

KEY THEMES _ NORTHUMBRIA AREA MEETING AND THE FUTURE

1. Which day of the week to hold Area Meeting?

- Clear consensus from Local Meetings that Area Meetings should be held on Sundays
 - Friends can join Local Meetings in worship in the morning, share lunch then into the business of Area Meeting ... perhaps at an earlier time than 2.00pm
 - This eases Friends from family demands on Saturdays.
 - Sundays have a more relaxed ambience which will be conducive to relaxation and spiritual questing.
 - Friends will have time to make friends and get to know each other.
 - It eases parking challenges ... everywhere.
 - We can do this!

2. How often should we hold Area Meeting?

- Should we move to quarterly Area Meetings? That is four meetings each year, rather than the current eight. Each Meeting hosts Area Meeting every two years. Two neighbouring Local Meetings could share the preparations for Area Meeting.
 - This could link usefully to Meeting for Sufferings' cycle of gatherings. Issues from Sufferings could have a more dedicated consideration. Issues to Sufferings could be better discerned in our Area Meeting.
 - This could link usefully to our Trustees' cycle of meetings and reports.
 - There would be little, if any, impact on the timing of matters of membership, hearing reports and sharing concerns.
 - Nominations and appointments which have time imperatives would be a challenge. Should we enable Standing Nominations Committee to make appointments, reporting to Area Meeting in due course and for the Area Meeting's records?
 - Should we create an Area Meeting Working Group to deal with routine matters including Nominations and Appointments, written reports, Treasurer's and other financial reports, Membership data including transfers in and out, and, general business development? The Working Group could comprise a representative from each Local Meeting who are charged with returning to their Local Meetings with reports of such materials?
 - Should we build in to our process a system enabling an Area Meeting to be called at short notice with, say, no less than two weeks notice. For example, if membership matters or reports from conferences and such have built up an evening session to hear membership matters or to hear four or five reports with time for discussion might prove attractive.
 - Is there a role for our Trustees in absorbing some of our routine business, as suggested by Meeting for Sufferings?

3. What might be the format for Area Meetings ... combining essential business, spiritual development and pleasure?

- Alnwick Local Meeting has written a prescription!
 - A whole day event, with worship at the host meeting in the morning
 - A short break with tea/coffee with, possibly, a presentation, exhibition or speaker
 - Shared lunch - soup provided by the hosts
 - A spiritual exercise to put the Friends in a frame of mind to approach important matters.
 - Area Meeting Business *see below* ...
 - Area Meeting Tea, including sale of home-made items jams, vegetables, cakes and breads for their own meeting funds.
 - Overnight accommodation offered to enable Friends to join the hosts in morning worship.
 - A welcome for children and children's events.
 - **On Business ...**
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 - Should we build in to our process a system enabling an Area Meeting to be called at short notice with, say, no less than two weeks notice. For example, if reports have built up an evening session to hear four or five reports with time for discussion might prove attractive.
 - Is there a role for our Trustees in absorbing some of our routine business?

4. How do we better inform ourselves about our Area Meeting, how it works, its role in the wider context of the Society of Friends and, indeed, how the Society of Friends works and what it does?

- A new format would suggest or command a programme of interesting talks from local or national sources, exhibitions or displays or a learning schedule drawn from Quaker Life or Woodbrooke on the Road.
 - We have a Learning Development Committee. Should we commission them to prepare such a programme.
 - Events could happen outside Area Meetings, as events in themselves.
 - Including events for children.
- We need to know how our Area Meeting works, yet we have no materials to hand.
 - Is this another role for our Learning Development Committee/
 - Do we need an INREACH Team? To develop tailored leaflets, posters and other materials promoting and explaining Area Meeting and its workings.
 - Should we exploit more effectively materials from Friends House?
 - Including materials for children.