

# **Letchworth Friends Meeting Triennial Report to Area Meeting May 2025**

## **General**

The period of this report is from September 2021 (the end of the previous triennial report) to the end of December 2024. The period is one of considerable change and development for Letchworth Meeting, as we emerged from the effects of the COVID epidemic. Added to this, our long-term warden, Avril Beesley, retired at the end of December 2021 and the Meeting took the running of the Meeting House into our own hands until we were able to appoint a new warden, Renée Santosa, from June 2022.

In September 2021, we had just begun to meet for worship in person, albeit with restrictions, and the Meeting House has been open every Sunday since then for worship. Numbers at Meeting for Worship have decreased slightly since COVID and have not entirely returned to their previous level. We now average between 10 and 15, though sometimes we have as many as 20 and on one occasion there were only 5 at Meeting. Advices & Queries continue to be read on a regular basis, both in Meeting for Worship and in our business meetings.

## **Spiritual Life of the Meeting**

We seek to involve newer Attenders in the Meeting and a number have become members, including one aged 11. We have also revived our regular discussion groups, which nurture the spiritual life of our Meeting. These bring together a mix of Attenders and Members, and are open to anyone from outside the Meeting. From May 2022, we reintroduced refreshments after Meeting for Worship and re-established our practise of shaking hands to conclude our Meetings. We have also established a “welcoming Friend” to stand outside the front door and welcome people arriving at Sunday Meeting.

## **Witness**

Our witness to peace continues. We sell white poppies every year and try to spread the message within Letchworth. Recently, we have begun speaking to local cub scout groups about remembrance day and what it means to us. In 2024, we initiated a conversation with the Letchworth branch of the Royal British Legion about the meaning of remembrance and possible involvement with remembrance day. This progresses slowly, but we are aware that some things take time. We have worked with and supported the local Palestine Support Group. We signed the Quaker statement on Israel & Palestine and have fed into the central Quaker consideration of this situation. We continue to subscribe to the Campaign Against Arms Trade.

We have expended a significant amount of our financial resources over the last 3 years in trying to make our Meeting House more environmentally sustainable. Though there is a limit to what can be done with the Meeting House itself, we have carried out substantial work to the Garden Room (previously the Childrens’ Classroom) to insulate it better and make it more comfortable for users. We have also removed all asbestos from the building and planted fruit trees in the orchard. All our energy is on a “green” tariff.

We have discussed in detail the issues associated with reparations for exploitation and fed into the Area Meeting and Yearly Meeting considerations of this issue. As suggested by Yearly Meeting, we have dropped the use of the term “overseers” due to its association with slavery.

We support a wide range of organisations through our Sunday collections and special collections. These include Quaker Social Action, Practical Action, CAAT, Water Aid, Glebe House, Jackie’s Drop In Centre (Letchworth), Herts domestic abuse helpline, Tree Aid, Friends School Ramallah, St Francis Leprosy Guild, Herts Young Homeless, Helping Herts Homeless, Herts welcomes refugees, Diapalante, Letchworth Food Bank, Palestine

Trauma Centre, Human Force, Israeli Refusers Network, Embrace The Middle East, Hertfordshire MIND, Peace Pledge Union, Turkey Earthquake appeal, Hoddesdon Peace Cottage.

We have also transferred our bank account from Lloyds Bank to CAF in view of their investment policies.

### **Outreach**

Outreach activities include joining Discovering Quakers, organising local events such as our George Fox Birthday event in 2024 and the presentation of a short film about Quakers at the Broadway Cinema, Letchworth. We are also hosting talks for various young scouting groups (cubs and beavers) where we focus on what Quakers believe and our peace testimony. Our lettings also provide opportunities for outreach as well as support for local community groups.

### **Activities and Events**

Our regular discussion groups restarted during 2023 and continue bi-monthly, on a variety of subjects, most recently the Quaker testimonies. Our Christmas Meeting also restarted in 2022. In 2023, we celebrated two weddings in the Meeting House. Both couples had an association with the Meeting and, in both cases, they regularly attend Quaker Meetings, though elsewhere. During the period, we have had only one death within the Meeting, with its associated Memorial Meeting.

In June 2024, we celebrated George Fox's 400th birthday with a whole day event, which attracted quite a lot of interest in the local community and from Meetings elsewhere. We had some new faces at Meeting for Worship as a result of this. We also hosted a number of talks by representatives of local groups and had a Meeting for Worship with Area Meeting camp committee, followed by a presentation by them. We annually open the Meeting House for the Heritage Open Days in September, and welcome visitors with tea and cakes. Howgills also hosted a Palestine Culture day run by the local Palestine Support Group and a folk concert, with supper, for Diapalante, one of the charities we have regularly supported for some years.

### **Use of the Meeting House**

During this period, the Meeting House continued to be used regularly for various local groups who hire the rooms. These included:

- Counselling courses
- Music groups and concerts
- Yoga
- Bridge
- Buddhists
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Circle Dancing
- a Womens Health charity

In 2023 we updated and widened our terms and conditions for letting into a Room Hirers Welcome Pack for use by all groups using the Meeting House. We now have WIFI officially available to users for a small fee.

### **Friends' wellbeing**

At the time of writing, we are seeing around a dozen Friends, at our Meeting for Worship. We seek to maintain contact and support for Friends, with Elders taking an active role in this. During the past three years, we have welcomed a number of new members as well as enjoyed meeting a number of new Enquirers and Attenders, many of whom have stayed with us.

***Ian Chandler***

**Clerk of Letchworth Meeting**

**May 2025**