

East Cheshire Quaker Meeting
To be held as a blended meeting at Frandley Meeting House
Sunday 14 May 2023 at 1.45 pm

Agenda

- 1. Friends present**
- 2. Reading**
- 3. Caring for Friends**
- 4. Britain Yearly Meeting**
An opportunity for Friends who attended to share their reflections on the meeting
- 5. Junior Yearly Meeting** (Oliver Kerins and Maya Owen-Geiger appointed to attend)
Report from Olly and Maya (attached)
- 6. Yealand Easter Camp**
Report from those who were there
- 7. Young Friends Regional Meeting**
Report from Lauren Kerins and Rin Molton
- 8. Peace Pathways**
Report from the Peace Pathways Steering Group (attached)
- 9. Transfer of membership**
Bill Fox and Jan Fox have asked that their membership be transferred to Craven & Keithley Area Meeting as they are now attending Skipton Meeting. The Records Clerk has sent the certificates for transfer of membership.
- 10. Appointment**
Nominations Committee has brought forward the following nominations and release request:
ECAM Racial Justice Group
Keith Braithwaire, Till Geiger, Ann L Lewis, Veronique Pin-Fat, Phoebe Spence
Pastoral Friends
Joe Godden has asked to be released.
- 11. Area Meetings**
We have received Minute 7 of Stockport Meeting held on 2 April as follows:
Area Meetings River~~ has formally asked the Clerk to put on the agenda for this Local Business Meeting his concerns about Area Meetings. We have considered this. Area Meetings are not accessible to everyone. There are difficulties with hearing, for example, as well as transport difficulties. In particular there are difficulties with public transport and this is inconsistent with our testimony to sustainability. We ask Area Meeting to look at the whole problem.

Date of next meeting: Saturday 8 July, 10.30 am at Marple Methodist Church following by lunch and an afternoon session considering membership.

Papers circulated with this agenda:

Report on Junior Yearly Meeting

Report from Peace Pathways Group

JYM report to Cheshire east area meeting by Olly and Maya:

Firstly, we'd like to thank east Cheshire area meeting for funding us this year. We both had an incredible time and met many new young quakers from all around Britain that we hope we will stay friends with for many years to come.

Quakers everywhere are always welcoming and kind people and quakers at JYM were no exception. From our arrival we were met with smiles and a welcoming atmosphere. A highlight of the 1st day was the base group challenge which included a malteser race where we tried to blow maltesers up a lego ramp, and the base group which gets it up the tallest ramp wins the most points.

The theme for this year's Junior yearly meeting was "Speaking Truth to power: how can we release this energy to bring light into our worlds?" This theme provoked many thought-provoking discussions, including whether there is an objective truth, and about the use of the plural 'worlds' signifying how whilst there is the world, there is also our own individual "worlds" e.g. Our own experiences and problems in our everyday lives"

This leads onto the talk made by Paul Parker about everyday prophets. This talk explored the idea that, whilst most of us can't make changes on a national level, we can make changes on a community, family, or workplace level. We also explored about how we should approach different scenarios as quakers. For example, these scenarios included how quakers should approach meeting the king, or what we should do if we see racism on the street.

Another talk was led by Jude Acton who encouraged us to come up with our own questions based around the theme and discuss them in groups. This led to discussions about when we should be listening to other people's truths instead of speaking our own truths?, how we decide who has power? (e.g. Who has more power, the prime minister?, parliament?, multi-national corporations?), should our truth remain static or does it evolve throughout our life? And many others.

We also had a very intriguing session on non-violent communication. This is where you try to get your point across whilst also diffusing the situation instead of getting angry/frustrated in conflicts. For example, if your parents are nagging at you to do chores when you're snowed under with work, instead of shouting at them, you calmly explain to them your situation and attempt to come to a solution that works for both of you.

Once again, thank you for giving us this amazing opportunity. We took away lots from this event and it allowed us to explore Quakerism in many new ways. Young quaker events are always things we look forward to.

Peace Pathways – Report to ECAM May 2023

Background

The Peace Pathways peace education project was formed in early 2017, by a small group of interested East Cheshire Area Meeting (ECAM) Friends, to provide peace education opportunities in schools and other settings. Having offered some initial financial support in 2017, Area Meeting (AM) decided in May 2018 to give financial support of £10,000 over 5 years. The Peace Pathways Steering Group last reported to Area Meeting in July 2019. A subsequent newsletter was sent out to Friends in East Cheshire and neighbouring AMs in November 2019. The work was then heavily disrupted by the Covid pandemic, from early 2020 onwards.

This report is to review our activities, update ECAM on what has happened since 2019, and to give an outline of where we are now.

Activities up to the start of the Covid Pandemic

At the time of reporting to ECAM in July 2019 we had a Steering Group of 7, 6 of whom also acted as facilitators of peace education activities. The project was a member of the national Peace Education Network. We had undertaken some training ourselves, and were using best practice materials from established Quaker-initiated projects elsewhere, particularly Peacemakers in the West Midlands, the Mid Wales Peace Education project, and Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW).

The peace education activities we had developed and delivered included:

- a nine week, 1 hour-a week Peace Education course at Rainow primary school, with years 6 and then a ten week course with year 4 (approximately 30 children per class)
- a full day of workshops on 'Understanding Conflicts and Conflict Resolution' at Bridgewater High School, Warrington with approximately 40 11-15 year olds and 3 staff , chosen by the school because of their roles as school council reps etc
- a workshop for Rainow Primary Year 6 on refugees
- a workshop for 45 sixth formers and staff at Poynton High School as part of Peace Day (21 September), on aspects of the Palestine-Israel conflict. We were joined in this by a recent Ecumenical Accompanier.
- a full day for the whole of Poynton High School's year 8, around 130 pupils, with a carousel of 5 workshops on different aspects of Living in the Community. Besides our core team we had three CND Peace Education volunteers, four additional ECAM friends and one of the QPSW Peace Education team.

- A large panel for exhibition at Macclesfield Library as part of the wider ECAM 'Building the Peace' exhibition relating to the centenary of World War 1.
- A taster evening about Peace Education for two Macclesfield churches
- A session for Teenage General Meeting on conflict handling
- A workshop on conflict handling for secondary pupils from a range of high schools across the north west organised by the Foundation for Peace based in Warrington and delivered to around 30 students and staff

We had also organised two initial Training Days run by QPSW peace education staff, a further Training Day on approaches to Peace Education for Friends and others locally and from further afield, with 21 participants, and had provided materials for outreach, including a newsletter, and materials for a stall at Manchester and Warrington AM garden Party. One of our Steering Group was able to take QPSW resources about Peace Weeks to a number of primary schools she worked with.

Following our report to May 2019 AM meeting, we undertook further activities up to the start of the pandemic. These included:

- Two 10 week Peace Education and Conflict Resolution courses at St Andrew's Church of England Primary School, Hadfield, Derbyshire to their year 3 classes (approximately 50 pupils)
- A 10 week course at Devonshire Park primary school, Tranmere, Wirral to a year 4 class (approximately 25 pupils plus staff)
- A workshop for Poynton High School sixth formers on what is Security, including material from the QPSW Fly Kites Not Drones resource pack.
- Support in organising a day for teachers from 6 primary schools, with input from QPSW Peace Education staff and Peacemakers, on incorporating peace education into the curriculum
- A workshop on refugees and the experience of evacuation for Year 6 at Rainow primary school
- A training day on peer mediation for ourselves and other Peace educators on peer mediation in schools, delivered by one of the QPSW peace education team
- A second newsletter sent out to local and area meetings in the northwest and more widely
- Further distribution of national peace education resources to schools where there were direct contacts
- A draft teaching session resource on Conflict Handling for a national Teach Peace secondary school pack coordinated by the Peace Education Network

- We were also exploring other ideas such as storytelling sessions in libraries, and a story and crafts based drop-in sessions for parents and young children in a Macclesfield church-run centre, and looking to develop an offer around peer mediation training for schools.

In summary, we had begun to refine our experience of different kinds of delivery and evaluate its impact. We had 6 core facilitators drawn from among us, plus had been able to draw in others for specific sessions. But these activities were definitely stretching us to our maximum capacity and we were hoping to draw in further facilitators.

Impact of the Covid Pandemic and Responses

The first covid lockdown in March 2020 closed schools apart from the children of key workers, and most schools, where they were able to, moved to part-time, on-line class work by their teaching staff. Over much of 2020 and 2021, and even in 2022 many schools operated in restricted circumstances, and for long periods of time external visitors were prevented or restricted or the school was not ready for external programmes again. At the same time, as schools started to settle back into full in-person schooling, many schools have been finding a number of issues that Peace Education is relevant to, including more stressed children and staff, and greater behavioural issues and conflict amongst children since they had been more socially isolated during the pandemic than is usual at their age.

With the pandemic, Peace Pathways as a project, in common with other peace education projects around the country, had to stop in-person delivery entirely. Our Steering Group met on-line periodically to keep in touch and try and think what to do. From March 2020 until 2022 our activities were curtailed. We did progress some things:

- Rachel Lewis, who works at Rainow primary school, continued working through the pandemic and she was able to deliver weekly sessions to an upper junior small group supporting their understanding of their emotions and learning new strategies to react in negative situations, to deal positively in argumentative situations and understanding others' situations
- Rachel also did some ad hoc circle times with Year 4s and 5s and a term of peace education work with Year 5s
- We initiated a Quaker Peace Educators network, drawing in projects round the UK, which met on-line to exchange information and support about what was happening in various areas and what materials and responses were being created.
- We tested a new resource, RESTORE, (developed by Peacemakers and other restorative projects, comprising group/class work aimed

at acknowledging and moving on from the traumas of the pandemic), by working on it within our own group

- We planned to develop a website, gathered and created some materials towards this, and paid for some time by a teaching assistant who is a school website manager to work on a website design for us. We did not complete this task as we were short of materials e.g. classroom based photos and also were not too sure where we were going next. However the work done so far can be picked up again in the future.

We faced a number of barriers as well which affected us:

- Apart from Rachel, who was already in school, the rest of us were cautious about returning to schools while covid numbers were still high.
- School staff, including existing contacts, were often dealing with too much to be ready to consider having us back for further work.
- Our numbers were reduced. Of the 7 on the Steering Group in 2019, 1 (Bridget Dunbar) had left just before the pandemic, and of the other 6, who were also facilitators, 1 (Till Geiger) left in 2020 to focus on other commitments and 1 (Anne Whitehead) moved out of the area. We were very grateful for the considerable contributions that these Friends had made. This reduced our number to 4 – Gill Alcock, Ann Lewis, Rachel Lewis and Phoebe Spence.
- Over this period also, Gill was serving in BYM central structures and the restructuring of QPSW at this time took a very significant amount of her time

Towards the end of this period some of the other peace education projects nationally were slowly able to return to delivery, often after further delays and with a changed format.

2022 - Starting to rebuild

During 2022 we were able to offer some delivery and also to think more strategically again.

- Rachel continued to use Peace Education in her work as she had done during lockdown
- We delivered a workshop for Poynton High School sixth formers on climate justice and migration as part of a World Social Justice day in February. This was mainly delivered by Veronique Pin-Fat of Disley Meeting, with Gill and Ann, and was attended by approximately 25 students and staff. Phoebe was also facilitating a workshop run by Stockport for Peace on the theme of the day, (and has done this at the other Poynton sixth form days we have been part of, as well, one of which included a Veteran for Peace).

- The Steering Group felt that the covid situation was now reduced enough that we could start again to encourage new potential facilitators/Steering Group members to join the project. Four Friends responded to this – Veronique Pin-Fat of Disley meeting, Michelle Turek of Frandley meeting, Sue Pounder of Marple meeting and Ali Ronan of South Manchester meeting and we first met on-line and then undertook the process of application forms, references, and checking for DBS certificates.
- The Steering Group held a review day in autumn facilitated by Jackie Zammit, formerly of Peacemakers, to consider future directions, and our project values, and developed a draft timetable for the next two years.
- Following this we held an in person session with the four new Friends, to share the review and start to plan together. Very encouragingly, all of them want the project to continue and develop and are bringing fresh ideas and energies as well as a range of very relevant skills and experience to help make this happen.

2023 and Future Thinking

- In January 2023 we delivered a workshop for Poynton High School sixth formers on Seeking Asylum and Us. Unfortunately the snow reduced school attendance significantly that day, as well as prevented Ann from joining Veronique and Gill to help deliver this, but the workshop did run part of the morning, and was followed by an open session with sixth formers.
- Rachel has been doing occasional circle time with a class and also uses some Peace education techniques in individual support sessions.
- Ann Lewis retired and laid down serving on the Steering Group in early 2023. We have been enormously grateful for her contribution over the years.
- Veronique, Ali, Michelle and Sue have become Steering Group members and also potential facilitators, and three of them have been able to join in planning sessions so far in 2023.

The reconstituted Steering Group has reviewed and evaluated our experience to date, and also been drawing on insights and experience from the review with Jackie Zammit and from other peace education work and developments around the country, including a new link through Veronique to CRESST (the Conflict Resolution Education in Sheffield Schools Training project). We have mapped out what other peace education projects are now offering in order to give us some perspective. We also recognise the strains that schools are facing, and constraints on time for delivery both for them and for us.

We are therefore in the process of moving towards the following:

- A focus on primary education (although still able to respond to requests for workshops from high schools and others) as this is where peace education and conflict handling understanding can more easily be embedded
- We are interested in 'training the trainers' i.e. staff to train their own pupils
- Developing some 'bite-size' sessions - e.g. twilight, or focussed on one theme. Build a 'suite' of these.
- Provide ways to be embed peer mediation/peace education – e.g. organise a Junior Peacemakers Day
- Developing and providing taster sessions
- Exploring with local Friends the potential for inviting primary schools to our Meeting Houses to engage children and staff in the ideas and games of Peace Education, and which may provide opportunities for more ECAM Friends to take part in a time-limited way
- We are looking to identify and work with a primary school, preferably in Stockport, that might be interested in developing more of a 'whole school' approach to peaceful relationship approaches.
- Explore whether links to Quaker members of SACRE (the (statutory) standing advisory councils for Religions Education) in Stockport and possibly elsewhere may be a way to promote opportunities in schools
- We will continue to gather and use shared/non-copyrighted peace education resources
- Make sure we are not competing for the same resources as other Peace Ed charities
- Develop a more diverse group of both Steering Group members and facilitators
- Continue to be part of the Peace Education Network and other national good practice.

Training Needs and Opportunities

We have a good basis of relevant skills and experience between us in project management and peace education for us to draw on, share amongst ourselves, and use in drawing in and supporting new facilitators or Steering group members.

Even so, there will be specific training needs to address. Peacemakers has recently been given funding to help capacity-build peace education around

the country and we are meeting with them to work out what they are able to help us with.

Finance

ECAM decided in mid-2018 to give financial support to the project of £2000 a year for 5 years, totalling £10,000. There has also been some income, as noted below. At the moment £4402.38 remains.

Much of what we have delivered has been free to the recipients, particularly the workshops, and when we started out we felt unconfident about asking schools for more than a voluntary contribution. In the immediate pre-covid period we did start to generate some income by asking the primary schools where we ran 10 week courses for a specific financial contribution to cover outgoings such as resources used and travel expenses. This generated £300 but other contributions had not been received by the time of the covid pandemic and are not now likely to be received. The project also received donations from Manchester and Warrington AM and South Manchester Local Meeting.

Work with schools has been undertaken as volunteers without payment, although travel expenses have been reimbursed. There was very little spend in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Spend over the whole period has mainly been on travel expenses, training, resources and materials, preparatory work on a website, and the review and visioning work in autumn 2022 done with Jackie Zammit.

Considerations for ECAM Going Forward

- We ask for the continuing prayerful upholding of Friends in ECAM for the project
- We welcome the opportunity to continue to promote our project through ECAM and also at Local Meetings. We could try out some taster sessions for ECAM Friends so Friends appreciate what we are about if there is interest in this.
- We welcome opportunities to talk to anyone in ECAM interested in supporting the project work, as well as school governors and teachers and ask LMs to make this known. We hope that Local Meetings will assist with contacts with schools, and also have collections for this work which is being undertaken to enhance our local community.
- In 2017, in the very early stages of project scoping, an informal group of ECAM friends acted as an Advisory group to help us test out ideas. We would like to be able to draw on the advice and support of these and other friends if we need to.

- ECAM may wish to consider whether to offer further financial support in the future. We feel that schools may value our offer more and be willing to contribute financially, even in such stretched times, if we can say that the charge is a reduced rate to schools as it is being partly funded by East Cheshire Quakers. As we still have unspent funds of £4402.38 at the moment this can be considered at a future Area Meeting.

Peace Pathways Steering Group

Gill Alcock, Rachel Lewis, Veronique Pin-Fat, Sue Pounder, Ali Ronan, Phoebe Spence and Michelle Turek