

Duties and Responsibilities 2018

This report is offered to Sheffield and Balby Area Meeting, 13th January 2019, by Sheffield Central Local Meeting.

We believe that we have met all of our responsibilities throughout 2018, in accordance with Quaker Faith and Practice, section 4.33.

We have nurtured and sustained the spiritual life of the meeting with regular meetings for worship, and the pastoral care of those associated with it through our Elders and Overseers, have welcomed newcomers and sought to help enquirers to explore and understand the Society.

Elders

Elders met first at the beginning of the year as a completely new team, with only one of them continuing from the previous group and most not having any previous experience of being an Elder. They were conscious that it was their task to carry out recommendations from the Spiritual Review that had been completed during the previous year.

One of these was provision for learning opportunities and Elders have concentrated on this as their main task for the year. They started by gathering together all the opportunities that already exist in the meeting and listing these in an article for Sheffield and Balby Quaker News.

Elders also initiated:

- Two Philosophical Enquiry sessions run by Rosie Carnall on the themes of vocal ministry and worship
- A workshop on Exploring Leadership amongst Friends run by Steven Allan
- A six week course called “New Testament Resources for Quakers and other Peacemakers” run by Richard Levitt, a Quaker from Leeds
- A question and answer session on ‘Autism’ organised by Jean Wildgoose and Pat Walker
- The monthly Inner Quest sessions which have covered a variety of topics.

The group joined with the Central Overseers and Elders and Overseers from Nether Edge for an afternoon session to talk over some areas of concern to both groups.

Overseers

Overseers’ first task in the new year was to try to get to know each other as a team, in what for some was a new role. They consolidated understanding of their role. They each took on a ‘list,’ from the list of members and attenders, of friends to keep a particular look-out for. Each Overseers sent a letter to everyone on their list saying, ‘I am your overseer,’ and that they were available should they wish to talk about any concern.

They also sent letters to friends who had not been seen for quite a long while, asking if they still wished to be associated with our meeting. This is one of the most challenging areas of oversight. Overseers do not want to discourage anyone from keeping a connection with our meeting, even if irregular, but sometimes a person really does no longer want to be involved in any way. It is helpful to know this.

Overseers' ongoing work is to offer support to F/friends in times of difficulty or ill health. Ideally they need to know people well enough to be aware of particular connections and friendships and who may be best placed to be a friend in any particular situation. A lot of oversight is carried out by those not currently named as overseers. This is essential in our large meeting. Our role is to support the building of community in whatever ways we can.

In order to develop understanding of the work and to gain feedback, in November Overseers ran an Inner Quest session. Amongst many useful comments, they were reminded that the upstairs coffee and social time is not easy or comfortable for many people: we need to make it as welcoming as possible for everyone. Also, it was agreed that a regular feature in SBQN, where F/friends introduce themselves, is a good idea which started and should be continued.

A minute from one Overseers' meeting read: 'Eldership and oversight are the responsibility of all who are part of our meeting. How do we foster this understanding and the behaviour that arises from that understanding within our meetings?'

Children and Young People's Work Committee

We have taken a special responsibility for the children within our care and for their parents, recognising that the continuing religious education of all, including regular attenders as well as members, is of real concern to our meeting.

This year the CYPWC has had a kind of double life, continuing with the usual sessions and events, while at the same time being much taken up with a successful bid for a Youth Worker and latterly with the proposal for a Play Worker on Sunday mornings.

Currently there about forty children and young people on the list, although many of them are seen only very occasionally. The committee is enormously grateful for the wonderful contribution thirteen leaders and nineteen helpers make to the life of the meeting upstairs on Sunday mornings in the children and young people's meetings for worship. A sense of community has also been helped by the Community Worship Sharing occasions which have included lovely lunches, games and singing together. Round the edges of usual Sunday mornings there have been various happenings: a Families Week at Barmoor, the annual outing to Hathersage, an amazing twelve of our young people attending Holiday School at Bootham, and two of our younger people to a Junior Holidays weekend at Fanwood.