

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

Minutes - 21 October 2023

Note: this Area Meeting had been scheduled to be held in Aberdeen and blended online from there. Due to weather surrounding storm Babet it was decided to hold the Meeting online only and the agenda was tweaked slightly to account for perhaps fewer Friends joining; notably the item on Pastoral & Spiritual Care is carried over to our February 2024 AM.

Friends present: 23 Friends from Orkney (& Westray), Inverness, Forres, Aberdeen.

Supporting Friends (Elders): Clunie Conochie & Lex Ryder

45/23 AM Dates 2024

10th Feb – online – or Aberdeen as we were not able to get to Aberdeen this time. (GM 9th March).

18th May - Inverness. (GM Family weekend 4-5th May? GM 8th June.)

30 Aug-1st Sept – Pluscarden (GM 14th Sept, Aberdeen)

19th Oct – Aberdeen. (GM 9th Nov)

Membership

46/23 Peter Kennedy (Aberdeen/unattached), died on 17th September 2023. A humanist funeral for Peter was held on 6th Oct. It is expected that a Memorial Meeting will be organised by Aberdeen Friends in due course.

47/23 Penny Selbie (Aberdeen), died 4th October 2023. A memorial Meeting for Penny will be held on 1st November, 1pm at Aberdeen Quaker Meeting House. This Meeting will be blended to give opportunity for Friends and family to join online.

48/23 John Wragg (Forres) died on 9th January 2023, with a funeral following at the Findhorn Foundation. No AM minute was recorded at the time.

49/23 Community Justice

We have heard from Jennifer Copsey about the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group and the Community Justice Forum.

We have heard of the importance of starting early, helping people find themselves, find their place in society before they fall into crime. We are reminded that most politicians and our Government acknowledge that Prison does not work to reduce offending but that we seem incapable of rolling out an alternative system, even when we can see the results in Norway. In Norway their criminal justice system is based on restorative justice; for an equivalent population size to Scotland they have a prison population of some 3000 people while in Scotland our prison population is 7,500.

We are referred to a recent programme on Radio 4's the Moral Maze "What are Prisons For?". <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014601b>

Also the Breaking Chains booklet produced by the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network in 2022.

Jenny reflected on a recent radio programme about Julian of Norwich, that after her long life of contemplation her conclusion was that God is love. Love being an element that seems sadly lacking in the criminal justice system.

We are invited to find someone from North Scotland to join the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working group. And we ask nominations to bring forward a name. The Scottish Quaker Community Justice Forum is open to everyone.

Another Friend also recommends reading 'The Secret Barrister,' a trilogy of books, although depressing and focussed on the English justice system:

<https://thesecretbarrister.com/about/>

Nominations

50/23 The following name was brought to us by the Pastoral and Spiritual Care Group: We appoint Jill Blackadder (Shetland) to serve on AM Nominations, from October 2023 until 31 Dec 2026.

The following names were brought to us by AM Nominations:

51/23 We appoint the following to the Pastoral & Spiritual Care Group, to serve 1 Jan 2024 to 31 Dec 2026: Clunie Conochie (Inverness), Brian Ashley (Shetland); Anthony Buxton (Forres); Sue Buxton (Forres); Nigel Dower (Aberdeen); David James (Lochaber & Lorn).

(Clerk's note: It is acknowledged that there may be a conflict of interest in that someone (in this case Nigel) serves both on the Pastoral & Spiritual Care Group and on AM nominations and when the P&SCG nominates to AM nominations, this could give rise to a conflict of interest. However, given we are small in numbers we have few alternatives and hope that we can work around this situation as needs be.)

52/23 We appoint Anne Hitchen to continue in service as Children and Young person's advocate, from 1st January 2024 to 31 Dec 2026 (2nd term)

The search for a Children and Young Persons Supporting Friend is ongoing.

53/23 *Assistant Clerk to AM:* We appoint Andrew Collins (3rd term); Lynden Easterbrook (1st term), from 1st January 2024-31 Dec 2026;

(John Hitchen continues his 2nd term as assistant clerk)

54/23 We appoint Clare Trinder to serve as ongoing archivist from 1 Jan 24 until 31 Dec 24 (as she would prefer us to find someone else after that date).

55/23 *Membership clerk:* We appoint Peter Heald to serve from Jan 2024-Dec 2024

56/23 *Assistant Membership Clerk:* We appoint Alex Page to serve from 1st Jan 2024 until 31 Dec 2024 (with the expectation to take over from Peter Heald thereafter).

57/23 We appoint Anthony Buxton to continue in service as AM Treasurer from 1 Jan 2024 until 31 Dec 2024*

58/23 We appoint Peter Heald to continue in service as AM assistant Treasurer from 1 Jan 2024 until 31 Dec 2024*

(* Given that we may be in transition to one Trustee body in Scotland, Anthony agrees it

makes no sense to change Treasurers at this point)

59/23 *Newsletter editor:* Harry Horsley to continue in service from 1 Jan 2024 to 31 Dec 2024*

(* it had been agreed we should find a replacement for Harry by now, but the search for someone to replace Harry is ongoing)

60/23 We appoint Cluny Conochie (currently serving as Assistant Registering Officer) to serve as Registering Officer from Oct 2023 until 31 Dec 2026, replacing Penny Selbie.

61/23 *QCCIR Woodbrooke Conference on Christian and Interfaith relations (15-17 March 2024:)* We appoint Juli Salt as our representative to the Interfaith Relations conference in March next year.

62/23 Trustee report

We have heard, and read of the work carried out by Trustees on our behalf over the last 6 months and we appreciate some of the challenges ahead for them. We thank them for their work on our behalf.

63/23 Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group

We recognise the deep sense of 'being ignored' suffered by Trustees in relation to the nominations for the Options for Scotland Co-ordinating Group. The AM Clerk has been in touch with Clive Potter, who represents us on GM Nominations. To encourage openness in the GM nominations process the AM Clerk will maintain regular communication with GM noms so that NSAQM is better aware of the work of GM Nominations. Clear lines of communication are required between different Quaker groups to maintain our trust that the Quaker process is fully representative of the diversity (geographic and otherwise) of Friends.

Nigel then gave an update on the work of the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group. There are two strands of work: One is the Governing Document for a single charity, Quakers in Scotland. The other is what Quakers in Scotland looks like more broadly. Is it referred to as an Area Meeting? Do we keep existing Area Meetings in their existing format without charitable status? A current aim is that the Quakers in Scotland governing document will be drafted to be flexible on how the life of Meetings (local and area) is maintained.

We considered briefly the question of whether it is advantageous or not that Quakers in Scotland has charitable status.

In respect to the role of Area Meeting going forward, a Friend offered the following consideration:

“Do others share the view that our spiritual and worship matters should remain with a body which is coincident with or similar to the current NSAQM? Because we value the common, shared experience of worship in the fellowship of rurally wise and experienced Quakers? That we should continue to enjoy arranging events, such as Pluscarden, Sunday morning area-wide online Meetings, and interfaith dialogue and other cooperative ideas with others in a similar rural/remote experience? The Religious Society of Friends lives to the glory of God through shared worship. The rural experience is central to our way of worship and a pillar of our Friendship in North Scotland. The removal of the stresses of administration will give us new spiritual fervour and vigour and we will be free to live that.”

We are reassured that the experience from Wales with respect to amalgamating core charitable roles is creating benefits for spiritual growth in the continuing Area Meetings.

64/23 Sufferings

Lex Ryder has given us a short report from Meeting for Sufferings., focussing on two items. One is the acknowledgement that the manner of being a Friend is changing, partly due to the diversity of online Meetings and therefore the conversation about non-members holding roles within Central Nominations Committee continues. The other was looking at how Meeting for Sufferings might be seen as a continuity of Yearly Meeting rather than a separate 'governing body'.

More details can be found online at: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Lex will send a longer report to the Northern Quaker.

65/23 Local Development Worker Priorities

General Meeting has asked Local Meetings to consider LDW priorities for 2024. AM has not been asked to contribute to this matter as AM Clerks are meeting with GM later in the month. This minute is simply to acknowledge that minutes have been sent to GM from Shetland, Inverness and Aberdeen Local Meetings.

We have heard that there is support for the current LDW priorities and the work that Zoe is doing. Going forward there might be more emphasis on role-holder networks and supporting Local Meetings through any transition to "Quakers in Scotland". Specific points identified included:

- Supporting, nurturing and growing Local Meetings.
- Supporting Local, AM and GM treasurers in moving towards a unified accounting system.
- Supporting Local Meetings in hosting outreach and learning events and sharing these events across Scotland.
- Supporting the work of Pastoral & Spiritual Care groups.

Clerk's note: Area Meeting closed with reflection on the word Ubuntu that was central to this year's World Quaker Day: Ubuntu is the philosophy that "a person is a person through other persons"; "I am because we are"

It resonates with "that of God in everyone"; there is unity through everything – an "invisible circuit of connection between us all"

"In practice it means everyone has a responsibility for the welfare of the whole community, and ensuring that people have what they need. This extends to care for the environment, since people are part of the same God-given creation that is an interdependent whole."

Piers Voysey
Clerk

Andrew Collins
Assistant Clerk