

**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS):  
GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND**

**(Scottish Charity Number SC 012281)**

**Trustees' Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019**

**OFFICE BEARERS**

During 2019:

Adwoa Bittle (Clerk)  
Elizabeth Allen (Assistant Clerk)  
Nigel Dower (Treasurer)  
Pamela Brunt (Assistant Treasurer)

At the time of the report:

Elizabeth Allen (Clerk)  
Nicola Maharg (Assistant Clerk)  
Nigel Dower (Treasurer)  
Pamela Brunt (Assistant Treasurer)

**ADMINISTRATOR AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE**

During 2019:

Marion Sharkey,  
3 Striven Place,  
Broughty Ferry, Dundee, DD5 3JD.

Telephone 01382 730 842  
Email [ScotFriends@gmail.com](mailto:ScotFriends@gmail.com)  
Website [www.quakerscotland.org](http://www.quakerscotland.org)

At the time of the report:

Sue Proudlove,  
Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House,  
7, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2JL  
Telephone 0131 225 4825  
Email [ScotFriends@gmail.com](mailto:ScotFriends@gmail.com)  
Website [www.quakerscotland.org](http://www.quakerscotland.org)

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF THE ACCOUNTS**

Gordon MacKay,  
90 Hammerfield Avenue,  
Aberdeen AB10 7FE.

**BANKERS**

The Co-operative Bank  
Triodos Bank  
Bank of Scotland

**TRUSTEES** (during 2019 and at the time of signing of this report)

Catherine Brown  
Martin Burnell  
Nigel Dower  
Michael Hutchinson  
Derek McLean  
Jacqueline Noltingk

NOTE 1: *This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).*

NOTE 2: *In this report "the General Meeting" means General Meeting for Scotland, "the Society" means the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and "the Yearly Meeting" means the Yearly Meeting of the Society in Britain (Britain Yearly Meeting). "Attenders" are persons who are associated with a Local Meeting for Worship, but who are not in formal membership of the Society.*

## 1. **The Organisation of the General Meeting**

The General Meeting is a constituent part of Britain Yearly Meeting which is the governing body of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. The Membership of the General Meeting consists of those having Membership in the four Scottish Area Meetings of the Society. The Area Meeting is the basic business unit in the Society, dealing with membership, marriages, pastoral care and property. The General Meeting normally meets four times each year in different parts of Scotland.

## 2. **The Objectives of the General Meeting**

The General Meeting has national responsibilities on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting to represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Scotland. The General Meeting shares the basic aims of the Society as a church, promoting its spiritual insights and looking after the interests and welfare of its members. It provides both a policy-making forum for the Society in Scotland and a focus for the consideration of issues of concern and importance to the Society in Scotland.

The General Meeting represents the Society of Friends in Scotland among the other Churches and other faiths, among Scottish organisations and to the Scottish Government.

## 3. **Administration**

**Foundation** There is no known founding document. The General Meeting was probably established in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Society was first organised, after its beginning as a popular religious movement under the inspiration of George Fox. Following periods of persecution the Society has been recognised as one of the non-conformist churches. Its operation is governed by "Quaker Faith and Practice", its Book of Discipline. As described there, the General Meeting is at all times subject to the discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting.

**Governing Document** Following changes to charities legislation in Scotland, a Governing Document was approved by the General Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

**Office bearers** Those who serve the General Meeting are normally appointed for (renewable) three-year periods. There are four office bearers: Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. The first three, together with the Convenors of the Nominations Committee and the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, the Newsletter Editor, the Children and Young People representative and several others with specific roles, form the General Meeting Committee which acts as an executive and arrangements committee.

The Nominations Committee brings forward nominations for various posts and the General Meeting makes the appointments. The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group attends to the GM's engagement with political issues, with the main focus being on providing guidance for the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. The Children and Young People

representative coordinates activities involving Children and Young People, and this includes weekends for teenagers and families.

Six trustees, including the General Meeting treasurer *ex officio*, serve the General Meeting. Trustees receive no remuneration. Trustees serve renewable three-year terms and are appointed by the whole General Meeting upon nomination by the Nominations Committee.

Up to the beginning of 2017 GM had had a rather more complex structure with Function Groups but it agreed at its June meeting in 2017 to adopt the structure as indicated above. This appears to have been working well.

**Business Method** The Society regards its meetings for business as being held under the guidance of God. It believes that, when the meeting takes place in a spirit of worship, God's will for the meeting can be discerned without the need for divisive voting. The Clerk presents each item of business to the meeting and, after Friends have been heard, and when it seems likely that the meeting has reached unity, the Clerk presents a draft minute. This may be accepted at once or can be amended until all present can unite with it. The minutes are thus approved by the meeting at which they are made.

#### **4. Financial Review of 2019**

The main income of the General Meeting is contributed by its member Area Meetings through a quota system. Quotas were increased by 60% in 2015 in order to fund our contribution towards the salary and other costs associated with employing the Parliamentary Engagement Officer (Mairi Campbell-Jack). She was employed by Britain Yearly Meeting with General Meeting contributing around 30% of the overall cost. In November she resigned to take up another post. During 2020 steps were being taken to refill the post.

Support for the main work of General Meeting continued to be funded through two grants, of £7391.95 from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) towards the tasks laid upon it in Section 5.03 of *Quaker Faith & Practice* and £1400 from the Francis Camfield Trust towards the travelling expenses of General Meeting representatives and Friends attending GM. The latter is particularly appreciated as it enables us to support the engagement of Friends from distant communities in our work and worship.

Expenditure in 2019 was roughly similar to that in the previous two years, the most significant feature being expenditure related to the parliamentary work. This has been partly supported by a direct quota imposed on our four Area Meetings, and partly from drawing down some of the General Meeting's financial reserves. This draw-down would have meant that by the end of 2017 we would have reached a point where reserves should not go lower. However a legacy of £24933.70 which we received during 2017 from Jenny Auld has enabled the GM to commit to funding the PEO post for another three years (£12000 over the three years 2018-2020) with BYM contributing and indeed increasing its contribution to the post, thus enabling it to be increased from January 2018 from 2 ½ days per week to 3 ½ days per week.

The work of the General Meeting has been ably supported by our part-time Administrative Officer, Marion Sharkey, since May 2015, with a salary paid from the General Meeting's funds.

General Meeting for Scotland does not have a primary role as a grant-making organisation, yet it exists both to support Quaker initiatives and to facilitate Quaker participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities in Scotland. One session of General Meeting in 2016 was devoted to revising our guidelines for making financial contributions to external organisations and to considering how we monitor their work through our participation. Our policy remains to offer support primarily to organisations with which we have some direct involvement via appointed representatives. During the year GM decided to add three more organisations which it wished to support this year and in future years.

The actual grants paid out each year are reviewed by members at a General Meeting held in November. Among the grants made during 2018 the largest was £2000 for the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust. This organises an annual summer school for Young Friends from northern Britain.

Our printed list of Members and Attenders is produced in alternate years, so one was produced at the beginning of 2019, with the next version planned for distribution early in 2021.

Two funds are currently maintained by the General Meeting treasurer as restricted funds. These are (i) Quaker Link Weekends for teenagers (administered by the General Meeting's administrator and previously known as the "QTAA" fund; QTAA is the Quaker Teenager Activity Account). (ii) A General Meeting Fund for Healing, established when the Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) was wound up during 2012. Grants may be made from this fund to support healing of individuals in the broadest sense. Following a decision by the trustees, recommendations are currently brought forward by the trustees of the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust, appointed by South East Scotland Area Meeting. No grant was made during 2019.

There was a planned overall deficit incurred within the General Fund during 2019, drawing down, as decided in 2017, part of the Auld Legacy. The deficit was in fact around £3,000, slightly less than had been anticipated.

The General Meeting last reviewed its reserves policy in 2011. It was agreed that, in general, reserves should be equivalent to not less than 6 months expenditure. During the period 2015-2017 there has been a reduction of our reserves, but within the general framework that was agreed in 2014. The financial situation was further reviewed during 2017 at the time that the future of the Parliamentary Engagement project was under consideration following the conclusion of its initial three-year pilot phase, in December 2017. As a result of the independent review, the GM agreed to continue support for the PEO post and the GM Trustees and BYM Trustees entered into a formal agreement for its continuation for three years.

There were several discussions at GM concerning the Auld Legacy, and apart from the commitment to use £12000 of it over three years, as noted above, it was agreed that at future meetings in which there will be a general review of GM priorities, it will be decided how the legacy will be used for special initiatives. This is therefore a designated fund (there being no conditions in the bequest that makes it restricted). No further use of the Legacy occurred in 2019.

## **5. Review of Activities during the year**

We held four business meetings during 2018 in different venues across Scotland. Regular business items include reports and discussion concerning a large variety of charitable endeavours within Scotland, especially those with which the General Meeting has a special relationship (for example, through an appointed trustee or other representative).

Each meeting included detailed reflection on a special topic. These covered: (March) consideration of the question: "Scottish Quakers: how do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness to the world?"; (June) discussion led by Edwina Peart on Diversity and Inclusion); (September) a presentation by a number of Friends on their responses to the climate crisis; and (November) an in-depth discussion of a 'menu for change' following on from the March meeting. .

A Quaker teenager link weekend was held in Edinburgh in October 2019 and a very well attended residential Families Weekend was arranged at the, Pitlochry Youth Hostel in June 2019. Young Friends from Scotland participated in the annual Summer Shindig held at Ackworth School in August (organised by the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust). An Enquirers Day was arranged and took place in October 2019 in Stirling.

Our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, continued to serve in her part time post until her resignation came into effect on 28th November 2019.

In November 2018, GM agreed that our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group should engage with the questions: 'What sort of Scotland do we want to live in, and leave behind?' and 'What sort of World do we want to live in, and leave behind?'. To this end both the

Parliamentary Engagement Officer and the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) were engaged in the following:

Our public petition concerning militarisation in Scottish Schools was closed on 5th September 2019 with the committee making recommendations for action by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The PEO responded to a number of Scottish Government consultations and she gave evidence in person to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee during the consultation on the Equal Protection from Assault (Children) Bill which was enacted during 2019. The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) in its work on economic justice, was responsible for a session at the Edinburgh International Book Festival on the subject of Land Ownership entitled "Who Owns Scotland's Land?", which attracted 700 of the public. During 2019 GM asked the PEWG and the PEO to give greater priority to work on the climate emergency. The focus of this work has been lobbying for greater reductions in emissions to be included in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill and to look for ways to hold the Scottish Government to account in reaching the targets once the Act came into force. An independent evaluation of the Scottish Advocacy Project and the work of the PEO was carried out during 2019 and was altogether very positive about how it is working and what has been achieved.

Apart from the work of PEWG, GM was actively engaged with climate change and sustainability issues and encouraged Area Meetings and their members to take appropriate action. In March 2019 GM joined Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. In September 2019 GM took up its ongoing concern, as noted above, about climate change with a process of discernment on what action it is being led to take on the climate emergency, and a significant time at the meeting was devoted to listening to what Friends are already doing. This discernment is ongoing. Some of the work of Committees was done online or by telephone conferencing (before COVID 19 led to a dramatic rise on energy-saving ZOOM and other online conferencing). We encouraged Friends to travel to GM and to attend GM committees by public transport, wherever possible.

Marion Sharkey continued to serve as administrator for General Meeting, being employed for eight hours a week to support the work of office-holders and Scottish Friends generally. In addition, various activities were organized by local Meetings in Scotland during October to mark National Quaker Week.

We continued to support representatives on a variety of Scottish bodies including ACTS, the Faiths in Scotland Community Action Fund, Scottish Churches Housing Action, the Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice, the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust, the Alternatives to Violence Project (Scotland), the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and others. Following a decision on 2017 we no longer have one 'representative friend': the role is now shared amongst Friends. However during 2019 Martin Burnell and Adwoa Bittle represented GM at various meetings on ACTS, which was undergoing the slow and difficult process of transforming into the Scottish Christian Forum. Adwoa Bittle was appointed in November to be our representative on ACTS/SCF during 2020.

## **6. Future Intentions**

The main new work anticipated for 2020 is expected to be further development of the General Meeting's work on parliamentary engagement. A decision was made in 2017, as noted earlier in this Report, by GM Trustees and BYM Trustees about how the work of the Engagement Officer post should be continued and developed for the future. Discussions took place (and continued in 2020) with BYM about a new way of funding the PEO work. Another significant task before GM will be to determine within the context of a general review of GM's priorities how best to use the balance of the Legacy (nearly £13000). Our work, currently focussed on the furtherance of economic justice, sustainability and peace in the world, will be continued.

At the end of 2019, we began a review of our internal and external communications. Guided by the General Meeting Communications Working Group, this work will continue throughout 2020.

One aspect of our improved communications will be to establish accessible ways for Area Meetings and Local Meetings in Scotland to share what they are doing in the climate emergency and to further our concern for sustainability. Throughout 2020 GM will showcase work which is being done locally on sustainability and the climate emergency.

More generally GM's role continues to be to put together the big picture of what Quakers in Scotland are doing and to let Friends and others know, and to inform, inspire and support them. GM also continues its role in providing an internal forum for sharing and discussing Quaker actions.

**7. Connected Bodies and Transactions between them**

Apart from the constituent Quaker Meetings and Britain Yearly Meeting, there is no other connected body.

**8. Approval of Report and authority to Sign**

This Report was approved by the trustees on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020; it was signed on their behalf by Martin Burnell, clerk to the trustees:

Martin Burnell (signed)

26th May 2020

This Report and the Statement of Accounts for 2019 were presented to a General Meeting held by ZOOM in June 2020 and the Clerk of the General Meeting was authorised to sign them.

Signed:

Elizabeth Allen  
Clerk of General Meeting

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020