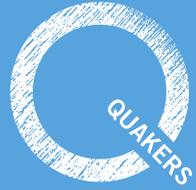


# Quaker Contacts



Newsletter of Thaxted Area Meeting Dec 16 Issue 135

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## **The Healing Group**

This group now meets on the second Monday of most months at 7.00 pm. For further information contact Joan & Martin Gibson, telephone 01799 521984

## **Area Meetings 2017**

Sunday 20th March at Dunmow

Sunday 12th June at Stansted

Sunday 11th September at Bardfield

Sunday 11th December at Saffron Walden, to include joining with Saffron Walden Friends for a Christmas lunch.

The hosting Area Meeting will present its Annual Report.

It is helpful if Friends who require lunch let the LQM Clerk know beforehand.

# Minutes of Thaxted Area Meeting

## held 11-12-2016 at Saffron Walden

### Representatives in attendance

11 Friends were named representatives. There were 22 Friends in total present.

### Membership Matters:

- a. Andrew Kynaston:** We record that a certificate of transfer of membership for Andrew Kynaston has now been received from Cambridgeshire Area Meeting. We are glad to have welcomed Andrew to our Area Meeting.
- b. Richard Bloomfield:** We record that Cork MM (Ireland YM) has minuted receipt of the certificate of transfer of membership for Richard Bloomfield, previously of Saffron Walden LM.
- c. Application for membership from Joanna Eden:** Angela Howard & Gill Parker were appointed between meetings to visit Joanna and have provided a report on their membership visit. We accept Joanna into membership of Thaxted Area Meeting and appoint Jackie Bartlett to welcome her.
- d. Tabular statement 2016:** Mike Collins, our membership clerk, has presented the Tabular Statement for 2016, which we now approve and forward to Britain Yearly Meeting. Our number of Members has reduced by 3 to 77.
- e. List of members & Attenders:** We ask Mike Collins to update our list of Members & Attenders for publication in spring 2017.

### Visit from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Further to minute 2015 09 05, we have welcomed Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of BYM Trustees, to our meeting. Ingrid has spoken to us about the work of BYM Trustees, and has responded to our questions.

The duties and responsibilities of BYM Trustees are set out in *Quaker faith & practice* chapter 8. They work in partnership with Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings to sustain church & faith, support Quaker meetings, raise awareness of Quakers and encourage witness through action. They are the employer of the staff of Britain Yearly Meeting. Ingrid has also shared with us material about the centrally managed work of Britain Yearly Meeting.

There are currently 16 Trustees, including the clerks and treasurer. They come from across the Yearly Meeting. The age profile of the Trustees has been gradually falling, and they bring a range of professional and Quaker experience, as well as a strong commitment to service, to their work.

The Trustees meet four times each year and attend Meeting for Sufferings. They have subcommittees for employment, finance & property, and audit, and are responsible for the hospitality company which runs Friends House and

Swarthmoor Hall. Ingrid has reminded Friends that Swarthmoor Hall is available for holidays and meeting visits. She has also told us about the Quaker Meeting Houses Heritage Project, which is nearing completion and may lead to a book.

Trustees are working with Meeting for Sufferings on the vision expressed in *Our Faith in the Future*, published last year.

- Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker;
- Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age;
- All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline;
- Quakers are well-known and widely understood;
- Quaker values are active in the world;
- Quakers work collaboratively.

Britain Yearly Meeting employs around 180 staff who undertake work on our behalf. We have been impressed to hear that around 350,000 people passed through the doors of Friends House last year – an important piece of outreach.

The YM Treasurer has expressed a wish to see Friends' contribution to the work of the Yearly Meeting rise from £2m to £3m per year to sustain the work.

Ingrid has told us about projects funded from legacies, including five staff employed on a legacy-funded Vibrancy in Meetings project in several areas of the Yearly Meeting, a property support pilot project and a project on engaging young adult Quakers. Ingrid has also told us of her passion for outreach, and reminded us of the importance of being aware what our buildings say about us to those who don't yet know anything about Quakers. Outreach packs are available on request for meetings to give to enquirers.

We have expressed our appreciation to all the staff at Friends House, Swarthmoor Hall and elsewhere for their work. We thank Ingrid for being with us today, and for her clear presentation, and hope she will pass on our appreciation to Trustees for their work on our behalf.

### **Essex & Suffolk Regional Gathering**

a. We note that the dates of Regional Gathering to be held in 2017 are now confirmed as 25 February (Southern East Anglia), 24 June (Mid Essex) & 30 September (Saffron Walden) and not 23 September as previously recorded.

b. We thank Sue Collins for her report on Regional Gathering held 24 September 2016 at Maldon. This is on page 23.

### **Meeting for Sufferings**

We have received a written report from John Capper on the Meeting for Sufferings held on 1 Oct and from Angela Pivac on the meeting on 3 Dec 2016. These reports are on pages 5 - 8. Lila Oliver also attended the Young People's Participation Day alongside this Meeting for Sufferings. See page 8.

### **Report on the life of Saffron Walden Local Meeting**

John Evans has reported on the life of Saffron Walden local meeting, and Clare Yerbury has told us about the Children & Young People's Meeting over the last year and a half. See pages 16 & 17

### **Outreach: preparation for a workshop at March AM**

Further to our recent discussions at Area Meeting and elsewhere following the "Catching Light Outreach Conference" in 2016, Clare Yerbury and Karl Gibbs have introduced a proposal from Saffron Walden's inreach/outreach group to work on a common phrase expressing our Quaker practice which can be used as a basis for our outreach. We agree to return to this at our next meeting in March, and ask Friends to use the paper circulated by Clare and Karl to help them prepare for this. The paper is on pages 24 & 25.

### **Meeting with the Head and Governors of Walden School**

Further to minute 2016 06 12 a meeting took place on 16 November 2016 with the Head and three governors of Walden School to discuss how the school lives out the commitment made by governors to a Quaker ethos, and how Friends in the Area Meeting can support the life of the school, both practically and through our contributions to the bursary fund. Minute on Page 14 & 15.

We have heard that Saffron Walden LM is considering how it wishes to proceed with contributions to the bursary fund.

We wish to see some connection with the school maintained and ask our nominations committee to bring forward the names of two Friends to act as a link between us and the school, so that the actions identified in the minute can be carried forward.

### **Glebe House General Meeting**

Jackie Bartlett has reported on the Glebe House General Meeting held on 29 October 2016. Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust) works with troubled young men with a history of sexually harmful behaviours. Glebe House is recognised as a centre of excellence in this area of work. Its Trustees come from Area Meetings in East Anglia. Jackie's report is on page 10.

### **Quaker Life Representative Council**

Sue Moloney has reported on the Quaker Life Representative Council held from 14-16 October at Woodbrooke. The Council was focusing on sustainability questions; going deeper into the spiritual basis of this concern of our yearly meeting. Sue has spoken of her sense of privilege at being able to serve as our representative to Quaker Life Representative Council. The report is on pages 11 to 13.

### **Criminal Justice workshop**

Further to minute 2016 06 13, a workshop with Rajiv Chelani was held at

Stansted meeting house on 26 November. We thank Stansted meeting for arranging and hosting this event, which was well-attended and thought-provoking. We have been challenged to think whether there is any justification for imprisonment beyond the need to protect the public from dangerous individuals. We will return to this question at a future meeting.

Jane Mitchell's report of the workshop is on pages 21 & 22.

Paul Parker &Loes Reeve  
Co-clerks

## **Meeting for Sufferings** **October 1 2016**

### **Vibrancy in Meetings.**

Rachel Matthews, Programme Co-ordinator, introduced 4 staff who have been appointed in a pilot project, each covering several Area Meetings (not ours). It is hoped that they will act as a two way channel between local Friends and Friends House and Woodbrooke, being available to be consulted about matters big and small, including helping Meetings explore ideas/issues/concerns etc. It is hoped that in due course the rest of the country, will be covered.

### **Recording and Yearly Meeting Clerks' Visit to the USA.**

We had a paper reporting on the visit of Paul Parker and Deborah Rowlands to the USA and particularly the liberal Yearly Meetings of Philadelphia and Baltimore. They reflected on their experiences and the concerns of American Friends including racism, inclusiveness and diversity. They said how good it was to have a travelling minute from Meeting for Sufferings, bringing back greetings from American Friends and hoping that their visit will encourage more sharing with Friends in America.

### **QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) Report.**

Each central committee reports annually to Meeting for Sufferings. The Clerk and General Secretary spoke to the report, which had been circulated in advance and is on the website. The committee works within the context of "*Our Faith in the Future*" and are currently finalising the overall strategy for their work. A wide range of work is carried out, supported by the 20 staff at Friends House. In response to Friends' concerns, legacy funds have been used to appoint a one year policy intern, placed with Housing Justice while another one year appointment is being made to work on Forced Migration ie refugees. It is anticipated that this work will start at the beginning of December. They will

liaise with QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) to see if anything extra can be done nationally.

The focus for the annual conference in 2017 will be movement building, working collaboratively with others. It was mentioned that the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniers is becoming increasingly difficult as the security situation in Palestine is worsening.

### **Management Committee Changes**

Helen Drewery is now General Secretary for Work and Witness, replacing separate secretaries for QPSW and Quaker Life. It was emphasised that this is to encourage closer cooperation between the two committees as there are areas in which both have an interest, for example the involvement of forces in schools. There has been no change in the departments themselves or the Central Committees.

### **Living Out our Faith.**

Having considered other aspects in previous meetings the focus was on the role of Meeting for Sufferings in *“discerning priorities... and contributing to developing a visionary and prophetic role for the whole yearly meeting.”* The vision was articulated in *“Our Faith in the Future”*. Now the role of Meeting for Sufferings is to discern what is a spirit-led Quaker concern, both work which no other bodies are doing and work that should be done with others. Members cannot know everything and the priorities are rightly left to the Trustees, committees and staff.

### **The Ammerdown Invitation**

A minute from West Yorkshire AM, with an accompanying note from Marigold Bentley, assistant General Secretary to QPSW, brought to our attention the work of the Ammerdown Group. This is a mix of professionals, academics, consultants, campaigners and thinkers who want a more peaceful and less insecure world and are involved in a wide range of peace related work. Marigold has participated since 2015 and news of the group is reported to the appropriate sub-committee of QPSW.

### **Relevant Papers on the Website.**

The BYM website has all the papers sent to Meeting for Sufferings and information on the Ammerdown group: [www.quaker.org.uk/mfs](http://www.quaker.org.uk/mfs) Then go to “Papers and minutes”. There are 2 papers about the Ammerdown group while the other information is in “Agenda and papers”: The US visit “Joyous Burden of Love” p 8-11; QPSW Report p 12-16; Living out our Faith p22-24.

*John Capper*

## **Meeting for Sufferings**

### **held on 3 December 2016 at Friends House**

We were joined by 38 members of the Young Quakers Participation Day in our opening worship in the Large Meeting Room. This included about nine 18 - 21 year olds.

#### **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees' report**

Ingrid Greenhow, clerk to BYM Trustees spoke, highlighting the work of Quaker World Relations Committee and Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations. Peter Ullathorne, YM Treasurer, presented the 2017 budget, stating that while we are in a sufficiently stable financial state, we still need to pursue the target of three million; currently on two million, in order to offset the precarious political situation, including HS2.

#### **Quaker Council for European Affairs**

Elaine Green, BYM's representative reported on recent changes due to limited resources. The focus of QCEA will be on peace and human rights. We agreed to nominate two Friends to represent BYM at the General Assembly in addition to our rep. This will give us a serious voice and help to make a difference in Europe. Elaine told us that Friends in Europe want us at the table, to remain involved, despite Brexit. We are encouraged to support QCEA with fund-raising. Reports are available of European YMs through our reps which make inspiring reading.

#### **Decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs.**

Sufferings returned to consider this matter, raised by Cornwall AM about five years ago. We, in Thaxted AM, sent a supporting minute at our December '13 AM. Since then, minutes have been received from 36 other AMs, not all in support. While there is empathy for the case of the vulnerable in our society who misuse drugs, especially when a young person is served with a criminal record which affects his/her life's chances, Friends were unable to unite with this concern. Cornwall will continue to work with those AMs who expressed interest in addition to other appropriate organisations, like Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs.

**The Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group** reported. They are pleased with the take-up of reading Quaker Faith & Practice and invite Friends to complete the Church Government questionnaire at: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ChurchGov](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ChurchGov) by 12.01.2017. The group are of the view that the church government part of QP&P should be completely revised rather than updated.

Another AM, in addition to General Meeting for Scotland, has forwarded a minute voicing concern about cadet forces in state schools in Scotland. This has been forwarded to QPSW Central Committee.

### **WWI Memorial Meetings for Reconciliation.**

QCCIR encourages all AMs to be active in their local Churches Together and Interfaith groups in order to influence commemoration services towards reconciliation and peace-building, particularly in 2018.

### **“Towards a Vision of a Criminal Justice System”**

A year ago, QPSW Central Committee commended this paper, written by its Crime, Community and Justice sub-committee. This document is seen as a useful tool and resource for local issues. Thirty AMs have responded to this paper.

### **Quaker Recognised Bodies**

The first four of the listed informal Groups are now registered; all have a Friends' House link person with a 5-year review planned. More will follow.

Jocelyn Burnell, the co-clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee spoke to their report. They do not feel that their relationship with Sufferings is as effective as it might be and challenged us to make changes.

The Young People re-joined Sufferings and we heard from each other, before finishing with worship.

Ethel Livermore has now stepped down as Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings. She was warmly thanked for her gifts and service over the last four years.

*Angela Pivac*

On Saturday, 3 December 2016 I travelled to Friends House in London with Angela Pivac to attend Meeting for Sufferings and Participation Day.

The day began with a Meeting for Worship in the main room, where participants attending Participation Day and older Friends sat and worshipped together. Then the Young Friends went upstairs to start the sessions.

The rest of the day was really interesting, with some enjoyable sessions such as drawing or writing on paper what it means to be a Quaker for you and discussing in groups or thoughts and issues that should be improved. For example more link groups for Young Quakers(etc.).

I really enjoyed the day and would recommend it to anyone who is thinking about attending it in the future.

*Lila Oliver*

# **Communiqué from Glebe House**

## **A summary of Trustees' Minutes - September 2016**

### **Glebe House News**

Trustees warmly thanked Sally Lewis for compiling Glebe House News as an annual publication insert for The Friend over the last six years. This was the last Trustees' Meeting for Sally and also Susan Garrett. Janet Nicholls will be laying down her Trustee responsibility too within the next few months. All three Trustees will be thanked formally at General Meeting on 29 October.

### **Financial Report and Cost Benefit Analysis update**

The projected budget is strong and in surplus. Current referrals being received suggest that the occupancy level is likely to remain buoyant. Trustees continue to seek the right agency for the cost benefit work.

### **Expenses for General Meeting Representatives and Nominations Committee members.**

These are both AM appointments and it is our view that AMs will meet these travel expenses.

### **School Governance - Trustees' new responsibilities**

Susan Garrett gave Trustees the benefit of her knowledge of school governance and made many observations of the ways our school registration will impact both on new policies, a 3-4 yearly inspection regime and relevant training available from Cambridgeshire County Council.

### **Presentation from our accountants, Peters, Elworthy and Moore.**

Judith Coplowe said in her introduction that this is the first year of Charities SORP 2015 - a format which will ensure all charities show greater transparency of their transactions and salaries of senior staff.

Silvermill Training Ltd ceased trading during the year, but the company is still open. It was agreed this account will be closed.

Trustees are advised to place more emphasis in the Trustees' Report on our reserves and risk management as well as the positive reporting of activities, research and continuing viability.

Keith Doughty, Assistant Director, Finance, and Alex Zens (Finance Administrator) were thanked for their work over the year.

### **Away Day for Senior Management Team and Trustees**

This is planned to take place at Hartington Grove Meeting House, Cambridge 13 October.

Three applications for Trusteeship have been received for consideration at the forthcoming General Meeting.

*Angela Pivac - Trustee*

# Report on Glebe House General Meeting

held Saturday October 29<sup>th</sup> 2016.

## Background

Friends Therapeutic Community Trust, known more familiarly as Glebe House is a ground breaking project which works closely with troubled and vulnerable young men between the ages of 15 up to 18 but sometimes beyond to early 20's. These are young people who in the past have demonstrated sexually harmful behaviours and for whom youth custody and possibly imprisonment are the only alternative. Glebe House, having agreed to accept boys of 15years old is also registered as a school, and supports the lads in residence through an OFSTED recognised curriculum of both academic and vocational subjects. OFSTED reports are consistently Outstanding.

The Trust, set up in 1965, was a response to the concern of Geoffrey Brogden's. He was a Quaker Social worker who sought residential care for vulnerable young men. The work of a professional staff under the leadership of Peter Clarke the Director is guided by a trust body made up exclusively of Friends drawn from Area Meetings within East Anglia. Trustees will usually serve for 2 triennia. There are currently 8 Trustees. Their functions include receiving Trustee reports and approving financial statements.

More information about the work of Glebe House and the Annual Report see the website: [www.Glebehouse.org.uk](http://www.Glebehouse.org.uk)

In this report I'd like to draw Friends' attention to two outstanding things:

1. Such is the recognition of Glebe House as a centre of excellence that in the wake of the disclosures about child abuse in Rotherham, Peter Clarke gave evidence before a committee at the House of Commons chaired by Sarah Champion MP about the work undertaken by the Trust.

2. The findings of the longitudinal study carried out with the involvement of Glebe House by Gwyneth Boswell and Associates (details of which are on the website) supports the enormous value in terms of outcomes, of living within a therapeutic community. This was overwhelmingly supported by evidence given before a Select Committee of the House of Commons by three of the young men themselves. This invitation was extended by Barnardos, the children's charity, when it began its own enquiry into sexually harmful behaviours.

While Friends don't usually entertain the notion of pride, here is a piece of work that deserves our pride and continuing support both in visiting on Open Days, being involved as Trustees or simply offering prayer and upholding. The way in which the lives of these damaged young men are turned around by the skill, devotion and love of the staff is humbling.

*Jackie Bartlett.- Glebe House GM Rep.*

# Quaker Life Rep Council Meeting Report Oct 14-16

## “Becoming The Change We Want To See”

Woodbrooke was lovely as ever, but particularly so this time, with the Autumn sunshine turning the leaves to red, yellow and gold, before their lightly falling to the earth....a fitting backdrop for 90 or so QL reps from every corner of the UK to gather for this bi-annual event... the theme this time being the earth's **Sustainability**.

On the train journey to Birmingham, I looked again at the world famous photos in Pam Lunn's 2011 Swarthmore Lecture (see ref 1), of **Earthrise** (NASA, 1968) and **The Blue Marble** (NASA, 1972), which bring home to us the words of Carl Sagan “*The earth is a tiny fragile world. It needs to be cherished*”. The weekend gathering was in part to remind us of the content of this book, and of Minute 36 (ref 2) to reflect on how far we have come since the idea of creating an additional Quaker Testimony to Sustainability was suggested at BYM 2011, and to encourage us and the communities we live in to be re-enthused to continue the journey of living and promoting sustainable living in any and every way we feel able.

The theme of Sustainability is vast. I turned to the new book “**Living Our Beliefs**” (see ref 3) developed by Young Quakers, whose chapter on Sustainability is clear and simple, with apt quotations, and a simplified Advice

and Query 42 being “*Look after the world for the future. Reduce, reuse and recycle*”...a great start; but during the weekend we were able to examine and think about the theme in greater depth through a variety of approaches, encouraging us to “*Become the change we want to see*” taking us deeper and further into our efforts, and helping us to recognise the subject on a spiritual level ; seeing that of God in the world around us, and being moved by considerations other than personal gain.

This was made clearer by the three keynote speakers on Saturday morning.

**Alex Wildwood** from Banbury and Evesham AM ,co-author of “**Universe as Revelation**” (ref 4) spoke on “A Vision to Sustain Us” with the world famous Paul Gauguin painting :“*Where did we come from? Where are we now? Where are we going*” as backdrop on the screen behind him. His presentation was erudite and full of powerful quotations, including :

“*treating the earth as if we wanted to stay*”

“*evolving by choice, not chance*”

“*a belief in something greater than ourselves*”

“*God is not your favourite uncle, God is a volcano*” Harvey Gilman

“*When speaking truth to power, act your age*”

Alex left us with these two questions:

- What might be the Quaker contribution to the evolutionary shift of consciousness that many prophetic voices believe we are called to at this time?"
- What gifts, skills, talents, can I personally bring to the transition to a just and sustainable future?

**.....Food for thought for us all**

The two other speakers gave their personal stories, which I invariably find a powerful, illuminating, fascinating and helpful way of illustrating and accepting how unique we all are in our journeys through life, and also how much we can resonate and learn from each other's experiences.

**Bryony Rowntree** came from Leeds AM. She shared with us the raw nature memories of her childhood and the effect they have had on the way she chooses to live her life now, her love of the earth and all things natural, the powerful experiences of becoming a mother, and the ways in which she nurtures her children to honour the earth. The childhood memory that seemed to resonate and make the most impression on us all, probably because we could relate to the wonder of it, was that of her as a child, coming across a tiny green shoot poking through a concrete path. It was referred to several times during the weekend.

**Rachel Harrison**, from West Wiltshire and East Somerset, talked

equally enthrallingly of the nature aspects of her own life, of simplicity and making time to connect with our intuition; deep listening in nature and to the earth, and the need to be kind to ourselves. The story of the death of her grandfather complimented that of Bryony's experiences of birth, and the wheel of life was seen to come full circle in these two thought provoking presentations spoken through the heart.

**Six Workshops** were provided. We could choose to attend two.

My choices were "**Food Sustainability**" and "**Being a Community Witness**" the former choice as it was a good place to bring up the subject of vegetarianism at Woodbrooke, which I had been asked to do by one of you in relation to the slaughtering of animals, and our Testimony to Peace. We were assured by Darrell Farnsworth, the Head of Services at Woodbrooke, that they do try to have days when vegetarian food only is provided but this is dependent on the group in residence. Generally, as was the case this weekend, meat and vegetarian are equal options with neither having the emphasis. One member of the group appeared angry and upset (not an unusual response it seemed) at the suggestion that Woodbrooke should only provide vegetarian food, stating that some people can't survive on a vegetarian diet only. The Woodbrooke Food Safety and Food services policy states its aims to be waste free,

to eat better with less meat and dairy, to buy local, seasonal and environmentally friendly food, to choose Fairtrade-certified products and to select fish from sustainable sources only. The general feeling was that for us all and individually, it is a case of choosing what is most right for us and our consciences.

The **“Being a Community Witness”** workshop was led by Helen Drewery and Laurie Michaelis, respectively from Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Living Witness (ref 5). They got us exploring our various gifts and leadings, considering, by examining a “map” of Quaker approaches to Sustainability, what changes we are called to in our individual lives and Meetings,... feelings, thinking and action.

**The Home Groups** (of 11 -12) that we retired to three times during the weekend gave us opportunity to share our own and our meetings’ individual achievements and challenges, and discuss, and later feedback at Plenary,

those things helpful to the wider group, and to draw the threads of our discussions together at the end.

**Drawing the threads together** was done as well, by the two retiring QL clerks, Jude Whitby and Jane Harries, who have served QLRC so well for three years. There will be two write ups in The Friend from individual representatives who have taken up the challenge to convey their experiences to the wider Quaker family.

As one of the two Thaxted AM Quaker Life Representatives this triennium, I came away overwhelmed with the feeling of privilege at being in this position. The Council Meetings have been called a “*hidden Quaker gem*”... but the point is for the content not to be hidden...the QLR role is to share, inform, uplift and enthuse their Area Meeting to benefit from it, so that, particularly with this theme of caring for the earth, the community and the world will too.

Sue Moloney

### References (All available from the Quaker Bookshop)

- 1 **Costing not Less than Everything** *Sustainability and spirituality in challenging times* Swarthmore Lecture 2011. Pam Lunn. Quaker Books
- 2 **Minute 36** Our Canterbury Commitment “...to become a low-carbon, sustainable community”
- 3 **Living Our Beliefs** *An exploration of the faith and practice of Quakers* developed and edited by Young Quakers with Graham Ralph 2016
- 4 **Universe as Revelation** *an ecomystical theology for Friends* by Jo Farrow and Alex Wildwood 2013
- 5 **Living Witness** National network of Quakers and Meetings learning from and sharing our experience as we seek to live our testimony on sustainability.

# Minute of a Meeting between Thaxted AM and the Head and Governors of Walden School

held 16 November 2016 at Saffron Walden Friends Meeting House

Present, Anna Chaudry (Head) and Andrew Clark, Celia James, Finola O'Sullivan (Governors) and 13 Thaxted AM Friends and others.

We have been reminded that this Area Meeting has no formal responsibility for the governance of the school, and the school is not formally accountable to us. The FSSW-GM was laid down at its special meeting in June 2016

Thaxted AM has minuted its wish to support the school. In 2015, in response to a letter from FSSW-GM, we minuted (part): *"We in Thaxted Area Meeting are asked if we remain willing to make the commitment, as one of the area meetings geographically close to the school, to support the GM and provide names of Friends to serve in various capacities.*

*This AM has a history of supporting the school and its General Meeting, and is, in principle, able to continue to do so. We have, however, questioned how effective the current governance model is when not all area meetings are able to make the same commitment, and we encourage the General Meeting in its review. For Friends School to remain known for its Quaker ethos it is important that there is a clear mechanism for Quaker involvement."*

Founded in 1702, the school is established as a Quaker foundation to provide education following the principles of the Religious Society of Friends. The governors, are trustees of the charity and directors of the associated company, are the stewards of this, bound by its founding purpose. The

majority of governors are Quakers. The number of Quaker children in the school, around ten, is more than most of the other Quaker schools in Britain.

We have heard that the governors, informed by market research, took a business decision to change the name of the school. The school has needed to grow numbers and to ensure that it has a clear identity in its market. We have asked how the Quaker aspects of the identity of the school can be made prominent, and have questioned whether it is presently sufficient, and how local Friends can support pupils in the school in developing a clearer understanding of Quakerism.

Members of the governing body of the school have described how they see the Quaker ethos of the school. This includes avoiding hierarchy and undue competitiveness in the way the school is organised. The school does not invite the military to participate in any way in the life of the school. We have heard that Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, equality, truth and sustainability (STEPS) are woven into lessons. We need to remember that we Quakers are not the only people who care about these values, but governors feel that they are brought more to the forefront at the school. The school seeks to be inclusive, to work with pupils as individuals, to

encourage them to succeed from within, drawing on their own strength, and to celebrate equally the successes of all.

The school holds a weekly Meeting for Worship both in the junior and the senior school. All pupils attend this. This is an un-programmed meeting, with occasional ministry by pupils, staff or others present. The twice-termly evening meeting has in the past been a valued way for pupils of the school and members of the meeting to meet together in worship. This has not always been easy to arrange, and being on a Sunday evening may not be the best time to do this; we should try however to reinvigorate this opportunity. It may be possible for Friends to worship with pupils of the school at other times as well, especially at the weekly 8.40 am meeting on Wednesdays.

Year 7 pupils at the school go on a trip to Woodbrooke. This visit complements curriculum content in the school's religious studies course. Two weekly assemblies in addition to the meeting for worship are an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of Quakerism. Staff are offered an opportunity to take part in a course on 'Working in a Quaker School'.

We have heard offers from Friends from the AM to serve the school as a resource, and a willingness on the part of the school to work with Friends. How can we, as Friends, communicate better with the school about the activities of the meeting, perhaps especially activities with children &

young people? We have heard that the school would welcome receiving newsletters from neighbouring meetings, and that news about events at the school could be included in them if sent.

How can the meeting support the school? We have heard that Quaker involvement could support the school in keeping its Quaker library up to date. Could the children from the school visit the meeting house more regularly as a way of bringing the Quaker experience alive? Are there other ways local Quakers can contribute to the school's curriculum and wider life, in person or through the provision of resources?

The school's bursary fund receives around £2500pa from SWLM and around a further £6k from TAM from the Margaret Stubbs Memorial Fund. In total the bursary fund has income of around £40k pa. This supports a number of Quaker children. The school currently gives around ten times this amount annually in bursary help, the vast majority of which comes from the school's annual income from fees. Shortage of funds has meant the school is no longer able to offer such high levels of bursary support as in the past, but it is trying to mitigate the effects of this decline.

We have experienced this evening the importance of having opportunities for local Friends to meet with people from the school to hear about what is happening and to explore how we can work together. We hope we can find ways for such conversations to continue.

*Paul Parker, Clerk for this meeting*

# Report from Saffron Walden Quaker Meeting 2016

Dear Friends

Our meeting which has quite a high number of nominal members and attenders seldom reaches 30 Friends at Sunday Meetings for Worship our average attendance is around 22 Friends and the number of new Members and Attenders joining us is not sufficient for long term sustainability.

If we were able to persuade our nominal Members and Attenders to come to weekly worship more often we would have meetings of around 40 Friends every Sunday.

It is difficult to discern why Friends don't come to weekly worship more often and Friends will all have their own theories.

We hosted a very well attended day school conducted by Ben Pink Dandelion in October and Friends from other Meetings boosted the numbers at this most inspiring day.

Administration through Local Meeting for Business has been greatly assisted by an average attendance of 14 Friends which has meant that decision making has involved more Friends than hitherto.

Our finances are in good shape greatly assisted by a very good level of hirings to outside bodies and the rental of 69 High Street Saffron Walden which after a long struggle has been leased out again.

Our weekly collections have provided a good level of financial support to both Quaker and non-Quaker organisations.

I have served two years as meeting clerk one year longer than originally planned and would like to record my thanks to our friend Rosemary Breen who acted as assistant clerk to our Meeting. I would urge Friends who have been approached by nominations to consider a role within the life of the Meeting please do not assume that you cannot do the job.

*John Evans*

# **Children & Young People's Meeting Saffron Walden**

## **Report to Area Meeting 11.12.2016**

**There follows an excerpt to Area Meeting from our annual report to Local Meeting.**  
**Friends may appreciate the CYP 'facts and figures' extract this year.**

We welcomed gladly a new family of 3 children from Hartington Grove Meeting who are often with us, and sometimes their cousin comes too.

Currently, 9 children under 12 years are part of CYPM. Attendance varies on Sunday mornings - from no children and young people, to 1, 2, 3 or 4 and very occasionally more. An All Age Meeting was held in December giving thanks for the donations collected for Refugee children and given within the context of the Christmas Story.

Connected to LM, either by the recent past, or in the present, are 12 Young People between 12 -20 years. Since our last Report, we have held 2 more Young People Sunday evening gatherings. On average about 7 attend, and 2 young people from elsewhere have come along out of interest. Through Facebook one of us occasionally keeps in contact with our older YP, especially if they are starting College and are unaware of a local Meeting nearby.

We were glad that 3 of our Young People attended Junior Yearly Meeting. They were funded by, and gave positive feedback to, Thaxted AM. Also, with our AM representative, 2 attended the Meeting for Sufferings' YP Participatory day at Friends House. One YP has been awarded a much-valued place with the Prince of Wales Trust to study sustainability. Four others have started, or will start, University. At least one will be at Summer School this year and two at Senior Conference. The standard of inclusion, planning, enrichment is very high at these national events. However with a couple of exceptions, Young People come to Local Meeting infrequently, if at all. There are a variety of reasons and some conversations have been held. At this stage, Elders have been asked to think on how this situation might be changed. Locally we have just begun enquiring about YP Friends in Cambridge. On an uplifting note, Friends House's publication of Young People's collaborative book on faith and practice, *Living Our Beliefs*, is inspiring for all ages, and a good offering for outreach.

*Clare Yerbury,*  
*Convenor CYP Committee*

# **MH garden developments present and future**

## **Report to Saffron Walden LM**

### **from Inreach/Outreach working group**

#### **4<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

The Inreach/Outreach group is open to all and currently comprises members of Elders, Resources, Children's Committees and the Wardens. The next meeting is at 10am, Long Room, Wednesday 21st December.

We are proposing that the garden become an inreach community project embraced by as many folks in Meeting as possible over 2017, with a view to combining such development with outreach possibilities in the future.

### **Background and recent developments**

Voluntarily, and sometimes with paid outside help, the garden over the last 20 years has received care and service from various members, particularly John Evans, and we give thanks for this.

We recognise that *maintenance* along with *creative initiatives* are 2 main parts to garden care; also that it is not feasible or fair to expect heavy work to be done without paid assistance.

Currently Andrew Kynaston is able to garden here when time allows, and he is nominated to Resources Committee.

Nine of us walked round the garden one Sunday in the Autumn to assess what needed doing. Review notes were taken and circulated. As a result Resources Committee have allocated £400 for Autumn/Winter maintenance and clearance; and were helped to find an employable gardener for this.

### **Our Meeting community**

Whether experienced or inexperienced gardeners, many of us wish to see the garden cared for; and some have expressed interest already in being part of some creative and/or maintenance initiatives.

### **Creative inreach/outreach ideas:**

- o Providing a place of sanctuary with some innovation which others on occasion could be invited to share.
- o Low maintenance planning.
- o An outdoor version of our graves location map.
- o 'Owning' a grave to keep its grass edges clipped.
- o A play space and place for young people's outdoor artwork eg painted stones.

- o An All Age Meeting in the Spring which would include the garden.
- o Part of an Outreach event in Quaker week 2017.
- o Interesting, environmentally friendly seats (ref: Deborah Arrowsmith Oxford Meeting warden; willow structures; Friends House's new garden seating ideas).
- o A sensory part to the garden.
- o Smaller areas to do with permaculture, ecological innovative ideas, wildlife attraction, fruit, nuts. (Include CYP Meeting and potential for local School visits).
- o An historically treasured area (gravestones, Gibson, Tuke, Quaker Town Trail leaflet, Gibson's Botanical book in SW Town Library).
- o Part of a tradition of Quaker gardens (e.g. Quaker Garden Group list of national gardens, Friends House, Dorchester Meeting, Lucretia Mott Garden in Philadelphia). And being informed of a growing movement of other non-Quaker urban garden developments.
- o Encouraging our Town Council Neighbourhood planners to include the gardens of local worshipping communities in their audit of the town's green spaces.
- o Quiz - what Biblical garden references can we think of and look up?!

### **Way forward**

With LM adopting such a gradual, community inreach project, and Inreach/Outreach group helping to co-ordinate and to overlap with other Committees, we suggest that the Meeting singly, and in small groups, adopt some of these ideas - and bring their own - depending on interest shown. And that an All Age meeting could also be a contribution.

### **A Quaker concern**

From John Woolman (F&P 25.01) through to the Yearly Meeting Canterbury Commitment Minute 36, gardens, fruits of and stewardship of the earth continue to be Quaker concerns.

*Clare Yerbury  
on behalf of Inreach/Outreach working group  
December 2016*

# Saffron Walden Local Meeting Elders' Report

December 4<sup>th</sup> 2016

During 2016 the Meeting's Elders have been Bidy Vousden, Penelope Cummins, Hilary Morrish, Andy Browning and Ted Jackson, who has served as convener. We were sorry to say goodbye to Andy in September.

We have met in most months of the year, and we will meet again on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Angela Howard has attended some of our meetings. We have used the book "*With a Tender Hand*" and have informed ourselves of training opportunities. Ted Jackson and Hilary Morrish attended the course "*Exploring Eldership*" at Woodbrooke, and found it very helpful. We have met twice with Overseers during the year.

We agreed to include a few minutes of "*Afterwords*" at the end of Meeting for Worship on the first Sunday of the month (except when another meeting followed on) starting in March for a trial period. This practice is now being reviewed.

We organised a survey of Friends' opinions, asking three questions:

- 1) What do you value and enjoy about life as a Member or Attender at Saffron Walden?
- 2) Are there any aspects of life in the community of Friends which you find difficult? Please explain your answer if you feel able.
- 3) Can you suggest any changes which might make your experience more positive?

We received 13 responses, and we found this a useful exercise. A summary of the responses was distributed. We have already responded to some of the feedback with monthly discussions of "*Quaker Faith and Practice*", arranging visiting speakers/workshops, and the trial of "*Afterwords*".

Meetings for Bible Study have continued on a monthly basis. The themes have included Forgiveness, The Kingdom of Heaven, Women of the Bible and Luke's Gospel.

We arranged a performance of "*Red Flag over Bermondsey, the Ada Salter Story*" by Lynn and David Morris, who form the "*Journeymen Theatre Company*". It took place at Friends' School on April 17<sup>th</sup> in front of the school's boarders, some staff, and a good number of local Quakers. It was widely praised by those who saw it.

On October 15<sup>th</sup> at our invitation, Woodbrooke on the Road came to Saffron Walden Meeting in the person of Ben Pink Dandelion, who gave a one-day course "*History in a Nutshell*". It was attended by 30 Friends including a number

from other Local Quaker Meetings, and was much appreciated. We hope to have another Woodbrooke-on-the-Road day on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017 “*Being a Quaker Community*”.

We have continued the practice of having readings from “*Advices and Queries*” on the first Sunday of the month.

We remain aware that the Meeting for Worship is central to our spiritual life. We have appealed to Friends to try to arrive punctually for Meeting for Worship. We are reminded of Elders responsibility towards young people and towards new Attenders seeking guidance.

We are concerned that some Friends may carry too great a burden of responsibility and that as Elders we need to do all we can to nurture our Meeting, so that all may find refreshment and renewal in worship.

*Ted Jackson, (convener of Elders)*

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## **What are prisons for?**

### **Report on the Workshop on Criminal Justice at Stansted QMHo**

This was the question at the heart of the workshop on Criminal Justice, held at Stansted Meeting House on Saturday 26th November 2016. This is a subject which has been frequently in the news recently, with a prison riot, escaped prisoners considered to be dangerous and even a strike by prison officers about conditions. There have been several television programmes about what actually goes on in our prisons, so as part of a Quaker concern that we should be as active with regard to the issue as our famous forebears, we set out to learn more.

The workshop was run in a quiet and thoughtful manner by Rajiv Chelani, who is just ending his second triennium on CCJ (a section of QPSW). Almost 20 people attended, the majority of whom were Quakers from the Thaxted Area Meetings, but also some from Harlow Meeting, and other non-Quakers who live in Stansted.

The usual introduction by each person elicited a rich seam of knowledge and experience on the issue, in the group as a whole. We heard of Catholic experience of prison work, a repeated concern about the link between educational difficulties and offending and even one former solicitor who had

been involved in running a public enquiry into the death of a prisoner in Chelmsford prison. So by the end of the introductory session, we had learnt a lot from each other.

After a short period of silence, in pairs we considered what were the good and bad things about prisons, adding our points to sheets stuck up for each viewpoint. Rajiv broadly divided our “good” points into protecting society from dangerous people, opportunities for rehabilitation, education and skills, justice for victims and deterrence. Our “bad” points covered “schools” for criminals, violence and drugs, institutionalisation and recidivism, harm to families and relationships, failure to rehabilitate and educate, and cost. We were then given true stories in our pairs, and reconsidered our points in the light of what we had read, then added anything to the sheets, with further discussion. It was apparent that the “bad” list was longer than the “good”, but there were clearly arguments on both sides.

One of the group had asked about restorative justice, and Rajiv spoke of his experience of this, which was informative and led to further thought and discussion. Then he threw a spanner in the works. Having acted as a facilitator throughout, without telling us what to think, he concluded by saying that his personal view was that there should only be one point on the “good” side : protecting society from dangerous people. He suggested only the 2-3,000 people in this country who are dangerous should be locked up, and all other criminals should be dealt with without incarceration. This radical view was food for thought indeed during the brief silence which followed, our shared lunch, and to take away with us.

A collection was held in aid of The Conservation Foundation’s Tools Shed project, whereby old garden tools are refurbished by prisoners. These can be donated to schools and other non-profit organisations. £95.60 was raised.

Perhaps Quakers might consider that the system does not need propping up, or tinkering at the edges to make it work better, but should be completely rethought and approached in a different way.

*Jane Mitchell*  
*Clerk of Stansted Quaker Meeting*  
28.11.16

## Regional Gathering in Malden 24<sup>th</sup> September 2016

The theme for 2016 is “Answering that of God, what does love require of me”. The September gathering also followed the continuing commemoration of World War I and was entitled “Objections to War: a Quaker Approach” The speaker from QPSW was Patricia Cockrell.

January 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 marked the centenary of the change in military law which allowed people to apply for exemption from military service on the ground of conscientious objection. Previously only those with a religious reason could apply – Quakers had been permitted since 1660 when George Fox made his declaration to Charles II. The FAU was founded in 1914. At that time the question of conscientious objection sparked off arguments in the Friend, and the Quaker War relief committee was founded. Patricia spoke of the treatment suffered by early objectors and the stringent process involved in making an application. Despite this 16,500 applied of whom 10,000 accepted alternative service.

In 1987 the UN recognised conscientious objection to war as a human right. The shocking figures are that in WWI civilian deaths represented 40% of all those killed whereas in modern warfare the proportion of civilian deaths is 90%. Patricia mentioned two useful websites [www.peacedirect.org](http://www.peacedirect.org) and [www.conscienceonline.org.uk](http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk)

In the afternoon we moved into groups of three and were given biographies of notable objectors to war and asked to describe to our group the views of these people. Then we took turns to make a statement based on the information required in the application for Conscientious Objection, while the other two had to query our reasons. Our choice of statement from the 4 we were given (in the original application there were 10 sections some with several subdivisions) was coloured by our own feelings and by the characters we had described earlier. When faced with the forceful statement made by an absolutist – ie someone who objects strongly to both combatant and non-combatant service (eg FAU) – it was not difficult to see why the tribunal panel, comprising local dignitaries and military officers, would decide to send a man to prison.

Patricia had placed several quotations by notable people around the room for us to reflect on. I was struck in particular by a quote from Ghandi. *“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary - the evil it does is permanent”*

We finished the day with a reflective worship sharing session during which we each read aloud a sentence from QFP 24.10 – the statement made in 1987 by Aotearoa YM to their government.

Sue Collins

## Developing phrases to underpin outreach.

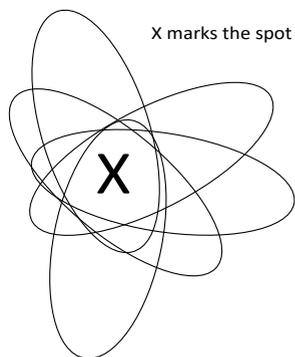
In Saffron Walden a small group gathered with a concern to enliven inreach/outreach within our Meeting. It is open to any who wishes to come and local Friends are informed of meetings. We are aware there are broader issues throughout BYM and that though there is a huge effort towards outreach the membership as shown in BYM figures has been in decline for many years.

As well as through our own experience our thinking has been informed by:

- The day workshop on the history of Quakers with Ben Pink Dandelion.
- BYM Media Training Days
- The Quaker leaflet “*Our faith in the future*” includes the following aspiration Quakers are well known and widely understood

We are active in our local communities, reaching out in friendship, making more use of our meeting houses for events and for renting or lending out. **All members are ready and equipped to explain our Quaker way confidently and clearly to anyone who asks, as well as to speak publicly on issues of concern.** We share our practices as appropriate and make full use of relevant media to reach out widely. In an increasingly divided world, we try to offer “*patterns and examples*” of a caring community.

Our experience is that we don’t feel confident/equipped to instigate communications and that having some underpinning statements would go a long way to correcting this. With the right underpinning statements we would feel released to tell our own personal stories/truth in the knowledge that we had not undermined the truth of another.



We all have unique yet overlapping experiences of Quakers but if we do not explain the shared experience adequately we might flounder or be required to back track.

If we start communications with the shared experience told in a pithy way which is understandable to people of all religions and none we then have a solid base to elaborate on our historical or current corporate witness and our personal experience.

We would like to see if we can find unity on some plain speaking (accessible to people of all religions and none) underpinning phrases that can set the context and basis for further communication.

This should cover:

**Why:** What it is that a Quaker Meeting achieves for those who attend it.

**How:** If you'd like these benefits would you be happy with how we go about achieving them? After all we are not talking about using hallucinogenics or a structured course of study like the Church of Scientology or indeed by initiations such as baptism but we need to find a way of saying clearly what we are about so that people don't jump to one of the preceding conclusion.

**What We Do:** This is where we feel most comfortable talking but when we do, we have failed to convey the heart of the Quaker way. What does this lead to? In our case Supporting Peace Work (Peace Testimony), being socially active and being a part of a community that eats a lot of cake.

We often start from here and hope the individual gains the rest by osmosis. In a suspicious world enquirers are far more likely to jump to a wrong conclusion than one which entices them.

### **Underpinning statement examples**

We are hoping to find universally understandable statements for example, "*Quakers: create stillness to explore your deepest values and how to live them*"

This could lead on to **how**, in the expectation that some will ask, for example we sit quietly together to find a sense of stillness in which each is sensitive to their own needs and the needs of others in the group; sometimes someone will feel moved to speak with love into the silence.

But more often than not this will lead directly on to the 'what' which is the point of the media release. For example, for 350 years of Quakers exploring their deepest values and how to live them we have consistently found that ... bearing arms is not the path to true peace.

**Consistency of use:** The phrase, or a congruent variation of it, should be useable in all circumstances as it is only through consistency of use that folk will start to take it as truly being who we are. So it should be useable on posters, press releases and in personal conversations.

**What next?** We hope Friends will consider what underpinning statements they naturally use and share with the group by sending thoughts to [saffronquakers+outreach@gmail.com](mailto:saffronquakers+outreach@gmail.com) or by posting to Outreach at SW Meeting House, High Street Saffron Walden CB10 1AA.

In March AM we hope to explore further whether we can find acceptable underpinning phrases to strengthen out outreach.

*Clare Yerbury and Karl Gibbs  
for Saffron Walden Inreach/Outreach Group.*

## **“My Quaker Story”**

*A suggestion, brought to Area Meeting, was that a Friend should write a paragraph for each issue of this newsletter with the above title using these headings - **“What brought you to Quakers? - What held you there? - What still holds you?”***

*Sue offered to be the first, Gill the second. It is obvious that “a paragraph” is a bit optimistic as a guide. As editor I would think that each Friend should decide on the length, but please limit it to no more than two pages of this publication which is around 700 - 900 words. We are looking for volunteers before we start to twist arms! Please start thinking about your article now to be ready for the call !!*

*Editor*

## **My Quaker Story** **Gill Parker**

### **What brought me to Quakers?**

I was bought up by a Methodist local preacher dad and a Baptist mum, with several free church ministers and local preachers in my family. I had a thorough and loving grounding in the Bible and traditional free church Christianity.

My father loved the parable of the talents and encouraged my sisters and myself to use our gifts in the service of others.

As with many teenagers I went through a period of severe doubt about the existence of God but with so many ‘heavy’ Christians in the family felt unable to express my doubts. It wasn’t done to question one’s elders in those days. Who was I to say they were wrong?!

I moved to London to train and to work and lived at a big Baptist Church in West Ham in east London.

When I was about 21 I had a spiritual transformation, a rebirth and have spent the rest of my life attempting to understand that and to deepen my spiritual life while serving others as best I can.

In the first part of my working life I was a hospital pharmacy technician, working mostly in East London. I enjoyed mixing up the various kinds of drugs and making up prescriptions. It was what I had wanted to do from childhood. After my two boys Paul and Ben came along I started the Arkesden playgroup with friends to provide preschool education in our village and ran it with friends for ten years as well as helping at the boys’ primary school and serving as a school governor there for about eight years. I have always been a Sunday School teacher wherever I’ve lived and when in London also ran activities for girls at the little Baptist Church in the docklands.

In 1974 we moved into our house in Arkesden with my father in law Edward Parker who largely paid for it and which we all helped to build. It is such a wonderful house, built for music, and ever since then we have had many concerts for a variety of charities there. It is a very special way of saying thank you for being able to live in it.

A high soprano voice is one of my gifts and encouraged and often accompanied by my father in law, in my twenties and thirties I often sang in various local churches for festivals etc. I also got to sing Bach Handel and Brahms with the local choral society as well as performing at the concerts in our house.

It was when my son Paul expressed a wish to explore other churches than the Methodist chapel and Anglican church in Arkesden that John and Carey Dickinson introduced us to the Quakers in Saffron Walden. I had always needed to find quiet spaces from childhood and had found increasingly that the church services of various kinds no longer fulfilled my spiritual needs.

I came to my first Meeting for Worship sometime in 1985 I think and found what I had been waiting for. The silent stillness and room to grow spiritually was what I needed and here I've stayed. I knew virtually nothing about Quakers and found I had entered a new world with often a new vocabulary.

### **What held me here?**

I gradually became involved in the life of the Meeting helping with the Children's Meeting and learning what it means to be a Quaker from Betty West and Margaret Slee. I owe them a great deal. I applied for my membership to be transferred from the Baptist church in London and became a member in September 1986 when I was given a copy of Quaker Faith and Practice. Since then I've been nominated for and served in a number of roles.

While all this was going on in my Meeting, my husband badly needed to stop teaching and do something less stressful but with a lack of recent qualifications I had no way of earning enough money to replace his salary. This had preyed on my mind for some time and it was in Meeting for worship that the idea came to me that I could study and train to be an Early Years teacher. It took me seven years until I could start teaching and he could stop.

During the following seven years when I taught full time, my attendance and usefulness at meeting was fairly minimal as all my energies and a lot of my love went into teaching and caring for my small charges making sure they enjoyed school and had a good start to their education.

When I retired I worked as a part time associate tutor for the OU for seven years, supporting about 40 students each year who were working in the Early Years sector. Here I could pass on my enthusiasm, knowledge and skills. This was very rewarding but also meant I could be more useful to the Meeting.

I made up for lost time by taking on a variety of roles in our Local Meeting and also attended the World Conference in Kenya in 2012 and a QCEA study tour in 2014. These broadened my horizons a lot!

When my most recent periods of service recently came to an end I gratefully accepted the opportunity to take time out and spend two years on the Equipping for Ministry course which the Meeting has paid for. The course has deepened my knowledge of Quakerism as well as my spiritual life in so many ways.

### **What keeps me here?**

My Friends here. Married to a very loving but severely atheist husband, I need all the support I can get from my Friends here and nourishment from Meeting for Worship. I have no one else with whom I can share my deepest spiritual thoughts. Thank you everybody.

### **There's so much to do!**

As part of my EFM journey I have been examining my gifts and what it is I can offer to Meeting to help nurture it and grow it. This was one of my primary aims for taking on the course.

In a course last November with Thomas Swain called 'Dreaming your Ministry', Thomas told me he thought I was a kind of shepherdess, nudging from behind and sometimes leading from the front. This seems to fit with who I am and this is the other side of what keeps me here.

Who knows what other leadings of the Spirit lie in store for me inside or outside of my Quaker life?

I'm sure AM and LM will find me plenty to do, starting with being your Area Meeting clerk from January!

*Gill Parker November 2016*

### **Editor's note**

*Friends will, we hope, be aware that this edition is much larger than previous editions. While it is great to have so much material, it has two implications.*

*One - We have had to edit down some articles, please ask authors for more details.*

*Two - More paper is used so to avoid un-necessary waste please do make sure ALL copies are distributed!*

### **Deadline for material March 11th 2017 after AM**

Please send a full version of items to us as soon as possible, bearing in mind that **we may then edit material** to suit the publication.

Email: **mscollins5@sky.com**. Post to: 5, The Maypole, Thaxted, Dunmow, Essex CM6 2QZ. Telephone: 01371 830457