

Local Development Worker Newsletter January 2024

Welcome to the January 2024 newsletter which includes details of survey responses, support sessions for role holders and some ideas I've gained from conversations when speaking with Friends from different meetings.

I am writing this sat in our lounge, watching the sun set behind the trees a few gardens down. The sky is a beautiful blue, but it's freezing cold. Just before the Christmas break, I was at Staffordshire Area Meeting, and after the business meeting we did some singing. I shared one of my favourite songs - Bells of Norwich, by Sydney Carter. I love the imagery of the daffodils pushing through the snow; a sign of hope even in the depths of winter.

The New Year brought a family trip to Manchester and Llangollen where we went for walks and had some slightly chilly picnics. It also brings changes and new plans. The results are in from my survey -thank you very much to those who completed it. See summary and follow up below.

The photo is from a table full of objects and labels to describe Friends' dreams for their local meeting, at an afternoon workshop I helped to facilitate in the Autumn. If you'd like me to come and visit your meeting, help to lead a workshop, discussion, threshing meeting or away day, or support you in other ways, please get in touch.



In Friendship,

Hilary Topp

Survey responses

I sent out an online survey via Local Meeting clerks in December 2023. 25 Friends responded to the survey.

When asked which three of the themes from Our Faith in the Future ([Our faith in the future | Quakers in Britain](#)) they felt were priorities for their meeting, the most common were 'Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker' (24%) and 'Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age' (23%). The other options got between 8% and 15% each.

Some suggestions of how I can support Local and Area Meetings included:

- Encourage collaboration between Local Meetings, Area Meetings and BYM.
- Share good ideas from other meetings
- Support Local Meetings and Area Meetings with community building
- Support Area Meetings with planning for the future
- Support meetings with outreach and raising awareness of Quakers
- Be someone to talk to
- Share ideas for engaging young people
- Make it clear what I can offer

It has been really helpful to read all of your responses and I will reflect on them and weave them into plans for the coming year. You will see this newsletter starts to address a couple of suggestions!

Role holders support sessions

Please see the attached poster for dates of these online sessions for Elders, Pastoral Carers, Treasurers, Trustees, Local Meeting Clerks and Nominations Committee members. These one hour Zoom sessions are a chance to meet Friends from other meetings to share challenges and ideas.

We are all over 60 – what can we do?

On my visits to local meetings, there are often recurring themes and questions. I'm planning to suggest some ideas in response to a different question in each newsletter, starting with 'We're all over 60, what can we do?'

A lot of meetings I visit would love to have children, young people and families as part of their community but are not sure where to start. Here's a few ideas:

- Have an honest discussion as a whole meeting about whether you are ready for children and families, not just practically, but as a faith community. Children are noisy, energetic. You might have to change the way you do things.
- Create an activity bag or box with quiet activities which children can engage in to help them settle into meeting for worship. Books, colouring pencils, stacking sponges, battery powered tea-lights. Make sure everyone knows about it and put it out every week.
- Have a 'creative corner' as part of your meeting for worship every week that is open to anyone of any age, with weaving, knitting, colouring etc. It's not just young children that might struggle with an hour of silence and sitting still.
- Think about what you are able to offer, AND TELL PEOPLE ABOUT IT. Invite friends, share on social media. Check that your website, the AM website and the listing on the national Quaker website are all up to date. List everything you can offer in a positive way, don't worry about what you can't manage.
- Think about where children and families already are in your local area. Could you volunteer in your local primary school? Are there charities supporting asylum seeker families?
- If there are other local meetings with a children's group, invite them to come to your meeting to visit one week for all age worship, lunch and a fun activity.

If you want to know more, there is training available from a wonderful team of volunteers. Get in touch with me if you are interested. You can find out more here: [training-opportunities | Quakers in Britain](#)

There's also a Children, Youth and Families training day in Bolton on 17 February, and plans to run these in other areas soon. [Exploring Quaker work with CYF | Quakers in Britain](#)

Some ideas from around the 'patch'

Stoke Quakers have started holding monthly '**Discovering Quakers' events**, to reach out to their local community and offer the chance for people to experience Quaker worship. The posters for the events read "Your local Quaker meeting invites you to join us to discover what it means to be a

Quaker and to enjoy a period of silent reflection. We welcome all regardless of religious background, sexuality, age or spiritual beliefs. Come along and discover what the Quakers can bring to your life!"

Malvern Quaker Meeting have **re-started their children's meeting** once a month after a gap of several years. A group of Friends met in the Autumn to plan what they wanted to do. They were keen that responsibility for the children's meeting didn't fall to parents or carers, and discovered that between them they had lots of skills and experience to offer – everything from peace education to painting. Fourth Sundays also coincide with the meeting's regular shared lunch.

East Cheshire Area Meeting have an **Area Meeting weekend away** at Glenthorne in April. Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting are planning another **AM Quiet Day**, following the success of their quiet days last year. Central England Area Meeting have three Area Meeting events planned on the months when there isn't a business meeting including a **singing workshop** and a day at Hartshill Meeting, near the birth place of George Fox. Wirral and Chester Area Meeting have regular **Area Meeting walks**. Staffordshire AM held a very successful interactive **workshop on the Climate Crisis** after their business meeting in the Autumn.

Dates for your diary

Midlands Green Quakers sessions:

Monday 26 February at 7pm. Connection and coalition – how we can build partnerships and networks with like-minded groups, and show up as allies in the climate justice movement: [register here](#). **Monday 15 April at 7pm: spiritual nurture** [register here](#).

Zoom Role Holder Support Sessions – click on the date to register

Local Meeting Clerks

[Wednesday 21st February 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 25th April 7.30pm](#)

[Monday 23rd September 7.30pm](#)

Trustees

[Thursday 22nd February 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 2nd May 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 10th October 7.30pm](#)

Pastoral Care

[Thursday 29th February 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 16th May 7.30pm](#)

[Monday 14th October 7.30pm](#)

Treasurers

[Wednesday 6th March 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 6th June 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 7th November 7.30pm](#)

Nominations

[Thursday 7th March 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 13th June 7.30pm](#)

[Wednesday 13th November 7.30pm](#)

Eldership

[Wednesday 20th March 7.30pm](#)

[Thursday 20th June 7.30pm](#)

[Monday 18th November 7.30pm](#)

Newsletters will be published in January, April, July and October. If you have stories or photos to share please email them to me at hilaryt@quaker.org.uk