

STRENGTHENING OUR CORE PURPOSES AT REDLAND

RESTRUCTURING AND REVIEW

In 2014-15 we conducted an overhaul of the organisational structure of our local meeting, and attempted to rethink our various activities in terms of how they might fulfill our main purposes as a Quaker meeting. We identified these purposes as *worship*, *fellowship*, and *witness*. In the same exercise, we re-examined all our activities, and distributed them across four 'Hubs', called *Faith Community*, *Learning & Action*, *Resources*, and *Administration*. After a year's operation under the new structure, we set up a review group to inspect how well it was working and make recommendations. The group reported in August last year, and one of its recommendations (the second) was:

Ask each hub to work out how it can best strengthen the Meeting's core purposes of worship, fellowship and witness, and to share their vision and plans each year with Meeting for Business.

Excerpts from the discussions of this recommendation in the Hubs are included in an appendix to this document (on the website). The present document contains summaries of our purposes and of how our various activities are divided across the four Hubs, and suggestions on what the Hubs can do to keep the purposes at the forefront of their work.

OUR PURPOSES

- In **worship**, we seek together in silence a deeper and more abiding truth and inspiration that lies beneath or beyond our separate individual existences, and that is available to all of us. We need no intermediaries to come into this presence. We may in worship be moved to share what we have found as spoken ministry.
- In **fellowship**, we seek to know one another in our lives and spiritual journeys, to help and encourage one another, and to invite and welcome others in to our community. We look for and try to respond to the divine spark in everyone, bearing with one another in loving kindness.
- In **witness**, we try to carry what we have experienced in worship and fellowship out into the world at large. We try to see the world for what it is, and speak truth about it; and we take part in it, trying to improve it.

A Quaker life, or a Quaker meeting, thrives on the dynamic balance of these three purposes. In balance, a Quaker meeting is an active spiritual community. In the interplay of the three purposes, over generations of Quakers, a few themes have become consolidated as of particular salience in our efforts and experiences, which we call our *testimonies*, such as those to peace, justice, equality, simplicity, and sustainability.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HUBS

The four Hubs do not directly map on to the three purposes, because all of the purposes should motivate all of the Hubs. Though they will respond to the purposes differently, and will inevitably overlap in operation, the Hubs do carry particular responsibilities for aspects of our meeting's work and life.

Faith community

The *Faith Community* Hub bears the main responsibility for enabling our meeting to flourish as a community within the tradition of Quakerism in Britain:

- **faith and practice:** holds an open public space for regular worship, leads the meeting in its spiritual life, and ensures that in its general operations the meeting follows Quaker principles and practices
- **pastoral care:** oversees a distributed local system of mutual support through sharing circles
- **children and young people:** provides separate and all-age meetings to nurture our younger people in the life of the meeting
- **communal life:** organises and supports social gatherings and events that bring us together, offers hospitality to newcomers, conducts funerals and weddings, and keeps a memorial record.

Learning & Action

The *Learning & Action* Hub's emphases are on shared learning, outreach and mutual support for external action. It connects us from our Quaker roots to the wider world.

- **learning:** helps people develop their understanding of Friends and the world outside Friends through (e.g.) meetings for learning, study groups, talks, the Library, the newsletter, *Becoming Friends* and similar courses or resources at Woodbrooke and elsewhere; exchanges at residential weekends
- **outreach:** spreads knowledge of Quakers outside the meeting and invites people to attend, through such activities as providing a regular meeting for worship at Bristol University, participation in Quaker Week, encouraging a Quaker presence at public events; ecumenical activities
- **action:** supports action teams in specific areas (eg, City of Sanctuary), organises appeals after meetings for worship to raise money for and awareness of a mix of local, national and overseas charities; supports individual activists acting beyond the meeting; engages with work of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW).

Resources

The *Resources* Hub's responsibility is to look after our premises, money, and wardens – all on behalf of Bristol Area Meeting – with proper care and in a manner consistent with Quaker values and testimonies.

- **premises:** maintains and develops our buildings so as to give us a home base for our own work and enable us to hire rooms out to groups in the local community
- **finances:** takes good care of our money and recommends uses or investments that support Quaker work
- **staff:** supports and manages wardens who keep the premises in good order and open for our own uses and those of our hirers.

Administration

The *Admin* Hub maintains and circulates the information we need to keep our meeting going, and organises overall service provision and our business meetings.

- **information:** maintains key information about our meeting, including who's in our meeting, what circles people are in, who does what in our meeting, and what's going on; organises and oversees the communication of accurate information on the website, noticeboards and elsewhere; acts as a conduit for information coming into and going out of our meeting; and maintains an archive
- **organisation:** finds people to serve in core roles; allocates people to sharing circles; plans, conducts, records and follows up local meeting for business.

UPHOLDING OUR PURPOSES

Any organisation over time can become disjointed or slip into routines, with different sections pursuing their own ends, so we need to pay attention to how the Hubs, jointly and separately, can continue to uphold our purposes.

In all the Hubs, we can check how well our work is geared to the meeting's purposes:-

- Is what we do grounded in worship? Do we regularly attend meeting for worship and wait there upon the light? Going beyond debate, conversation, and bureaucracy, do we make that search for love and truth the basis also of how we operate in our Hub?
- Does what we do strengthen our fellowship? Do we, in general, try to get to know and support one another, and welcome newcomers? Resisting the pull towards becoming a more closed, exclusive, or specialist group, do we look in our Hubs to share our knowledge and expertise, in a spirit of openness and cooperation?
- Does what we do enable and encourage witness? Do we in our lives try to live as well as we can in accord with Quaker principles and testimonies? In our Hubs, can we go beyond simply recording our internal deliberations or writing reports and policies, and move towards practical engagement with the world?

The Hubs can refresh their commitment to the meeting's purposes by periodically asking such questions as:

- what is our vision for this hub (in the context of the other hubs and Meeting as a whole)?
- what would it look like if the hub successfully realised that vision?
- what are we doing in the hub to achieve the vision?
- is that the right set of stuff to be doing?

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