



## GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

21-22 Nov 2009

Aberdeen

### Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard a reading from *Quaker Faith and Practice* 26.61 on the universal light which can unite all those of a sincere heart.

### Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome 4 attenders to this GM.

We also welcome as visitors Rev Graeme Bruce of the United Free Church of Scotland, Michael Hutchinson, Assistant Recording Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, and Ali Ghanem, one of our speakers for this afternoon.

We will record the total numbers of all present and add them to these minutes.

East Scotland	10	
South East Scotland	9	
North Scotland	15	
West Scotland	<u>9</u>	
Total:	43	plus 3 visitors.

### Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint Chris Smith from East Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask North Scotland AM to report on the next GM.

### Min. 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting:

Robert Steele (W)  
Gudrun Mitchell (W)

We record the following death since our last meeting:

George Baines (W).

### Min. 5 Report from Representative Friend

Pamala McDougall has given us a report on her work over the last two years. She has reminded us of the importance of ecumenical work, and the opportunities it can provide for deepening our understanding of our faith and our Christian roots, and for playing a part in creating more cooperative work among the Churches.

She spoke in particular of conferences she had attended, including one on "Christianity, Conflict and the Soul of the Nation" which had included speakers on conflicts within faith communities, possibilities of healing through mediation, and ways of strengthening such opportunities. She also spoke of meetings between church representatives and leaders and

the First Minister of Scotland, which she felt had been genuinely useful in raising at government level issues of concern on moral and social questions.

Pamala is ending her term of service and we thank her for all the work she has carried out so energetically and prayerfully on behalf of Friends in Scotland over the past two years. Her full report is attached to these Minutes (Appendix 1).

This work will be continued by Leslie Stevenson as Representative Friend (ACTS) supported by a team of Friends from across Scotland.

### **Min. 6 Budget for 2010**

Daphne Wassermann has introduced the draft budget for 2010. She reminded us of previous decisions to supply Scottish Friend without charge to Area Meetings, to not charge for attendance at Residential General Meetings, and to subsidise the cost of children attending the Kindrogan summer conference. These have all increased GM payments.

She recommends that the annual quota to Area Meetings is increased from £7,800 to £11,000, divided pro rata between Area meetings. We agree to this. We also agree to the proposed donations.

We ask Nominations Function Group to find a replacement for Nancy Selkirk as contact for Quaker Service (formerly Ulster Quaker Service Committee).

### **Min. 7 Meeting for Sufferings report**

Margaret Peacock has reported on the work of Meeting for Sufferings. The Meeting has been taking forward the decision made at Yearly Meeting Gathering regarding the celebration of committed relationships and same-sex marriage. This work includes:

- drafting interim instructions for Registering Officers
- rewriting the section on Marriage in Quaker Faith and Practice
- working for the revision of the Marriage Act
- informing and caring for Friends not in unity with the decision taken at Yearly Meeting Gathering.

There has also been consideration of whether journalists should be allowed to attend sessions of Yearly Meeting in future.

There had been discussion about the 10:10 campaign to promote reductions in carbon emissions. We acknowledge that many Friends have been making changes to their lifestyles in response to the crisis of climate change, and we encourage all Friends and meetings to consider what further steps might be possible.

Margaret reported on the critical state of the financial position of the Society. Meeting for Sufferings had been given details of reduced contributions, which will have a severe impact on Quaker work in the near future. We are urged to become more wholehearted and imaginative in fund-raising activities and in encouraging increased contributions from our membership and attenders.

## Min. 8 Report from Trustees

Philip Bryers reported on the work of Trustees since June 2008. A major role for trustees is consideration of financial papers before they come to GM, and in signing off the annual accounts and report for presentation to OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator).

They have checked that the work of the Function Groups is in accordance with the aims of GM and are satisfied with what they have found. Trustees ensured that the Annual Review of the work of the Administrator took place, and are pleased that this found the work to be fully satisfactory. They are working on creating policies on safeguarding, and on performance and disciplinary procedures for employees. We acknowledge the importance of all this work, and thank our Trustees. The full report is attached to these Minutes (Appendix 2).

## Min. 9 Travel Expenses

Trustees have considered guidelines for refunding of expenses for Friends attending meetings on behalf of Friends. They recommend refunds of – rail fare (cheap advance booking where possible), bus fare, ferry fare, car mileage at 20p per mile where unavoidable. The treasurer would have discretion to pay mileage at different rates under exceptional circumstances.

We agree to this proposal.

## Min.10 Appointments

Nominations Function Group have brought forward the following names, and we agree to these appointments:

Children and Young People's FG	Convenor	Madeleine Harding	SE	Jan10 – Dec12
Communications & Outreach FG	Convenor	Robert Thompson	E	Jan10 – Dec12
ditto	member	Pete Stuart	W	Jan10 – Dec12
Conference FG	Convenor	Margaret Gladden	W	Jan10 – Dec10
Nominations FG	Convenor	Pat Lucas	SE	Jan10 – Dec12
Examiner of Accounts		Andrew Marlow	SE	Jan10 – Dec10
Meeting for Sufferings	Representative	Peter Kennedy	E	YM2010 – YM2013
ditto	Representative	Margaret Peacock	W	YM2010 – YM2013
Representative Friends Pool (to assist Leslie Stevenson)		Alison Burnley	SE	Jan10 – Dec10
		Margaret Boland	W	Jan10 – Dec10
		Margaret Peacock	W	Jan10 – Dec10
		Pamala McDougall	E	Jan10 – Dec10
		Eleanor Fairclough	N	Jan10 – Dec10
		David James	N	Jan10 – Dec10

## **Min. 11 Encountering Friends Worldwide**

We have welcomed two Friends as our speakers this weekend. Ali Ghanem is a Syrian Muslim Quaker, currently living in London, whose journey into Quakerism includes time spent with Aberdeen Friends. He is a former clerk of Europe and Middle East Young Friends. Bronwyn Harwood is a member of Central Edinburgh Meeting who until recently was Executive Secretary to the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).

Bronwyn has given us a brief history of some of the ways in which Quaker groups, some now Yearly Meetings, became established in Europe and the Middle East. We were particularly interested to hear about recent developments, made possible by the internet, in producing materials about Quakerism in sixteen languages for use in many parts of Europe. This project is ongoing and growing. Bronwyn has spoken too of the work of FWCC in holding together the different strands of Quakerism throughout the world, reminding us that it is a committee for consultation.

Ali has shone a spotlight on Young Friends in Europe and the Middle East. He has spoken to us from his own involvement with Europe and Middle East Young Friends and described the activities undertaken by that group. He reminded us of the words of the Dalai Lama: "In practising tolerance, your enemy is your best teacher".

Both Bronwyn and Ali attended the EMES Young Friends Gathering in Damascus in April this year where the theme was "Faith, the Divine and the Other". Drawing on this theme each of them has gone on to tell us some thing of their own personal journeys, and of their experience of "the other".

Ali and Bronwyn invited us to share, in small groups, our responses to two of the questions considered at the Gathering:

*How has/does "the other" affect my faith or spirituality?*

*How can we overcome differences with "the other"?*

We have spent a short time together sharing our reflections from the group discussions. Ali and Bronwyn have left us with much to think about, and with a greater awareness of the world family of Friends of which we are a part. We thank them both for their contribution to this General Meeting.

## **Min. 12 Creating Connections**

We have heard the moving talk by Julia Ryberg, "Creating Connections", which she delivered at Yearly Meeting Gathering in summer 2009.

## **Min. 13 Closing Minute**

We record our thanks to North Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again in Glasgow on 13 March when our special topic will be homelessness and the work of Scottish Churches Housing Action.

Robin Waterston  
Clerk

## REPRESENTATIVE FRIEND REPORT

Events since last report and then overview of last 2 years.

Advices and Queries 6

‘Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship’.

That is what being GM Representative Friend is for me.

### 1. ACTS and Church of Scotland conference on Calvin and Unity in Edinburgh.

After the ecumenical visit to Geneva last year when Calvin seemed to pop up everywhere – I learned even more at this conference from the main speaker, David Cornick, General secretary of Churches Together in England. I was asked to deliver a short account of why I became involved in ecumenism along with 2 others – a RC priest and a young C of S member. We agreed that inreach was the prerequisite to our journey with others, and that we ourselves – and our faith community benefited. Some of you might be familiar with this booklet ‘Quakers and the Ecumenical Agenda’ produced by the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations. In case my enthusiasm has not yet touched some difficult to reach parts of Quakerdom, let me read just a wee bit from the booklet on why we are involved -

+ Reading from part of the booklet on ‘Why we are Involved’.

### 2. Annual Meeting of Church Reps/Leaders with the First Minister, Alex Salmond, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

This was the 5<sup>th</sup> such meeting I’ve attended – 1<sup>st</sup> as GM clerk then as Representative Friend and as other reps change eg the Moderator of the Church of Scotland changes every year, I had the advantage of experience. Until last year I was the only woman present (Lily Twist now represents Methodists in Scotland) I recall the First Minister shaking hands with all the participants until he came to me without clerical garb and went past thinking I was an aide or secretary until I made sure he knew otherwise! However, this year my suggested topic of Restorative Justice was shelved when the First Minister’s office decided only 2 topics would be allowed. Having done my homework and persuaded my local meeting to purchase Marian Liebmann’s book on the subject, it was a disappointment, but my 2<sup>nd</sup> topic on ‘End of life ‘ issues was accepted along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> topic of ‘Social Cohesion’.

Now this was a clever move on our part to enable us under this umbrella heading to discuss the underlying causes of poverty and what more can be done by government to tackle poverty in support for families, also funding available for faith based groups which work in support, AND we went on to discuss alcohol and licensing laws and addiction strategies. After a good hour’s dialogue in which we managed to challenge some of the government’s strategies and proposals, including speeding up financial help to Kinship carers ie children who might have gone into care , but grandparents or other family members take the child to live with them –

Alex Salmond also promised to look into anomalies in funding faith group initiatives to help families stay together eg when one member is in prison. So, after an hour we

moved on to the topic I was to introduce – or as our chairman put it ‘ Now let’s move on to Pamala and the end of life’.

I was once a Marie Curie nurse and have retained an interest in the Hospice movement and in palliative care. With Margot McDonald’s proposed Bill on End of Life Choices and Gil Paterson’s Palliative Care (Scotland) Bill, it seemed timely to ascertain what the government’s views were. I can’t go into the detail – and we had an extra half hour – but I can tell you that Alex Salmond offered a meeting with the Health Secretary, Nicola Sturgeon, myself and others yet to be determined, to ensure the churches are consulted and views heard.

I sometimes wonder at the value of these meetings with the First Minister but as a result of last year’s meeting, a reception and awards presentation for those involved in anti-sectarian work is taking place and there have been other positive outcomes.

3. Friends may remember that I attended a 3 day conference in January of this year in Aviemore as an invited guest of the Church of Scotland on conflict, mediation and peacemaking within our church communities. This arose after research by the Ministerial Committee of the C of S found a worrying number of conflict situations in congregations, between congregations, with ministers, elders, organists and others. The committee wondered if other churches had similar problems – and which were long term or unresolved, so the idea of the conference was born as a means of exploring if a larger conference to address some possible solutions should be arranged and this was agreed.

So I sought the support of GM to return to Aviemore – this time I needed financial backing- to engage in the conference which I returned from 2 days ago called ‘Christianity, Conflict and the Soul of the Nation’. It mainly dealt with how we could respond to conflict within and between our churches. I say mainly because I never really grasped the notion of the ‘soul of the nation’. It was said that Scotland has a turbulent past filled with conflicts and that history impacts on our national psyche today – but doesn’t every country have the same to some degree?

There were 250 participants, 6 keynote addresses, and the opportunity to attend 6 workshops out of 16 on offer, interspersed with worship but not enough silence.

The main speaker was an American called Ken Cloke who is Director of the Centre for Dispute Resolution, with 30 years of world wide mediation experience, who is also a lawyer and a judge. Others were David Brubaker, a Mennonite and our Friend Alastair McIntosh led workshops on ‘Rekindling Community’. It was a very busy 4 day conference from 9am until 9pm – including meals of course.

What did I learn? A lot of about conflicts within faith communities, massive hurts reported in all denominations present, long standing disputes and avoidance at all costs.

I also learned about pro active mediation, mediation techniques, the possibility of transformation by mediation, personal reconciliation, and the need for healing and forgiveness. I gained much from conversations with skillful, interesting, experienced and deeply spiritual participants, and many learned more about Quakers and our history of negotiation, mediation and peace making.

What were the visions and plans at the end of the day? An ecumenical team to be set up to take the vision of a Peace and Reconciliation Centre in Scotland forward to serve the

churches in conflict situations and to serve the nation in wider ways of working for peace.

The government is interested and has expressed interest in funding already. Maybe this is the start of something big – and one which in my vision Quakers should be part of. I'll keep Friends informed in the Scottish Friend.

### Brief Overview

Now to move on to a brief overview of the past 2 years as Rep Friend before handing over to our Friend Leslie Stevenson and our group of 'mini reps' who will share the load of representing Friends ecumenically, politically and socially.

This has been an experiment which has allowed our input to the ecumenical life in Scotland to expand and grow and to have a higher profile politically without the responsibilities of clerkship. There has been interest in our experiment from other meetings and I've been asked to write about it. Perhaps now that I may have more time, perhaps I will. A few highlights – and to demonstrate the variety of events and opportunities for Quakerly influence. I would point out that my support has been from Central Committee, and I've managed to delegate some events as 'one offs'.

- \* As a member of ACTS Members Meeting taking part in decision making  
And a Trustee of CTBI with an even wider remit (and waving the saltire as and when necessary!)
- \* As part of the ecumenical officer's group of ACTS – supporting and learning from each other
- \* Being part of the ecumenical group visit to Geneva last year, introducing the group to QUNO
- \* Participating in the annual meeting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Minister,
- \* Organizing and presenting a study day on The Quaker Way at SCH,
- \* Being a strong Quaker voice along with Margaret Peacock to help save SCH, with support, speaking out with optimism and hope when things looked hopeless. Our money and prayers were welcome too.
- \* Taking part in various meetings on sectarianism – adding a Quaker voice
- \* Being part of the commemoration in Blantyre of the anti slavery Act on behalf of Quakers which was a huge privilege and a most moving occasion.
- \* I'm still involved in preparations for the ecumenical conference Edinburgh 2010
- \* And finally, the responsibility of leading a delegation from ACTS to meet with Kenny MacAskill, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, and Frank Mulholland, the Solicitor General which has led to further dialogue and interaction with those departments and influence is being seen to show results.

GM agreed to invite an ecumenical representative to each of our meetings and so I'm particularly delighted to welcome Graeme Bruce here today.

Friends, sometimes it's right that our work is done in quiet circles but at other times God moves us to be more visible – to be seen to speak truth to power –and for us to be more open in sharing the gifts and insights we have, and to receive the same from others in love.

One of the greatest gifts I have received doing this work is the gift of friendship and also the opportunity of offering a service which I have enjoyed, but I have also received an affirmation of my own faith in this work.

I would like to welcome Leslie Stevenson as he starts his journey as Rep Friend and the other mini reps as they share responsibilities. Leslie will bring his own background, gifts, skills, and personality to this job – and we wish him much joy and a fruitful term of service.

Pamala McDougall

## Appendix 2

### Trustees' Report

Trustees last reported to General Meeting in June 2008. GM recorded a minute following that report which read:

*'We have received a report on the work of Trustees after 1 year from Pam Brunt. She feels it is useful to have a group of named Friends to exercise oversight of financial and other issues as required under new charity legislation. Trustees do not however intend to take over the work of any Function Groups. A copy of the report is attached to these Minutes'*

Since June 2008, Trustees have met on three occasions and have conducted business by phone or e-mail between their meetings.

A major role for Trustees remains giving preliminary consideration to financial reports before these go to General Meeting.

From 2009, Trustees have assumed the formal responsibility for signing off the General Meeting Report and Accounts before they go to OSCR. This was done satisfactorily in 2009 and reported to GM.

Trustees have satisfied themselves that appropriate insurance cover is in place for the paid administrator and for the activities undertaken by GM.

Trustees have made arrangements to monitor the work of GM Function Groups in order to be in a position to verify that all activity is in accord with GM's aims and purposes as understood by OSCR. No instances of inappropriate action have been identified.

The changes agreed by GM at its meeting in September 2009 have laid down the Administration Function Group and some of the duties of that group pass to Trustees. The implications arising are being addressed.

Through the Clerk of GM, Trustees ensured that the annual review of our Administrator took place in September 2009. We are happy to note that this found the work of the administrator to be entirely satisfactory.

Trustees have ensured that GM is covered for data registration with the Information Commissioner following changes which have meant that we are no longer covered by the BYM registration.

Two matters of significance to GM are ongoing. Trustees are reviewing the current GM capability and disciplinary procedure and its grievance procedure in the light of changes which have occurred. They are also preparing a Safeguarding Policy for GM. Both matters will be reported to GM at the appropriate time.

The appointment of four of the five existing Trustees runs until March 2010 with that of the Clerk (Philip Bryers) being until December 2010.

Trustees have taken the view that they were appointed in order to satisfy the governance requirements set by the State for voluntary bodies. They believe that their role should be a background one which does not detract from the manner in which Quakers have always conducted their business.

We hope that our performance has been satisfactory both to the regulatory authorities and to Friends.

Philip Bryers  
Clerk of Trustees.  
November 2009.