

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at Huddersfield FMH

on Saturday 20th April 2024

A total of 48 Friends attended in person.

1. Reading

In our opening worship we have heard read 24.04 from Quaker Faith & Practice.

2. Testimony

We have heard a testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend Wilf Fenten of Airton Local Meeting and Craven and Keighley AM. We thank the Friends concerned for preparing it and add our endorsement.

3. Welcome

Our clerks have welcomed us to this, our second meeting of 2024, and introduced our agenda to us, based on the theme of Peace. Robin Bowles welcomed us to Huddersfield and dealt with the housekeeping matters for today.

We appoint Helen Meads and David Olver to act as Elders for this meeting.

3. Report on the breakdown in peace since April 2023

At our meeting in April 2023 held in Sheffield it was minuted:

We are conscious that peace and reconciliation, as in the theme of this session of QiY, has still to be agreed in Ukraine, fourteen months after Russian forces invaded. Many have fled as refugees, leaving family behind, but others are trapped in their homeland. Today, we hold Ukraine and its people in our thoughts, but also remind ourselves that there are conflicts in other parts of the world, which cause people to flee either physical or economic hardship.

Now in April 2024 the level of conflict seems so threatening to world order. We have seen no sign of a breakthrough for peace and reconciliation in Ukraine and we, like so many, are troubled by both the attack on Israel on 7th October 2023 but also the subsequent bombing of Gaza along with the huge civilian casualties and suffering, mainly of women and children.

We have invited speakers and participants today who can provide us with a picture of what is being done to bring about peace and what we might do in support of these initiatives.

Robin Bowles has introduced the topic, in which he has illustrated some of the actions and initiatives taken by Huddersfield LM, who are located in a very diverse community for age and ethnicity with an active and aware population

In addition to those present in Huddersfield we have a presentation from Ramallah Friends School in the West Bank, that gives us a strong impression of the challenges that are being faced by the staff and students, and their families, on a daily basis. Much of the early part of the presentation can be seen on the school website but the case of Shadi, a 16-year-old student who was in court for the 22nd time this week, describes the sort of pressure placed on students who wish to study and lead normal lives. A poem on the prayer for miracles and requests for our prayers were moving parts of the presentation. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the QiY website.

Debby Flack told us of her experience of being on the Ecumenical Accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) 12 months ago in Hebron and the difficulties of working and making connections in an environment of such tension.

The programme was set up by the World Council of Churches in 2002 to be a witness of what was happening in Palestine. Around 25 countries take part. The programme supports human rights and international law. We saw illustrations of EAPPI activities on behalf of all parts of the community in Palestine, as well as advocating for Peace.

Umm Shadi, a shepherdess, has lost her ability to roam with her 35 sheep and goats in amongst olive and almond trees. A Jewish settlement is encroaching on their historic land, in contravention of international law but with Israeli government support. Shadi has a strip of land for growing crops and is now prevented from accessing her important land. We saw film of, and heard of, intimidatory confrontations over land access. The dilemma is whether to leave family land, held for generations, to find some safety. Further attacks have taken place in November, meaning it is too dangerous to stay at night.

Such attacks have doubled to 6 per day since the attack by Hamas on 7th October 2023. There are 700,000 Israeli citizens in West Bank and East Jerusalem and permission has been given for accommodation for a further 13,500.

The situation is very difficult with no freedom of movement, and harassment of Arab residents of the West Bank, in addition to the suffering in Gaza. There are actions that we can take: email, donate and understand. We are encouraged to access <https://www.eyewitnessblogs.com>

The question was asked: who is talking to Hamas? This is not known in this meeting but Hamas will need to be part of the process to establish peace. We also heard of personal experience of being in Gaza, and a meeting with a mayor who wanted a peaceful two state solution.

The presentation supporting this segment cannot be placed on the QiY website, to protect identities.

We have heard from Philip Austin, coordinator of NFPB, of the work of Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) and the challenges of bringing about action to promote peace when the participants are reluctant to back down and talk.

Philip spoke of the history from 1913 for the active promotion of peace in the North across the Quarterly Meetings. It is a representative body that includes Scotland, North Wales, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Hybrid meetings have helped to increase participation but smaller regional meetings have been introduced, the most recent being a powerful meeting in Sheffield.

There is an event on 11th May in Stockport on the arms trade and on 5th June, to be confirmed. The board shares ideas and provides support. We heard of two strands being followed. We are aware of the conflicts in Africa by bringing together thoughts and contributions which will be published and thinking about the dilemmas for our peace testimony. Peace work is about long-term action, and a network of people called Re-thinking Security have been brought together to seek out what is meant by security and what it could look like in the future. How does it feature in the community as well as promoting global interdependence?

NFPB is part of the UK steering group looking at military spending, Global Campaign on Military Spending, to assess aspects on climate and security. There is a related programme within QPSW.

There is a new programme on nuclear weapons, where some input may depend on how a future Labour government might approach this topic.

Robin Bowles spoke to us about Quaker Roots and how we might imagine the world without the arms trade. Quaker Roots focuses on the DSEI arms fair held in London every 2 years, the next in September 2025, and there is a website for us to access.

Behind almost every refugee there is an arms dealer. The UK is one of the world's largest arms dealers, facilitating global deals, with a government department to support the trade. How can the end to the arms trade be brought about by 2030? If we focus on the 'bad' we invoke anxiety and depression and we shut down the possible.

'Longing on a large scale is what creates history.'

'What we need to know is already here.'

'The future must enter you long before it happens?'

Features that might be with us in the world of 2030 include: Companies diversify, an enhanced focus on human rights, and no arms trade.

We need more conversation, presence and persistence, setting an example, humility and leadership to create a calm and secure environment.

'In order to save everything, we have to change everything' together with the quotes that started this brief conversation.

We are grateful for the contributions made in the morning session by Robin Bowles, Debby Flack, Philip Austin and Rania Maayah of Ramallah Friends School.

4. Appointments and Releases

a. Thanks

We give thanks for the service of all those Friends whose appointments for Quakers in Yorkshire have been completed since our last meeting.

b. Releases

Roy Love of York AM has asked to be released from service with immediate effect as QiY Treasurer. We accept this request and thank Roy for the service he has given to QiY.

Leah Dalby of Craven and Keighley AM and Louise Brown of York AM have asked to be released from service on the Outreach Projects Committee. Rachel Twort of Brighouse West Yorkshire AM has asked to be released from service on the Breckenbrough School Committee. We note that these releases have been in operation for some time.

We agree to these requests.

c. Appointments

(i) Our Nominations Committee has brought us the following nominations for service:

From 1st January 2024 until 31st December 2026:

Robert Keeble of Leeds AM, to serve a second term on QiY Arrangements Committee.

Liz Schweiger of Leeds AM to serve a second term as QiY Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator.

Andy Beck of Leeds AM to serve a second term on Under 19s Coordinating Group.

These nominations being acceptable, the Friends are appointed accordingly.

(ii) Area Meeting nominations committees bring us the following nominations for service:

Carol Hayward of Brighouse West Yorkshire AM to serve a second term on the Outreach Projects Committee from 1st January 2023 to 31 December 2025.

Sundai Karim Ghauri of Leeds AM to serve a first term on the Outreach Projects Committee from 20th April 2024 to 31st December 2026.

Catherine Putz of Brighouse West Yorkshire AM to serve a second term on QiY Nominations Committee from 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2026.

Alison Clarke of York AM to serve a first term on QiY Nominations Committee from 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2024.

Joyce Hughes of Central Yorkshire AM to serve a first term on QiY Nominations Committee from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2025.

Veronica O'Mara of Leeds AM to serve a first term on QiY Nominations Committee from 20th April 2024 to 31st December 2026.

Fiona Lewin of Sheffield and Balby AM to serve a first term on QiY Nominations from 20th April 2024 to 31st December 2026.

These nominations being acceptable, we appoint the Friends named accordingly.

iii) For the Schools:

Lynne Ward to serve a first term on the Breckenbrough School Committee from 20th April 2024 to 31st December 2027.

Phil McDonald to serve a first term as a parent governor on the Mount School Committee from 20th April 2024 to 31st December 2027.

Mary Frankland to serve a first term as a governor nominee on the Mount School Committee from 20th April 2024 to 31st December 2027.

These nominations being acceptable, we appoint the Friends named accordingly.

We thank all these Friends for accepting nomination for service.

We are minded that there are still vacancies on QiY Nominations Committee. AM Clerks are reminded of their role in bringing names forward to QiY.

5. Notices

Craig Barnett, supported by Jo Baynham, has spoken to us about the developing plans for a Quaker Summer Camp in Yorkshire that is affordable and accessible for everyone. There is now a planning group and there has been an enthusiastic response to the proposal.

There is a list of potential venues which will be reviewed by the planning group. Other members would be welcome in planning, especially young families.

Jo Baynham has told us of a 'Faith in Action' event, Creative Tactics for Peace taking place on Saturday 18th May at Friargate Meeting House.

There is potential for a new Quaker community in Goole based on outdoors, woodland worship. Young families, Quaker or not, would be welcome.

Quaker Peace Studies Trust supports the Peace Studies department at Bradford University and meets in Bradford on 6th to 9th June and Geoff Tansey has told us how we can attend this Golden Jubilee Conference which will include the 4th Adam Curle lecture by Dr Nozizwe Mdala Routledge, Director of QUNO, in Geneva on 8th June. There is a QR code on the website is <https://forms.office.com/e/SakGMgNzXn>

Elsbeth Moore has told us of the book about the 90 years of the QiY Holiday School and how we might receive a copy. Each meeting house will receive a copy.

We are urged to join Quaker Roots.

Rosie Roberts has spoken about the arrangements for our next meeting at New Earswick on Saturday 20th July when the theme will be the celebration of George Fox's 400th Anniversary. Her message was for contributors and volunteers to help a specific planning group to deliver the day. Publicity, displays, presentations and music will be required for the day.

Rosie will be delighted to hear from you, or anyone you know, if you would like to be involved in this exciting celebration. She is setting up a Zoom meeting in early May to start the planning for the meeting.

6. Racial Justice Group Update

Today Ruth McTighe and Rosie Roberts have spoken about the life of Bayard Rustin, to coincide with a film that is now on Netflix that tells of how he organised the March on Washington in 1963.

We received two quotes

From Bayard Rustin: 'We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers.'

From QF&P 23.08, paragraph 3: 'In and out of season, in and out of jail, in and out of court, counting house and farmstead, our Quaker forebears challenged the conventions of the day – in politics, in commerce, in the law, in the established church, in social etiquette, in education, in attitudes to war, poverty and crime. In face of the sterile institutions of their day they found living answers about the ways in which men and women might go about their business of living together.' Roger Wilson 1976.

We thank Ruth and Rosie for this presentation. Their full report is on the QiY website along with a trailer for the Netflix movie and an interview with Walter Naegle who was the partner of Bayard Rustin.

7. Afternoon Session

Geoff Tansey has spoken about Swords into Ploughshares, a Brighthouse West Yorkshire AM concern. The idea emerged from consideration of how much is spent on armaments when so many people are going hungry, and Geoff was persuaded to set up a blog. There have now been 4 years of struggle in Zoom discussions,

researching military spending and involving other bodies to help the profile of the group, to try to get something done.

Impetus came through the invasion of Ukraine, allowing a retelling of the story about how we live and consider how we can change the systems by which we live. Our stories of how we live will need some imagination hence involving a university department focused on risk and a dramatist.

In 2023 there were three workshops, on nuclear weapons, people who have a lived experience of conflict and the challenges of how we think about global risk

The key will be how to communicate with the generation who will be most involved in bringing about the transformative process, i.e. those under 35, which will require podcasts and connections with the broadcast media. These are the people who can bring about generational change over the long-term.

We thank Geoff for bringing this concern to us.

A website is at <https://www.cser.ac.uk/resources/people-patterns/>

We have welcomed Rebecca Bellamy of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) to lead us in a creative session and with her new project about peace building in Britain, which focuses on the local relationships with those who might not be Quaker. It deals with the causes of tensions in our local communities, and Rebecca is relying on personal testimony to give strength to the project to benefit members of our community and those beyond.

Rebecca has a national role in QPSW, as Peace Building Coordinator, having started 6 months ago, and wants to meet as many Quakers as possible, and by taking individual support as a listener to the community. In thinking of conflict theory and strategy there are practical ways of dealing with conflict and conflict resolution.

Rebecca helps us grapple with conflict and we are encouraged this afternoon to think about what might have inspired us in today's sessions and how we can take this back to our meetings. We then joined an interactive session and one area of thought was that issues are interlocking, including relationships with asylum seekers and the African communities, and the invasion of female space by male groups

We thank Rebecca for encouraging us to consider what has inspired us today and how we might take our enthusiasms back to our various Quaker communities.

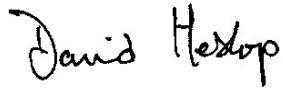
Rebecca wants to hear from us; she can be contacted at rebeccab@quaker.org.uk

8. Thanks to Huddersfield Friends

We thank the Friends at Huddersfield LM and Brighouse and West Yorkshire AM for their excellent hospitality and for the arrangements that have made today a success.

9. Concluding Minute

There being no further business to be taken today, we conclude. We intend to meet again in person at New Earswick Meeting House on Saturday 20th July 2024, should nothing occur to prevent.



David Bunney

&

David Heslop

Co-Clerk

Assistant Clerk

Quakers in Yorkshire