

West Scotland
Quaker News
November 2008

Clerk's Letter	3
Reports	4, 6
Features	
<i>Israel/ Palestine – Concern</i>	Margaret Munro 8
<i>Faith Book</i>	Jan Lethbridge 10
Notices	9, 11, 12

This newsletter is available
in other formats.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of individuals. They do not necessarily represent the view of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

I am very grateful to Janette Walkinshaw for proofreading this issue. Any remaining errors are my responsibility. Editor

The deadline for the next edition of *West Scotland Quaker News* is
Wednesday, 31 December.

Copy should be sent to the editor, Jane Mitchell, either on paper or disk, by post to

Kirkokerry, Millhouse, Tighnabruaich, Argyll PA21 2BW,
or in Word (.doc, not .docx, please) or plain text by email to:

wsqn@phoncoop.coop.

Telephone 0845 345 7196 or 01700 811229.

Clerk's Letter

Light Bulbs and Connections

For some reason this month we have had two dates advertised for our next Area Meeting. The Meeting will in fact take place on **15 November** in **Milngavie** (and not 8 November in Glasgow) and one of the reasons for keeping this date is that Alastair Macintosh has agreed to speak on the spiritual aspects of climate change and he is not available on the earlier date.

Having read Alastair's recent book *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition*, I believe his is a voice which needs to be heard. As I understand it, his main argument is that climate change is essentially not a technical problem but rather a spiritual problem – brought about because we have become disconnected from our own humanity and our spiritual roots. We have lost the sense of deep connection with other human beings and with the environment around us.

I see the credit crisis as another manifestation of the same problem. We have allowed our economic system to be used by a few people to make a lot of money rather than to support essential human activities. Banks have become betting shops instead of sources of finance for firms wanting to invest. Bankers who are paid a million pounds a year clearly have very little contact with their spiritual roots and it is interesting that many of them are now wanting to change to teaching, perhaps a more human and worthwhile occupation.

Quakers, like other religious bodies, offer a way to reconnect with our spiritual side. My main concern is that dealing with climate change is going to need such a fundamental change in attitude by everyone that it may not happen. As long as most of us can go to a filling station and buy as much petrol as we want or go to the supermarket and buy as much food as we want, it is going to be difficult to get any change. We need to do far more than buy low-energy light bulbs – we need to become high-energy light bulbs ourselves.

Martin Mansell

Reports

Area Meeting: Dunblane, 18 October Standing up and being counted

Report by Jenny Agnew

There were but 21 of us gathered together for Area Meeting this month. These days I do feel a sense of ‘coming home’ when I come into the meeting room, gratefully sip my coffee and look around to see who else has come. However, I still remember coming to Monthly Meeting, not knowing a soul – and understanding very little of the business discussed! What is – or has – changed?

I was really pleased to hear of the work of our new trustees. Perhaps because they have clearer responsibilities, the work is being sifted and sorted. Procedures are being clarified. Lines are being drawn between local and area meetings with Friends House issuing guidelines on national issues such as Child and Data Protection. For me, it is really helpful to have clarity and greater transparency.

Margaret Peacock gave a short talk about Meeting for Sufferings, much of which was in her report in last month’s newsletter. We were shown the initial printout of the Long Term Framework. It was clear, easy to read and helped by appropriate illustrations. All the

work will however be as naught if we not able to act and react as a body. Fine words are all very well but ‘the proof of the pudding...’!

We welcomed into membership David Kelso of Lanark Meeting. There was space and quiet to remember our Friend Helen Douglas. I did not know her but the tributes brought her to life and to the centre of the meeting for a short time.

Dunblane Meeting brought a Minute in which they asked us to take time each week to hold the people of Israel and Palestine in the Light. I particularly appreciated this – it is a small thing to do but it extends and deepens our awareness of a seemingly insoluble problem. Who knows what spark may be lit in the Silence? (See also page 8.)

The decision to forward the Minute to Meeting for Sufferings was one which I was more than happy to encourage. It is an extension and an outreach from our Meeting, which hopefully encourages those who struggle in such adversity and brings closer those who would help if they only knew how!

Our development as a Fairtrade Church gathers space; local Meetings are asked to inform the Clerk as we register our own home Meetings.

And so we come to the presentation of the day – Jane Mitchell’s talk which focused on the Global Call to Action against Poverty. Where does one begin with this topic? In fact, Jane began with the problems of this country – a rich country where everyone apparently has access to free education, to free health-care, to an abundance of food. Yet we are a country with greater inequality than many other countries in the developed world. The UK has greater child poverty and more problems of mental health than many of our partners in the EU. The government has spent £37 bn bailing out banks. What of bailing out our future generations?

Our problems are nothing compared to those of the developing world! The aims of this campaign are threefold:

- Debt Relief – for countries so overwhelmed by debt that they have few funds left for their own development.

- Justice in Trade – which works for the developing as well as the developed world.

- Action on Climate Change – and to help the poorest countries which are at the forefront in facing the effects.

The campaign seeks to influence the outcome of the Doha Conference on financing development in November and the United Nations Climate Summit in December.

Is there anyone who would argue with these aims?

World spending on arms is estimated at £561 bn; £32 bn is spent on aid; £275 bn is the estimated debt of developing countries. The figures speak for themselves. Developed countries make fine promises but give a fraction of what is needed.

The focus of Jane’s presentation was to ask us to make a very small commitment. We agreed “to



stand up:

- for children killed by poverty today
- to insist that governments keep their promises to the poor
- to reach the Millenium Development Goals and aim still higher
- for action, not excuses
- for justice and equality.”

As a Meeting we stood to join the many thousands ready and

willing to be counted. Armed with camera, Mary Latham photographed us joining the protest against governments who procrastinate and prevaricate in avoiding the unavoidable. What we did was little enough. Think how it would have been if every Local Meeting in the country had stood up and been counted.

Postscript: Worldwide about 117 million people stood up — almost 2%. The greatest numbers were in Asia, Africa and the Arab states.

Quaker Life Conference: April 2008 Quaker Identity & the Heart of our Faith *Report by Nicola James Maharg*

Brenhiniaeth a Brawdoliaeth

Place of Fellowship

*Mae rhwydwaith dirgel Duw
Yn cydio pob dyn byw;
Cymod a chuflawn we
Myfi, Tydi, Efe.*

Each living person is knit
Within God's secret net;
The full web's unity
Of I, Thou, He.

*Mae'n gwerthoedd ynndo'n gud
Ei dyndra ydyw'n ffydd;
Mae'r hwn fo'n gaeth yn rhydd*

What we are worth is hid in it.
Its tension is faith;
She who is caught in it is free.

Waldo Williams (1956) ©

Six Quakers, six views and, when some of them are Quaker theologians, the horizon stretches further. As Quakers we like to think we have broad minds and deep hearts, but perhaps there are views even within our membership that make us shrink before that horizon.

Around two hundred Friends heard Welsh poetry from Deborah Rowlands, not a theologian, but a Christo-centric Friend whose sure but modest manner was seasoned by generations of the Quaker family which preceded her.

Then there was Rex Ambler, a retired theologian. *Experiment with Light* seeks to discern the process by which Fox and early Quakers came to know one another in 'the things eternal'. It has impacted hugely on

Quakers who have met in local 'Light groups'.

Alex Wildwood presented his working model for 'unity in diversity', namely the process of continuing revelation that continues to shape us as we grow towards the Light.

David Boulton's sonorous voice some might remember from the *World in Action* documentaries of which he was producer. The humanity he brought to those programmes echoed as he spoke of how it is to be a non-theist Quaker, more motivated by our Digger roots and social testimony than as a believer, yet still calling lyrically on the Biblical texts of the Plymouth Brethren in which he was raised.

Beth Allen spoke of a life in which marriage to an Anglican priest meant she had multiple roles as teaching theologian, mother, Anglican lay reader and Quaker.

Lastly, we heard from Simon Best, a Young Friend, and part of a group who are rediscovering the Bible and the works of the Quaker Thomas Kelly.

How could these views be reconciled? Movingly and tellingly in the final meeting for worship. Friends gathered in Waldo's 'silent net', a tension which knit us together across a horizon much wider than we individually could hold. It set us free, at least for a while, from our differences. The Quaker way still has much to offer a world which seeks its way forward in the sometimes painful but necessary process of pluralism.

*Permission has been requested to copy the lines from the poem.
(This extract is included in both books marked * below.)*

Further reading

Allen, B. (2007) *Ground and Spring: Foundations of Quaker Discipleship*. London: Quaker Books

Ambler, R. (2002) *Light to Live By: an exploration in Quaker Spirituality*. London: Britain Yearly Meeting

Boulton, D. (2006) *Godless for God's Sake: Non-theism in Contemporary Quakerism*. London: Dent

Kelly, T (1996) *Testament of Devotion*. New York: HarperOne

* Williams, W. (1997) *The peacemakers: selected poems*, translated by Tony Conran. Llandysul: Gomer

* Quaker Life Committee (2008) *Quaker Identity and the heart of our faith: conference papers and study material for use in meetings for learning, based on a Quaker Life conference held in April 2008*

Features

Israel/Palestine — a Concern

Friends, I'd like to ask you to support me in my concern, which is this. I'd like us to commit ourselves to praying for and holding in the Light the two peoples of Israel and Palestine. Some years ago we in the Society of Friends committed time every Sunday evening to holding South Africa, at that time riven by apartheid, in the Light. My plea is that we do the same now for these two anguished peoples.

On 23 August having listened to Anne Rado's address at Area Meeting on the Israel/Palestine conflict I returned home moved to act in some way. I read again the article which Anne had distributed to us entitled *Denied entry* by Starhawk, a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement who, despite being born Jewish, had been denied entry to Israel and had been sent home to America, because of his past work with that movement. One sentence really struck home: "*Israel is like the abused child who grows up to be an abuser.*"

I had often wondered how Israel of all peoples could treat Palestinians (simply called Arabs by Israel) so cruelly. Now I finally understood that it is the underlying fear, vulnerability and a steely

determination of 'never again' that has led to the ghettoizing and the violence. Recently I heard of a rabbi who in his childhood did not know of his Jewish origins because of his mother's fear and desperate desire to protect him. When I asked myself how would I feel if I discovered I were Jewish my two predominant emotions were fear and shame. I was born at a time when unspeakable things were happening to Jewish children, and images I have seen and read are indelibly etched into my mind.

Sixty years have now passed since Israel was founded and since then millions of Palestinians have been the victims of her aggression. This conflict is openly acknowledged to be at the root of many other conflicts and violence throughout the world.

On 17 September I heard an address by Jeff Halpel, the director of the Israeli Committee against House Demolition, who claimed that Israel only gets away with her behaviour because of her militarism and her huge support from America (and Britain). He further claimed that the occupation of the Gaza strip has moved from a form of apartheid to what he called 'warehousing', i.e., a

collective treatment of Palestinians as 'surplus to requirements' so that they simply disappear...

In December we in the Society of Friends will with justifiable pride be commemorating the Kindertransport, which saved the lives of hundreds of Jewish children. Now 70 years on, we

have volunteers who are ecumenical accompaniers. Will the time come soon when they may have to accompany Palestinian children to a place of safety?

Friends, the above is the basis of my concern, which won't go away.

Margaret Munro, Dunblane

Margaret wrote this paper for Dunblane Meeting, who brought her concern to the Area Meeting. Editor

Corrections to articles in the October issue

1. Anne Rado thanks Norman Peacock for his generous Report on page 4, but says that the Palestinian university she mentioned is in Bethlehem, not Hebron, and it was founded in 1974. It is the oldest one.

It is very difficult to find reliable information on the proportion of the population of Israel that is Palestinian; it is about 47% when the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are included.

(This is calculated from 2008 estimates in the *CIA World Factbook*.)

2. Bill Bingham notes that where he wrote "Iraq" on page 11, he meant to write "Iran".

Apologies for these errors.

Editor

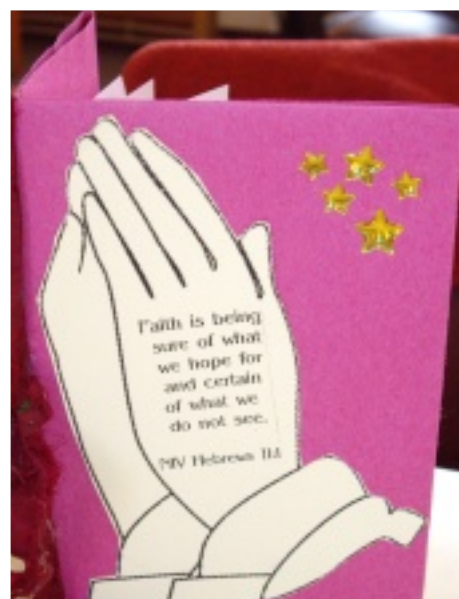


For the story for this photo, taken by Jan Lethbridge, please see page 10. It seemed a good idea to put it beside the Israel/ Palestine article.

Editor

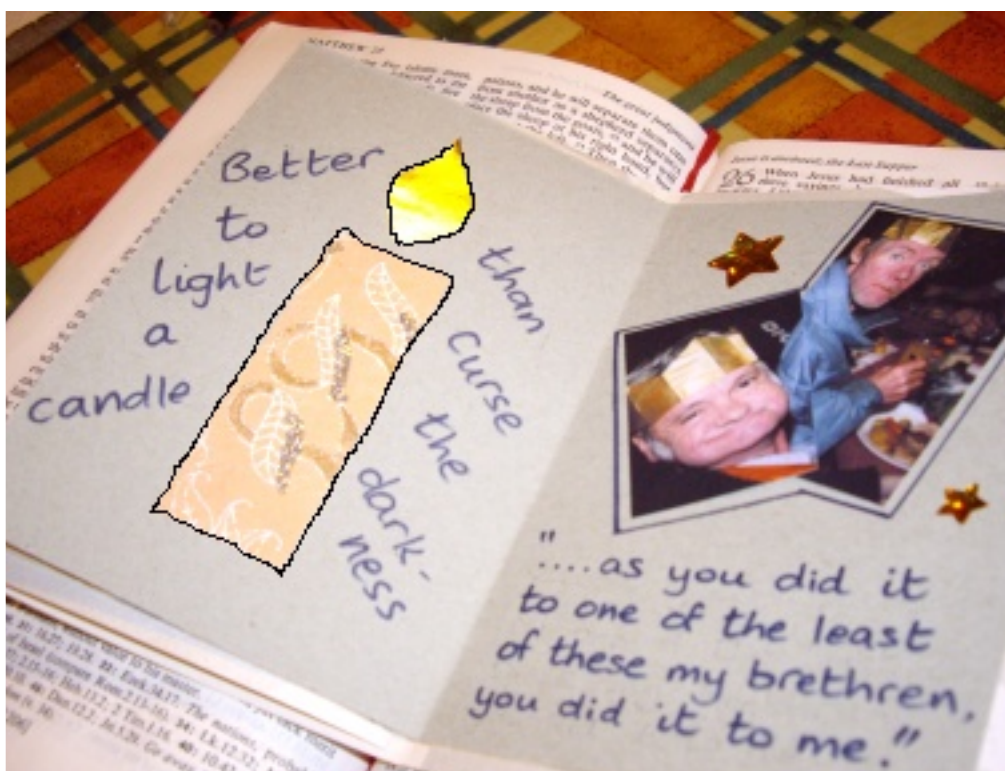
Faith Book — the Work of many Hands

This is the title of a current project organised by the Scottish Inter Faith Council. It is part of a nationwide effort, and the Dumfries Interfaith group recently invited one of the organisers, Carrie Varjavandi, to conduct a workshop for representatives of various worshipping groups within the town. Representatives from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Church of Scotland, Episcopalian, Latter-day Saints and Quakers joined together for a time of fellowship, informal discussion and simple artwork. Each person produced a small book, made largely from recycled materials, showing words and images which are important to them personally, drawn from their own particular faith and beyond. It quickly became apparent



Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Hebrews 11: 1



The photos on this page and on page 9 are by Jan Lethbridge.

that, despite our differing traditions, all of us share certain core values such as commitment and compassion, honesty and enthusiasm, tolerance and friendliness, and many more. We enjoyed the opportunity to work together and learn a little more about each others' faith, recognising the importance of all the qualities that we have in common, rather than the details that divide.

During Scottish Inter Faith Week at the end of November, these little books, together with others produced all over Scotland in other workshops, will be displayed as a single artwork in St Andrews University. All those present agreed that it was good to be a part of this wider example of unity.

Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries

Notices

Sing carols!

Eat mince pies!

At 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 23 December
at the Peacocks'
16 Drumlin Drive
Milngavie

New Music for Remembrance

Glasgow Friend and composer Sally Beamish writes: A year ago I notified Friends about the première of *The Lion and the Deer*, an oratorio using the words of the Persian poet Hafez, and poems about war and conflict by pupils of Portsmouth Grammar School.

This has now been issued on a CD entitled *A song more silent: New Works for Remembrance* (Avie label). The disc also includes moving works by Tarik O'Regan, Cecilia MacDowell and Lynne Plowman, and is available on Amazon.

Hill-walking Group

This goes out most months. Anyone interested should send their email to daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com to be put on the email distribution list.

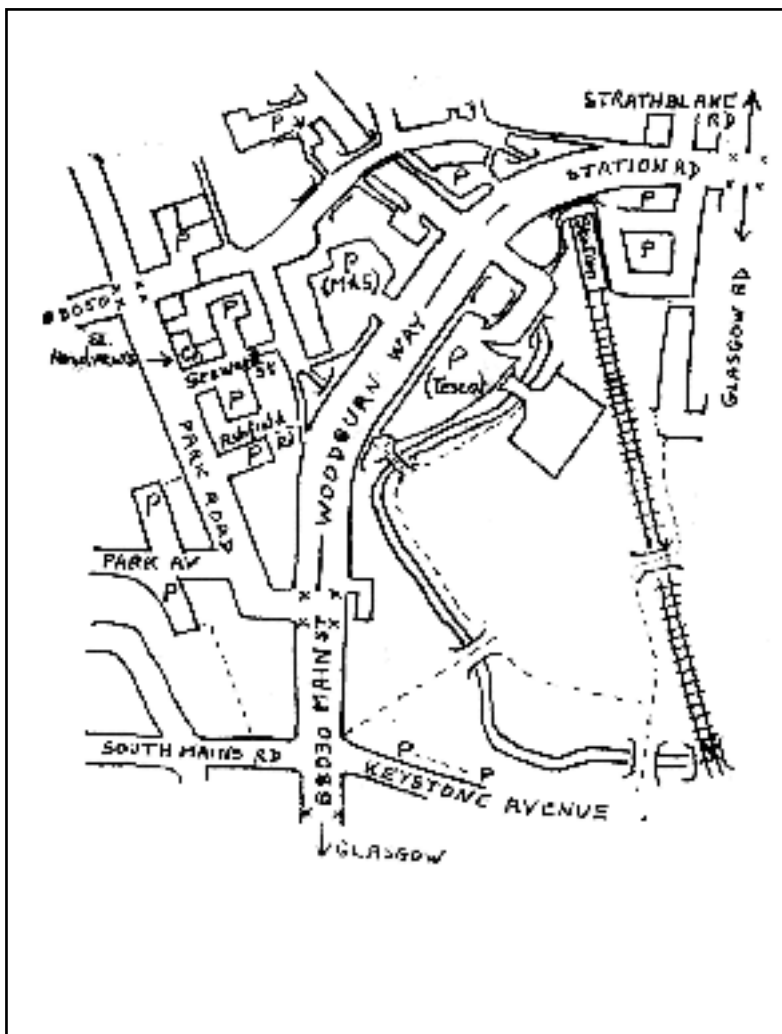
Daphne Wassermann, Glasgow

November Area Meeting

We meet in St Andrews Church Hall, Stewart St, **Milngavie** (not Glasgow MH!) on **15 November** (not 8th) at 11 for 11.30. **Trains** leave Central Station at 1028 and Queen St at 1043 (low level in both cases) and take 24 minutes to reach Milngavie.

Buses 109 and 119 to Baljaffray leave from Hope St (by Watt Bros) every 15 minutes and take 25-30 minutes. Alight at Park Road.

Parking: Two small parks on either side of Stewart St below the hall. Otherwise try Ashfield Rd, Park Ave or Keystone Ave.



There will be an Area Meeting in **Glasgow** on 7 February, 2009. It is possible that the meeting announced for 17 January will not take place.

Copy for the next *West Scotland Quaker News* should be sent by Wednesday 31 December to the editor at the address on page 2.

West Scotland Quaker News is published by
West Scotland Area Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers),
38 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow, G2 4PS.
Telephone 0141 248 8493

Charity registered in Scotland No SC011234
Paper edition printed by Glasgow pdc, 130 Douglas Street, G2 4HF