

Governance Gold

No 9: November 2017

Local meetings and worship groups



For the attention of AM and LM clerks

Governance update from the Recording Clerk's Office

Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p) gives us full guidance as to how to be in right ordering for our church affairs. Our faithfulness in following our agreed process upholds our Quaker community. In these papers we are highlighting matters for your attention and action. Please keep these papers for ongoing reference.

Local meetings – meetings for worship

Some meetings have enquired about being regarded as a “worshipping group” rather than a local meeting. They assume that this would mean having fewer responsibilities.

Local meetings are the only category of meeting in our Yearly Meeting. Any regular public meeting for worship has to be an activity of a local meeting. It can either be a local meeting in its own right, or part of another local meeting. A local meeting, as a community of Quakers, can hold as many regular meetings for worship as it chooses. They may be held at different times, and in a variety of places.

When a public meeting for worship is held, there is potential liability (both spiritual and legal). The meeting needs to be under the care, eldership and stewardship of the AM, its overseers, elders and trustees. This is done by being, or being part of, a local meeting.

Local meetings need to consider the responsibilities noted in *Quaker faith & practice* 4.33. The important word here is “consider”. There is a great degree of flexibility in how these responsibilities are fulfilled, and creative approaches can be used. Some responsibilities may be fulfilled through the work of the area meeting. An agreement can be reached with the area meeting through a memorandum of understanding, see 4.34.

For further guidance, or if you have any questions, contact:

Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser, michaelsb@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1023

Quaker faith & practice 4.31

“The area meeting may contain a variety of meetings for worship differing in size and practice. Any group of Friends may meet to worship at any time. The area meeting should encourage worshipping groups, as they evolve into regular meetings for worship, to adopt practical arrangements suited to their circumstances. The existence of a new local meeting or the laying down of an existing local meeting should be formally recognised by the area meeting and recorded by minute, which should be sent to the Recording Clerk.”

Quaker faith & practice 4.34 (part)

“Each local meeting should agree with its area meeting the duties and responsibilities which the local meeting undertakes on behalf of the area meeting. This agreement should be formally recorded as part of a memorandum of understanding.”