**Pat Lucas: a Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in her life**

*(South East Scotland Area Meeting, Minute 2021/09/08 refers: Diana Simcock of East Lothian LM, together with Cathy Bell and John Phillips of Central Edinburgh LM, were appointed to prepare this testimony. They have been extensively helped by Phil Lucas and they have also contacted a number of Pat’s friends.)*

**Pat Lucas 19th November 1939 – 5th June 2020**

Pat regarded herself as “ordinary”: but this was far from the case. Self-deprecatory, she once wrote that she could not discuss deep matters or generate original ideas, though she admitted that she could listen and organise. What she did not mention was her endless ability to help others to find their inner selves, to bring calmness in times of difficulty and joy at times of anxiety.

During her early years of marriage with Phil, building a family for her two sons and supporting Phil in his Baptist ministry, Pat was working as a teacher. Even then she was looking beyond the obvious confines of home and job. On moving to the Wolverhampton area in the late 1960s, she was snapped up to teach in an infant class at her local primary school, but quickly became involved with the then-novel development of teaching French within primary classes. She worked to help train teachers, as well as organising a playgroup and a young wives group in the local church – she found she was a natural organiser and thrived on her interaction with family groups and on building connections within her community.

The whole family changed direction during the 1970s. Phil left the Baptist ministry to take up primary school teaching himself, the busy-ness of their daily lives being complemented by attendance at Methodist church services.

A family holiday in Cornwall in 1979 led to a visit to Come-to-Good Quaker Meeting House near Truro, where they collected and read some Quaker literature. They found that this really spoke to their condition and both Pat and Phil started to attend Stourbridge Quaker meeting. The questioning approach of Quakerism spoke deeply to their own needs and understanding in a way that the formality of the Methodist services did not; within a year they had together been accepted into membership of the Society of Friends. Nourished by the small but committed membership of the Meeting, they explored matters of faith and in their own turn they served the members; Pat acted as Clerk to the Meeting for a number of years.

During the 1980s Pat was working in a school in a deprived area. While this was inevitably hard work in itself, she again enjoyed the community role that she developed – the after-school club and the family-based activities brought her into close interaction with families with all sorts of backgrounds and needs, families who themselves brought varied gifts to the groups. Her own teenage children were growing up and Pat and Phil began to feel that it might be time to move on to a new challenge. The idea of sharing some years of work in the role of Quaker Meeting wardenship was born. In fact, they moved from Stourbridge to Edinburgh in 1994, Phil in the autumn, with Pat joining him at the end of December.

Working together as a team was a new experience, not always easy of course. Pat could have quite a spontaneous personality, while Phil felt he was more strategic and measured in his approach. However, over their first few years they worked closely with members of the Central Edinburgh Local Meeting to develop worship and social facilities for teenagers and students, they expanded the local role of the Meeting House as a location where community groups could hold meetings and events, and they built up a greatly enhanced role for the Meeting House as a venue for the Festival Fringe. This opened a new culture door for the Meeting, with many members volunteering to help and in their turn enjoying the dramatic and other events that were attracted to feature in “Venue 40” during the annual Edinburgh Festival.

As wardens of the Meeting House, expected to welcome Friends and visitors at all hours (and to clear up after them), Pat and Phil enlisted a team of assistants who were able to help them for a few hours each week. One wrote that “Pat and Phil held the team to high standards, but Pat could always see the funny side and they both had the gift of making the team feel like a community – it was a business, but business done fundamentally in the spirit of Friends.” In this role, “Pat had all the qualities needed for Quaker oversight in the best sense. I felt that I was safe in talking to her about personal worries, and she was a great listener and a perceptive counsellor – she made one feel upheld… She had a great deal of patience even when individuals could be trying, and a capacity to see the positive qualities of that Friend.”

Throughout these years Pat provided a wonderfully reassuring presence for Edinburgh Quakers. She was there to support and encourage everyone from experienced members to visitors and children. Her natural empathy led to others being enabled to give of their best. Everyone was met with a smile and the knowledge that Pat would see the positive side in any situation. She constantly had a “twinkle in her eye”, communicating a feeling that she was on the listener’s side and that she would be supporting them.

In addition to her wardenship role Pat took on other service within the Local Meeting, as an overseer and as Clerk. Friends found that she was quite a retiring clerk (rather to their surprise!), rather apologetic and not wanting to push her own views forward. She offered occasional ministry in Meetings for Worship, but again this tended to touch on practical points, or on support for others. Above all, her great contribution was her efficiency. She kept matters well-organised, she knew what needed to be done and who was doing what and when. She was strong on procedure – due process led to progress. She served on several Nominations Committees (for Britain Yearly Meeting as well as locally), preparing comprehensive job descriptions for roles and working out exactly who was involved in taking what sorts of decision and who pursued what sort of action on behalf of the Meeting.

Above all, however, Pat was a really good listener. Her engagement could encourage any retiring or shy individual to unburden themselves, alone or in a group setting, and she could help them to explore their own feelings without prejudice or judgement. These skills led to both Pat and Phil serving as Friends in Residence at places such as Swarthmoor Hall and Woodbrooke, but especially they acted as facilitators of Enquirers’ Weekends. Two Friends who attended such events have written:

“(My husband and I) had the great good fortune to be led by Pat.  She seemed to me to be the embodiment of what I imagined a Quaker to be. She spoke simply and clearly in her quiet self-effacing way of what it meant for her to be a Quaker. She spoke with a conviction and sincerity that was inspiring.  She constantly reiterated that the opinions she was sharing were her own, implying that we should make up our own minds.”

“Pat was the right person to meet for someone exploring the Quaker Way.  A Swarthmoor weekend with Pat on the team proved to be enlightening and inspiring for a group of enquirers.  She had the skill to encourage us to talk about our spiritual journeys – or lack of them! – listening in a gentle and understanding way.  Everyone’s contribution was considered important.  One was aware of her pleasure in sharing her journey to becoming a Quaker herself, and that she genuinely hoped that we might take the same path.  Pat didn’t lose touch with us.  She made contact several months later, writing to ask if we had continued on our journey into Quakerism.  I was pleased to tell her that I had – in no small way due to her gentle leading.”

After twelve years of service Pat and Phil retired to live in the village of Stenton in East Lothian. Pat continued to put her organising abilities to the service of many groups, including Quakers; she used her ability to make connections with people, helping them to work through any problems and disagreements through sitting down together and gently exploring all the angles. As clerk to East Lothian Local Meeting she had a reputation for welcoming enquirers, managing rotas and exerting gentle pressure when necessary to get positions filled. She frequently said that managing Quakers was like “herding cats”!

Pat encountered adversity with grace, and when the spread of cancer to her brain was diagnosed she decided not to receive further treatment. She chose to be cared for in her last illness by her family at Stenton where she could get out into the lovely, well-tended garden she had developed with Phil. She loved flowers and was especially noted for her success with sweet peas. Some of the last photographs of Pat were taken by a neighbour. They show her in her garden, smiling warmly with that characteristic twinkle in her eye. She was a loving and loveable person who radiated a quiet positivity towards those in her company.

Many people feel blessed, having known her.