

Report on Meeting held 13th September 2018 Perth

We met to work on a way forward for Scottish Quakers, in terms of finding people to fill roles, wide geography and a sense of disconnect with the business structures. NSAM has worked hard and long on this. The Listening Project that they undertook is a model example of an AM getting off it's back side and working hard to meet all it's members and attenders, to find out who they are and what their Quakerism means to them.

There are many background papers that have been attached to various GM minutes since November 2017. If you can't source them and would like to please get in touch with your GM clerk. adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk

We were glad that three Friends agreed to be Elders for our days' work.

We welcomed Paul Parker, our Recording Clerk and Jonathan Carmichael, the staff member at Friends House tasked with working on the Simpler Meetings Project. Jonathan introduced himself and made it clear he was there to listen and see where he might be able to provide support in the future.

We began the day noting on post it notes our main reason for being at the meeting and/or what we wished the meeting to achieve. Please see attachment where they have all been written out. Our clerks took stock of these quickly and acknowledged the pain clear in some of them. With an aim to be gentle with ourselves we settled again to be led by Paul Parker, into an exercise of Threshing.

Paul began with helping us to think carefully about No.27 from our Advices and queries. Live Adventurously..... We were encouraged to think about how we could find our gifts and to then find how we could use these gifts in the service of God. He talked of not throwing the baby out with the bath water. He then described a framework that he would use to help us focus for discernment through the day.

On a large sheet he drew 4 boxes and wrote the following in them.

Pressure for change	Capacity for Change
Clear Shared Vision	A plan – what now?

Paul talked of how change can be painful, difficult and create conflict. Of how some people like it but some hate it. It can create uncertainty and suspicions. But all of this needs named, thought about and talked about in a respectful way.

Pressure for change = what is sitting there meaning we just can't go on the way it is?

Paul talked about the timeliness of this with the revision of our Book of Discipline beginning to happen. He spoke of the weight of some of our structures on small Meetings. He spoke of finding the principles behind the reasons why we do the things we do. How can we do some of them more simply?

We were asked to consider that, if change is going to happen, and work, it will need; positivity, hope, trust, worship and prayer. That Scotland is a good place for this as we do have people willing to; travel to do this community building, thinking and encouragement of engagement.

We worked until lunch on the pressures for change box. We did this through Creative Listening. I had been going to type up all that was said but that does not feel correct. I can give a flavour.

Here follows notes on some issues raised

- Friends feel disconnected and don't get involved
- Need to sustain our meetings and worshipping groups
- Area meeting doesn't feel relevant

- No shared projects – Friends witnessing through other churches
- Quakers evolve and question things
- Learn from/work with other churches
- Shortage of names/finding service for people
- 'Mystique'
- Demographic change – single Quaker households
- Need to build community
- Egocentric -> eco-centric
- Caring for one another

This was followed by Joining us together/combined visions Spiritual purpose

- Are all posts essential? Is all business essential?
- We are not alone with this!
- Opportunities of new technology
- Changing work patterns/pressures on time
- Ageing membership
- Want others/young people to have the chance to be Quakers/Outreach
- The structures may not be the real issue
- Being part of our local community
- Exciting new ways of being a meeting
- Need for explicit coordination by GM?
- It's possible to do work in a less burdensome way? -> joyful use of gifts

I can say that the feeling in the room was one of great stillness, respect, honesty and true listening. I am honoured to have been there.

Paul summed up the sharing by saying that there was

-some unity on the need for change

-there were voices heard from all parts of Scotland

-the words echoed the experiences felt by many Friends across BYM

-that other faith communities were clearly part of our experience which isn't so obvious in other parts of BYM

-that there was lots of hope

Then we had lunch. It was a lovely lunch. Thank you.

After lunch we settled again to consider

What is the heart of Scottish Quakerism like? What are the bare essentials?

What is at our core?

Paul reminded us that not one size fits all. That there are reasons why Quakers do things the way they do but with the principles firmly in place we can adjust the structures to fit each circumstance.

So, we wrote down what we thought were the true essentials that we need to look after.

We want to look after:

Worship/spiritual growth

People/community (growth and involvement)

Connectedness – internal & external

How we take decisions (business method)

Compliance (£, property, data protection)

Leadings- work we are led to do together

Outreach

Remember that not one size fits all

Next, we thought about what resources and gifts we had to work with and utilise. We have:

God

Property – 7 FMHs

- **Burial grounds**
- **Investment properties**

Cash – money in the bank

- **Contributors**
- **Investments**
- **Investments with charitable purposes**

People – staff

- **-Serving/involved Friends**
- **-Not yet involved Friends**
- **Dependants/beneficiaries including family members**

Skills/Gifts/Service of different people

Reputation/Truth

Our methodology

Testimony/connectedness/joy

Our capacity for knowing we can be gathered and how this can happen

Openness to Leading

Our decision-making processes/business method

Next we thought about our structures. We have:

General Meeting

Trustees and treasurer, Committees, Clerks, YPs

4 area meetings

Trustees and treasurer, Clerks, Committees, Elders and Overseers, YPs

Local meetings

Trustees and Treasurer, Clerks, CYPs, Committees, etc

2 property trusts

Shindig John Wigam Enjoyment Trust Participation in Yearly Meeting activity

When we got here we were getting tired, It was time to go our different ways. We felt it important to try to form a minute that could be taken to GM on the 15th in Glasgow. We felt it important to have some actions to show a way ahead. These are;

1. To hold another meeting
2. To invite Paul and Jonathan to join us again
3. Not to have small meetings trying to move forward, it feels like a Scotland wide discussion that we should rightly take together.
4. Our clerks to produce a minute then a full report.

The minute we agreed follows

Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?

A desire to listen, pray and discern brought 37 Friends from across Scotland to Perth on 13th September 2018. This meeting was called following minute 9 of GM June 2018. We met to move forward on the issues and thinking that began in NSAM 3 years ago. We welcomed Paul Parker, our Recording Clerk and Jonathan Carmichael, the BYM staff member tasked with leading the Simpler Meetings Project. Initially we were invited by our clerk to write down what brought us here and/or what we really wanted to get from the day.

There were three common themes that emerged. Firstly, to let the Spirit move amongst us. Secondly, for NSAM to be heard and for their concerns to be addressed and thirdly for us to look at the structures that are currently in Scotland as to whether they need changed or spring cleaned.

Paul Parker then led us through a very helpful framework that focussed our thoughts and contributions for the rest of the time. Before lunch we considered what Pressures for Change exist. He talked about how change can be a thing that can create uncertainty hope, and conflict but can also contain joy and positivity. We shared our thoughts on this in a very worshipful session. Within the room our different voices pointed to some unity and echoed situations found throughout BYM.

After lunch we looked at the bare essentials of what is the Heart of Quakerism in Scotland. We spent time considering what it is we need to look after. Then what gifts we have to do this service with and then what structures we have at present.

Then we came to the time that we needed to stop.

There is not unity of understanding or unity of vision, yet. However, we did really listen to each other and to God.

We said at the beginning that if we needed another meeting we would have one. We know we need another meeting. We are clear that we want this meeting to be similar to this one in that anyone across Scotland that is interested should come. We would like to invite Paul Parker and Jonathan Carmichael to the meeting.

This meeting needs to be in a bigger venue and have really clear documents in advance.

Since the meeting on the 13th we have found that March the 9th is a good date for Paul and Jonathan to return. It is the date set aside for GM to be held in Glasgow.

At GM we minuted;

Minute 5 Minute from meeting held 13th Sept on NSAM concerns

In minute 9 Of General Meeting held 16th June 2018, the clerk was asked to convene and clerk a meeting with Paul Parker our Recording Clerk to include Scottish AM trustees, GM Trustees, Clerks to AM and GM Nominations Committees and those in GM who feel invested in this concern. All those who would like to be invited to this meeting were invited to contact adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk

That meeting took place on Thursday 13th September in Perth. There were 37 Friends present. The list of names is attached to these minutes so that you can find a Quaker near you with whom to talk to about the meeting, if you wish.

Our clerk has read the minute from that meeting. We are grateful for all the energy that is going into this work. We are happy to endorse the suggestion that GM on 9th March 2019, to be held in Glasgow, will be dedicated to the next steps of discernment on this matter. We are glad that Paul Parker and Jonathan Carmichael will be able to attend to continue to share in and help lead this discernment with GMS. We ask that the minute from that meeting be sent to Paul and Jonathan and be attached to these minutes.

People who attended on 13th September

Martin Burnell, Robin Davis, Paul Parker, Jonathan Carmichael, Adwoa Bittle, Kate Arnot, Diana Brockbank, Anthony and Sue Buxton, Margaret Morton, Jacqueline Noltingk, Rachel Frith, Margaret Roy, David Sanders, Robert Thompson, Pamala McDougall, David James, Sarah Brown, Marion Sharkey, John Philips, Robin Waterston, Tom and Phyllida Sayles, Maureen Lambie, Pam Apted, Daphne Wassermann, Robert Wilson, Michael Hutchison, Gisela Creed, Alyson Buchan, Nigel Dower, Alistair and Gill Reid, Constance Tonge, Mike Shilson, Joyce Taylor, Leslie Stevenson

So now, dear Friends, I suggest we wait. Creative waiting. Using Prayer and Worship that allows God to move amongst us. Learning from what Alastair McIntosh said at GM about Quakers knowing how to build community and about how we know how to be true to the Spirit. I really hope we can wait in trust and love until March 9th.