

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA QUAKER MEETING JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **QUAKER PRISON CHAPLAIN SUPPORTER**

Gloucestershire Area Quaker Meeting currently supports Quaker Prison Chaplains at HMP Gloucester and HMP Leyhill. QPCs are appointed by the governors of the individual prisons, their names having been put forward by the Area Meeting. They will have had to undergo security clearance and sign Official Secrets Act and Counter Terrorism declarations. The two prisons have different populations. Gloucester is a dispersal prison, taking men on remand or at the beginning of their sentences whereas Leyhill is an open prison, taking men towards the end of their sentences often for crimes of physical or sexual violence.

The Quaker Chaplain of each prison is to have a supporter who will assist and support them as set out below.

#### **General Context of the Role:**

Quaker Faith and Practice 13.45 et seq. sets out in some detail the role of Quaker prison Chaplains. The role has four tasks: to visit and minister to those in prison who have registered themselves as Quakers; to assist the work of the prison Chaplaincy; to be a Quaker presence in the prison, particularly in relation to staff; and to be a channel between the prison service and the area meeting, keeping Friends aware of prison issues. Where and when possible they will also arrange occasional or regular meetings for worship.

In the Quaker context the aim is to offer ministry to those imprisoned, especially those who are Quakers or who ask for a Quaker to see them. Friends House provided updated advice and a guide to the role of the QPM in March 2012 and this available on request.

However, as noted in QF&P, the Quaker prison ministers have their needs too, and it is important that area meeting supports them in what can be demanding and emotional work. The role of the supporter is set out in the Friends House advice, namely to meet regularly with the QPM to ensure support and accountability between the QPM and the area meeting community.

#### **Experience and qualifications sought:**

An understanding of Quaker ways and beliefs is important but the supporter does not have to be in membership.

It would be helpful if the supporter has awareness of the nature of prison environments. The role is more specific than those supporters who attend meetings in the prisons, either on a regular or occasional basis. The QPC supporter may attend the meetings for worship held in prison and periodic attendance is likely to help towards an understanding of the work of the QPC.

It would be helpful if the supporter is willing to attend specific conferences and courses that will enhance their ability to provide effective support.

The supporter will need to be someone that the QPC feels is supportive of them, and the views of the QPC will be sought before an appointment is made.

## **Main Responsibilities:**

They can be summed up as:

- Providing emotional support for the QPC as well as being a listening ear and springboard for ideas.
- Supporting the QPC in communicating with area meeting on how they are fulfilling the demanding work in a suitable and effective manner.
- Being prepared to serve for the triennium as it takes time to become familiar with the QPM role.
- Being prepared to go through the security procedures required by the prison as necessary.
- The supporter will be available to the QPC as agreed between the QPC and the supporter
- Conversations between the QPC and the supporter should respect privacy and confidentiality, but this should not be used to prevent issues of concern being brought to the AM.
- If the QPC and the supporter agree, a support group may be formed, in which case the supporter would be the convenor of the support group.

In practice, depending on the kind of involvement you find best, this can mean...

- Holding planned meetings with the QPC to discuss issues, and gain a sense of the QPC's needs and how these can be supported.
- Helping the QPC to take proposals on how they wish to fulfil the QPC tasks to area meeting, and giving support with the implementation of any projects agreed by AM..
- Supporting the QPC in ensuring that Friends throughout Area Meeting provide a reliable and ongoing presence at agreed meetings for worship in the prisons.
- If the supporter is willing, to obtain the full terrorist level of security clearance needed to allow them to hold a Meeting for Worship in the prison if the QPC is prevented.

## **Rewards and satisfactions of the job:**

You will be upholding and continuing the long held Quaker concern for those who are imprisoned and the conditions of prisons. You will be helping to maintain a Quaker presence in the local prisons and the possibility of Quaker worship within that environment, with the transformative possibilities that this can bring.

*Prepared by Eliot Walker and Wendy Gerard, with contributions by Sue Barrance, and accepted at AM 13.10.2012*