

Duties and Responsibilities 2016

Report from Sheffield Central Quaker Meeting to Sheffield and Balby Area Meeting, 15th January 2016 In accordance with *Quaker faith and practice*, 4.22 and 4.33, this report is offered to Area Meeting from Sheffield Central Elders, Overseers, LM Clerks and Children and Young People's Work Committee.

Elders

Over the last year, Elders have particularly focussed on planning and supporting the meeting's spiritual review. This was a leading we discerned with overseers in February and brought to local business meeting in June. A core group of elders, overseers and other friends have taken this forward and will continue to focus on this during the first half of 2017; we hope this is enabling the deepening and sharing of our spiritual lives.

In addition, we are mindful of the responsibilities of eldership outlined in QFP 12.12

We have continued to read and reflect together using "With a Tender Hand" by Zelig Gross which explores the roles of eldership and oversight. We have also continued to ensure there are regular readings from Advices and Queries and from Quaker Faith and Practice in our Meetings for Worship and we regularly support the Clerks in the right ordering of Meeting for Worship for Business. We have also continued to struggle with how best to foster helpful vocal ministry.

Throughout the year we have been in close collaboration with our Children and Young People's Work Committee as they continue to discern ways to meet the spiritual needs of our children and young people and their families. Sharing responsibility with them for all age worship Sundays, we celebrate the life and energy of the children's meeting. We have taken responsibility for the right holding of meetings for worship for a number of marriages and funerals this year. Inner Quest and spiritual friendship groups continue within the meeting and we are grateful to all those who facilitate this. The Quaker Faith and Practice reading group meets on a monthly basis and we have encouraged other groups/ individuals to follow the national "Reading Quaker Faith and Practice" project calendar. A significant number of Sheffield Friends and attenders were at Britain

Yearly Meeting in May 2016 and we encourage and support attendance at Yearly Meeting Gathering in Warwick in 2017. We are also very aware that outreach is undertaken in many ways and by many different Friends in Meeting. We have had another display at Sheffield Central Library this year and we continue to have a Quaker Stall at the annual Peace & Craft fair and work at the 2 universities on our behalf by our chaplains. In addition, as part of and during the Sheffield Off Shelf festival we hosted a “mini-weekend of radicalism” including the production, ‘Red Flag over Bermondsey’. We greatly value events such as these and all the varied use of our meeting house.

Overseers

As our time as overseers / co-convenors was coming to an end this year we decided to write our version of the carol 'Sweet Bells' to present to the rest of the committee during our last meeting in December. We thought we would include it as part of our report for 2016:

Sweet Bells

1. Margaret and Janet are leaving
today
But will not be far away
Its mostly been good and fun as well
With challenges we have to say.

Chorus: Sweet bells

2. Meetings and minutes and
sending cards
Our duties to pursue
Hospital visits and social care
We try our best to do.

Chorus: Sweet bells

3. We've had coffees in cafes
galore
Whilst sorting out Quaker matters
We've had lots of chats on the
telephone too
It's made us mad as hatters.

Chorus: Sweet bells

4. 'Fear not' say we You'll all do
fine
Caring and sharing together
You'll brave the storms and do 'reyt
well'
Whatever the bloomin weather.

In addition we would like to add the other duties we have fulfilled.

The main priority has been the pastoral care of the members and attenders at Sheffield Central and we each have our own oversight

group to give any help or support as needed. This has often included visiting Friends in hospital, care homes or having a Meeting for Worship in their own home if they are unable to come to Meeting. We have also facilitated two Memorial Meetings for Elizabeth S and Chris R, two Friends who died earlier in the year. With elders we also try to be mindful of the children and young people and Mark L is the liaison between the families and overseers.

Whenever possible we like to ensure newcomers are made welcome and introduce them to others within the meeting. Wearing name badges on the third Sunday of each month is one way which helps us to get to know each other. Earlier in the year some of the overseers were looking at the material available to give out to people who had recently started coming to meeting and, coordinated by Irene P , produced a leaflet giving basic information of times of meetings for worship and other events of interest.

We have met regularly as overseers and taken it in turns to facilitate or write the minutes as a record of our meetings together. We have been pleased to welcome Elisabeth B, and Elspeth E as new members of our committee this year.

In December we updated the Tabular Statement for attenders at Sheffield Central ready to be sent on to the Recording Clerk at Friend's House. We also continue to pass on any changes for the 'List of Members and Attenders Booklet', often giving out data consent forms when appropriate.

We have been asked to arrange bursaries for Friends attending Yearly Meeting Gatherings, extra funds for holiday School, or courses at Woodbrooke and try to inform people about which funds are available.

Recently overseers organised - 'Singing in the Season' which proved to be a wonderful evening of entertainment, singing , poetry, and sharing food together.

We have enjoyed the opportunities presented by the joint elders and overseers meetings to explore different issues and concerns. When it was discerned by the whole of Sheffield Central Meeting in June 2016 that it was the right time to embark upon a spiritual review, several

overseers, elders and other interested Friends were part of the planning group for it.

We put forward ideas for questions to use to talk, listen and reflect on together and different ways to get involved. Overseers helped to compose a letter explaining the whole process and this has been given personally or posted to every Friend who has been attending meeting. We are hoping to gather Friends' responses to the questions over the next few months. For this purpose, overseers have helped to create an area for displaying art work, poems and post-it responses, a folder, a postbox, an online survey, a blog, or the suggestion of chatting to some-one e.g. an overseer in the first instance. Different groups such as Soul Work and Spiritual Friendship Groups have started meeting together to share their experiences and their responses are being displayed.

Being an overseer is a powerful ministry – it is a form of worship.

Clerks

Eleven Meetings for Worship for Business were held during 2016 as none are held during August.(QFP 4.33e). Agendas have been published in advance, and Area Meeting business is a standing item on the Local Business Meeting agenda. Names of Friends hoping to attend the next Area Meeting are recorded in the minutes (QFP 4.33f).

Much of the Clerks' work during 2015 was concerned with the Quinquennial Review, a periodical review of the relation between the Meeting and the lettings business. In 2016 we have convened a group comprising members of Elders, Overseers, Premises and Lettings Business Committee, Staff, Clerks and the Local Business Meeting to consider revisions to our procedural discipline in the light of discernments during the quinquennial review. The group presented its final report at our July Local Business Meeting, touching on a range of our duties and responsibilities (QFP 4.33c,d,e,g,h,j,p)

Sheffield Friends' use of our library has thrived; when the Library Group reported to the meeting this year, many Friends expressed their gratitude for the work and their excitement at hearing of new works available (QFP 4.33n). We have again maintained a display in

the Central Library during November, and run a Quaker stall at the Peace and Craft fair. We have advertised our meetings for worship in several physical forms (posters, leaflets etc) as well as online (QFP 4.33k). We have links with a number of churches and faith communities in the city, and Friends serve as Quaker chaplains at the Sheffield universities (QFP 4.33o).

Children and Young People's Work Committee

Sunday mornings at Sheffield Central start with a Welcome Circle for children and young people, their parents, and leaders and helpers. After about 10 minutes the parents join the main meeting while the rest of us split into 4 groups: Mighty Mice (0-3yrs); Fox Family (4-8yrs); Sheffield Chocolate Chip Cookies 9-12yrs); and the Teenagers (13-16yrs). We all come together again with the main meeting community for the last ten minutes of meeting.

Each group has it's own content and 'flavour' that fits within the overall themes for the year (for this year, Bible stories and relationships including friendships, Special stories and friendships, and Making Choices and Belonging), which in turn come within our overall purpose: to welcome and include children and families, getting to know them, providing for their particular needs and rejoicing in their presence in the meeting. We aim to provide opportunities for appropriate worship experiences, including all age worship, and to consider children and young people's needs as they develop. QF&P 23.73 speaks for us: "Our experience (is) that God speaks to and works through children as well as adults. Religious education needs to respect, affirm and value children's insights."

Although we could potentially have up to 46 children and young people on a Sunday (the number on our list), our average per week this year has been about 12. We know this is something to do with increasing pressures for families, but wish it could be otherwise.

At the moment we have 14 leaders and 22 helpers to call on as we put together the rotas for next term's four groups. This sounds like a lot of people, but since we need 3 leaders and 4 helpers each week there's not much room for manoeuvre and some of us are spread rather too thinly.

We have met with the meeting's safe-guarding officers who have produced a very helpful summary of the full safe-guarding policy. It is good to be able to consult them as needed and we are very grateful for their support. Also, we have been able to adopt Ruth V's wonderful dog Oscar as the meeting's official Pets As Therapy (PAT) dog.

We have been involved with the new Quaker tapestry panel, with the Garden Group, and we have organised a 'First Aid for baby and child' course for the meeting.

As part of the meeting's on-going Spiritual Review we have held a consultation with the whole meeting, about all age worship.

We have

- learned of some ideas and significant reservations felt by the children and young people;
- heard from many adults in the meeting who value worshipping with the children;
- discovered much feeling about important elements of that worship;
- realised a widely-held sense of the need for opportunities for us all – children and adults – to get to know each other better.

We hope that our new strategy of combining all age worship three times a year with a bring and share lunch and games will help to bring us all closer together as one Sheffield Family Meeting. We hope to build on the new strategy at the next all day, all age Area Meeting on March 12th 2017.

One highlight of the year was in June when we had booked the Hathersage swimming pool (heated open air) for an hour late one Sunday afternoon. Members of the meeting joined us, and we had such a wonderful time that we have booked the pool for the same time next year (June 4th). We will circulate information about this to the rest of the Area Meeting in April and May, and hope that lots more people will come for a Sheffield Family Meeting swim!