

**A Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of
Alison Joan Gean Davis
11 October 1969 – 1 September 2013**

Alison was a passionate woman who lived her life by her beliefs. A Quaker, feminist, massage therapist, artist, poet and mother Alison challenged society's, and indeed individual's conventions, about what it was to be all of these things.

Alison was born to Christine and Robin at 11.22 pm, 7 minutes after her twin sister Marion. Alison always maintained that Marion did nothing special with those 7 minutes. Being Marion's twin was a very important part of Alison's identity and she always expressed sympathy for the non twins of the world.

Born and raised in Dunblane in a Quaker family Alison made Quakerism her own. She and her family spent a year in Canada when Alison was 8, where the welcome of Hamilton Meeting, and the experience of travelling among Friends across the country, lived on with her. Many of the friendships begun then are still alive, into the next generation. Active as a young person in the Leaveners, at the Canadian Friends' Centre at Camp NeeKauNis, at the Honduras World Conference and with Northern Friends' Peace Board, her Quaker faith also took her to Iona Abbey to work in the cafe where she met her life partner Mark Hughes.

Alison and Mark had a Quaker Celebration of their Commitment on November 20th 1993. They felt marriage was not an option for them until it was possible for all couples, regardless of their sexual orientation (*Quaker faith & practice* 20.46). On what should have been their 20th anniversary, 20 November 2013, new legislation in the Scottish Parliament took Scotland one step closer to equal marriage, finally realised on 4 February 2014. From their commitment celebration Alison and Mark took the mutual name Gean, Scots for the wild cherry tree, which their three children have as their family name.

To Alison life was a spiritual and creative journey. She was committed to processing even the most difficult of times as part of her evolution. Alison had a personality that challenged. Her relationships with loved ones were passionate and could be fraught. Alison loved the rain, writing letters, Lord of the Rings, reading books in one sitting, labyrinths and everything to do with the sea. She possessed a wicked sense of humour and had a fine appreciation of satire and the absurd. She had a laugh bigger than her body. In true Quaker fashion Alison loved to challenge authority, any kind of authority, and this became difficult to balance for her when dealing with doctors and her cancer diagnosis.

Alison loved to learn. She had two Masters degrees, one in Scottish History from St Andrews and the second in Peace Studies from Bradford. During a year out from her Scottish History degree she attended Woodbrooke College and her terms there were transformative and inspiring. She was a lively presence in many of the classes and activities becoming particularly engaged with Peace Studies and Women's Studies. During her time there she became interested in massage therapy and when she and Mark returned to live in Dunblane in 1999

she opened her own massage therapy practice, Gean Therapies. Her initial interest in remedial massage mushroomed into a wide range of therapies that had Alison travelling to the States and England to further her studies. With the birth of her first child Caitlin in 1999, Alison with typical passion studied to become a doula (birthing partner) and her practice attracted women pre and postpartum who felt supported and healed by Alison's talent and knowledge.

During her time with cancer Alison rejected the term 'battling with cancer' because she did not want to embrace violent language and fight her body, but rather work with it. She therefore chose to 'live with cancer'. Alison struggled to balance her beliefs about alternative therapies with the invasive and aggressive cancer treatments of western medicine. She managed a mixture of both, finding anaesthetists who were willing to chant positive affirmations whilst she was undergoing surgery. In these years she lived with a highly disciplined diet, supported steadfastly by Mark. Even when she was given weeks to live and some of us would have been on the chocolates and champagne Alison was planning her juicing regime for her return home.

When surgery and cancer drugs robbed her of her ability to work in massage Alison turned her energy to her long term passion for poetry and photography and found new visual expression in constructing 'altered books'. In June 2013 she participated in Forth Valley's Open Studios event exhibiting her deconstructed books and photographs and she sold her book of poems and photos, *Sea Remedies*.

As her health failed and she struggled to achieve normal daily activities, including washing her masses of curly hair, she ministered on her life as a 'lily of the field' (Matthew 6:26). Alison, the beautiful lily, felt tired as she described it, of 'germinating in the mud'. Alison had spent time in Canada, South America and Australia and during her last weeks of life friends and messages poured in from around the world. She made peace with her death and consoled her friends and Friends who were devastated to see her dying. Alison truly radiated peace and was an inspiration and a source of strength to those of us privileged to visit her. Alison loved well and was well loved.

When Alison died peacefully at home 6 weeks before her 44th birthday she left behind three of her proudest achievements Caitlin, Arwen and David who were then 14, 11 and 8 respectively.

Those of us who knew and loved Alison are left with both an enduring sense of her presence as well as her absence.

Signed in and on behalf of West Scotland Area Meeting held 16 June 2014



Michael J Hutchinson
Clerk