

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

8 February 2020
Inverness

Start time 10.15am

Duty Elder: Jean Thompson

Friends attending:

23 Members & 5 Attenders from Forres, Orkney, Nairn, Shetland, Inverness, Aberdeen, Lochaber & Lorne

Inverness represented by Clunie Conochie, Valerie Saunders & Oriole Hall, Forres by William Purser, Aberdeen by Eva Deregowska and Gillian Siddens.

Friends prevented:

Clive Potter (for the morning part of the Meeting)

Nigel Dower, Marion Strachan, Valerie Weir, Juli Salt

In our opening worship Oriole Hall read from 3.05 in Quaker Faith and Practice, “The right conduct of our meetings for church affairs depends on all coming to them in an active, seeking spirit...”

Minutes:

1/20 AM Report to Northern Quaker

Johanna Quinney agreed to write a report on our Area Meeting for the Northern Quaker.

2/20 Reps and reporters for GM 7th March 2020

The following will represent us at General Meeting on 7th March in Edinburgh: Sila Collins-Walden, Piers Voysey, Sue Horne, Anthony and Sue Buxton and William Purser.

Membership:

3/20 We received a report from Piers Voysey and Clunie Conochie with respect to Chris MacGregor's application to Membership. We welcome Chris into Membership of the Society of Friends.

4/20 We received a report from Sue Horne and Robert Wilson with respect to Angela Nunn's application to Membership. We welcome Angela into Membership of the Society of Friends.

We ask Sue, on behalf of Shetland Meeting & North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting to welcome Angela at their next Meeting for Worship in Shetland.

5/20 We ask Peter Heald to liaise with these new members to identify a suitable book to give them as acknowledgment of them coming into membership.

6/20 Fiona Hope (Banchory) has asked to resign her membership and we ask Peter Heald to make the necessary changes to our records.

7/20 We have received an application for Membership from Ailish Carroll-Brentnall (Nairn). We appoint Dave McRobie (Nairn, who has confirmed with the Clerk that he is willing) and Phyllida Sayles as visitors and ask them to report back when the time is right.

8/20 We received the Tabular Statement to 31/12/19, presented by Peter Heald. It records 135 Members and 102 Attenders. We thank Peter for maintaining this record.

Tabular Statement available on request.

Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

9/20 William Purser gave us an update on the activities and focus of this group, explaining that they are seeking a new Parliamentary Engagement Officer to replace Mairi Campbell-Jack; that work is ongoing to inform preparation for COP26 and to hold Scottish Government to account with regards their climate change targets, via the Just Transition Commission. (<https://www.gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission/>)

Work also continues on Forces Watch to keep military recruitment out of schools.

In relation to COP 26, this coincides with General Meeting on 14th November 2020 that had been planned for it to be in Glasgow, so it is expected that GM will be modified to enable participation in a 'people's' march/demonstration on that day. PEWG is working with the Glasgow Hub of Friends and with Friends House to find the best ways to support and participate in COP26, be that hosting delegates, providing travel bursaries for delegates from smaller countries & NGO's or getting in to plenary meetings at COP.

Matters from Trustees:

10/20 NSAQM Investment Policy: We accepted the proposal from Trustees to invest funds released from the closure of North Scotland Area Quaker Trust into an investment account with a suitable ethical bank, e.g Charity Bank or Triodos.

11/20 It was agreed that Trustees will call on the services of Fraser and Mulligan (Solicitors) as required with respect of the Aberdeen Properties

12/20 On request, we release Chris Mayo from his role as Trustee and thank him wholeheartedly for his service in this role.

We ask Nominations to suggest an alternative.

13/20 The Meeting confirmed the Trustees' approval of the final NSQT report and accounts. David James will now submit these to OSCR (the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator).

14/20 It was agreed that we would continue to explore the use of video conferencing for Area Meeting Business, as required. Zoom is the preferred platform and Phyllida has already taken out a monthly subscription on our behalf which any AM group or committee could use by liaising with Phyllida. We thank Phyllida for initiating training and familiarisation for those in AM who need it.

Nominations:

15/20 We appoint Cleo Welsh as Elder/Overseer (E/O) representative for Nairn, with Clare McKay (attender) as alternate.

16/20 Oriole Hall (Convenor for E/O's) explained that E/O's are organising a training day in Inverness facilitated by Zelig Gross, that will be open to all Friends and is aimed at exploring new ways of eldership and oversight for scattered communities.

17/20 We appoint Tor Quinney-Smith to represent us at Junior Yearly Meeting in August this year.

18/20 Sila Collins-Walden and Sue Horne gave us an overview of the Woodbrooke online Nominations Training course they undertook recently.

Additional notes: This course helped participants explore the practical aspects and Spiritual background to Nominations; matching gifts to roles, roles to gifts; not advertising and expecting volunteers; but discerning the suitability of a role for a Friend that will help develop their spiritual pathway and give them opportunities for development. The aim is to build a stronger community of Friends.

Practical aspects that might need consideration are the need for clear role descriptions and getting the balance of age and gender right, e.g. for those sitting on committees.

The online course is an effective method of learning and can work well for those who can not get to a face-to-face training course in middle England. Woodbrooke uses an online training system called Moodle that can take a little while to get used to and monitors how many hours you are online but otherwise does not check your learning progress.

Quaker Life Representative Council

19/20 Lynden Easterbrook presented her report from QLRC in October 2019. Lynden's report included a role play with the Clerk. The weekend was on the theme of Mental Health in our Meetings and it encouraged participants to be aware that mental ill-health can occur in anyone of us at any time. It covered a range of aspects in relation to mental health issues noting that it is important for us all to listen, be welcoming, be sensitive, avoid judgement and avoid interrogation or jumping to conclusions.

Meeting for Sufferings

20/20 Sue Horne reported on the function of MfS and on the recent Meeting held the previous weekend. Sue is now 12 months into her triennium as our representative on MfS.

There was space in this Meeting to consider some of the strategic options for MfS. Two staff members will report back to MfS on whether we speak to all concerns or limit ourselves through limitation of resources to a few concerns.

Following a concern from NW London and from Staffordshire Meetings MfS has asked Area Meetings to consider the topic of Assisted Dying. We will seek to consider and discern on this matter at a future AM; August 2020 at Pluscarden by the latest.

We ask Local meetings to consider and discern on this topic and to send minutes to Area meeting.

Recommended reading is the revised publication from Leeds Meeting published in 2016.
<http://www.assisted-dying.leedsquakers.org.uk/>

https://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/assisted-dying_9780993494703

Your local meeting library should have a copy of the booklet.

A seminar will be held in Friends House on this subject, Saturday 7th March 2020:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/assisted-dying-do-we-need-a-change-in-the-law-a-quaker-discussion-tickets-80229836601>

The Clerk read out and noted the following:

Rendition

Orkney Meeting has supported a concern endorsed by SESAM that is seeking a judicial enquiry into rendition flights that saw people flown back to countries where torture is routinely used as a method of interrogation. This, in breach of our international commitments to end torture. A parliamentary enquiry was carried out into rendition flights 2010-2014 but a judicial enquiry will enable all to fully understand why and how decisions were made to allow rendition flights at all. It is the right step to take in order to regain some moral standing and to reaffirm our commitment to end torture.

This concern is now being put before The Quaker Committee for the Abolition of Torture but if, in the meantime anyone would like more information on the subject, please contact the Clerk or Edmund Holt on Orkney.

Dates for Next Meetings

March 21st, 11am, L'Arche Workshop, Inverness. To consider options and concerns for the Aberdeen Properties; a special Area Meeting facilitated by Barbara Davey (East Scotland) and Michael Hutchinson (West Scotland)

May 9th, Breakish, Skye, where we will be joined by the Kindlers.

Yearly Meeting

Robert Wilson (Orkney) who is on Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee encouraged us to consider attending this year's Yearly Meeting Gathering in 1-7th August, University of Bath.

Meeting for Worship for Business closed at approximately 3.30pm

Many thanks to Inverness Friends for hosting the Meeting