**How do I see Quaker Life Representative Council (QLRC)?**

Take a moment to pause and imagine your ideal Quaker community…  What does it look like?  How do people behave?  What are the conversations about?  For me, the image that springs to mind looks very much like QLRC which offers opportunities for learning and deep reflection, some light-heartedness and, hopefully, growth on a personal as well as a community level.  The content of each gathering has an inspiring and motivating theme, reflecting the current needs, and thinking of British Friends as a whole.

There is always plenty to take back to Area Meeting and we are encouraged to share our enthusiasms, all we have learned and our experiences as widely as we can.  But it is also important for bonding, for taking friendships deeper and for making new friends!  QLRC can be seen as an extended family, providing a safe space to explore the things that are eternal as well as those that are frivolous!

I have now served three years as a deputy and have one more year as the representative for my AM.  The whole experience has been nothing but a joy and a privilege.  I am extremely thankful to my AM for this appointment and would unreservedly recommend it as a way to serve the AM, to consolidate one’s own faith and to discover more of the riches of living a Quaker Life!

**Meri Goad, East Scotland AM**

I felt unsure about accepting the nomination to serve on QLRC. As I set off to Woodbrooke for the first time, local Friends seemed confident that I would be able to pick things up as I went along. I was a relatively new attender then, but I need not have worried.

Each QLRC meeting generates an astonishing sense of community that I have rarely experienced elsewhere. Being expected to be a two-way channel of communication between QLRC and Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting was daunting at first, but it has gradually become easier, as I have got to know my area meeting better. I have learned a great deal about the work of Quaker Life, coming to appreciate the wealth of expertise amongst the different Quaker Life staff and the creative ideas shared by representatives from other area meetings. I have been able to share many things with my own area meeting and point Friends in the right direction when needing particular support or resources.

I have realised the importance of QLRC in enabling Quaker Life staff to connect with Quakers across the UK, helping them to discern the right way forward for the work of different departments.  QLRC has also been a great opportunity for me to grow as a Quaker, through getting to know some wonderful Friends and finding unexpected opportunities for further service that have been just right for me.

**Kathy Chandler, Lancashire Central & North AM**

Like most Friends, when agreeing to be nominated to a particular role in Area Meeting a number of doubts and trepidations set in. What is this group I’m being asked to join? What are the other members like? Much weightier than me, no doubt! How often do they meet? Does Area Meeting want a report after *every* gathering?

How can I possibly share the personal, spiritual and information exchange experiences of a weekend with over a hundred Quakers in a few short moments allocated to me in a busy Area business meeting? But I’m a veteran now. In the final year of my second term. And it gets better all the time. From the start, the friendship and good companionship at meals and in home group sessions has been the most important aspect for me. Being with so many people who share my passion for faith and Quakerism, who listen to me, and who are keen to share their spiritual stories and journeys inspires and encourages me to be open and strong in sharing my journey. Hearing what Quaker Life staff have been doing in the world on our behalf reassures me that the Quaker message and Quaker way of doing things is being broadcast beyond our Meetings.

And my Area Meeting listens. They enjoy reading my reports which are factual, but also impressionistic and lively. They appreciate hearing about the support and new services available from Friends House. So, if asked to take on Quaker Life Representative Council as part of your journey into service, say YES!

**Michael Long, Northumbria AM**

I always look forward to QLRC - the people, the place, the ideas, the worship, the home groups, the entertainment. It’s hard to explain how all these things come together to make a truly magical experience - every time.

Then one time I arrived in a foul mood, angry about things that happened at home and expecting the mood of QLRC to be rather irritating. As soon as I arrived, someone spotted that I was not myself - a hug and gentle listening, a group helping someone else and by the end of the evening I felt at home with Friends again - still angry about things outside - held in the light, nevertheless. Please decide to go. Every time I have come home refreshed, sometimes much more than that.

**Isobel Dunbar, Hardshaw & Mann AM**