

**Reporting on the responsibilities of Balby (Doncaster) Local Meeting
Year ending 31 December 2018**

- We have continued to hold regular Meetings for Worship, on Sunday morning and on Wednesday at 1.00. There have been few attenders at the midweek meeting, but numbers for Sunday meeting are showing a slight increase and are stable.
- Our Advices and Queries have been regularly used either in personal vocal ministry or as a foundation for our Worship Sharing. We display the individual Advices and Queries in sequence in the entrance hall.
- We have maintained spiritual and pastoral care of our Meeting and its members and attenders. Our elders and overseers meet regularly and we have maintained a series of discussion groups and social events which have enhanced the life of the Meeting. We have continued to look for topics for our regular 'End of Life' sessions. We have continued our consideration of how the spirituality of the Meeting might be further developed, and with effect from the new year we shall institute a different method of worship sharing on the last Sunday of every month, in order to enhance and encourage our spiritual understanding and exploration, both as individuals and collectively as a Meeting.

We continue to visit the CAST theatre as a group from time to time, and to go out for lunch at a local restaurant after Sunday meeting. We book an annual long weekend at Barmoor on the North Yorkshire Moors, which provides us with an opportunity to spend time in each other's company and also to renew acquaintance with those who have moved on from our Meeting.

- We do not have a demand for a Children's Meeting at present.
- We hold regular Meetings for Business each month and have been able to send representatives to all this year's Area Meetings and have hosted it on two occasions. We seek to uphold the Area Meeting clerks by whatever means we can, and are happy to host Area Meetings when required. Members of the Meeting participate in Area Meeting activities and are appointed to committees of the Area Meeting. We have sought to send representatives to Quakers in Yorkshire when possible.
- We have given consideration to our patterns of giving, in order to satisfy ourselves that we are giving our money to appropriate Quaker causes. We have altered our arrangements for charitable collections so as to ensure that we give a right proportion of our money to Britain Yearly Meeting, and have now instituted a system (which remains under review) that all collections will form part of our

annual contribution to Britain Yearly Meeting. Our accounts will be audited in line with our usual annual practice

- Tabular details and statistical details have been returned when required.
- Correspondents are appointed to the main Quaker services and our library is now in better order and there is a system for encouraging Friends to borrow and read the books which we have. We hope to review our stock within the near future, and to establish a routine for buying new books.
- Our Meeting House has a full-time presence during the day from Monday to Wednesday, and frequently on Friday. On Thursdays the Doncaster Conversation Club (see below) is in occupation and supervises building use. We are seeking ways of developing our presence on line, by reviewing our website, and by developing a presence on Facebook.

The building itself continues to be used by a variety of groups, including representatives of other faiths, although we notice that the number of groups has diminished recently. We therefore continue to look at ways in which we can improve outreach to those who use it and to others. We continue to use the building for events and to publicise these locally. The income from hire of the building is a valuable contribution to our income.

During the year the Meeting House was broken into and a certain amount of money was stolen. The actual money lost was fairly insignificant, but repairs and increased security have been a drain on Meeting resources.

- “What’s the Albanian word for ten – do you know, off the top of your head?” This is an actual, and not untypical, cry (in a Scottish accent!) which was heard at Doncaster Conversation Club one Thursday recently. Doncaster Conversation Club (DCC) is a resource for asylum seekers and refugees, based at the Meeting House, and with close connections with our Meeting, although it is an independent organisation. Several Friends are involved in its running and organisation, together with numerous non-Quaker volunteers. The meeting itself, and individual Friends, continue to provide financial support.
- The average weekly attendance at DCC is in the region of 150. Volunteers do not simply provide conversation, but also practical help and support, including the provision of material goods for those who need them, the weekly supply of food by way of unwanted supermarket food which reaches us through the club’s close links with the Fare Share organisation, English classes, practical help with the claiming of benefits and with navigating the NHS, help at a variety of levels by incoming advisers, support with asylum applications, the preparation of medical reports for Freedom from Torture, and social events. DCC continues its regular

series of walks and outings, which are willingly supported by Friends in our Meeting. There are regular and enthusiastic football sessions, and occasionally the Meeting House fills up with bikes for distribution. Various Friends have parts of their houses and garages given over to furniture, clothing and bedding, also for distribution in due course.

- DCC cannot give full immigration advice, but three volunteers are accredited with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner and are allowed to give level one advice. It can be difficult to keep advice to that level in view of the almost endless demand for help and support which DCC receives, which is in itself a result of the general policy of the Government towards those coming to the UK.

During the year our Friend Nic Burne presented an introduction to the Asylum system, which was well attended by people from Doncaster and further afield. On another occasion, Lilian Hollidge, a DCC volunteer, gave us an account of her work at a refugee camp, and this was followed by entertainment provided by Doncaster's Quirky Choir. Our Friend Paul FitzPatrick provides an excellent and well-read newsletter every month.

- The Meeting is a Sanctuary Meeting and is associated with the central Quaker work of joining local initiatives to build a culture of welcome, building alliances with groups opposing racism, and working with others to change the laws on destitution, detention, deportations and removals. In January 2019, we hope to hold an event for other local faith groups at which we shall explore the concept of sanctuary.
- We continue to work with Doncaster Museum in their work on the centenary of the First World War, and have participated in an exhibition which they have been holding in 2018, which has enabled us to say something of how the peace work of former Quaker adherents has been carried forward into our work for peace today.
- We have a reading and discussion group on the New Economy, which is building on the material sent out by Friends House. We have appointed a small group to look at how we can campaign against poverty, and how we can address the issue of a basic income which is of interest to several of us.
- Following the success of our visit to the Arms Fair in 2017, we plan to engage in further activities around the next one in September 2019, and to work with the new Quaker resource "Roots of Resistance" to ensure a significant Quaker presence in London during the event.

- We were pleased to welcome the Journeymen Theatre Company back to the Meeting House for a performance of their play “And The Beat Goes On” which was very much enjoyed by all who attended.
- Our Friend Paul Fitzpatrick visited Sudan during the year, and we were pleased to hear from him with an account of his visit and his impressions. We were joined for this by two conversation club friends from Sudan, who were able to help us to see the broader picture.
- One of the ways in which we seek to carry out outreach work is with the displays in our Meeting House. We now have a roll-up banner on Quakers and their work, which is displayed when other groups are using the building, and we have a permanent display on Quakers and peace, sanctuary and torture. We took a stall at Doncaster Pride in 2018, and a total of seven Friends helped to staff it during the day.
- We have sought to educate ourselves in spiritual matters during the year with several Meetings for Learning, at two of which we have watched and then discussed videos presented by Ben Pink Dandelion on the topic of early Quakerism. A number of us hope to attend the Area Meeting Woodbrooke on the Road session in February.
- Our Clerk and our Lettings Assistant were able to meet with staff from Sheffield Central Meeting House, who visited us during the year to begin discussions about things we have in common and how this might be developed. Several ideas were forthcoming and we look forward to a return visit in the near future.