West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

June 2019

Clerk's Letter	p. 2
Report on Area Meeting 11th March	p. 3
Report on Area Meeting 13th April	p. 4
Glasgow Quaker Meeting House	p. 6
Meeting for Sufferings	p. 8
Quaker Peace and Social Witness conference	p. 9
Christian and Interfaith Relations	p. 11
BYM Epistle	p. 12
My First Yearly Meeting	p. 14
It's That New Boy Again!	p. 15
Climate strikers afraid for their future	p. 16
Extinction Rebellion	p. 17
Secure Scotland	p. 19
Other Events	p. 20
Seeking to Know One Another in the Things that are Eternal	p. 21
To Meditate or Not	p. 29
Book Review: Not in God's Name	p. 31
Muriel Robertson is 80	p. 33
West Coat Friends' Gathering	p. 34

Clerk's Letter

Sometimes someone from outside can show you things more clearly. So it was at the annual Swarthmore Lecture during the annual gathering we call Yearly Meeting.

This year's lecture was given by Eden Grace, director of Global Ministries for Friends United Meeting in the USA, on 25th May at Friends House in London. Her title was "On Earth as it is in Heaven: the Kingdom of God and the yearning of Creation" and that immediately made some of us wary of language we found difficult or off-putting. We were right, it was difficult. Eden reflected on the theological, spiritual and biblical grounding of Friend's witness on climate breakdown and related experiences of people whose lives are impacted by the climate crisis. She drew strongly on our Christian tradition, the Bible and Eco Theology. A few Friends left before she really got going as they found the language impenetrable or threatening.

One of our basic disciplines, though, is to learn to listen to where words come from, and not to get so caught on our own little bubbles of meaning that we are unable to find new light from places we didn't expect or even distrust. As Eden said: "First of all, I'm really clear whenever I minister that the effect of my words is not my job. It's not something that I can control and it often happens that somebody will hear something that is not what I thought I'd said but is what they needed to hear. My job is to be faithful to the message I'm given".

I found the lecture's message was, for me, actually about what Quakerism is all about, and which we risk by not paying attention. Quakerism is about process, not results. The results follow if we keep the process. The process means a deep caring for how we gather and worship, how we listen and how we let go of everything in doing that, so we can be felt by the Spirit. As Eden said again: "Quakerism is premised on vulnerability, on stripping away all constructs and safety nets and laying ourselves bare to the real presence of the living God in our midst. And that's an excruciatingly beautiful vulnerability. But it means that there is no guarantee that it's going to work every time or for everyone. And we enter that space together as a community and sit down on those chairs next to each other knowing we've taken a risk by doing so... I think that's beautiful and I wouldn't have it any other way."

To be opened to what we have to do as individuals and as a religious community, we must cultivate our process of deep worship, both in Meeting and in business. It is beyond words and language as it describes a reality. The results are the product of being connected.

Eden again: "Quakers had a spiritual experience that led them to the understanding that the Kingdom of God is breaking through into creation, into history, into our lives and communities right here right now, that there is a layering of realities such that we can participate in the Kingdom of God even in this present moment in our current lives as we experience a global climate crisis."

The Lecture Committee said that "In this time of Climate Breakdown, we hope Friends will welcome an opportunity to re-root ourselves in the spiritual imperative of our work and ministry". I hope so.

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting.

Audio and video recordings of the lecture will be available on the Britain Yearly Meeting or Woodbrooke websites and a book relating to the lecture will be published in the autumn. To pre-order the book, please mail quakercentre@quaker.org.uk with 'Swarthmore Lecture 2019' in the subject line and you will be contacted for payment and delivery details when the book is available.

Report on Area Meeting by telephone, 11th March

This meeting took place as above with friends from other Friends Meetings also attending via the phone link, which on the whole worked very well.
I have to say, as the one who agreed to write this report, that it's a wonder it got written at all! Islay was wild, wet and windy that particular night and driving across island was difficult and it was with great relief that I arrived, eventually, at Bronwen's house where we have the telephone link. So here is the report.
We began our meeting with worship as usual and then we all linked up together. Those minutes spent in worship are powerful and it's good to know we are linked in worship together across the miles and islands.
There was humour as we discussed the phone linking and the problems that can arise from it. "Comfort breaks" brought much amusement and laughter, but on the whole it was felt that this method of linking was good. Costs of it were discussed so everyone knew the best way to use it.
Sadly for us, but good for other Friends, Sally Beamish has asked to be transferred from Glasgow Meeting to Sussex Meeting and Rob Quin has asked to be transferred from Castle Douglas to South East Scotland Area Meeting. We wish them both well.
We welcome Pete Clarke into Glasgow Meeting, following a report, written by Mary Cox and Jane Mitchell.
Events coming up were:
Tree planting in Lanarkshire on April 7th.

Scottish Friends and family Weekend in Pitlochry Youth Hostel, May 31st -2nd June.
The Shindig Gathering for young people is to be held 27th July -3rd August.
Yearly Meeting will be held in London from 24th to 27th May.
Reports were also read from the Treasurer and the Nominations Committee.
It was noted that Bobby and Edna Locke had moved away to be nearer their family. They have both been much loved and appreciated by West Scotland Quakers and will be greatly missed.
It was also noted that our Area Meeting in August will be held in Lochgilphead and not Tarbert this year. That being all the business and discussion, the meeting closed and we went our separate ways.

Since this meeting it was with sadness that we heard of the death of Bobby Locke. Words and cards of sympathy were sent to them.
Susan Campbell, Islay & Jura

Area Meeting Report, Dumfries 13th April

Around 30 of us, representing most of our Local Meetings met in Dumfries yesterday for WSAM. Assistant Clerk, Margaret Roy read from Advices and Queries 40 and 41 reminding us to live simply and use our power over nature responsibly. Our Clerk, Michael Hutchinson suggested an implicit theme to the meeting was the future and health of Britain Yearly Meeting. He also reminded us of some defining Quaker principles such as our business method which was helpful - and not just for newcomers!
We remembered with huge affection Bobby Locke who died on 1st April after moving with his wife Edna to be near their daughter in Gloucestershire. We heard that Bobby always wore a white poppy and will be deeply missed by all who knew him. We are holding Edna in the light along with the rest of his family. Argyll members will liaise with them and when it seems appropriate we will hold a memorial meeting for Bobby in Scotland.
It was sad to hear of the resignation of a Friend who was also an Elder. There will be much to learn and reflect upon. We trust those in his LM to bring back their insights and suggested next steps.
The software communications programme called Zoom is being successfully used within BYM including by our own Clerk of Elders and at Friends House. We agreed that it should be tried out for the holding of WSAM bearing in mind the importance of meeting face to face and showing sensitivity to those who are not as experienced or comfortable using technology. Additional guidance and accessories may be needed to have this system work as well as possible. The technology group

will be asked to come back to WSAM with detailed advice on all these aspects of using Zoom.
A Friend from Dumfries spoke about her involvement in Inter-faith work and asked all LMs to complete a survey. LM clerks that were not present will be informed about this in due course.
Another local Friend from Castle Douglas announced a retreat called Secure Scotland at nearby Allanton World Peace Centre. The event has been organised by UN House Scotland with the aim of envisioning how a small country can look after its citizens, land and sea and respond peacefully to internal and external crises. As the notice was rather short the Friend may be the only attendee but pledged to write a report of the event so that WSAM friends can share any outcomes.
After a delicious lunch of soup with 'extras' provided by Dumfries Friends we reconvened. Our Clerk prepared us for the afternoon discussion with more reminders of how we conduct Quaker business and why. He spoke of Quakers having no formal leadership but recognised that some people will exercise power more than others. Also, to avoid the 'tyranny of the majority', Quakers don't vote but seek agreement in the spirit.
Our Clerk of Nominations Committee spoke of three new names being brought forward to serve as WSAM Trustees as well as a second Assistant Clerk, a new Children's Advocate and Nominations contact person for Castle Douglas LM. These developments were welcomed as was a suggestion that all WSAM vacancies will be an item on every AM business meeting agenda from now on and will be sent to all LM clerks.
At General Meeting on 8th June in Edinburgh, Edwina Peart will address us on Diversity – she is an excellent speaker. Five Friends present gave their names to attend if nothing occurs to prevent.
A special meeting will be held on 18th May to discuss the future plans for Glasgow Meeting House. All WSAM Friends who are interested are encouraged to attend. Whilst Glasgow Meeting House is home to Glasgow LM it is also a resource for all of us. Taking care of this asset is a WSAM responsibility.
Our WSAM representative who attended last Meeting for Sufferings was prevented from attending today. However, all the papers and minutes are available on the BYM website for anyone wanting to find out what was discussed and agreed.
The programme for BYM on 24 – 27th May is now published as well as a preparation document which all LMs have been sent. Edwina Peart's survey about how we see ourselves is included as part of the preparation process.
A booklet made up of the most recent LM Annual Reports to Trustees was handed out to those who had not already read it. Our Clerk suggested that it provided an

interesting snapshot of how LMs see themselves as well as being a requirement under our charitable status.
We split into mixed groups and discussed the following questions: -

What do you gain from your local meeting?
What is missing/what else could LM provide?
How could AM help LM more/in different ways?

Unsurprisingly the points raised were wide-ranging and varied. All seemed to find the conversations with Friends from other LMs useful and thought-provoking and the feedback will be shared as part of the minutes. Personally I was pleased we had a range of ages in our small group of 4 and came away with renewed enthusiasm to encourage younger people to attend. Our LM plans to hold an All-age Meeting for Worship followed by a shared picnic at our Taliesin Community Woodland in July.
Towards the end of the meeting, the success of this year's Wiston Lodge Family Tree Planting was noted. There is goodwill to keep this event going despite low numbers of children attending.
We also heard about an event next Saturday 20th April linked with the River Garden, Auchencruive Project run by Independence from Drug and Alcohol Scotland (IFDAS) in Ayrshire.
WSAM ended with silence followed by a lovely tea – huge thanks to our 'cluster' Friends from Dumfries who made everyone feel warmly welcomed.
Clare Phillips, Castle Douglas

Glasgow Quaker Meeting House:
Special Meeting for Realising our vision for Glasgow Meeting House
18 May 2019 at the Meeting House

MINUTE

This special meeting for realising our vision for our meeting house was asked for by the Glasgow Meeting House Development Group and authorised by Glasgow Local Meeting for business which asked its Visioning Group to see to the arrangements. Local Meeting minutes 19/14, 19/28, 19/41 and 18/122 refer. Area Meeting Trustees, whose responsibilities include any decisions on property, have been included in the process and most are present with us today. We have 28 Friends from Glasgow and Milngavie Meetings, together with 10 trustees and Friends from other West Scotland meetings.

After a period of open worship, Kate Philbrick explained the background to this meeting and the process we have been engaged with so far. The original visioning process wished that our meeting house would be a beacon for the city, reflecting

Quaker values and testimonies. Since then we have been delayed in moving forward owing to the uncertainty on the site next door. Now that is clearer, we need to make decisions, as doing nothing is no longer an option – the present building requires expensive work regardless.

A paper with separate appendices has been circulated in advance and Friends in Glasgow have had opportunity to consider these in 5 preliminary meetings.

Today we have heard from Richard Hands of FBN Passivhaus, part of the team who produced the original study. He has given us background to his practice's work and explained the new feasibility study proposal, which would retain the building, maximise the space and explore what can be done with it.

He explained that Scottish Government energy policies will affect building standards in the future, and we have an opportunity now to work to them. He expects to be able to reduce our energy use by 70%. He explained how the process and timescales would work if we take these ideas up.

Richard answered various questions on the proposals.

Any decision will need to be based on a sound financial plan. There may be ways of spreading costs over up to twenty years after getting the basics completed. If we took this step by step approach, it would cost more.

We may additionally need a review of costing and how we could achieve the funds.

After Richard left, we gathered again to consider the first of the questions in section 6 of the paper, whether we "agree to remaining in our present location and own the decision to explore further the proposed refurbishment to realise as much of our vision as possible within the broad budget outlined". This was simplified to: "How do you feel about the proposal and your own role in it?"

Whilst some Friends feel the proposal is a way forward, others indicate that we are not capturing the original vision and that the existing building and site is not the right one. We should embed in an area, perhaps further from the city centre, with an established community.

Yet others point out that we may not realistically have the option to move. Some have come round to value the site and can see how the present building could reflect much of the vision.

How then do we move forward, when we have been stuck for the last few years?
We are captured by original vision, and how the process by which it was achieved.
We want a Meeting House that acts to focus that.
Perhaps we are not being sufficiently ambitious for this site.
Perhaps we are not trusting that we can raise the funds for a rebuild.

Or we feel that staying here would not meet that vision, and so have a stop in our mind
The Meeting House needs to meet our needs and reflect our practice and testimonies: truth, simplicity, sustainability, inclusivity and accessibility - within what we can afford.

We do consider that we need a Meeting House but if it is stays where it is it needs to reflect the vision better and overcome the difficulties of the site.

We do think we could tackle this problem by proceeding with the feasibility study proposed by the Meeting House Development Group, perhaps including updates on the more visionary rebuild option given in 2016. We need to know more first before we can make the decision. We want to bring the invisibility into the Light; our future into the light, so we breathe in and out like the passive house.

We do feel we have moved forward at this meeting, and realise we all hold the responsibility for future progress. We will have to make decisions regarding finance and on our capability of taking the project forward. If led, we can.

We send this minute to Glasgow Local Meeting.
Kate Philbrick and Michael Hutchinson, Clerks for this meeting

Personal impressions of Meeting for Sufferings, Friends House, London, 6th April 2019 – Ed Tyler

London: a tale of two decision-making bodies.

Body one: Houses of Commons, Westminster.

Verdict: deadlocked over Brexit.

Body two: Meeting for Sufferings, Friends House. MfS (as it is simply known) is often referred to as Britain Yearly Meeting when not in session.

Verdict: agenda completed according to our Business method.

Maybe MPs could learn from us....

We heard from two projects that are going to help shape our Society; indeed, to an extent, they are already shaping it. One was the Diversity and Inclusion project and the other, which I want to look at further is ViM.

ViM (Vibrancy in Meetings) has been looking at how to make our Meetings more vibrant. Four project workers have been working in pilot areas in England and Wales, supporting local and area meetings. We saw a video of Friends saying how much they appreciated having someone outside their meeting make helpful suggestions and validate ideas they had but were anxious about implementing.

Overall the project has been a great success and the idea is to roll this out so that eventually all Meetings across these islands will have access to support.

Another theme has emerged from this project: that of **decentralisation.** The pilot was a joint venture between the staff at Friends House in London and Woodbrooke Study Centre in Birmingham. I think this was an inspired move, for it seemed to get staff and trustees thinking about our different regions having greater autonomy.

Two examples of this already happening were mentioned: Quaker youth workers are now based in Yorkshire rather than Friends House, and the Parliamentary Engagement officer for Scotland answers to General Meeting for Scotland whilst maintaining links with her fellow officer at Westminster. I spoke about how positive this has been for Scotland, and a Friend from Yorkshire said the same regarding the youth workers.

So, when the Vibrancy project is rolled out, it is my hope that it will be done in such a way that will go hand in hand with decentralisation. That way meetings across our islands can be doubly empowered.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Conference, March

The opening evening session was an enlightening and edifying overview of QPSW activities. Engagement is at so many areas and at different levels. The leaders of each workshop for the weekend introduced themselves and their field of work. The keynote speech by Nim Njuguna addressed the issue of diversity. His challenge went beyond race, age or sexual orientation concerns but questioned how we welcome visitors and potential new members. It is insufficient to welcome: we should be thinking about how we include people. Building bridges through meaningful dialogue is to have a rich conversation with others. These conversations may be loaded with unconscious bias. A ‘my way is the only way’ bias is exclusionary indicating we are unable to change. A ‘my way is better’ bias indicates that while we may be aware of other paths, we are unable to accommodate others. Taking a ‘my way and the other way’ approach is us making a conscious choice to include and make our society more complete than we would be without such an openness. Our unconscious bias is a shortcut in our thinking, a gravitation toward what is reassuringly familiar and within our comfort zone. By being inclusive we become whole but that may challenge our personal terms of reference. Being a champion for the excluded is evidence of a global mind and needs to be continuously developed through dialogue.

Discussion of the QPSW conciliation work provided examples of how deep listening is a much-needed skill in the advancement toward reconciliation.

Evidence was given of listening and listening again and then listening some more. This listening was not in order to construct a reply but to deeply understand the issues that are being faced by participants. Until people are convinced that you have understood the situation, engagement is going to be less effective. When working with multiple factions it is imperative that listening to each group is part of that work even when you may be hearing the same narrative repeatedly. According to the situation this process may take years and have fuzzy objectives but for a continuance of the engagement listening is essential.

In a workshop discussing a tension within meeting between activism and spiritual activity a contributor raised the notion that some activists may feel there is insufficient support or engagement from others. At the same time those who feel more attuned to the spiritual life of Quakerism can feel their contribution to the life of a meeting is less understood or valued. Accepting that each of us have limitations to our contribution is a Quakerly approach. Perhaps less often thought about is the value that both bring to meeting. The spiritual enrichment can be acknowledged, and the inspiration of activism may need to be openly aired. A dichotomous either/or perspective is unhelpful but valuing each contribution according to skills, talent or leading makes for a more complete whole.

Within the criminal justice sphere it was felt that a new model was required as it was acknowledged that the current system is broken. With examples from other countries, Norway where a treatment / health process has been adopted, a need to end the failure of care for those caught up in the process was aired. It will be a long-haul project to change and will require courage to try and possibly fail with new ideas and then revise policy. Redirecting political agendas and developing a national public dialogue to avoid the 'soft on crime' criticism are essential elements of changing how we respond to criminal activity. Moving to a social rather than criminal justice dialogue opens a language for change.

This was the first mass gathering of Quakers I have attended and found that Friends really are friendly.

Peter Morton, Dumfries

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations: Annual Conference at Woodbrooke, 8/10 March

SHALL WE DANCE?

Where else but at Woodbrooke, or some other Quaker gathering, would a total stranger greet you at breakfast with the words "Are you a psychotherapist?" Apparently it was the painted wooden beads that I was wearing which led to this mis-identification. Surely there must be more to it than that?

So began the QCCIR 2019 Conference in March.
This year's event followed on from last year's, where we considered the changing face of faith in Britain, as presented in a research project report. Now, perhaps, to look ahead. What do these changes mean for Quakers? With whom might we find our future paths?

The first speaker, Inderjit Bhogal, is a walking advertisement for desirable Interfaith co-operation, fusion even. Born a Sikh, and finding himself in a British city without a Sikh Gurdwara, he went to the nearest place of worship to his home, which happened to be a Methodist Church, and there he heard the teachings of Jesus, and committed himself to follow them.

Inderjit's work is renowned in the Ecumenical/Interfaith world. Instrumental in the establishment of the Cities of Sanctuary movement, his vision is for all to ". . . live confidently with diversity, and remove the fear of the 'other'". He promotes coming together to achieve better understanding of each other, which leads to mutual respect and trust, and finally acceptance of each other as fellow human beings. As we in Scotland might say, 'We're a' Jock Tamson's bairns'.
A humble man, who walks the walk and talks the talk, he instilled a sense of optimism in his audience.

Next we heard from Gretchen Castle, head of the Friends World Consultative Council, who operates on the international stage, a spiritual diplomat I suppose. Though not a theologian, she represents Quakers at the World Council of Churches, where we still have Observer status, and at all manner of other international ecumenical and interfaith gatherings. Often she seemed to be the only woman present, and the Pope featured prominently in her travel photos.

My earlier optimism waned in the face of so much in ecumenical and interfaith work still to be done. Conquering fears: of losing something precious; of being 'converted', of the 'other'; overcoming historical divisions; the challenge of religious language and its interpretations ……. These things are all difficult enough within Quakerism at times, so what hope for the spiritual world at large? Gretchen listed some of the "Learnings" gained over her many years of experience. We need to share ourselves—what we know, who we are and what we do; we must keep learning from other faiths; we must honour what is precious to each one; we must not be afraid to challenge and go to the edge, but also know when to back off; we must be prepared to take some risks (she mentioned the taking of holy communion here); and she emphasised the prime importance of relationships and shared stories.
Gretchen later engaged in conversation with Deborah Rowlands, whom many will know as a recent Clerk of BYM. Under the headings of the Spiritual Imperative (the essential requirement of Ecumenical and Interfaith co-operation),

Discernment, and Mission, Deborah and Gretchen compared and contrasted their work. Whatever the scale of the work, be it in the UK, the USA or worldwide, the necessary conditions for progress seem to be the same: openness; the ability to engage in joint work; the willingness to learn from one another, and to experience and respect each other's ways of worship.

As is usual at these events, some work was done in small groups, one of which I found somewhat disturbing. We were each given 5 names of groups with which Quakers might, or might not, wish to work. Circles were drawn and we placed our cards accordingly—in or near the centre if we felt we would have much in common, and at, or indeed off, the edge, if we felt no connection whatever, or indeed some level of suspicion. (One of my groups was SUBUD? Answers on a postcard, please.)

My initial thought was that surely we would and should talk with anyone. Isn't that what we always advise in conflicts as being really the only way forward? Someone else suggested that it was rather arrogant of Quakers to assume that any of these groups would want to talk with us! True enough.
I wasn't surprised that the established churches were largely rubbished, and was reminded of a quotation from a Celtic Devotional book by Caitlin Matthews.
"Be aware of the ancestral teachers, the grandparents and elders of the spiritual traditions, ***whose footsteps have kept the pathways open."***

But I wasn't expecting to hear some describe themselves as 'Fundamentalist Quakers'. Are there any in Scotland? Perhaps I'm naïve, lacking in discernment, or both. I admit that I found this rather judgemental outlook depressing, dare I say unquakerly? What about being open to new light, wherever it may come from? What a forbidding task the forthcoming revision of Quaker Faith and Practice appears, as it looms upon the horizon.
I will close with this thought from Deborah Rowlands, on diversity and inclusion.
Diversity is inviting someone to your party.
Inclusion is asking them to dance. **Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries**

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting, held at Friends House, London on 24 - 27 May 2019

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere,

Our themes have encouraged us to look through the lens of privilege at climate justice, and at diversity and inclusion. The opening session was one of tenderness and love. We heard about the need to be a trusting and trusted community, sharing our insights and experience, perhaps bringing to light what has been hidden. In their introduction, our

Clerks acknowledged that we are confronting difficult and potentially alienating topics. There is a risk of becoming mired in introspection and failing to address the challenges presented to us.

Each of us is at a different stage of this journey and has different understandings of the issues involved. The word 'privilege' has been used in two distinct ways this weekend: as a blessing we experience and as the unearned advantages a person can inherit from birth and/or accumulate over time. This has brought some frustrations. Our identities are complex and multifaceted. We need to be aware of the ways in which we can simultaneously have, and lack, privilege.

The words of Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) frame the challenge we face:

"We recognise the exclusion we may create is not intentional but it doesn't mean we aren't responsible for it. There is a feeling Quakers are passively inclusive. Our testimony to equality makes us complacent." (from JYM 2019, Minute 1)

We need to be gentle with Friends who feel uncertain about how to engage whilst moving with a sense of urgency, knowing that these issues are an everyday source of pain for some of us.

Over 1,200 Friends have participated. Our twin themes have been woven together in main sessions, parallel sessions, special interest groups, programmed and unprogrammed worship, across different age groups and in the buzz of our shared spaces. The Children's programme focused on Caring and Including. Exploring the themes worshipfully through dance and singing has been a gentle way to make friends and build our spiritual community.

During our time together, we've shed tears of joy, of emotion and of sadness. We are thankful to Friends who were able to share the riches and vulnerabilities in their life stories. Listening to these stories in the Spirit helps us to reflect on how we need to change.

"There is nothing that age, experience and status can do to pre-judge where and how the Light will appear". (Quaker faith & practice, 23.32)

We recognise that the Light may not be warm and comfortable but be a spotlight exposing our vulnerability, complicity and fear. It is from such discomfort, even being broken, that spiritual growth can come alive. We want to stay with the struggle and hold the tension.

Guilt and shame emerged as strong themes in our opening worship: guilt for what we've done and shame for who we are and for what we've inherited. By sitting with overwhelming feelings we have the hope of transformation: anger and fear can become passion and love. Helplessness can trigger us to learn. Accountability and responsibility can guide us to make changes in our lives. In the Swarthmore Lecture, "On earth as it is in heaven; the kingdom of God and the yearning of creation", we were challenged that the more we give ourselves over, the more we are given.

We have heard how our sense of being 'Quakerly' can itself be a barrier. As Quakers, we are not called simply to be good - how instead, in our frailty, are we called to live faithfully?

"Somewhere beyond right and wrong there is a garden. I will meet you there." (Rumi)

Let us begin to understand what it means to be in unity with others and with the whole of creation, acting out of love rather than duty or fear. It's all about Love.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

My first Yearly Meeting

First thought- how big and complicated (and amazing!) Friends House in London is. I'd only been to the bookshop and the foyer before, so the size and extent of the building came as a revelation. It took me a while to understand the structure of the sessions- but after arriving on the Friday lunchtime, by the Saturday had realised there were big plenary sessions, "parallel sessions" that were around the same theme as the plenaries and then "special interest meetings", which covered a huge range of interests. At the start of the day was a meeting for worship and of course all the sessions had Quaker silences and Quaker business method governing them.

I found the plenary sessions in the large meeting hall- (sometimes called the Light) moving and impressive. Like West of Scotland Area Meeting and Scotland General Meeting, the clerking was both sensitive and competent. With up to several hundred people in the large meeting room and often several standing up to ask to minister at various times in the plenaries, the clerk had to choose who could speak, and people had to bow to the clerk's choices. This all worked smoothly and no-one appeared angry or distressed. (It made me wish that politicians would adopt our method, instead of the horrible shouting and aggression that goes on in Parliament.) I felt proud of us all.

The theme of the whole meeting was "looking through the lens of privilege at climate justice and inclusion." I attended most of the plenary sessions and parallel sessions on this topic. Some looked at the subject in depth and some more superficially. I gained a lot of insight into the subject, especially around the theme of privilege. It gave me insight into my own privileges and that of others and the difficulties faced by people with less privilege. It reminded me that Friends are no different from the rest of the population in that many of us benefit from being white, well-educated etc.

I also attended one particular special interest meeting called ""Let's talk about gender and sexual diversity". Friends spoke openly and passionately about hurtful situations involving sexuality and gender they had faced in their meetings. I also noted that there are serious divisions among Friends around the issue of trans women. This is a complicated subject but one that needs further attention.

All in all- I got a great deal out of Yearly Meeting and urge Friends who have never been to one to try it.

Penny Lilley, Castle Douglas

“It’s That New Boy Again”

As is usual for me, outside of meeting I ‘wait’ on a near daily basis about a 1000ft up on an Argyll hill overlooking the village where I live. Here I experience the light through nature and being just a small, but meaningful, part of the world. It was here that I received my first discernable ‘leading’- which was to put down on paper what being a Quaker has come to mean to me.

I have come to realise that attending meeting on a regular basis is not at the heart of being a Quaker. It is instead, (as many of you must realise after your years as a Quaker), about how I lead my life. I have felt for a long time that finding Quakers was like ‘coming home’. I can honestly say that my main values and beliefs have not changed due to any epiphany, but they do now have a focus and meaning which I both believe in, and live my life through – The Testimonies. Whilst not seeing them as any sort of ‘creed’, I do use them as my daily test in terms of actions and understanding. Even then, they are not without their difficulties.

Truth: Whilst I have never seen myself as a particularly untruthful person, (and enquiry of friends and family seem to attest to this), being always ‘truthful’ is difficult. I was reminded of the story of a Dutchman during WW 2 who was asked by the Gestapo ‘Do you know where any Jews are hiding?’ – To which he replied ‘No’. Clearly he was being untruthful, but what he did display was his integrity, care and love for others. This kind of action is then what I have come to view as being ‘truthful’. I can quite easily display truthfulness in my financial and professional life, but at a personal level I cannot always be ‘truthful’ if to do so would hurt or injure others – what I can do is preserve my, and others’ integrity, safety, well being, and trust, by being as ‘truthful’ as I can in a particular context.

Peace: At first an easy one! At my time of life I am unlikely to be called on to fight in a conflict or war. I have managed to live a peaceful, nonviolent personal life in occupations which were amenable to my beliefs in the futility of violence and the need to protect people from violence and trauma. I can also legitimise to myself my views on ‘defensive violence’ for the protection of those whom I love and care for – though of course I hope never to be tested. Taken together then the main area of concern for me in ‘living’ this testimony is that if I have never, and I hope never will be, ‘tested’, how can I claim to ‘live’ by it?

Equality: Giving regularly to charity, tut tutting at the news of growing poverty, a wish to see equity in the world – all well and good, but similarly to ‘peace’, how can I live a life where I make a difference? When I thought about this I realised that in my own life I have been able to make some difference here. As a lecturer for the OU, I have students who suffer from many forms of inequality, be that

disabilities, poverty, gender, or at its most extreme, being a student in a secure environment. I can at least see that I can bring some equity into people's lives through my work with such students. This though still does not make seeing a world of growing inequality any easier to bear or able to change. Instead, I have though been led to realise that whilst I can only make a small difference, perhaps we as a Quaker community, living our testimonies, can make a larger one.

Simplicity and Sustainability: I've come to believe one is dependent on the other. Our world can only be protected if we as individuals are willing to aspire to less. Our economic system is unfortunately not geared to taking a long term, environmental, or ethical view. Nations, both the developed and developing, are caught up in a race to 'grow' economically and such activity is bound to damage our world and squander its resources. In this context, only the actions of individuals, (often in groups or communities), can protect our planet – living simply, is in itself sustainable.

So, whilst these testimonies are of great help to me, I also need to understand and practice them in particular contexts. I know I will try and fail some of the time – but as a 'goal', living my testimonies has helped me better understand my beliefs, my world, and my role in it.

Pete Clarke, Glasgow

Climate Strikers are afraid for their future

Scottish Greens Education Spokesperson Ross Greer MSP was joined by two youth climate strikers on the second day of the party's spring conference in Edinburgh this morning. The strikers – 13 year olds Holly Gillibrand from Fort William and Josie Law from Edinburgh – addressed conference, sharing their thoughts on the climate crisis, and their fears for their future.

Asked why she got involved in the strikes Josie said, "I believe climate change is the greatest challenge we've ever faced in human history. I got involved because I was afraid. Afraid for my future, afraid to see it disappearing down the drain."

In response to a question from the audience about teaching climate change in schools, she added, "It's really frustrating, we're taught about fossil fuels and how important they are, but only hear about climate change in passing during Geography lessons."

Holly, who has been striking every Friday since January, added, "I started striking not so much for humanity, but for all the animals we're dragging off the cliff with us. The youth want change, and we will not sit aside whilst adults continue to pillage the natural world and explore for even more oil and gas."

She also noted her frustration when adults congratulate young people on their action, saying, "Adults congratulate us, and say it's the youth that will save the world. But it's

not the youth, it's the grown-ups and today's politicians that must save the world. By the time we grow up the chance will be lost."

Following the session, Ross Greer MSP said:

"The climate crisis - and how we all respond to it - will now unavoidably define the lives of today's school pupils. Many are, completely rationally, fearful for their futures and those of other young people around the world, particularly in developing countries already being devastated by a crisis they didn't cause. It's clear why they feel compelled to speak out and urge stronger action from governments and corporations who have not just failed to tackle this crisis but who have caused it. We need a jobs-rich transformation in our economy, one which will stop climate breakdown while lifting millions out of poverty."

Report by Ed Tyler, Argyll

Extinction Rebellion – My personal response so far

My response to the initial email

I was ready when I got the invitation email on 4th April via our local Meeting.
Some young primary school aged children had already told me in January about Extinction Rebellion and of their non-violent actions including one at BBC Scotland. They had invited me then, but I hadn't been ready. This time I was.

Meeting at Glasgow Autonomous Space

I went to the meeting at Autonomous Space, and met Ruth and some of the local group. Once the introductory 'go round' was over, Ruth gave the partially scripted briefing with additional information from more experienced 'rebels' adding and expanding our knowledge of the state of our planet and of Extinction Rebellion or XR as it is known.
I was deeply impressed by the way the group were behaving, this was a respectful group with sound aims and objectives, I could see myself getting more involved.
There was tea and although the briefing was deadly serious and we were obviously a very diverse bunch, we managed to begin to generate a feeling of community between us very quickly.

Kinning Park Complex

My next meeting was at Kinning Park Complex. I arrived early and helped set out the chairs. As people poured in we rearranged the circle of about 25 chairs and brought in many more setting them out around tables, we had far more people than had been anticipated. Again there was tea and this time we had some induction for the newbies like myself and some role-play which involved us all in table groupings with people with varying levels of experience of nonviolent direct action.
This meeting was again very well facilitated with explanations and the use of hand signals very much encouraged.
The hand signal to get everyone to stop talking will be familiar to Quakers and is known as 'giraffe' in XR referencing Marshall Rosenberg's work. Other hand signals, e.g. 'jazz hands' to silently express approval and signs to encourage people to speak louder and/or

more clearly are very useful for the hearing impaired like myself. These and other signals quickly became a shared language for communicating quickly and easily within the large groups. Part of the role-play was a 'Quick decisions' exercise which in the context of XR took on new dimensions for me, this type of exercise is familiar in the Alternatives to Violence Project workshops which I have facilitated.

Affinity group

My next meeting was a small affinity group meeting with my fellow Wellbeing supporters.

Again I was impressed by the ethos which permeates XR, more tea and sharing of food but this time the aim to generate a supportive and restorative space to get to know each other before the first large scale action later in the week. The meeting had an agenda and boundaries too, again the facilitation was light touch but skilful.

Edinburgh North Bridge

Tuesday the day of the action in Edinburgh finally dawned and I was ready to leave on the bus to Edinburgh for the big briefing. I had most of what I needed with me but unaccountably forgot to bring teabags!

The briefing went on for about 3 hours including some time in our affinity groups.

I left understanding what was expected of me and without any anxiety about the day ahead.

No tea this time....other people had unaccountably forgotten the tea bags too?

Outside we were met by friendly police from Glasgow who had been drafted in for the event.

On the bridge we took our places and waited for a couple of minutes for the action to begin.

On cue we moved onto the bridge, the traffic stopped and the few vehicles on the bridge drove away. The bridge then became a different space where pedestrians could walk freely, cyclists and emergency vehicles freely used the bridge too.

People and cyclists soon arrived to swell our numbers from around the city and beyond.

A PA system was set up and people were invited to use it. Throughout the event we heard many inspiring speakers and singers. We were entertained by clowns and drummers and at times broke into spontaneous singing and dancing.

Soon the gazebo was set up and food and hot drinks were passed around. At last the tea bags and urns had arrived!

I had a variety of tasks during the hours I was on the bridge, mostly I was looking out for anyone in need of any kind of assistance and distributing leaflets explaining the action. My turquoise welfare sash meant that people were on the look out for our particular assistance too. One of the nicest jobs was giving out penguin bars - veggie but not vegan and with silly corny riddles on each wrapper - as I learnt very quickly.

I spoke to many people during the four hours I was there. A highlight for me was a conversation with a mother and baby who were far more successful at leafleting than I was. . . no one could resist the baby's offer of a leaflet. The baby's mother and her mother had been involved in many of the campaigns for disarmament and the anti-Iraq war demos I had been on. Another high spot was giving an interview to a Guardian

Journalist. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/16/im-terrified-extinction-rebellion-activists-on-why-they-are-protesting

My message to my fellow Quakers. . . join in if this sort of nonviolent direct action is for you, look at https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/about-us/ to find out more about the ethos of the organisation. See also Glasgow XR on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=extinction%20rebellion%20glasgow&epa=SEARCH_BOX
Lots of the TV coverage of XR actions, talks and training is on YouTube too now.
I would be happy to speak to anyone interested in getting involved.
I will be keeping in touch with my affinity group, briefings and actions when I can over the next few months. **Mary Kennedy, Glasgow**

Secure Scotland
event held at the World Peace Sanctuary, Allanton

An organizing group including Friend Janet Fenton and Gari Don of UN House in Edinburgh planned and brought together participants for a residential event at the Allanton World Peace Centre from Tuesday 16th April afternoon until Thursday 18th afternoon. The invited individuals were chosen to comprise, as far as possible, a group which was reasonably representative of different demographic groups including new Scots, young people, women's groups, faith groups, elected representatives and/or their staff, trade union officials and members, who are active and informed within healthcare, social enterprise, violence reduction efforts, arts and culture, education and media.
The aim of Secure Scotland is to shift prevailing discussions on 'Security' away from a toxic militarism and patriarchal dominance that leads to environmental degradation and instead to address the real threats experienced here in Scotland – naming them and providing impetus for change.
Friend Philip Austin, convenor of the Northern Friends Peace Board was one of the facilitators for the workshop sessions that took place over the three days, as follows: -
Our Ideal Future - safe and secure **Where We Are** right now
The Constraints -what we have to change **Planning for Action**
Celia McKeon of Rethinking Security travelled from the South of England to help facilitate.
Attending for part of the time to speak and participate were South of Scotland MSP Emma Harper, Pete Ritchie from Nourish (organization addressing food security) and Mike Danson from Heriot Watt University. Caroline Uchima spoke to us about Allanton; we were deeply affected by the place, its values and its community which was perfect for an event like this.
Some immediate outcomes included: -

- Parliamentary Questions on education for healthcare professionals on nuclear health risk asked by MSP Emma Harper will be followed up with ICAN partners
- A survey on UN process, model UNs, will be submitted to a sample of Head teachers

• Approaching local folk club (s) to offer music events based on the theme of Secure Scotland possibly with speakers, possibly fund or awareness raising
• Connection established with campaigns on militarism in schools and universities
• **Secure Scotland stall at Allanton Festival, Sunday 23 June 2019, 2 – 4pm (***I'm helping with the stall it would be great to see other WSAM friends at that event)*
• A logo and a banner, a logo and a basic leaflet to be created, explaining the concept which can be taken to events and gatherings.
• Creation of a register of interested parties and a list of existing initiatives that support the aim.

Clare Phillips, Castle Douglas Local Meeting

Other events

Roots of Resistance

Do you want to stop the London arms fair? Roots of Resistance is a grassroots network of Quakers across the UK who are building a creative, vibrant and radical Quaker response to the DSEI (Defence and Security Equipment International) arms fair. (quote from website)

I will be attending from 2 September when there is a briefing session at Friends House in London. There will be activities from then until the event ends on 13 September. Anyone not already in touch with Roots of Resistance who would like to take part or offer support please contact them directly. Any WSAM Friends who plan to go we may be able to share transport or accommodation so please get in touch.

Clare Phillips, Castle Douglas Local Meeting

Cycle against Torture 2019, cycle from Hastings to Edinburgh in aid of the charity ***Freedom from Torture,*** 865 miles over 1-28 July, with events along the way to raise funds and awareness. **It will be in Glasgow 26-27 July.**

Friday 26 July, 2- 5pm

Open Day at Glasgow Freedom from Torture Centre, The Adelphi Centre, 2 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ.Find out about the charity's work and enjoy a free tea provided by local supporters.

Saturday 27 July, 9.30am

Photoshoot with riders and supporters, outside the Adelphi Centre, followed at 10.00 by a 2.3-mile traffic free Suspension Bridge loop fun cycle ride that anyone can join. The official cycle team will depart for Falkirk at 11am.

Meeting for Worship at Faslane ***Sunday 16 June***

This will be held at the North Gate at 11am and is the last date before the summer. Friends come from Edinburgh and Argyll and we encourage Glasgow Friends to join this witness.

Further information: Mary Alice Mansell, mamansell54@gmail.com, 01505 842 380.

Seeking to know one another in the things which are eternal – Truth and Integrity

This is the sixth in the series of interviews with Friends in the West of Scotland. You will see that the prompt questions used as a basis of these interviews are also included, to encourage you, or your meeting, to consider experiences, thoughts and feelings about Truth and Integrity. The next topic is Jesus/Christ to be followed by The Quaker Way. As I've said before, I hope you will consider whether you are a Friend who would wish to contribute to this.

Thanks to these five Friends who've shared their experiences so openly.
Sheila Semple, Glasgow

Prompts for Truth and Integrity
Quaker testimonies have arisen over time from the discernment of individual Friends and meetings about how to live their lives following the leadings of the Inward Teacher/Light. One of those testimonies is Truth and Integrity.

- What does the Quaker testimony of Truth and Integrity mean to you?
- Do you see a difference between what is meant by Truth and what is meant by Integrity?
- Early Quakers often called themselves 'Friends of the Truth' or Friends in the Truth'. Does this mean anything to you today?
- Is this a testimony that you feel led to apply to your life? If it is, how does it play out in your life?
- Which bits are easy? Which are most challenging?
- Which most important?
- Is there a particularly Quaker approach to Truth and Integrity? What do you think is the spiritual/religious underpinning of this testimony?
- Do you have an image or phrase that sums up Truth and Integrity for you?
- Have you observed Truth and Integrity in practice in the lives of individuals or in Meetings? Or in wider society?
- How important is this as one of our Quaker testimonies? If it is, how could it be encouraged?
- Quaker meetings in earlier times were asked to consider and respond to the query 'How has Truth advanced among you?' How has Truth advanced in your life; how is it advancing in your meeting?

Truth and Integrity by Kate Philbrick
I can see that truth is the basis of all our testimonies. Early Quakers found that honest, simple truth was demanded of them by God, and truth and love were their leadings. From that came both our commitment to peace, social justice, equality etc and to telling our neighbour the truth and doing what we say we will do. When

we are in a direct relationship with God, making ourselves bare before God, then we can come to a state where we can listen and be open to the truth and then act on it. We find this sometimes in meeting for worship, sometimes on our own when we are prayerful and are letting go and '*waiting in love and truth* '. We can find truth in people and books, too, and everywhere.

We need to own the truth and also to think it possible that we may be mistaken; even good scientists know they only know the best truth for the moment. Ministry in meeting can speak to some and not others and we listen because true ministry is each person's own truth from God: I know as a mother of siblings and as a sibling that people can see things completely differently even if they apparently have the same experiences. Truth is the kernel, although it appears differently, and differently over time: truths I discovered in my 30s sometimes appear differently and in a way more relevant to me now in my 60s.

There are truths in all aspects of our lives: the truth of our emotional and spiritual experiences, on our own and in community, and truths that are "factually" knowable. Our experience of God is our own and cannot be exactly known to others. It's not why we are truthful, but if we are trusted in the everyday bits of integrity, people are also likely to trust us in the things that are not factually knowable because we are people who are truthful.

I don't try to challenge the prison system when advocating to improve matters for the children of prisoners: it would achieve nothing for the children I am working with and for if I spoke too radically, so I try to speak truth appropriately and be effective. I'm glad to be part of the social justice sub-committee, a Quaker Peace and Social Witness committee where we take a more radical challenging approach, speaking truth to power.

The essence of truth may mean we keep quiet if love requires that. It's right that without truth there cannot be love, and yet vulnerable people need to be protected too. Kenneth Barnes says (Quaker Faith and Practice 20.44):

'...Integrity is a condition in which a person's response to a total situation can be trusted… This condition of trust is different from the recognition that he will always be kind or always tell the truth. The integrity of some Dutch Friends I have met showed itself during the war in their willingness to tell lies to save their Jewish Friends…'

At a public meeting, as a candidate with no likelihood of being elected, I felt I could say what I thought – others seemed to qualify their answers. It's perhaps harder now for politicians to be truthful because the media and society pick up on any 'weakness'. As a Quaker Society we haven't yet found a way of challenging 'fake news' other than as individuals (although Friends House recently hosted

Greta Thunberg; she is so clearly speaking from a place of truth and we are supporting that.) There are other areas of difficulty in modern life: is truth being universally applied in seeing white collar crime as less criminal? Few Quakers now work in business which appears to be tainted and without integrity. Quakers showed integrity in business in the past and some still do; there could be more.

How is truth advancing in me? I have, and I haven't, changed over time. Maybe we just become more of who we are and try to shed the bits we don't like. When we, and others have failings, that's still our truth which we have to accept. We are still all precious children of the light.

Truth and Integrity by David Thomas

Truth (with a capital T) and Integrity seem to me quite different. Truth is very definitely religious; truth (lower case) is more to do with honestly evaluating the situation, it's closer to integrity. The very least you can be expected to be is to be honest with yourself, but it's not easy. . . Integrity, for me, is about taking into account the whole situation and acting in everyone's best interests.

Truth is what early Quakers spoke about as part of their rejection of the teaching of the church in their time, trying to go back to the biblical accounts of the early Christians. Christian Truth is about Jesus coming down to earth to save sinners, it's primarily about forgiveness: I have some problems with the Bible story, but forgiveness is good, both for the person doing the forgiving and for the one being forgiven. Early Quakers were big on Truth, strong on God's love and strong on simplicity, getting rid of the excrescences of church and society in general at that time.

Although integrity is important, the problem is you don't think about it every day. There are always difficulties; sometimes I don't say something, I'm not very good at challenging people, I tend to take the weaker approach. Is reacting with self-preservation integrity? A rather challenging time was when I was accosted by a young man on the street, who claimed to be homeless and asked for money for food. I talked to him for some time and since I had too much food in I thought it best to feed him at home, but it turned out badly; he was a heroin addict and having found out my address, he and his friends became a nuisance. I was naïve, and I would now be much more circumspect. But I still think I acted with integrity based on the information I had at the time.

It was what first attracted me to Quakers. I had a Quaker colleague whom I very much admired for the way he behaved; he always weighed up the situation, behaved correctly, didn't bear grudges. He was close to 'integrity' in how he behaved in his work.

It's important as one of our testimonies, especially to non-Friends, that we act with integrity, but we don't always practice what we preach; for example we still insist on travelling even though we worry about sustainability. And we have teachings

against gambling but probably quite a few Friends are 'gaming' on the stock exchange. But it's very difficult. If you're a steward of funds it might not be considered responsible to invest at a very low rate, albeit securely, but you'd be a bit queasy about investing in bonds at a higher return and therefore risk . . .
I think we probably don't get enough general encouragement and guidance in Meeting. In Birmingham elders were quite powerful, they used their influence a lot and were very keen on letting Friends know how they should behave, for example, how you organise personal finances, your personal life, about accepting people as they are (but not to the extent of indulging wrong behaviour). It was the wisdom of the meeting that discerned what right behaviour was. It was quite old fashioned Quakerism, but on the whole I thought it a good thing. Glasgow elders seem to take a much lighter approach.
It would be a bit pointless for me to pontificate about truth in public affairs, I'm not a public figure, but the Recording Clerk at least has a platform; maybe we should issue public statements to challenge the lack of truth.
Truth is advancing in my life by me becoming a more integrated person, as I get older I'm coming to terms with conflicts in my youth. As a young person I grew up to be gay; it was taboo in my family, and I spent a lot of time denying it, I've still not shaken it off completely. T**r**uth is advancing in Glasgow Meeting with elders doing a good job with the study groups, and Meeting for Worship is healthier now than 5 years ago. More people understand that we listen in silence to the promptings of our hearts rather than people getting up too quickly and unburdening themselves.

Truth and Integrity by Mike Shilson

'Be still and know that I am God', Psalm 46 v10. It's the sense of 'being' that is most important. The whole ethos of being a Quaker is stillness and listening to God, from that comes the knowledge in the form of 'gnosis' (knowledge from experience rather than theoretical knowledge) which is the ultimate knowledge, the ultimate truth. We all have our truth, that to which we are called, but the ultimate truth is all encompassing. 'I am' is personal integrity, following your path and being true to yourself, the truth of yourself. It can be abused, you can say that your truth is 'I'm useless, hopeless, a failure, I can't do anything.' Why? We are born in the image of God, we are children of God, why abuse that relationship? God has given us everything to use.
A dark phase in my life was when I was a Head of Biology in a secondary school and I was poisoned by insecticide: I lost my health, my financial security, some friendships. My wife was very supportive and I'm so grateful for this experience, I learned so much, I've gone down pathways I'd never dreamt of. If God is God, there's a divine plan and it's learning how to fit into that. Truth is trusting that

God is love and that there is goodness (evil, too) and that all things will work together for good.
After this I trained with the leading teacher of shiatsu in the USA. We are all electro-magnetic beings in a human form, all our heartbeats are electro-magnetic, all our thoughts are controlled by electro-magnetic impulses. In shiatsu I tune into this, I'm trained to listen with all my senses to translate these signals.
It's not for me to question each individual's journey, just to allow the healing to take place, it's a divine right.
An image of truth for me is the analogy of the bow and arrow. Nowadays there are so many pressures to meet our targets. To meet that target, the arrow has to be drawn back, and the further you draw it back to the still point the further it will go. The challenge in my life is to reach that still point where you are true to yourself, and to know the peace that passes all understanding. Another image is of white light. If we are not true to ourselves, our light becomes muddy. And the light is made up of the colours of the rainbow, and each of these colours has a vital role, e.g. green plants need red and blue light for photosynthesis. And we all need to follow our different true paths.
Our Friend Alastair McIntosh says: *'Not everyone has to like what you do or say. Stay true to yourself, stand in your power and trust your journey . . . which is why these days, much as ever, seeking to be faithful to truth, integrity and kindness in public affairs are the most revolutionary acts that we can undertake (personally, I constantly fall short).'*
It's our responsibility to let those in power know, we don't give them enough information, and it's the *way* that we do it that is important. It's the Quaker way not to judge but to nurture truth. *'Are you aware that your action is resulting in…?'. 'Would it surprise you to know that you are depriving someone…?'*
How is truth advancing in me? I was brought up with a spiritual awareness and Quaker values, as my parents met at Woodbrooke. In addition, I realised from an early age how ephemeral and precious life is: my father was disabled from the Encephalitis lethargic pandemic, my two year old sister was drowned, and my elder brother killed in an industrial accident when I was 19 years old.
Because life is ephemeral, it's so important to be true to yourself, to the role you've been asked to do. I can never be sure of what today is going to bring, it can completely change my life. It's the trust that whatever happens all will be well, about being true to the truth whatever today brings.

Truth and Integrity by Ian Macdonald
'Truth and integrity' has always been my own watchword since childhood, I have always set store by it. My grandmother, who was a very devout Christian, told me

shouldn't tell lies, always the truth, which set my way of life. I was drawn to people who were plain speaking and honest.
When I was a Renfrewshire councillor, I overheard two councillors from the opposition saying to each other (after a heated debate in the Council Chamber), 'Do you think Councillor Macdonald meant what he said today?' 'Of course! He has integrity; he's a Quaker you know.' I thought, goodness me, I'm going to have to carry this label with great care. It's not just about me and my opinions, but Quakers, too! As Friends we carry a back-pack of great heritage from generations of past Quakers with their honesty, truth and integrity.
I looked at lots of Christian churches, all good folk, doing their thing, but I felt I had to go somewhere there was evidence that faith was based on *real* truth, not doctrines, dogmas or myths from the past. It's an essence of Friends that Truth and Integrity must be part of our Society of Friends, *at the heart and the core*. We do *trust* each other, if a Friend tells you something it's has to be true, a fact. To me this Friendship is a different, special, deeper relationship than that with friends with a small f. I like the quote: *'On the road of life, it's not where you go but who you're with that makes the difference.'* It's what I think being a Friend is all about – you get tremendous support in life being a Friend with other Friends.
Looking at the history of the Society of Friends, it's about waiting in silence as Children of the Light, waiting on Truth to appear… it gives me time to analyse, to wonder, marvel and be thankful for taking part in a wonderful journey of life.
John Punshon's quote [Quaker Faith and Practice 20.18] is important to me:
'... In a deceitful world I warmed to those who did not swear oaths and strove to tell the truth in all circumstances . . . a 'testimony' is a declaration of truth or fact . . . it has a purpose, and that is to get other people to change, to turn to God. . . '
You've got to have some sort of anchor in the middle of the turmoil of our world. In old age, I have no desire to become a recluse and stay away from it all, from the fake news and the turmoil. Surely we have a duty to ourselves and those Friends from the past who sacrificed much, to stand up as Friends and say to our troubled world 'We have a different way, why not try it!'
Truth for me has always been more of a scientific analysis, 1+1=2, never 3. It must be able to be as well proved as it can be. I was a telecommunications engineer for 60 years. In my field if there's an untruth or falsehood somewhere, there's a flaw in the system. In chemistry if you study the elements, they behave in a certain finite way and will always do that. When they become part of a compound they always try to go back to their trueness. It's like that for every known element, in the universe.
As I grow older, experience makes it easier for me to be gentle with myself. I still offer plain speaking but try to caution myself about the effect it might have on

others. I admit that my views can cause hurt if delivered without care and sensitivity.
Truth and integrity are different, but very much interlinked. Truth is finite, it can be laid down. Integrity is trying to apply the truth to self and others. Most people are trying to live in a peaceful honest world. Every day I see acts of kindness and honesty and truthfulness.
For me and many millions of others there is integrity and truth in the teachings of Jesus Christ and his way of teaching us to live happy and fulfilled lives on earth. Like all humans I can only wonder at what the great plan is but I am grateful that I have Friends to help me on my journey.

Truth and Integrity by Mike Nellis

I thought about integrity – what it means to be an honest and honourable person – before I ever thought about truth, or faith, in the abstract. I came to think of my Dad, a farmer, as a model of integrity. We were always close, though' we never had long or deep conversations – he was truly a man of few words – and I think he was often baffled by my career choices, social worker and academic, tho' he never interfered with them. I admired the skill and determination with which he did all the varied practical tasks around the farm, and his strikingly honest business dealings. I imbibed from him the sense that there were always better and worse ways of doing things, grounded in *the discernible facts of the matter* – and that it was always worth putting in the hours to become adept at something, to know the what, why and how of whatever one was engaged in.

[Reflecting, in my late teens, (probably quite superficially) on "non-violence" and on the implications of the Holocaust, convinced me that there were truths to be defended and acted upon, though at the time I considered myself an atheist. Evangelical college friends challenged me with "gospel truth" and while they did indeed open my mind and heart to faith I could not stay in that particular tradition: it required too much uncritical belief. Serious, potentially fatal, illness at this time pushed me to consider deeper questions, and made faith – a definite sense of transcendence - more real to me. Working in criminal justice gave me a clear sense, among other things, that determining guilt or innocence, the distribution of personal and social responsibility, nature and/or nurture are always matters "to be got right", and that working them though presupposes that some things are indeed true, and others are not, even if we can have honest disagreements about them.]

Academically, the truths and uncertainties of the field I work in have preoccupied me, and blended with the more personal pursuit of truth in my spiritual life. Conceptually, "truth" obviously has layers and levels so I would use both capital T and small t, depending on context, to talk about it. Isaac Pennington's line "All truth is a shadow, except the last" (QFP: 27.22) speaks to me. In the public square,

we need to agree on many small truths (and untruths) in order to communicate, judge and live reasonably amicably with each other: lying, misrepresentation and obfuscation seed mutual mistrust and make conviviality difficult. But there are larger truths latent within humanity, spiritual and existential, easily lost, often obscured, which signal what we should strive for, and what we need to do and to be to defend ourselves against evil. Quakerism, political and mystical in equal measure, is appealingly attentive to both truths, and I would be uncomfortable with the Society of Friends if it did not have "a testimony to Truth", not least because peace and justice, if they are to mean anything, have to be anchored in an objective (truthful) understanding of better and worse ways to live. Integrity is a way of living that upholds truthfulness, quietly or defiantly, come what may.

In my late twenties, just before I came to Quakers, I felt the pull of the mystical side of the Christian tradition, and the poetry of the line in Corinthians 13:12: '*Now I see through a glass darkly…*' penetrated me and has never left me. The mystical life is necessarily lived within "a cloud of unknowing": the pursuit of deeper truth requires living, paradoxically, with a consciously sceptical stance towards conventional secular wisdom, prevailing intellectual fashions and ossified religious beliefs. We go at our own pace. Attention and focus matter, but insight cannot (usually) be willed: truth unfolds, suffuses us from within and without. We seek truth beyond society, but not to leave society behind: we do so to bring it back, and to bear witness to its importance, even when it is unwelcome.

'Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs' was published by Friends in the mid 1990s, a very good book emanating from Friends' concerns in that era about unwarranted state secrecy and the ethics of civil service whistleblowing. It needs updated now to focus also on the crisis of "fake news", "filter bubbles" and indifference to truth more widely. In some respects, Friends are doing this already, notably via a commitment to sustainability and the manifest truth of climate change, reaffirming both a longstanding Quaker faith in science as a way of knowing and manipulating complex material realities, and in the authority of hard won expertise. While I am less and less comfortable with Friends corporately aligning themselves with secular liberalism, there are nonetheless other pressing social and political truths, about economic and social justice, which Friends seemingly find it no easier to articulate than other faith groups, and rather than coming to unity, blandly agree to differ. So Truth, I think, is prospering unevenly among Friends at the moment. Perhaps it was ever thus, but maybe there are indeed challenges peculiar to our time and culture, to which we have not yet risen.

When asked what she prayed for, Mother Theresa is believed to have said, I only listen. And what does God say, she was asked. Oh He only listens.

To Meditate or Not

Meditation is one of those words that has different meanings to different people. To many it is simply contemplation. A common assumption at one point in time was that its aim was to achieve emptiness (of mind) when that meant nothingness. This was confused with nihilism. Often the process meant concentrating on a candle to eliminate anything else. It was one of those Eastern things that oddballs got up to! Thankfully our knowledge has advanced a little since those days. Mindfulness has become a buzz word meaning to stay in the present moment and to be carefully and fully aware of one's actions and thoughts. Leading to clarity of mind, it allows us to catch stray thoughts and feelings that become a subconscious mish-mash that not only stresses our energy but also influences us in such as moods, reactionary prejudices and habitual thinking patterns. Mindfulness allows us to own more truly who we are. However, training the monkey mind that darts all over the place is a frequent goal of many Eastern spiritual practices. Samadhi in Hinduism and Buddhism.is the one-pointed mind that is now powerful and available to the practitioner. An example of this in Zen Buddhism is the Koan of concentrating on the sound of one hand clapping.

The edge of meditation is where the focus is . . . externally on the candle, internally on the thought (koan) or . . . The koan enables us to stay on the edge neither inside nor out but fully aware of our totality, hence in a lot of meditative practises the eyes are open but unfocussed or resting softly on a spot 3-4 feet in front. In Lectio Divina, an early Christian practice still widely used, a short text is read out loud three times. On the first reading one registers the meaning of the words. On a second reading a word or phase catch the attention. On the third reading especially, 'one opens' to the phase. What is it saying to us? Thus, we 'receive' from the text. There is a Quaker Bible Study that follows a similar approach. The letting go allows new insight. To fully follow it through into Early Quaker ministry, this openness and listening is how 'God himself teaches his people'. Or as William Tabor will say, in our business meetings, it is the mind of Christ that we discern.

This Other is what separates Christianity and Buddhism. Some forms of Buddhism do indeed use the Other in Deity work but Christianity, Judaism and Islam see the Other as God, the One, the Creator. Christian mystics such as Meister Ekhart would see the aim as Union with the Divine, aas do the Sufis. The 'union' is important because we are going beyond Dualism. The God is not out there but everywhere and we are part of the oneness of creation. In the Quaker meeting, when the mind is still and open, the Light touches the Divine seed within each of

us bringing it to life, opening the heart. I like to look at it as types and levels of consciousness. When the heart opens the first state is compassion.
The Vipassana practice of the Theravadan Buddhist is also called insight meditation. Letting go is the key to this. The practitioner learns to let go of every day life or the mundane thoughts of the thinking mind. This process can be called 'generating Boddicitta', great mind. I explain this as opening the mind from three dimensions to ten, widening consciousness. It happens automatically when the thinking mind goes back into proportion – the thinking mind is just one tool of consciousness that supports the Ego which I explain as the focussing point between the outer and internal worlds. When the natural balance is restored, consciousness opens so there is only ONE mind. We are all one. At this level, we have access to a universe of knowledge and wisdom. To hold a question or thought here is to get an insight. This is well developed in the Quaker practice of Experiment with Light when we are asked not to answer our questions but to wait on the answer arising. In Buddhism there is a term called the 'ground of emergence' when 'thoughts/images/feelings' etc come into consciousness.

In the Mahamudra practice of Vajrayana Buddhism, the thoughts and feelings are processed differently. They become the tools of liberation. If angry, we might ask not just why but how are we attached. Often it may be past experiences. It may be the lack of skill. Where do we put our values and why? Ultimately what is self? The end of the process is to see the self itself as an attachment and not real, but still a useful tool whilst we are incarnate. In the Experiment with Light we recognise the thoughts and feelings as disturbances. We are asked not to indulge but to look over them to the Light that helps us to recognise them. *To walk in the Light and you will shine.*

Another aspect of consciousness can be seen in the Dzoghen practice (usually but not always a Buddhist practice). This talks of 'natural awareness' . One of the Mahamudra teachers speaks of it as *resting in the true nature of the mind*'. You could say it is staying on the edge as in Mindfulness but it is more than that. The best way I can explain it is resting in a deep stillness that opens to a wide spaciousness that attunes you to the very essence of life itself. There are no words there. I can only describe it as a being part of a presence. I don't want to give it words!
If I have over-simplified this, more experienced practitioners must excuse me.
Some useful texts might be:
Feeling Wisdom Rob Preece, Shambala, 2014
This gives a simple introduction to the Mahamudra practice.
Awakening through love John Makransky Wisdom Publication2007
A practical introduction to the Dzoghen practice.

Margaret Roy, Lanark

Only a very wise person, or very foolish one, would tackle this question. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is known as the former. His books, his broadcasts and writings have inspired many.

His approach is a re-interpretation of Genesis to address principally the relationship between the three peoples of the Book, viz. Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He applies a scholarly knowledge of the Hebrew language and some psychology. In doing so he revokes many common interpretations.

First, he tackles identity: how does this arise and what purpose does it serve? Where do our loyalties lie? How are these sustained? His reading is extensive. As social animals, we have a need to identify with others. Darwin's dilemna of how 'non-genetically related individuals co-operate to form groups' is the Golden Rule based on ***reciprocal altruism*** but . . . it depends on '*repeated face-to-face encounters'*. Robin Dunbar, 'an ingenuous biologist', works out that the optimum group size for this to work is 150 – the tribe, the village, the clan. When cities arise, something else is needed to cement relationships. Hence,'*the early religions created moral communities, thus solving the problem of trust between strangers*'. However, Sacks states that the first fully articulated religions were integrally linked with politics, a word that itself derives from *polis*, meaning city. The separation between the two only came about with 'Abrahamic monotheism'.

Essentially people are capable of great good and great evil. '*Within groups we practise altruism. Between them we practise aggression'*.

If violence is to do with identity, how do we tackle the Us and Them mentality? Sacks suggests three major attempts in Western society – Pauline Christianity, the European Enlightenment, and modern secularism. In Galatians 3:28, Paul talks of neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female, etc. And we are all familiar with the schisms within Christianity! Next, the European Enlightenment introduced 'All men will be brothers' but the Romantics within this movement returned us to the '*old gods of nation and race*' leading up to two world wars. Finally our current era attempts to abolish groups altogether and go for the individual that can only be understood '*in the light of the traumatic failure of the three substitutes for religion: nationalism, communism and race*'. '*We are now living through the discontent of individualism and have been since the 1970s. Identity has returned. The tribes are back and fighting more fiercely than ever'.*See page 41. Why the return? In his book *Suicide*, Durkheim states that individuals cannot cope with the 'a*bsence of public meanings and collective moral identity*'. And so on to Jihadists, etc. '*driven*

by poverty and social exclusion' '*Emptiness, meaninglessness, materialism and narcissism of the contemporary West*' and the corruptions of secular regimes in other parts of the world. '. . . *the isolation of the lonely crowd*'.

Sacks is looking for the mechanism so next he explores ***altruistic evil*** that arises from dualism in religion, the children of light and the forces of darkness. But not all dualism is dangerous so he describes ***pathological dualism***, page 54: *a cognitive breakdown, an inability to face the complexities of the world, the ambivalence of human character, the caprices of history and the ultimate unknowability of God*. This is discussed in the context of monotheism leading towards his key solution of how to balance Elohim, God-as-Justice, with Hashem, God-as-Compassion. '*A judge enforces the law, a parent embodies love. God is both, but it is hard to think of both at the same time',* page 53.

And all this, very readable and challenging, is in the first section of the book. The second section follows four pairs of siblings in the book of Genesis to show a progression of understanding: Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and especially his brother Judah, Leah and Rachel. Sacks shows how understanding deepens through ***role reversal***, standing in another's shoes. But ultimately *sibling rivalry may be natural, but it is nor inevitable. It can be conquered: by generosity of spirit, active efforts of reconciliation, and the realisation – dramatised by Jacob's struggle with the angel at night – that the mimetic desire is misconceived. There is no need to want someone else's blessing. We each have our own.* I will leave you to read these beautiful stories for yourself. For me it brought alive the richness of the Judaic religion and how much we need the understanding of those who still own this material to bring us the depth of the Old Testament. Sadly we have lost so much through years of teaching from an anti-semitic perspective.

The third and final section leads him to look at the Universality of God and the Particularity of Love, and the interplay of these. His dialogue is strongly connected to present day examples.

Love, the very emotion that forms human bonds, bringing new life into the world, is neither simple nor universally benign in its effects.

The last two chapters are labelled *Relinquishing power* and *Letting go of hatred.* The whole book is a deep understanding of the journey of the human soul that underpins our western culture. He takes away much of the Helenism that colours our interpretation of Christianity, and even Judaism, to reveal a story that is more profound and indeed is more useful in tackling many of the conflicts in today's society. It reintroduced me to the wisdom that the Bible offers.

Margaret Roy, Lanark

Aunty 'Em's' Ninetieth

Everyone's Aunty, Mother. Grandma, Ffrien
A bastion of love and understanding
But Nobody's fool, - sharp and intelligent with a ready wit
A lady who looks, listens and knows something
- with a twinkle in her eye!!
Generous, warm and wise
Powerfully perspicacious, sensibly straightforward
A voracious reader – a demon Master of Scrabble
A Healer – a well-spring of Light
Elder and mainstay – Clan Chief and confidante
Determined and courageous.

Last year we thought we'd lost you in a fog of confusion
But your miracle of healing brought us back your cheeky presence
Your wisdom and love

Thank God, Goddess, Sender of Light and friendship
For the gift of you.

Derek Read May 2019
Lines from Mary Woodward and Max McBride (attributed)

Muriel Robertson's 90th Birthday

On Sunday, 26th May 2019, members of Milngavie Meeting were joined by Friends from Glasgow and Dunblane to celebrate Muriel Robertson's 90th birthday. Meeting for Worship was followed by a pot luck lunch with more Friends joining us for the meal and the numbers easily swelled to 30. It was a happy occasion which was also to welcome a number of new members who have come to worship at Milngavie recently.

There was much chat and laughter and photographs were taken. Gifts and cards were given; Happy Birthday and For She's A Jolly Good Fellow were sung and, of course, there was a birthday cake with candles! And there was a poem to Muriel composed jointly by Derek Read and two friends from the Healing Group.

Meeting for Worship gave thanks for Muriel's presence with us. Just over a year ago, Muriel was gravely ill and was not expected to see her 90th birthday but she did and we are all glad that she is with us. Her secret for longevity was simple she said, "just keep breathing". Meeting also gave thanks for Muriel's family, especially daughter Jane, who nursed her mother so expertly back to health and to F/friends who visited her and supported her and her family during the journey back to health.

Muriel's involvement with Friends goes back well into the last century. Newly associated with Friends, she is remembered participating successfully in our Scottish spring conference, able to talk easily to strange Friends from the North, as well as to our children. With her background in nursing, it is not surprising that she has been enthusiastically involved with the Friends' Fellowship of Healing, and Glasgow meeting's healing group.

We are glad that Muriel decided to defect and join Milngavie Meeting. Perhaps she would not have done so had she realised that it was a short cut to becoming an elder! Elder or not, in good health or not, she has been an inspiration to us.

Margaret Peacock and Elizabeth Holmes, Milngavie

Report on West Coast Friends Gathering 2019, 15-17 March

36 Friends, including 6 children, from across Scotland from Oban to Ayr and Glasgow, including Skye, Lismore, Mull and Islay, met again at Crianlarich, defying the wintry weather in the warm and welcoming youth hostel. Sadly Tessa and Gus from Arran were prevented by ferry problems. Our facilitator was Zem Moffat, leading us skilfully through the complexities of "decluttering" our lives.

On the Friday evening, Zem set the tone of the weekend by asking each one of us to present a "significant object" in our lives, and explain the reason. These varied widely from a much-used babygro to an antique apple corer, demonstrating the emotional attachment that can develop with particular things. On the Saturday morning, the early risers were calmed by a pre-breakfast session of *Chi Gong* led by Ed Tyler and Carina Spink. Zem began the main "Clutter Chat" session by pointing out that clutter derives from the Middle English word *clotteren* (to clot). The problem with clutter in our homes and lives is not the amount and variety of things but rather the things that obstruct our lives (as blood clots obstruct veins and arteries). She encouraged us to identify, and write down, what we thought were the obstructions to the testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, truth/integrity and community, and what might be done to alleviate these obstructions by actively "decluttering". Although the responses varied widely, one particular theme featured for many participants: the social dynamics surrounding the giving of presents, including gifts as a form of control; the fact that selecting or making a gift may benefit the giver more than the receiver; and

the need for gracious acceptance. We should not clutter our lives with a gift that we do not want or need but, in handing it on to another who could value it, we need to be truthful to the giver. These issues are particularly important where the gift is in the form of an art or craft object, in which the giver has made a significant investment.

In the afternoon free time, dogs were walked in the snow, Hilary and Peter Christy led a session of *Tai Chi,* and we had fascinating talks from Bronwen Currie on her work as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Israel and Palestine, and from the Tylers on their walk to the meeting from Glasgow. At the evening ceilidh there were memorable contributions from the junior Scott musicians and a spectacular backflip from Thandiwe, but none of us will forget the seated pantomime directed by Angela Stather and the less than animated acceptance of Prince Charming (Bronwen) by Cinderella (Kate).

After a challenging and thoughtful Saturday, Meeting on Sunday morning was deep and meaningful, with the children working away quietly at their crafts. Altogether an absorbing weekend, with the customary good food and good company, thanks to the organising committee.

Bob Hay, Lochaber & Lorn

Friends planting trees at Wiston Lodge in South Lanarkshire.

Experiment with Light

Full day event on 9th July at Crawfordjohn Village Hall, near Abingdon.

Join us for a whole day of the practice. Time to take it slowly, to get into depth and indulge in companionship. We will do two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon with a shared lunch in between. Even if you have not done it before come along, you will be welcomed.

Cost: expected to be £10-20 depending on numbers (but don't let cost put you off)

Further details: margaret.roy@btinternet.com and sheila.semple@btinternet.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

8th June	GENERAL MEETING South East
10th June	Area Meeting by telephone 7 – 9pm
24th August	Area Meeting in Lochgilphead 11am – 4pm
14th September	GENERAL MEETING North
12th October	Area Meeting in Dunblane 11am – 4pm
16th November	GENERAL MEETING Perth
2nd December	Area Meeting by telephone 7 – 9pm
11th January 2020	Area Meeting in Glasgow 11am – 4pm
7th March 2020	GENERAL MEETING South East
6th June 2020	GENERAL MEETING North
12th September 2020	GENERAL MEETING East
14th November 2020	GENERAL MEETING West
6th March 2021	GENERAL MEETING North

Ellie Koepplinger

Ellie moved to San Francisco as a barista but decided to study economics as well. She will be receiving her degree shortly. Helen Minnis and Steve Koepplinger are going to California for the event.

Congratulations, Ellie!

Looking After Each Other

That smiling Friend along side may not be OK! And they may not be able to talk about it, or even know they are failing/over-burdened. How do we hold community?

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The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 15th September.

Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair McIver or Margaret Roy