



Minutes of the Meeting held Saturday 27 June 2009 at Felinfach, Lampeter

09.14. Opening Worship & Welcome

We are pleased to welcome 34 Friends here today, as listed on the attendance sheet. The following Friends have been appointed by their area meetings to attend: Mid-Wales: Susan Greaves; North Wales: Julia Aspden and Frank Brown; South Wales: Jean Lewis; Southern Marches AM Joyce Gee.

Jill Evans and Joan Southern have been appointed elders for the day.

09.15. Calon and the Friend.

We appoint Bryn Jones to report on this meeting for "*The Friend*" and for "*Calon*".

09.16. Friends and same sex committed partnerships

Christine Trevett, of Bridgend Meeting, who served on the Quaker Life group on committed relationships, has introduced the subject today. She has outlined the current position amongst Quakers, and the legal position.

The current proposals under discussion are not suggesting that Quakers should ask for a legal change but for more equality in the process of preparation, recognition and support for all couples in Quaker Meetings in Britain.

Changes to the wording in Chapter 16 of *Quaker faith and practice* will help to ensure that opportunities, which have been opened by some meetings, for recognition of committed same sex partnerships will be available for all meetings with 'right ordering' based on the discernment of all Friends. We have realised that the language we use to express and record the commitment we make is important. We need to be aware of the feelings behind the language we use.

We have not attempted today to come to any conclusions, but rather to understand more deeply our own personal fears, sensitivities, expectations, truths and values. We met in small groups to look at the following questions, and also shared thoughts through post its and in a plenary session:

1. Some Friends are speaking of the need for change in the light of Quakers' 'testimony to equality'. What does the 'testimony to equality' mean in relation to this topic?
2. What do Friends understand to be the purpose of marriage, and is it the same as applies to same-sex committed partnerships?
3. If Friends determined that it was right formally to acknowledge same-sex committed partnerships in accordance with our discipline, how might it be done?
4. Friends' marriages are 'In the care of the Meeting'. What should be the pastoral care implications for Friends given gay and lesbian Quakers (or couples where one was a Friend) intending, making and living in civil partnerships?
5. What's in a name? In this matter, how important is the language we choose to use, both for the Meeting/the Society and for partners? Might it seem to some people unsatisfactory or hurtful?

We have realised how a discussion of these issues in relation to same-sex partnerships can illuminate our approach to all committed relationships. All of these require the gathered Quaker community, working with God's guidance, to use proper Quaker process to help to

- Prepare for commitment
- Celebrate, witness to and acknowledge commitment
- Offer on-going support and care to committed partnerships

For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or the magistrates'; for it is God's ordinance and not man's; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together; for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are but witnesses.

(Quaker faith and practice 16.01)

09.17 Nominations and appointments

- (i) **Nominations for nominations:** We appoint Dafydd Jones (NW) stc and Jane Beaton (NW) to act as a nominating group to bring nominations for the nominations committee to serve from January 2010 to December 2012.
- (ii) **Release:** Carolyn Sansom (SW) has requested release from Arrangements committee. We ask Nominations Committee to seek a replacement.
- (iii) **Nomination as Governor of the Retreat** (Meeting for Sufferings appointment) We agree to the request to nominate a Friend from Wales to serve as governor of *the Retreat* for a three year period from 1.1.2010
- (iv) **Appointments:** Representative at the Annibynwyr annual meeting to be held in Ruthin 16.7.09: Janice Jones (NW)
- (v) **Annual appointments:** Appointments for 2010 onwards will depend on decisions made about the subcommittee structure. We encourage Nominations committee to use Calon to publicise the nominations sought widely and to encourage Friends to put nominations forward.
- (vi) **Nominations training:** Our nominations convenor, Liz Butler, will attend the annual Woodbrooke Nominations training event 6-8 October 2009
- (vii) **Wales peace Institute meeting July 4 2009 Aberystwyth:** Jane Harries and Wilma Walker will attend this meeting on behalf of another organisation, and report on whether it would be appropriate for MFW to have further involvement

09. 18. A Framework for action.

(Min 09.07 refers)

Our assistant clerk, Lynn Moseley has summarised the responses received by the Recording Clerk's Office from meetings in Wales. Her report has been circulated to local meetings. Lynn has introduced the subject and reminded us of the background to this document. We have heard how Meeting for Sufferings is using the responses received.

We have shared ideas on how we might use the framework to guide our work over the next few years.

- How can MFW help local Friends pursue their stated concerns? The summary shows what is already going on; we could draw up a directory of work so that Friends could get in touch with others working in the same field. As an all-Wales body, we can coordinate activity in Wales, working on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting.
- What is the national role of MFW in relation to the National Assembly? What are we doing in relation to the Copenhagen summit for example?
- The framework might also inform our arrangements committee in planning our programme of activities.
- Could we grasp the opportunity to take advantage of the exciting new developments happening to support meetings across Europe which are working with Woodbrooke on learning packages – could this be translated into Welsh?

The framework is exciting. By endorsing it, we all, in our small meetings, can speak out more confidently on behalf of Friends. It gives us an opportunity, showing how we can network and communicate to help and support each other in different parts of our action. It shows how all is part of a holistic view, fitting together as part of the whole.

We ask Friends to take these ideas back to their meetings so that we can continue the work of development and networking.

09.19 Changes in Organisational Arrangements

(Min 08.19 refers)

As the Meeting requested in October last year, the clerks have worked with the sub-committee convenors on proposals for organisational changes to our sub-committee structure so that MFW can become a more enabling structure as a resource to all Friends in Wales, and take account of changes in area meetings in Wales and the borders. Deborah Rowlands has outlined the main points of the proposals, which are set out in the discussion paper which has been available for those interested to read.

We have had a chance to comment on these and notes have been made. These will be taken into account when drawing up terms of reference. The proposals will also be considered by a meeting of clerks and clerks of trustees of area meetings in Wales and the borders planned for September, before being brought back to MFW in October for formal approval.

We need to respond to the needs of this day and age, being flexible.

09.20 Relationships with area meetings in Wales and the borders

(Min 08.19 and 09.08 and refer)

We have received some suggested revisions to the draft Memorandum from South Wales Area Meeting, where all local meetings were circulated with the draft in February so that they could comment if they wished (Min 09.06.42 of SWAM held 13.06.09).

We have received a letter from Frank Brown, on behalf of North Wales area meeting trustees, expressing some concern about the right ordering of the process of drawing up such memoranda, and we have consulted the assistant recording clerk. We agree that the principle of clarification of the relationship with each area meeting is what is important, rather than what this is called. We have been reminded that some of these matters were not clarified when MFW was first set up. Crucially the financial support from area meetings enable this meeting and this needs to be recorded and recognised as a contractual agreement. A possible title might be 'Minute of Agreement'.

We agree that it would be helpful now to send the current draft to mid-Wales area meeting for comment. There will need to be a different type of minute of agreement with Southern Marches and other border meetings.

The clerks will circulate a revised draft for discussion in September, to be brought back to MFW in October.

09.21 Communications.

The MFW website (www.quakersinwales.org.uk) is now functional. The administrator is dealing with the remaining formatting glitches. She has started work on the Welsh website, considering how to ensure the two sites are linked effectively.

Minutes, papers and directions for the meetings are now available on the MFW 'notice board' as part of the Website, for anyone to download. In addition the most recent edition of Calon shows us how this publication – which should be reaching every Friend in Wales - could distribute information in a timely way more effectively than the current system of depending on clerks of local meetings.

We therefore agree that, for an experimental period, we will normally distribute just the flyer for the next meeting as a paper copy to meetings, with sources of further information clearly indicated. The administrator is happy to send paper copies to any individual who cannot receive electronic copy, if they cannot make arrangements to get this from a member of their own meeting.

09.22. Cytûn and Christian and Interfaith Relations

(Min 09.13 refers)

(i) Cytûn

Cytûn has discussed the issue of the women's network and has decided to join this work to the work on equality.

The costs for the Eisteddfod have risen beyond what was agreed at our last meeting. The treasurer of Cytûn has explained that they had requested more than their share from some churches in the past, and therefore had reassessed each church's contribution. Our treasurer has paid this additional cost.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is cutting nearly three quarters of its staff because the major churches no longer wish to fund it as before. The "common pot" formula, where all monies are paid in for the four nations, and Cytûn was given 10% of this to fund work in Wales, will no longer operate. This means that all churches will be asked to fund Cytûn directly. There is some doubt that all churches in Wales will wish to contribute sufficient to continue all the work which is done at present. We will be asked for £638. At present, Quakers contribute £1674 for Wales. Our contribution to Cytûn is paid centrally.

A response has been drafted to the request for support for the chaplain for the air training corps, stating that Quakers work against the recruitment of child soldiers. We would welcome an opportunity to contribute a pacifist viewpoint to the chaplaincy.

(ii) Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith relations (QCCIR).

Catherine James and our new QCCIR representative, Alice Southern, met with Robin Bennett, clerk of QCCIR, and Aled Edwards of Cytûn to discuss ecumenical and interfaith matters in Wales. QCCIR met at Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, North Wales on 12 June, for their first meeting of the new triennium. They invited local Friends to attend. Julia Aspden, Gerald Hewitson and Catherine James gave information to the committee on both Interchurch and Interfaith matters in Wales, speaking of local, regional and national matters, explaining the fruitful relationship between Cytûn and the Welsh Assembly.

09.23 Eisteddfod and other Outreach

- (i) Eisteddfod. Mari Evans is collecting names for the rota for the Eisteddfod in Bala. There are still many gaps. Quakers will be responsible, in conjunction with the Roman Catholic Church, for refreshments on Thursday August 6th, but will have a Quaker presence throughout the week if there are enough volunteers.
- (ii) Leaflet for Enquirers. Publications committee submitted the enquirers' leaflet, which they have been working on for 18 months to the Outreach section at Friends House. Tom Harris of Outreach section informed us that they are now sending out a much more compact pack, which contains, for Welsh enquirers, equivalent material in Welsh and English, including the short 9 fold leaflet and the bilingual *Advices and Queries*. The new longer leaflet is now available for use at the Eisteddfod, or other outreach opportunities in Wales. It can be quickly produced in numbers required on request to the administrator.
- (iii) Welsh translation of Funerals and Weddings leaflets: These have now arrived and are available for use.
- (iv) Leaflet for National Eisteddfod at Bala. This is now being translated.
- (v) Resources Leaflet. The 2009 leaflet on resources for Outreach has been sent to all local meetings, and has been distributed today. It clearly indicates which resources are available in Welsh or bilingually.

- (vi) Exhibition: Roger Holloway is working on the upgrade of the permanent exhibition, ie the “What we believe...” and the Waldo panels.
- (vii) Cerdded i Gynulliad y Cyfarfod Blynyddol: Mae Catherine James yn gobeithio cychwyn cerdded o Dŷ Cwrdd Dorothy Owen yn Nhabor ger Dolgellau i Gynulliad y Cyfarfod Blynyddol ar 3ydd o Orffennaf. Bydd yn dilyn llwybr Mari Jones ar y diwrnod cyntaf, ac yn mynychu’r cyfarfod Rhanbarth yn Glanllyn ar yr ail ddiwrnod cyn cerdded ymlaen gyda rhai o’r Crynwyr i’r Bala.

[Translation: Walk to Yearly Meeting Gathering:

Catherine James is hoping to begin walking from Dorothy Owen’s meeting house at Tabor near Dolgellau to Yearly Meeting Gathering on July 3rd. She will follow the Mary Jones trail for the first day, then attend Area Meeting at Glanllyn on the following day, before walking on to Bala with other Friends from AM].

09.24 Arrangements 2009 and 2010

Our Arrangements committee has reported as follows:

- (i) Retreat May 16 Dolwyddelan: was attended by 12 Friends including some from across Offa’s Dyke. The day was a valuable opportunity for Friends to worship together, to meet new Friends and to renew acquaintance both with our scattered meetings and those from further away.
- (ii) October 24: Llanelwedd.
- (iii) Dates for 2010. We agree to continue to hold our regular meetings three times a year. Suggested dates and venues are: -

February 27: Glantwymyn (Cemmaes Road)

June 26: Newtown

October 30: Aberystwyth or Llanfarian.

Arrangements committee would welcome suggestions for topics or themes.

We would like to have a residential event in the south of Wales in 2010 if possible and ask for volunteers to organise this.

09.25 Calon

Two editions of Calon have been circulated since we last met. The delayed winter edition came out in March and the first of the new-look Calon came out in May.

We thank Maureen Hughes for her faithful service as the editor of Calon over the last three years.

Following the discussions at last MFW, we welcome the innovations in Calon, produced by the new editor, Stevie Krayner, using our administrator’s technical expertise on layout and production. We agree that we should produce one more issue this year.

Jules Montgomery has worked hard to obtain alternative printing quotes, which have been laid before us today. A thinner version would be cheaper to produce and post. We could look into asking the printers to post. We ask the editors to consider increasing electronic circulation.

Waldo Williams said: Mae’n rhaid i ni hawlio’r preswyl, heb holi’r pris
[We must claim the residence without asking the price]

*Catherine James
 Deborah Rowlands
 Co-clerks*