

Ulster Quarterly Meeting

20th February 2016

Ulster Quarterly Meeting was held on 20th February 2016 at Frederick Street Meeting House. Most Friends arrived in very good time for the morning session and were well rewarded by being greeted with the wonderful aroma of real ground coffee, which seemed to be in great supply throughout the whole day. Frederick Street Friends were the perfect hosts.

The customary period of Worship before business is a valuable time to quieten our thoughts from normal activities, to ask for guidance on matters arising and to request the wisdom of the Holy Spirit throughout all our deliberations.

We were pleased to welcome Charles B. and Marjorie A. Lamb from Roscrea Meeting, Co. Tipperary.

The clerks, Edmund J. Allen and Sheena M. Bell, were well prepared and carried through the business with patience and grace. We wish to record our appreciation to those who give time and talent to keep the machinery of our Society running smoothly.

Early in the day we were introduced to Stephen Moore, the recently appointed Principal of Friends' School Lisburn, who gave his first report to Ulster Q.M.

Stephen is aware of the great responsibility he has taken on but thankful that the challenge has been trusted to him.

He reminded us of many of the past successes. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent and their united aim is to strive to achieve even greater things. As a listener, one wonders is that possible but the thirst for higher achievements is a great incentive. Making learning enjoyable is an excellent objective and the outstanding results rewards both students and teachers.

At present there are on offer 24 subjects for G.C.S.E. and 26 subjects for A levels. The aim is to provide the broadest range possible, which is ever-increasing.

The number of activities taking place within the community is mind-boggling. Parents too are pleased to be involved.

To conclude, Stephen was dashing off to watch his school play rugby against Wallace High School in Lisburn. That is competition at its keenest.

In contrast, the discussion on the closure of Portadown Quaker Meeting House and its pending sale could not have been more sobering. The current offers are disappointing and Portadown Friends are anxious to ensure its future use is appropriate. Friends have been appointed to get legalities put in place.

This is not a simple matter and there is an awareness that unused property soon starts to look dilapidated. Prayer for guidance, consensus and the right decision would be valued.

~ Margaret Livingston

Lunch was followed by a lively discussion led by the Testimony and Social Witness Committee entitled **“Are we sitting on our laurels?”** This was based on the results of the questionnaire sent to, and completed by, each Preparative Meeting (and worshipping group?) in Ulster.

David Gamble led the discussion indicating the responses obtained by the questionnaire and giving us food for thought and discussion. What stayed with me was the range of very active involvement individual meetings have with their community, the differences between the rural and urban nature of local engagement and the challenges.

I am not sure that we answered the question or, if so, came near to finding fresh solutions. The question and the challenge remain - “Are we sitting on our laurels?”

~ Sheena Bell