

Keep
It
Simple

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Keep It Simple Foreword

It all began with 2 minutes from North Wales Area Meeting.

22/21 Further to minute 22/07 Ruth Moore Williams and Eleri Elliott have found a number of Friends to form an **informal working group** that will be looking at our appointments structures with an 'outside eye'....date by?

Younger and older Friends and attenders were contacted as were attenders relatively new to Quakerism, as well as very experienced Friends. Ultimately, everyone in North Wales Area Meeting was invited to engage in the process called, 'Keep It Simple'.

'Keep It Simple' was the title of six hourly online sessions which ran every fortnight from March 29th to June 10th of this year, 2022.

Eighteen Friends, representing all of the Local Meetings in North Wales Area Meeting, attended for one or more sessions.

The sessions used the following as a guide for the discussions.
(KIS = Keep It Simple)

KIS 1 Getting our bearings - Idea sharing

KIS 2

What matters most? What matters less?

KIS 3

New ways of thinking about roles in Area Meeting
New ways of thinking about roles in Local Meetings

KIS 4

An all-age meeting – building for the future

KIS 5

Spiritual and Pastoral Care of our meetings

KIS 6

Let us reflect upon what we have spoken of.

What follows is the result is a summary of those six sessions.

You will appreciate Friends that summarising six hours of measured exploring of our roles, structure and much more in order to discern a way to 'keep things simple' takes a lot of words. This document is long but, we hope, accessible and useful.

Our journey began after hearing of so many Friends in roles burdened by their time-consuming service. We, the eighteen Friends who took part, hope that our thoughts and ideas will relieve some of that burden and show how we may be able to 'Keep It Simple' and serve with joy.

Linda Batten, Margaret Biddle, Moragh Bradshaw, Tricia Bridgewater, Frank Brown, Gerry Craddock, Roger Dovey, Kate Dyke, Eleri Elliot, Anne Harris, Martin Hughes, Denise Jones, Will Parrott, Rhian Parry, Sarah Partington, Tug Wilson, Sîw Wood and Ruth Moore Williams

Some Quaker Acronyms

Very few have been used in the Keep It Simple document

Local Meeting – LM

Area Meeting – AM

North Wales Area Meeting - NWAM

Quakers in Wales – QW

This is a name change from Meeting of Friends in Wales

Crynwyr Cymru – CC

Symud Ymlaen - SYM

Britain Yearly Meeting - BYM

Meeting for Worship – MfW

Meeting for Business – MfB

Meeting for Sufferings – MfS

Quaker Life - QL

There are lots and lots and lots more (unfortunately).

How can we Keep It Simple? Introduction

What Matters Most?

It was very clear in our conversations that

The deep spirituality of worship, silence and stillness and being together as a community of Friends and a social community of friends are what matters the most to us.

Is anything is set in stone?

Not very much as far as procedure goes and even stone can be carved in different ways. Would better questions be What needs to be done? or What is essential?

Let us ask ourselves these questions.

Do any of our structures and procedures help us to do what we feel is really important as Quakers in our spiritual journey and how we live our lives as Quakers day to day?

Do our structures and procedures help and support us?

Let us identify the ones that do.

Be clear exactly what they are and define them carefully.
Keep them.

If any structures or procedures do **not** help us or support us, why do we hang onto them? Let them go.

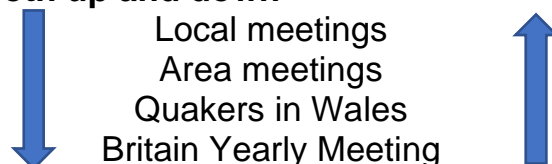
Whatever we agree is important, should only be there if it helps us.

Thinking in 2 directions

To avoid duplicating roles unnecessarily across Local Meetings and Area Meetings we need to think in 2 directions:

Sharing roles horizontally across all our local meetings and the four Area Meetings in Wales and the Southern Marches.

Sharing roles vertically both up and down



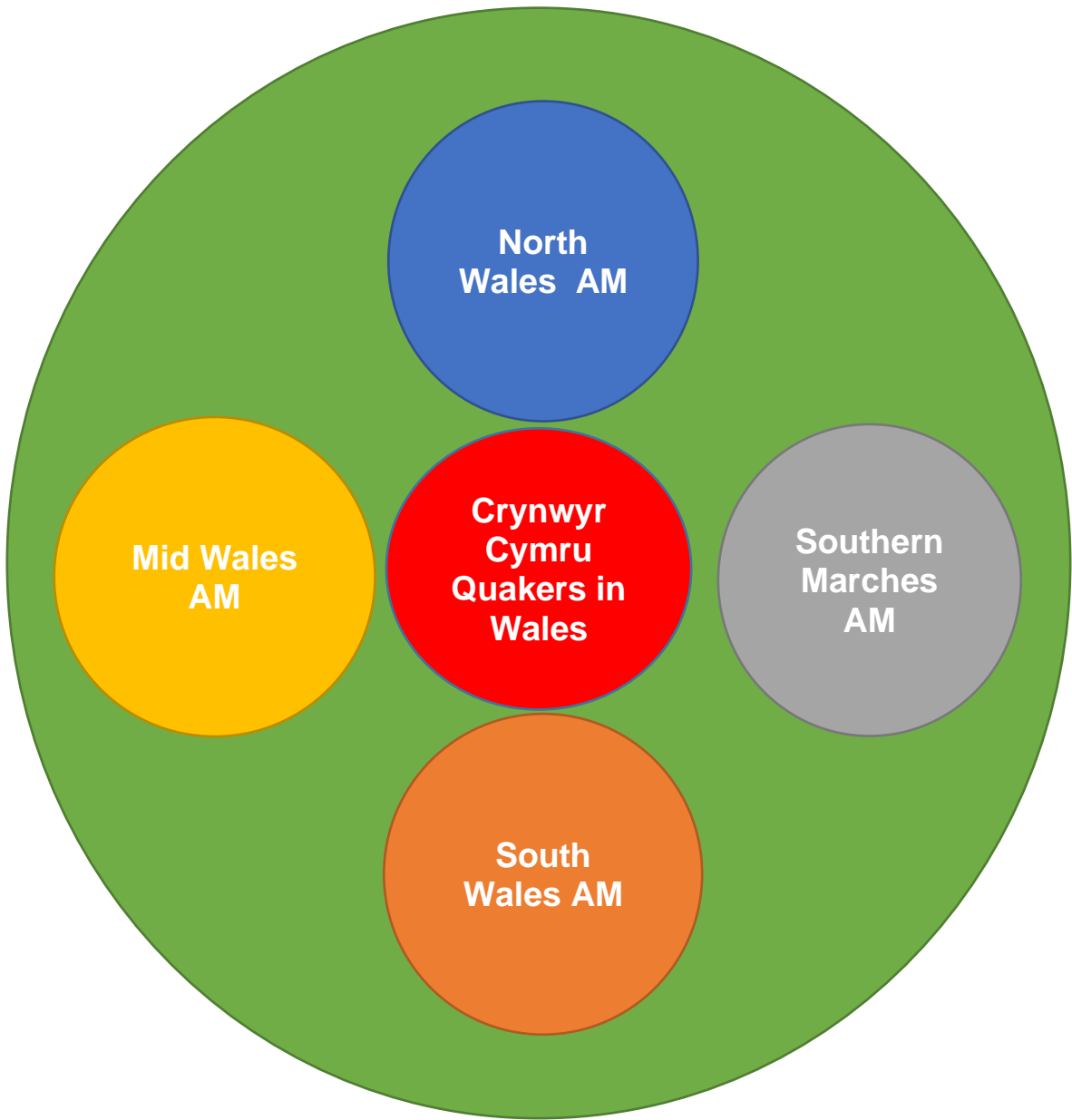
We realise that the Quakers in Wales initiative – Symud Ymlaen (Moving Forward) – has made a start for us in Wales and the Southern Marches.

Moving to a single charity means that essentials like Trusteeship and Safeguarding may be taken up by the new charity within Wales and the Marches, thus relieving the burden for Local Meetings and Area Meetings

While many Friends most value their Local Meeting, we are a much larger church. Our Area Meeting is key to that larger structure, linking us to Quakers in Wales, Britain Yearly Meeting and the world.

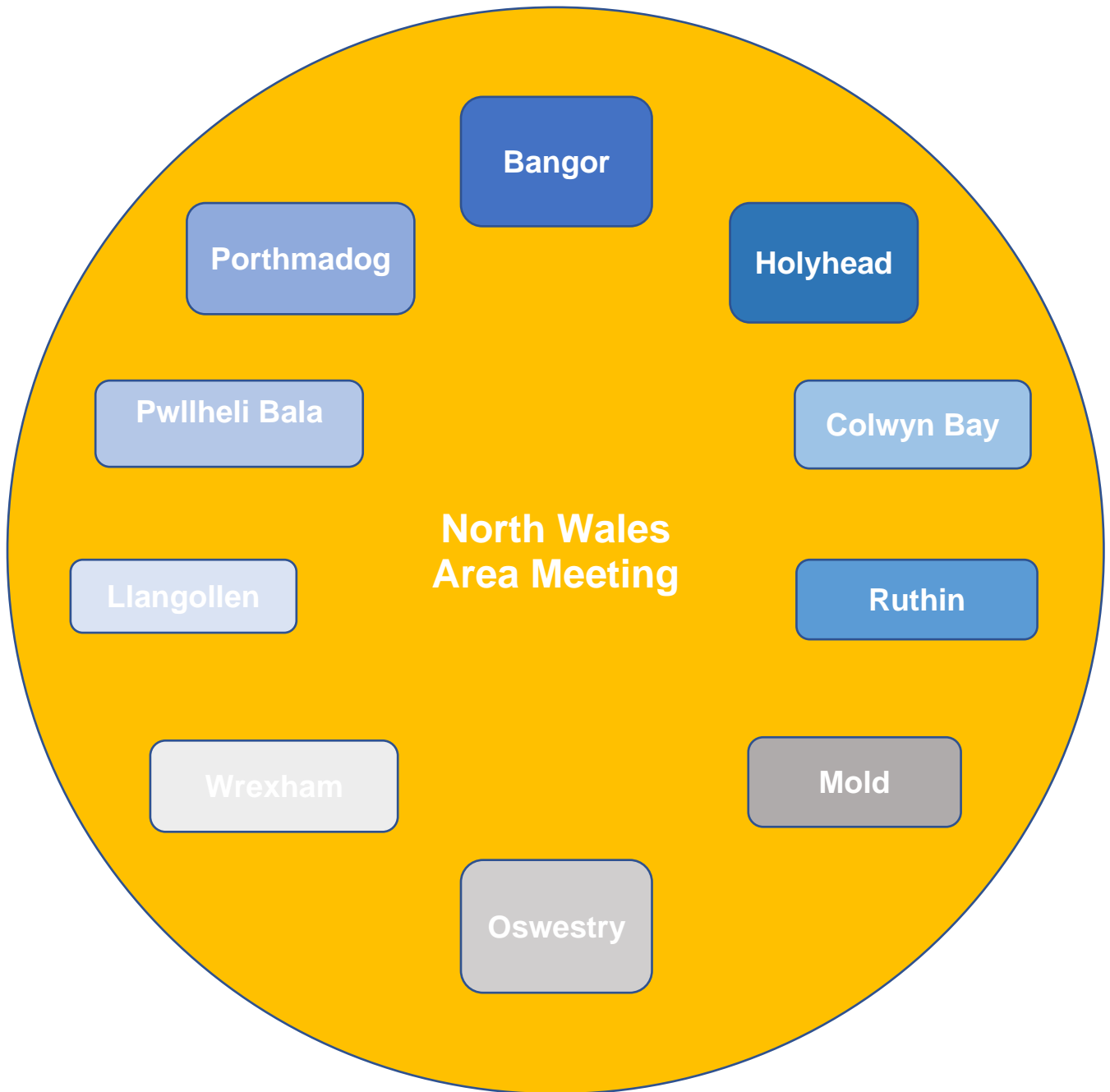
A New, Single Charity for Wales and the Marches

One charity with a number of roles shared by all meetings,
e.g. trustees, safe guarding coordinator.



North Wales Area Meeting and its Local Meetings

A number of roles could be shared between Local and Area Meetings too – see later in the ‘Keep It Simple’ document.



What Matters Most

Worship, Community, Friendship/friendship and Our Discipline

A worshipping community of Friends is bonded together:

- by habitual waiting in and engaging with the vast stillness of God, the Light, the Spirit;
- by working together with the insight that comes out of this eloquent silence;
- by having profound respect, profound regard for equality and profound commitment to each other and to the action of deep listening;
- by diligent practice and continual recreation of the discipline which flows through our whole life.

This is the discipline which knows, truly knows, that there is that of God, the Spirit, in everyone and everything.

For many of us, meeting face to face brings us closer together both spiritually and as friends. For some, meeting online to worship and socialise is either a necessity or a choice. For others, sitting in silence at home is, again, a necessity or choice. It is the astounding truth of our religion that whichever way we practise our faith, we find that we can meet together in the eloquent silence.

We, as Quakers, do not say, "You must be like this. You must be like that." By having a due respect for our testimonies we can be who we are, safe in the knowledge that we are all valued and loved. This respect for each other enables us to speak about difficult things in proper dialogue, bring into the Light the different views without long debate or conflict.

Our business method, our structure, our Quaker testimonies, founded in the seventeenth century, are the strong bedrock of our church. Upon this rock we still stand, and yet our religion, culture and structure can be carved in many and varied ways.

Twenty-first century Quakerism has found the need to be malleable whilst remaining true to the rock of our church.

We, the eighteen Friends who took part in the *Keeping It Simple* sessions, hope that we offer useful ways to be flexible in this summary of our sessions. We represent all of the Local Meetings in North Wales Area Meeting.

We pondered on our structure. We saw that too much time and energy are spent on things that may matter to us but are not as important as our worship and community. These are what we would like to have most time and energy for. Yet we find that for many of us our time and energy is spent on busy-ness, doing jobs/roles, going to meetings for those roles, being part of other Quaker groups. All this is in the service of our community, but is too much busy-ness?

We meet primarily to worship together with like-minded seekers.

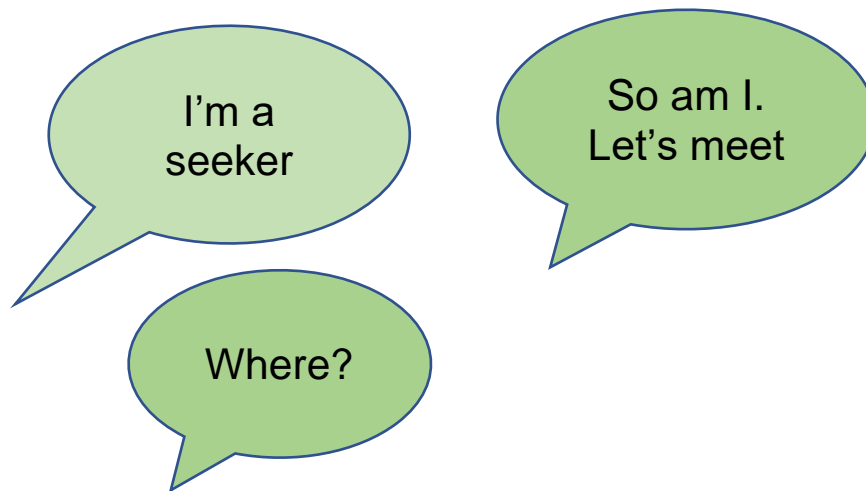
Worship is an hour, but the busy-ness is hours.

How did we get here?

Building a Meeting from Scratch

When we asked ourselves,
'How did we get here? How did we get so busy?'
We thought it would be a useful exercise to ask ourselves,
'If we were to start a religion from scratch today, what would be the bare essentials to hold a meeting?'
The following graphic illustrates our thoughts.

It starts so simply



And so a structure begins.

First you

Find place to meet

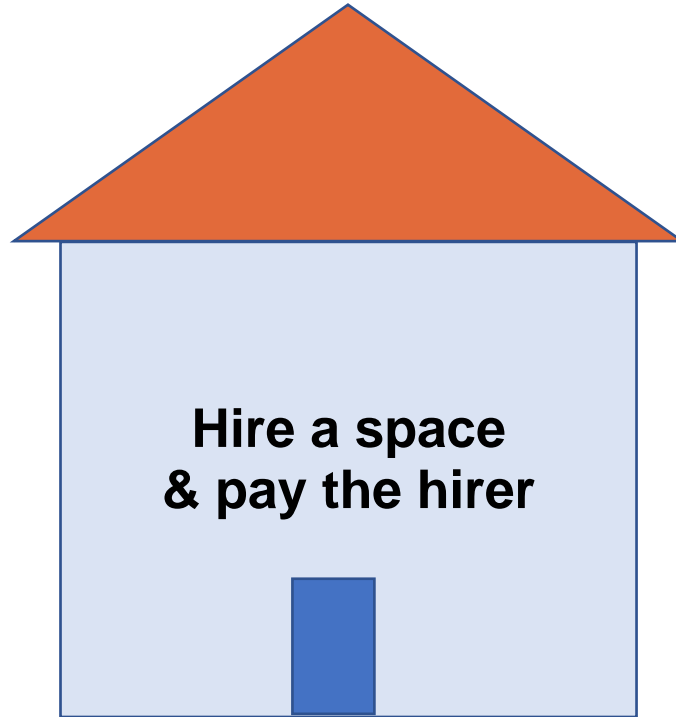
The easiest place is in someone's home, but

You soon have too many seekers so ...

Someone collects money to...

Book a zoom meeting

Or



**Now we need to have....
Wait for it!**

Someone to open the door



Someone to set out the chairs



Someone to welcome everyone



Someone to start and end the meeting



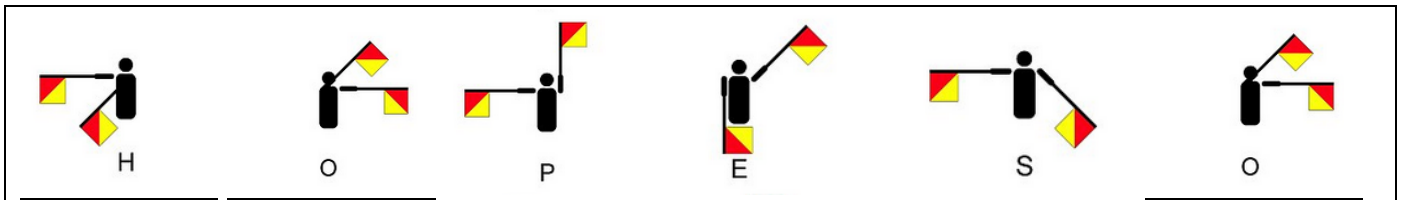
Someone to keep track of everyone and see they are well



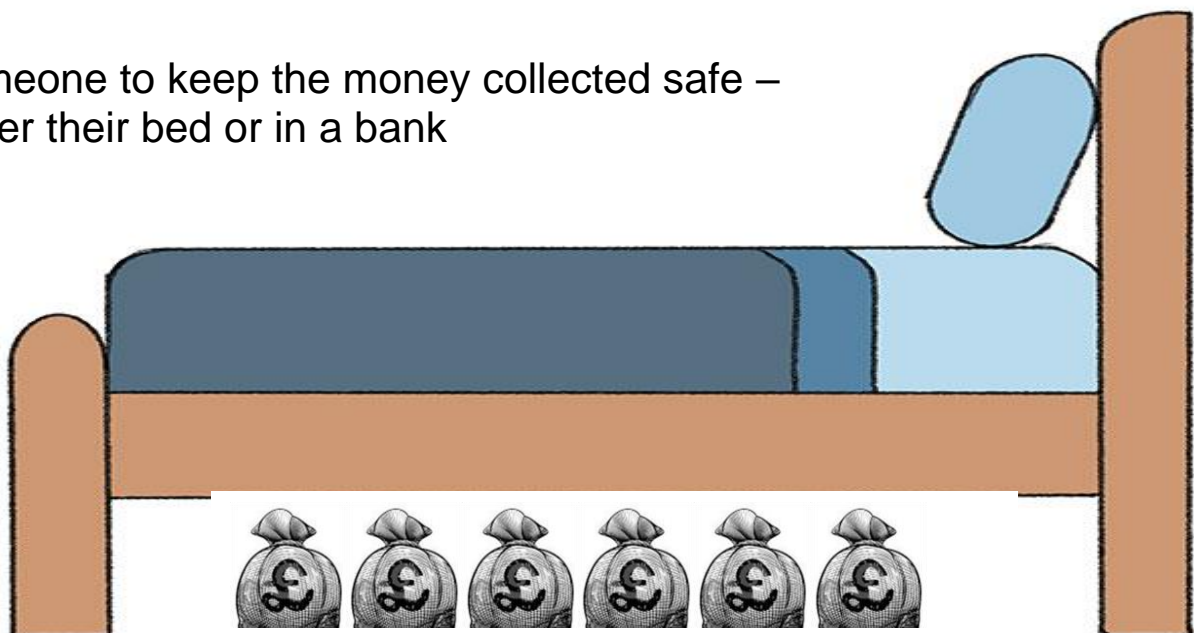
Someone to look after the spiritual nature of the meeting



Someone to communicate with everyone and organise meetings for decisions



Someone to keep the money collected safe – under their bed or in a bank



**And so we have built the structure we need.
Does it look familiar?
And no-one has mentioned building a
special seekers' meeting house –**

YET!

So, whether we like it or not, we need a structure of some sort, but we can have a lighter structure than the one we have now. By sharing roles and laying down some of the tasks we do, we can keep it simpler. When times change and our meetings grow in energy and numbers there is always the possibility of adding to the structure. But perhaps, if we get it right, we won't need to.

A Flexible Structure and Role Sharing

Quaker Faith and Practice's advice about roles in Area Meeting is quite flexible.

Certain things are asked of AM: to have a clerk or convenor, treasurer, trustees (legally required because we are a charity), a nominations committee, a registrar and a custodian of records, elders and pastoral carers.

Representatives are also needed for linked bodies such as Meeting for Sufferings. There is scope for sharing some roles between AMs. Symud Ymlaen is leading in this by sharing trustees between AMs in Quakers in Wales.

Area Meeting – required roles

Trustees – *each North Wales trustee is now allocated to one of the other 3 AM Trustee Committees in Wales and the Southern Marches. This initiative may well lead to an all-Wales trustee body and eventually lessen the work of AM*

Clerk/Convenor or Clerking team

Treasurer or Finance team

Nominations committee

Registrar – *this role is now ongoing until the present incumbent wishes for change*

Custodian of Records – *this role is now ongoing until the present incumbent wishes for change*

Elders and/or a Convenor of Elders to facilitate meetings of local meeting Elders. *This is dependent on whether AM finds elders or LMs find a named elder. If the latter, only a convenor would be needed.*

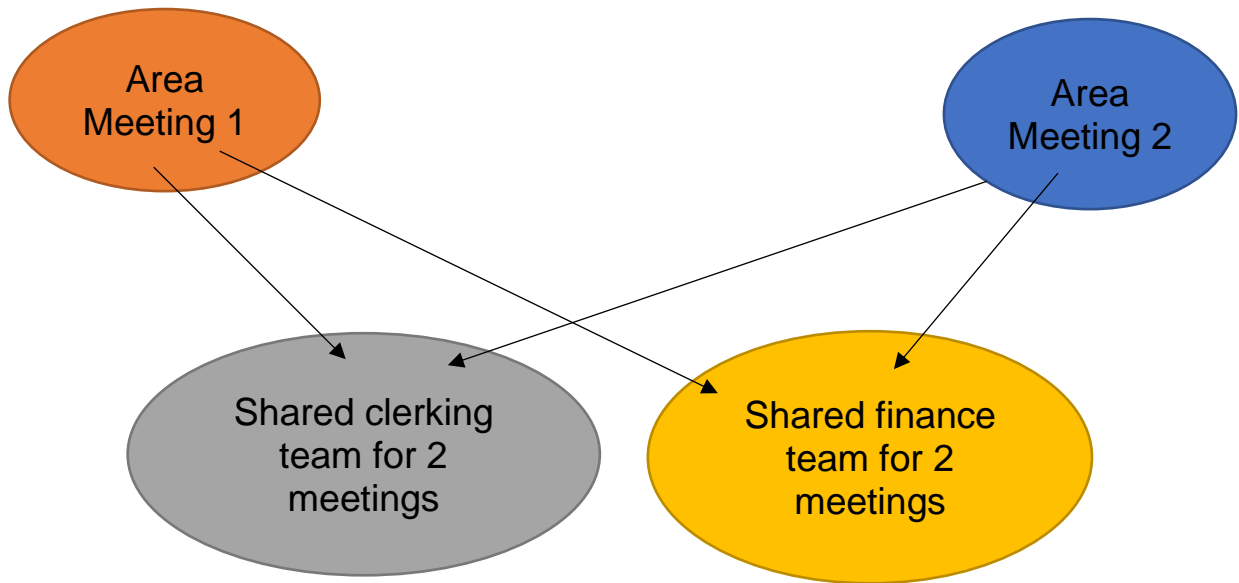
A Convenor of **Pastoral Carers** to facilitate meetings of local meeting PCs

Safeguarding Co-ordinator – *could the expertise of Britain Yearly Meeting be used for this so that this role was a conduit role, i.e. a link person between LMs, AM and BYM?*

Representatives for Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life – *these could be shared roles with another AM e.g. Mid Wales?*

The present Clerks' Support Group currently comprises of 3 subgroups - Clerks, Spiritual Nurture and Community Building. *Could a Mentors group be added to this: knowledgeable Friends who could support inexperienced Friends in roles?*

Two or more Area Meetings can share essential roles



What other roles could be shared by Area Meetings?

Elders

Nominations Committee

Meeting for Sufferings Representative

Quaker Life Representative

Registrar of Members

Custodian of Records

Quaker Faith and Practice says that for LMs there is more flexibility due to the variation in size. Most of our LMs in North Wales are small.

From QF&P: 'the scope of work undertaken will vary but every Local Meeting will give due respect to Quaker values, testimonies and practice and will provide regular opportunities for public worship.'

A clerk or convenor is needed. A treasurer is needed if the Meeting has any financial activities. There is much scope for sharing roles between LMs.

Local Meetings – required roles but be flexible, smaller meetings can be even more creative.

Clerk or Convenor

Treasurer

Elder – *shared Eldership in a meeting can be problematic, judging by the experience of our local meetings who have tried it.*

Pastoral Carer – *this role is being shared quite successfully in many of our meetings. Some meetings are using a 'buddy' system i.e. pairing up to keep an eye on each other's welfare. Other meetings use a circle of all members with each Friend knowing their fixed place in this circle i.e. 'Who is either side of me?'. Each Friend looks after the people either side of them, thus 2 people are always looking out for each Friend. If a new person joins the circle, the caring is reorganised to include this Friend.*

Nominations Committee

Questions to think about

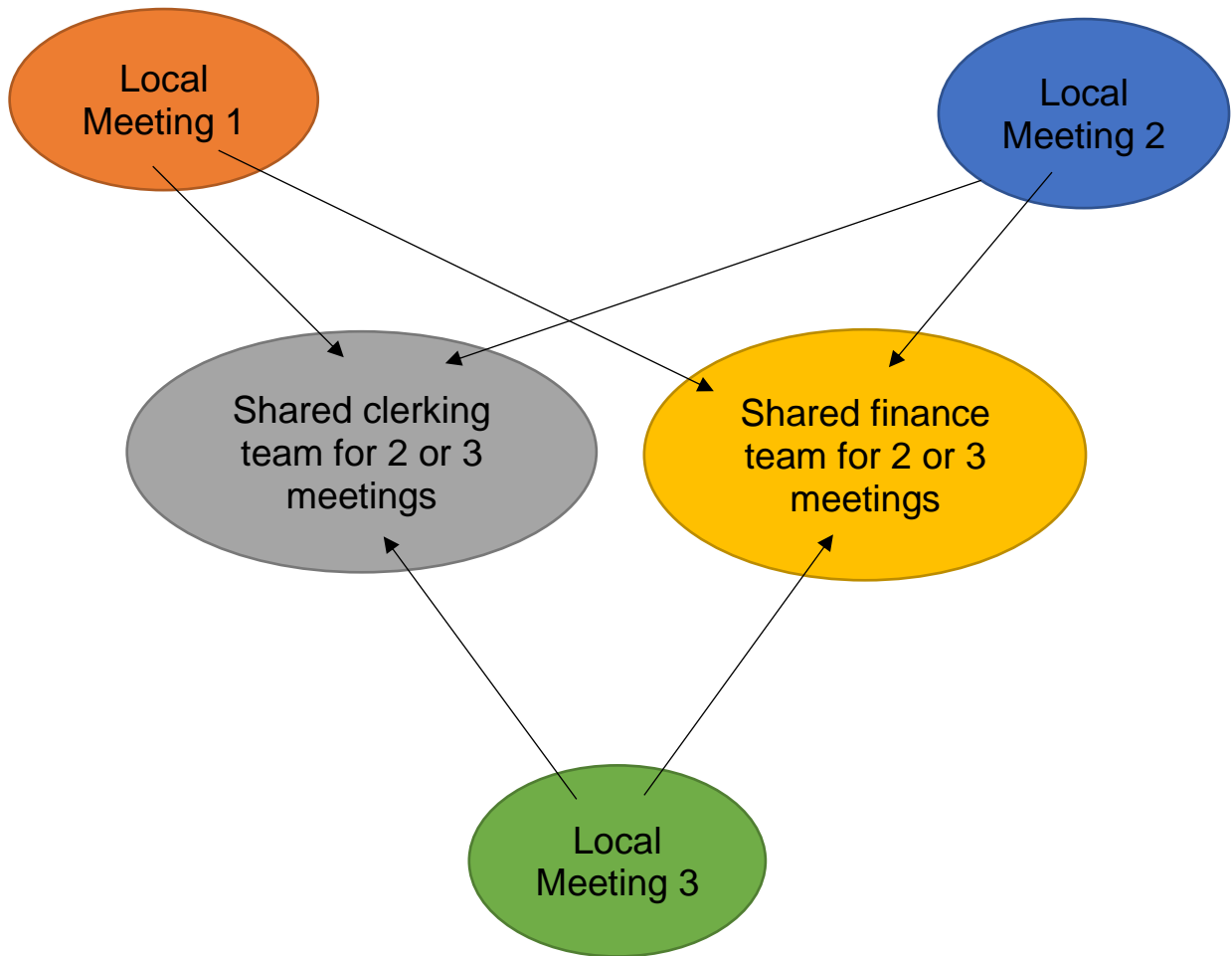
Can tasks involved in each role be split up and dealt with by different Friends? Some tasks are ongoing, e.g. dealing with day-to-day correspondence. Some are time-limited, e.g. membership.

Do Friends in some roles have to be in our meeting? Can they be from another LM?

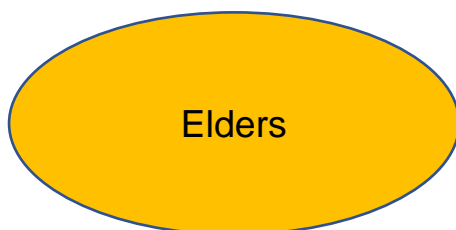
What roles can be shared with other LMS?

What skills do Friends have in our meeting? Have we asked that question?

Two or three small Local Meetings can share essential roles



What other roles could be shared by Local Meetings?



Could Meeting Houses share a Premises Committee?

An example of a light-touch structure for a Local Meeting ‘tried and tested’ by a North Wales Local Meeting

A Convenor is appointed rather than a Clerk. The Convenor will ensure that

- Proper financial accounts are kept,
- Regular public meetings for worship are held
- Prompt regular discussions or activities as a worshipping group as held, both spiritual and practical.

The results of these activities could be reported in an email and/or a simple newsletter, both for absent Friends and as a form of record. If the Area Meeting asks Local Meetings to consider something, it could be done after worship or in a special meeting. The Convenor would then report the discussion and any formal minute from it to the Area Meeting.

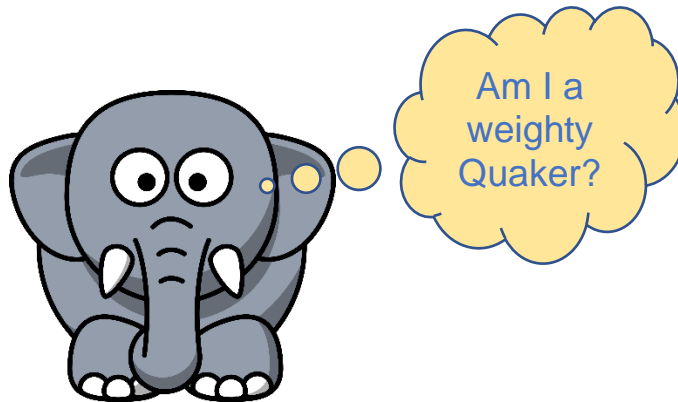
Writing to an MP, a local council or the local papers for any reason could be discussed in the same way. The Convenor would follow this up by sending a draft letter round by email to everyone, to make sure it was what all Friends in the Local Meeting wanted to say, before the final action of sending the actual letter was completed.

Please turn to
Appendix 1 for ideas for a different structure
Appendix 2 for ideas about roles in Area and Local Meetings
Appendix 3 Being a Treasurer – a different way

Heard It Through The Grapevine Part 1

How do we communicate?

We have some words and phrases that have been used by Friends for many, many generations. They mean something to those who understand this Quaker Code.



However, to both old and new Friends, some of these are no longer acceptable in a loving and equal society.

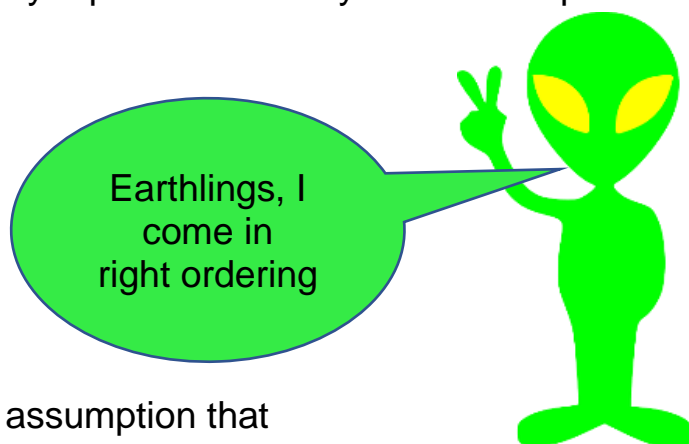
For example, any word or phrase that carries an historical and very negative connotation, such as overseer. We now use Pastoral Care and Pastoral Carer. Quakers in Wales are considering Bugeiles – Shepherdess, or Bugail - Shepherd.

We are alert to any word or phrase that is sex- or gender-biased. Quakers have used English language, non-biased words like Clerk and Convenor for generations.

Elder is potentially an age-biased word. In our Quaker Code we do not mean that eldest is wisest, yet we use the word.

Do we replace this? Are there other alternatives? Are we content that *eldering* and *elder* are good enough, because they represent maturity in matters spiritual? Or do they get in the way for some?

To new Friends, which words and phrases that we use are alienating?



Our habit of using acronyms in the assumption that everyone knows what they stand for is a barrier too. From the most used AM, LM and MfW to QCCIR, QLCC, and all the rest of the alphabet, we confuse Friends old and new and visitors.

How do we keep our words simple?

Heard it Through the Grapevine Part 2

Early Quakers needed a structure to organise and communicate with a fast-growing membership.

We retain that structure, but our membership in Wales is declining. How can we recapture that spiritual and communal enthusiasm with the advantages of both traditional and modern ways of communicating?

In our AM and LMs, let us clearly identify our ways of communicating

- Quaker business
- pastoral and spiritual matters
- social events and informal chats
- information.

What methods do we use for these? Are they different for each one?

Are they effective, bearing in mind that not all Friends want to know everything that is going on?

Some Friends are unable or reluctant to use the internet and mobile phones.

Some of us live in areas with poor internet and mobile phone coverage. Some of us cannot afford such equipment or do not have the knowledge to use it.

Can we accept that and create a useful strategy to include those friends in our communication? We already do this to some extent, but is it good enough?

For example, does your meeting use a telephone tree to spread news? Do we share good effective practice with each other?

There is no doubt that Friends in roles find their work so much easier if information can be spread via the internet.

One idea would be having one or two internet-using Friends in LM clusters who are willing to send and receive online communications and spread them around Friends in different formats, for example via social media, WhatsApp etc., we may be able to ensure that no one is overlooked. A telephone tree in a LM takes the burden of communicating information off the clerks/convenors by spreading the load.

Both of these ideas could be a valuable support for role holders.

A North Wales Area Meeting information page on the new Quakers in Wales website could also be used for this to prevent more emails in Inboxes.

Quakers in Wales and Britain Yearly Meeting increasingly have a social media presence which can be immediate, engaging and lively as well as spiritual and thought-provoking. Could NWAM use Quakers in Wales social media links too?

It goes without saying, but here it is anyway – nothing works if Friends aren't willing to engage. Our communication can only ever be good enough.

Let us ask our younger relatives and friends to teach us new ways to reach out. They are doing it already. They do not need to be concerned about geography.

Some of us chat and worship with people all over the world. What can we learn from this to help our ways of communicating?

See this quote from a Friend with many roles and a very busy working and family life:

For Friends who work, some of us have wall-to-wall zoom Meetings and emails all day, and increasingly Quaker business is done that way too, and it makes a Quaker role feel like another job.

For working Friends, a varied way of doing Quaker work when possible, would be welcome.

There are better ways of sending information such as Google Docs, where everyone can have access to a document online. This avoids adding to the emails we already have. Quakers in Wales is going to use its website to link to Google Docs. There will be a folder that can be accessed by anyone with permission to look at it.

We must get away from this habit of using email for everything. We need to get a bit smarter than this.

We do need to get smarter, Friends. Can we change? Can the silence of our worship show the way? Instead of a torrent of words can we transform our communication to just enough, using the right means to engage as many of us as possible?

Let's look at our communication now in order to communicate more effectively in the future.

Of course, if **X** doesn't look at the tweets, the texts, the WhatsApp alerts, the emails, the postcard, the parchment scroll, **X** will remain oblivious. We've all been **X** from time to time.

No matter what method we use, the message needs to be, where possible, short, simple to understand and engaging. **X** might, just might, look at some of them then, and that is good enough.

**See Appendix 4
Heard it Through the Grapevine Graphic**

Building an All-age Meeting. Is it already there, hiding from us?

It's very unfortunate but also typical of our North Wales Quaker community at present, that no young Friend was involved extensively in the Keep It Simple discussions. Their voices are therefore absent from this document.

Communication is, of course, key to this.

Are we aware of what is going on in the different age groups in Wales and the UK?

For example, different events like summer schools for Junior Meeting and Young Friends General Meeting have been and are happening all the time.

How can we keep up with what's going on for young Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting, in order to spread the word to young Friends in Wales? Some of these events encourage friends of young Friends to join in too. Letting young Friends know about events where they could bring along a friend may encourage more engagement.

If older Friends had regular news about these events would it brighten us? Show older Friends that vibrancy is there?

Are there groups aimed at 25-plus working and non-working Friends with and without families?

Do young Friends know about older Friends' events and vice versa?

The emails about these sessions were sent to some Young Friends, but as one Young Friend has 3 jobs, and the others work long hours it's hard for them to fit things in. Emails are obviously not an effective means of communicating with Young Friends.

How do younger people communicate? The way they communicate is different from the way most of us communicate. We and our meetings, need to learn their methods of communication in order to engage with them. They need to teach us what's relevant to them.

The average age of becoming involved in Qs is in your 40s, and the average age of membership is 60+.

How do we encourage younger people to be involved in Quakerism?

How do we interest and communicate with the Generation Z (those who have come of age since the millennium and grown up as 'digital natives')?

Digital native - a person born or brought up during the age of digital technology and so familiar with computers and the internet from an early age.

Is it possible to set up a zoom meeting across AM or Quakers in Wales just for Young Friends and ask them to 'bring a friend'? They could run it, make connections, possibly leading to them running various events or groups, created by them for them. Ask them, 'What is something you would like to do?' then give them space to do it.

Perhaps more open access to Young Friends General Meeting, Summer Schools etc to friends of young Friends might be a way forward. Perhaps these could be advertised on social media?

One Friend said,

'When I was in a larger AM we were lucky to have a paid BYM teen worker. Young Friends were encouraged to bring a friend to events and if you do several of those 'bring a friend' events some of those friends stick around so the number of YPs grew. Similarly my niece in South Wales, not really connected to a Meeting, was encouraged to go to Junior Gathering where she knew no-one. There were empty spaces, so she was encouraged to take a friend. They enjoyed themselves and so the friend is going to the Yearly Meeting 11- to 15-year-old session.

'I too enjoyed being in a Meeting with my peer group. When you don't have that it's difficult.'

Having someone of your own age in a Meeting is really important. We need to have a critical mass of Young Friends to attract other young people.

Critical mass is the seed that sets things off for all age groups. All age groups struggle when there's not many of our own age.

Let's consider activities which are not just M4W such as shared meals, a Meeting House garden needing looking after, litter picking in a group. Doing things together helps us feel part of our Meeting

An all-age Meeting is about community building, and that's what we should be about all the time, in whatever we do.

Let's encourage people to socialise in every way we can imagine.

In Wales and Britain we may well be worshipping, engaging in activism and socialising in our own age groups; we may well already have separate all-age meetings that are working well and engaging with the world. Geography matters less to all of us now.

If we could just communicate our goings-on to each other somehow, could we not see that we are in fact already an all-age meeting, learn from each other and build on that?

If it is true that all this is going on, but we don't know about it, we're all missing out on a great party.

Thoughts and Ideas about Spiritual and Pastoral Care of our meetings

Do we need to revisit the definitions of what being a named Elder and Pastoral Carer are? Are new Friends, unfamiliar with Quaker terms, aware of the roles and support they offer?

Some of our Local Meetings have been practising shared Eldership and Pastoral Care.

It was commented upon that Pastoral Care works well but shared Eldership doesn't.

Does this mean that the name of an Elder needs to be discerned and that it is not appropriate to have shared Eldership?

A method of Pastoral Care used by one of our LMs is a buddy system where Friends are paired up to look after each other's well-being.

Can you have a buddy system for eldership?

Some Meetings are not labelling anyone as a Pastoral Carer or Elder.

Some have one Elder and one Pastoral Carer working together as a team.

One Friend commented that as most of our Meetings are pretty small you don't need a formal arrangement.

However if we don't have a formal approach in LMs, i.e. no named Elder and Pastoral Carer, we do need someone who goes through the list of members at least once a year to make sure that no-one is being forgotten.

Once again, communication is key. Varying methods of communication between Friends and named Elders and Pastoral Carers is vital. Letter, telephone, email or zoom become so important for the Elders and Pastoral Carers to keep contact with a Friend having a hard time. The same goes if an Elder and Pastoral Carer can't attend meeting.

Looking after every lamb in the flock means someone needs to be tasked with doing that, either by having a formal role or having a structure in place. Whatever the method, it must be done so that no-one is left to cope on their own.

Some LMs rely a lot on one weighty Friend. That Friend is often the glue that holds Friends together. We need to think about that. It was commented that a meeting can only be viable if it contains weighty Friends.

Are all of us sure what a 'weighty Friend' is?

If a meeting is lacking in weighty Friends, what different glue we can have? A monthly chat to check on the spiritual journey of the Meeting?

The Doorkeeper is an important role linked to Eldership. The welcome given sets up the warmth, friendliness and spiritual nature of the meeting. Is this a role that is a stepping stone to Eldership?

Is there an alternative word or phrase for Elder? Knowledgeable Friend? Weighty Friend? Sage? Spiritual Friend? Good Shepherd/ess?

Things have changed over the pandemic. We've lost people, our families have been affected by Covid, we've lost confidence going out. We need to get to know each other again.

That doesn't mean sitting in silence, it means getting out and doing things socially, in person ideally but online too.

We begin by knowing each other in friendly ways and grow to know each other in the things that are eternal.

Some LMs have meetings for worship at a Friend's house when they are unable to come to Meeting. We should offer that more.

How are we going to train Friends for these roles if external face-to-face training is problematic?

Do we need longer than a weekend to train for Eldership?
American Friends have Eldership training that lasts a year.

In other AMs when an Elder is appointed they have an Elder Mentor who supports them through the training and the early stages of being an Elder so that they have someone they can talk to and be guided by and have a place to bring issues that are of concern to them.

There may be Friends who have eldered in the past who would be more comfortable being a Mentor than an Elder.

We could have mentors for all kinds of different roles. We have Friends with so much experience who may not want to do the role again but would be willing to be a guide.

**See Appendix 5 A Local Meeting Circle of Support and
Appendix 6 Ministry – What Friends Said**

Afterword

Let us reflect upon what we have spoken of

Quotations from Friends in our last session

It's very rare that we get the opportunity to hear from other meetings about how they're getting on and the problems they are dealing with. It's been very useful.

I've found the sessions really interesting, and it's been lovely to spend time with people just 'in thought' rather than doing things.

I've been struck by the tension in making laudable attempts to simplify whilst retaining what we need, but the success seems to depend on the size of meetings. In smaller meetings we can be simple but in larger meetings the roles are there because they perform a needed function. That's my impression anyway but I have been struck by that tension.

It's been invaluable to think about what we're doing instead of being busy doing it. We all suffer from great business and forget the advice about this in the Advices and Queries. Perhaps we should do this on a more regular basis, just stand back and look at what the situation is and where the strengths and weaknesses are and the stresses. I think that's really been the major value of what we've been doing, and Friends who have missed out on this have missed something very useful.

We haven't been able to hear the voices of younger Friends.

One of the things that's come through very strongly is that there is no one solution for every meeting. It seems that it's best to reflect on how each meeting can best run its own affairs. If some type of new organising of roles were imposed on meetings we'd be back to where we started. I think in the future we need to be as flexible as possible.

If each of you had one thing to say in the summary about this process what would it be?

I would say that there was a need for this forum. I benefit from hearing other people's thoughts and problems. I think something similar should happen every now and then so that we don't fall back into doing things purely on a routine basis. Rather like Zoom forced us to do things differently, this forum has brought things up which may not be urgent now but need to be borne in mind in the future. We need to keep on keeping up to date with ideas and thinking, and a forum like this helps that. The world is changing quickly. Young people live in a high-tech world

and Zoom is about the furthest most Friends have got in that world and even that is probably old hat to younger people.

Would recovery be an appropriate word? The way we ourselves and our meetings have been existing for the past two years has been so different. All the balls were thrown in the air and now we're seeing how they have come back down. How should we recover from the massive disruption that's taken place?

One of the things we lose on Zoom is unprogrammed chat. If we hold a Zoom meeting we have to have a title and a topic and a structure, but we can't just have a chat with somebody. I don't think we can overestimate the importance of that. The sense of community, showing love and understanding to each other, talking about things on a more eternal plane rather than a job plane, is powerful and I don't think we should underestimate the importance of that to our community. I agree that a forum like this needs repeating, but just as this one has been facilitated. It's been light, with lots of room to think as well as talk. That's such a luxury. I wonder if we should have a 'bubbling up' group, but without an agenda, just a chance to meet and chat, but held by a facilitator. Unprogrammed time to just think and talk is such a luxury.

Things will change. Change happens all the time as we've seen over the last years, very definitely. I'm sure we'll carry on; I'm sure things will continue in some form or another. My meeting has changed enormously while I've been there but that's alright. Keep hoping.

I'm glad we are considering how to keep things simple.

I like those phrases, 'what's bubbling up' and 'how to keep things simple.' They point to a way forward.