

Meeting of Friends in Wales

Lampeter Saturday 22nd February 2020

Workshop on Being a Trustee:

Nine of us considered this and after a brief period of silence part of QF&P 15.07 was read:

‘Trustees must be well-grounded in the life and concerns of the meeting for which they act ... Just as they care for the life of the meeting, the meeting should support and uphold them and their work.’

Our group encompassed a wide range of experience of trusteeship both from within the Society and elsewhere. Within the Society we had experience of BYM, MFW and AM trusteeship, some with many years’ experience others just at the start of their service.

We acknowledged that the law required there to be trustees and that because of our Quaker structures this was a role that we took on for a limited period of time. We recognised the need to foster an understanding that trustees are an integral part of the body for which they work (AM, MFW, BYM) not a separate group. Just as all Friends are elders and overseers, so all Friends are trustees in the sense of being stewards of our resources.

We considered the ‘joys’ of trusteeship:

- When someone asks me for help and I am able to give it
- When an initiative I have been involved in takes off and becomes a recognised asset to the Meeting.
- Listening and enacting our Quakerism in a small community
- Being heard
- Learning from some amazing people
- Trying to fulfil the law **and** much more
- To add Quaker values to the legal requirement
- Filling the gap: cementing
- Vision of testimony
- Opportunity by working closely together to get to know Friends in the things that are eternal.
- Using skills we have in service to Friends
- Developing new skills

We were perhaps more forthright with our ‘challenges’ of trusteeship:

- Where is God in all this? - Irrelevant? - Absent?
- What are the power relationships: some examples where this was not felt to be right
- Reinventing the wheel.
- Lack of good hand-over partly because of triennial appointments.
- Yet another of many jobs.
- The same Friends doing all the work.
- Ageing, dwindling membership.
- Why bother to become a member?

- Yet more travelling to meetings.

If we place Meeting for Worship at the heart of our community what might the simplest structures to support our community look like?

Reducing the number of charities across Wales and The Marches and buying in property management services were noted as possible practical options. However, we did not have enough time to explore in any depth how we might work together to lessen the burden on Friends. There was a general sense throughout our time together that 'business as usual' was not an option for the future. Trustees can, perhaps must, be visionary and all Friends have a responsibility to foster good communication and trust throughout the Society.

We finished with an extract from QF&P 15.01 Christine A. M. Davies 2008:

'Stewardship involves prayer, and it involves thought, and it involves applying what emerges from the two. As individuals our particular talents may lead us to greater emphasis on one of those elements, but they can never be wholly divided within any of us, and as a community we need to be faithful to all three; prayer, thought and application.'

Penny Harding
Facilitator
Abergavenny Meeting
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