

## **North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Pluscarden Village Hall 26 & 27 August 2023**

Friends present: 23 members, 6 attenders, representing Forres, Aberdeen, Inverness (inc Dingwall & Caithness)

8 Young Friends & friends and 5 assistants were involved in the Young Friends programme.

In our opening worship we heard Rufus Jones reflecting on the diversity of people seeking their way in faith yet united in the universality of seeking Truth: “The insistent questioning of the seeker, the fire of the rebel, the reflective contribution of the more cautious thinker – all have a place amongst us. This does not always make life easy. But we have found that we have learned to listen to one another, to respect the sincerity of one another’s opinions, to love and to care for one another.” Quaker Faith & Practice 11.41

#### **Area Meeting – Ways forward**

**32/23** We are invited to consider how we rationalise Quaker organisation in Scotland. Key to this is establishing ‘Quakers in Scotland’, a charity that will replace existing Area Meetings.

In order to help GM make progress in this matter we are asked to consider:

1. Is the AM interested in taking the planning for a single charity (Quakers in Scotland) further?

One question arose in relation to the scenario of some AM’s joining ‘Quakers in Scotland’ and others retaining their AM status. It may be messy if not all AM’s join ‘Quakers in Scotland’.

Our response to the question of pursuing the establishment of ‘Quakers in Scotland’ remains a unified “Yes”, North Scotland Friends think this is a positive way forward, and a way of future proofing our organization, for all Area Meetings.

#### **33/23**

2. Is GM nominations committee the appropriate body to find names to serve in the roles required for Quakers in Scotland?

Yes. To ensure representation from across Scotland we trust GM nominations to appoint accordingly.

The nominating process is still relevant and important for Quakers. In order to maintain representation to Quakers in Scotland it is perhaps necessary for North Scotland and other regional meetings to retain something of a nominating function, but the detail will become clear to us as we move forward.

North Scotland Quakers understands the need for us to bring names forward to support the process of bringing life to Quakers in Scotland. We are aware of the need for outreach to keep Quakers alive and relevant in Scotland and to mentor our friends and attenders at Local Meetings to engage them in AM matters.

Might we refer to Options for Scotland 3 by another name? We are moving on from options to establishing a new structure, with relevant governing documents.

We were referred to Advices and Queries 27: "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?..."

And 28: "Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. ..."

[See William for reference]

[Clerk's note: Responses to another 2 questions are covered in later minutes, 35 and 36]

## **Ecocide**

**34/23** Skye Simpson and Sila Colins-Walden have lead us in a session to consider Ecocide and making it an international criminal offence.

While there is some concern about how such a criminal offence will be enforced, we do believe this is a worthwhile campaign to help humanity reign in the excessive damage caused to the planet by human development, greed and demand for resources. In the light of the presentation by Skye and Sila and in the film "Why on Earth Isn't Ecocide Illegal?" And given that there is already considerable momentum for this concern, we ask our clerk to sign the Manifesto for the Criminalisation of Ecocide on behalf of North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting. We also invite all Friends to individually sign the international petition on the Stop Ecocide website: <https://www.stopecocide.earth/become>. We also ask that the StopEcocide International manifesto is considered and signed by GM and BYM.

## **Area Meeting – Building Resilience**

**35/23** Carried forward from the morning session, where we are considering questions from GM in relation to moving forward with Quakers in Scotland:

3. Are Friends happy to work with Friends across Scotland in fleshing out the various aspects of Quakers in Scotland beyond the work towards the single charity?

Yes, why would we not want to? If we do not engage we only have ourselves to blame, and we trust that all Area Meetings will work together to develop the means by which we can function as Quakers in Scotland. We support a process that involves the existing networks of Treasurers, Trustees, etc. And also a process of discernment by which those involved in implementing Quakers in Scotland (aka the Options 3 Group) refer regularly to

the existing Area Meetings and Local Meetings.

### **36/23**

4: Is GM the right body to let Meeting for Sufferings know at this stage our intended direction of travel; or do Area Meetings need to communicate directly with Sufferings?

Yes, please, if GM, having received direction from Area Meetings, could communicate the direction of travel to MfS, that would be simpler.

### **Nominations**

**37/23** We have heard from one of the co-convenors of Nominations, noting that the committee only has 4 members at present.

A list of those active in roles will be presented shortly. In the process of reviewing this list a number of roles were noted as coming to an end of the first term in December:

#### **Assistant Clerk**

We appoint John Hitchen (Inverness) to serve a second term as Assistant Clerk, from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026.

#### **Trustees**

We appoint Jane Booth (Aberdeen) and Anthea Mason (Aberdeen) as trustees (second triennia), to serve 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31 December 2026.

#### **Pastoral and Spiritual Care**

We appoint Oriole Hall to serve a second term on the P&SC group, from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2024 to 31 Dec 2026.

### **38/23 Offers of Service**

We encourage Friends to complete the Offer of Service form available online:

<https://forms.gle/2KMANG2w5E2saRVdA>

So far only 10 friends have completed the online form. A paper version is now available for those who would rather complete the form, or as a computer document.

### **39/23 Nominations Nominating Group**

We ask the Pastoral and Spiritual Care Group to continue their search for 2 or more names, if possible, to serve on Nominations and ideally representing more of North Scotland.

In reflection on Nominations we raised the following questions: How do Friends who are not in roles support those in roles? Do we practice a no-blame culture? Are we good at collaborating? Why are we asked to serve when it is we who should wish to serve? In what ways can we demystify roles and enable Friends to think, "why not me?"

We could remind ourselves about the roles: bring them to AM in talking about roles, what's involved. There are descriptions of the roles on the North Scotland Quaker Notebook (<https://northscotlandquakernotebook.org/>). We could provide shadowing in a role, for a day, for example. Remembering that we need to be careful and mindful of the needs of new Friends who are still seeking for where they belong and old Friends who need a break from responsibility. We need to grow our community.

### **Peace at the Heart**

[There was no minute from this interactive session lead by Richard Raggett and Carolyn Burch, drawing from the Peace at the Heart report produced by Britain Yearly Meeting. We considered what it is about us and how we interact with others that builds peace within our communities.]

## **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August**

**40/23** We record the death of our Friend Eleanor Fairclough, on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Eleanor was a long-standing Inverness Friend and active within the Area Meeting, providing much appreciated wisdom and wit. We uphold Friends and family in mourning her passing. A Quaker Meeting to celebrate Eleanor's life will be held at the D. Chisholm & Sons Funeral Home, Huntly St, Inverness, 11 september, 12.15pm, prior to cremation at Inverness Crematorium. If friends wishing to attend could inform Oriole Hall (oriolehall@hotmail.com). The Meeting will also be live-streamed and a link will be advertised soon.

## **Pastoral & Spiritual Care**

**41/23** Going forward, irrespective of any re-organisation [Quakers in Scotland], AM Nominations is still seeking names to join those on the Pastoral & Spiritual Care Group. The Group accepts that a wider body of eldership and pastoral care may be acceptable as a general policy but would wish to retain the present area level of care which serves to support all the local Meetings and Worshipping Groups within the North of Scotland.

Looking forward:

**42/23** Inverness Meeting has been working to bring Woodbrooke on the Road to North Scotland in 2024, for a 1-day workshop. A possible theme might be "Hope as Practice". We ask Sila Collins-Walden to liaise with Woodbrooke with a view to booking them to join us at Pluscarden on 30/31 August/1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2024 failing that 23/24/25<sup>th</sup> August.

## **43/23** Booking Pluscarden for 2024?

We agree to pay Pluscarden Abbey £850 for providing venue and accommodation for this year's residential AM. We ask the AM Planning Group to review the Pluscarden weekend fees for attending Friends, prior to sending out booking information in 2024, providing a sliding scale of 3 options for fees and a request to apply for travel costs as well through the Bursery fund (noting that bus travel is free for those under 22 and over 60. We ask the Clerk to liaise with the village hall and the Abbey asap to reserve our preferred dates for 2024. We thank the Brothers at the Abbey and the Pluscarden Hall committee and wish them well.

**44/23** We also warmly thank Ruth Jeffries for the catering skills and time to support and feed us this weekend. We have signed a card and will thank her personally.

