

Report to GM 07.06.25 on Family Weekend in Pitlochry 2nd – 4th May 2025

Our annual Families Weekend, for Quakers in Scotland, was held once more at The Atholl Centre in Pitlochry from 2nd – 4th May 2025. Sadly, the Centre is closing at the end of June 2025, but we give thanks for the happy times we have enjoyed there. As in previous years, places were in demand from families returning and those seeking to come to the weekend for the first time. Two families were prevented from attending at the last minute due to unforeseen family circumstances. However, all 4 of Scotland's Area Meetings were represented in our intergenerational group of 28 participants aged from 5 – 75 years who gathered in Pitlochry to explore the theme of peace and peacebuilding. Reflecting on our fourth annual gathering since lockdown, it is worth recalling these words from *"Our Faith in the Future,"* the vision approved by Meeting for Sufferings in 2015¹, which states that *"In turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all age. All are heard, valued and supported both in our needs and our leadings. Everyone's contribution is accepted according to their gifts and resources. All are welcomed and included. There are clear and effective ways of working together on shared concerns. Fellowship and fun strengthen the bonds between us, enhancing a loving community"*

This vision underpinned all aspects of our programme – our themed sessions, our peace café, our social time, our shared mealtimes, our worship. We enjoyed reconnecting with those we knew from previous gatherings, and welcoming those joining us for the first time. We used different approaches to explore what peace means to us – through stories, songs, making artwork, discussion and research, and we acknowledged the frustrations of how it feels when politicians don't listen or do much to help. With our young people's group, we shared real life stories about courageous Quaker activists: Helen Steven and Gaie Delap. And we reflected on the recent incident when the police broke into Westminster Meeting House and arrested some young people holding a meeting there about proposed peaceful protests. How would we feel if this was us?

We recognised the importance of making others aware of what is happening in different parts of the world - the places where there are wars and how this affects people. Gathering these threads together, the young people made a newspaper which included photos of wars, protests and some pictures of the Friends Ambulance Corps. They wrote short articles about peace and conducted interviews about what people do to feel peaceful and peaceful places where

¹ <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/our-faith-in-the-future-leaflet-2016>

they like to go. They made a puzzle and quiz page and a peaceful labyrinth, and designed a graphic cartoon strip about the casualties of war. This work is now forming a framework for an issue of *Journeys in the Spirit*, the resource prepared by Quaker Life to support our work with children and young people in the UK and beyond.

Our Peace Café on Saturday afternoon gave us the opportunity to join together as a community, engaging in activities including kite making, designing bookmarks, making bunting and thinking about designs for banners to use in demonstrations for peace. These ideas provided inspiration for our closing All Age Worship on Sunday morning, when we heard Michael Morpurgo's story, *The Kites Are Flying* and wrote our peace messages, drawings and prayers on little paper kites to hang on our peace tree. Here are just a few:

Peace within,
Peace between,
Peace throughout the world.
Shalom

Peaceful offerings:
 a hug, a smile, a greeting,
 a picture, a story, a song,
 a flower, a melody...
Small but so important

Peace for
Everyone, everywhere
All working together
Caring for
Every community

Our Family Weekends provide a valuable opportunity to be part of a caring and adventurous community within GM where intergenerational groups can have time together in a safe space to explore and discuss issues that are important to them, and to support each other in living out our Testimonies. The weekend brought us all closer together – nourished and enriched by delicious food provided by Mary Alice Mansell and her volunteer helpers. We thank General Meeting for its continuing support to enable us to meet together in community in this way and we will look forward to continuing to work together throughout the year across the miles. As I conclude this report, an opportunity is emerging

to enable us to offer direct support to a brave family in Gaza – living out our Quaker witness with love. I pray that this will bear fruit.

Our Gathered Family Community – Pitlochry 2025



Mary Troup
7th June 2025