

Lewes Quaker Meeting
Meeting of EORG with Clerks on June 29, 2020
held by Skype at 2.00 p.m.

Present: EORG: John Ashcroft, Bob Harwood, Chris Lawson and Louise Tinsley
Clerks: John Thurley and Nancy Wall

Apology: Veryan Greenwood

1. Check on arrangements for MfWs at present

The meetings in the garden were being attended by about 6 people on Sunday mornings, fewer in the evening and about 5 on Wednesdays. Louise and John A were willing to continue organising them and acting as elders at the time. Louise said that she would keep the names of those attending for 3 weeks in case needed for contact tracing. The Zoom meeting was well attended and the subsequent chat a useful time for exchanging news and views. We hoped that Patricia would continue organising them and acting as elder for now but we would consult with her once worship in the Meeting House was restarted. The Separate Togetherness continued for a good many in the Meeting. Louise said that up to now, no-one had used the MH for private prayer on a Wednesday morning.

2. Re- opening of meeting house

Agreed minute:

- Once meeting for worship in the Meeting House has started, we hope that the Zoom and garden meetings will continue as long as needed.
- We hope that visitors will be able to join us in Meeting for Worship in the building.
- We await the Risk Working Group's plan for details of precautions to be taken, including notices to be given.
- We felt that re-opening should not be rushed but hoped that Meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays could start from 12 July, subject to agreement by the Meeting for Worship for Business on 5 July. As EORG we would expect to act as welcomers and elders as usual with two Friends fulfilling the welcoming and eldering roles on Sunday mornings.
- If Meeting for Worship for Business decides on July 5 that children's meeting will not restart for the time being, we hope the children's room would be available for overflow. The garden will also be available if the weather is suitable. If numbers have to be limited, we hope priority if needed will be given to Friends with particular needs or coming from a distance. Nonetheless, the practice of Friends who wish to be certain of a seat emailing the Resident Friends should continue.

Further points made:

- Nancy will be asking Circle Convenors if they could find out the level of interest amongst their members (including families) in worshipping in the MH. Signs so far were that many people were understandably cautious.

- John A offered to organise a rota for Sunday mornings once needed. The Resident Friends will look after the other Meetings (eldering, safety announcements etc).
- The possibility of “blended meetings” (i.e. in the MH and linked live to the Zoom meeting) had been raised. There was already some advice about this from Quaker Life and Woodbrooke. It would probably involve some investment on the technical side. There are many issues to be thought through if the Meeting wishes it to be done.
- Chris was confirmed as our representative on the Risk Group and will report out views to Patricia straightaway.

3. Suggestion of a WhatsApp group for the Meeting

This had come up in the Zoom Chat on June 21. We can see that there could be advantages for the Meeting though not everyone will want to be involved. We decided that the only way to know if it was wanted was for someone to start it off, the Clerks to advertise it in the Notices and see what response there was. Louise thought David would be willing to do this and will ask him.

4. Role of EORG and its relation to AM Elders and Overseers

We had considerable further discussion of these matters, noting AM on June 14 had requested “Lewes Meeting to clarify the role of EORG and how it relates to AM eldership and oversight.” We were helped by a paper by Nancy giving the background to the setting up of SPRIG/EORG in 2016 and reporting a discussion she and John T had had with Peter Aviss and Deirdre Morris (AM Clerks). We also looked at the existing terms of reference for EORG. Nancy had also had a discussion with Helen Thomas as convenor of the Nominations Committee.

In relation to Lewes Meeting and AM we agreed this minute:

We hope that Lewes Meeting’s Nominations Committee will check if those being appointed to EORG are willing also to have their names forwarded to AM for appointment as an AM Elder. We know that AM elders are important and accept that Lewes as the largest meeting should be well involved in supporting them. We will confirm names of those currently willing as soon as we can.

Nancy will report this to Peter Aviss and to Helen Thomas for our Nominations Committee to do the checking with existing members of EORG about their willingness to be AM Elders. We know of the difficulties Nominations Committee has in finding new members for EORG with so many of the strong members of our Meeting being involved in the development programme work but would find our work easier if we had the 6 members suggested in the terms of reference. On the matter of EORG’s role within Lewes Meeting, we noted that many Meetings had non-traditional ways of covering the responsibilities of elders and overseers. There were plenty of Friends who could be trusted to take the role of elder for a particular occasion. EORG’s responsibility is to make sure that what is needed takes place, not necessarily to do it themselves. We need to be careful when making decisions that affects MfW in particular without consulting the Business Meeting.

We considered how the roles of overseers are carried out in our Meeting. Some of those in QFP in relation to membership are not on EORG’s terms of reference at present. We know that Circle

Convenors in practice are doing a great deal of the pastoral care of members and attenders. It is good for them to have the opportunity to go on relevant training courses at Woodbrooke. Looking ahead, we suggest that it would be timely for the Meeting to review the role of EORG in the light of the experience since 2016. This could begin by our writing a "Stewardship Report" on what we do and identifying some of the issues that we see as needing to be addressed. It was also pointed that our minutes/notes should be being made available within the Meeting, for instance being placed on the website. We need to restart doing this. (Chris to follow up)

5. Silence at the end of notices

We note the decision of Business Meeting on June 7 that asking for a formal silence at the end of notices should be discontinued as not all Friends appreciate it.

6. Future meetings:

We suggest that our next meeting is a joint one with Circle Convenors on Monday July 27 at 2.00 p.m. by Zoom. Chris will check around those Convenors of this is alright.

Chris Lawson (with John Ashcroft) 30.6.20