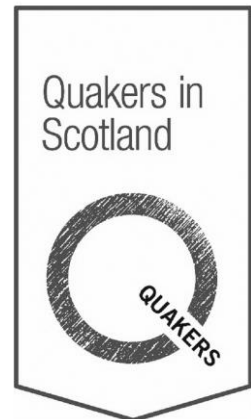


# GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

At a blended Meeting held in Perth at the Bell Library, York Place, PH2 8EP, and by video conference, on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023



## MINUTES

### 23/11/01 Opening worship

During our opening worship we held in the Light the deeply distressing current conflict in the Middle East, made more so by the troubled state of our world as a whole. We have heard something of how Quakers can and are responding to the situation in Israel/Palestine, including here in Scotland. A summary will accompany the circulated minutes. Our assistant clerk has read section the Christian Aid statement, signed in the name of the General Meeting, on the Israel/Palestine situation as given in following minute 23/11/18c. We feel an unbearable sadness, but also recognise how this may stimulate us as individuals and in groups like ourselves to work towards a positive difference.

### 23/11/02 Welcome to all present

We welcome all Friends who are with us today, both by Zoom and in Perth.

The numbers of those present for all or part of the meeting were:

East Scotland AM	17 (11 in Perth, 6 on Zoom)
North Scotland AM	11 (5 in Perth, 6 on Zoom)
South East Scotland AM	21 (11 in Perth, 10 on Zoom)
West Scotland AM	19 (7 in Perth, 12 on Zoom)
Visitors	2 (1 in Perth, 1 on Zoom).
<b>Total:</b>	<b>70</b> , including 2 attenders

We thank the East Scotland Area Meeting Friend acting as elder for us in Perth: Alyson Buchan. We ask South East Scotland AM to provide Friends to act as elders for our next meeting.

### 23/11/03 Agenda

We adopt the agenda as circulated in advance.

### **23/11/04 Reporter to *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend***

We thank Pam Apted for agreeing to report on this meeting for *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend*.

We ask East Scotland Area Meeting to provide the name of a Friend to report on our next meeting.

### **23/11/05 New members, transfers and deaths**

From Area Meeting minutes since General Meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> September, we record the following:

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Terri Sutherland (WSAM)

#### **DEATHS**

Peter Kennedy (Unattached, ESAM and also Aberdeen LM) on 17th Sept 2023

Penny Selbie (NSAM) on 4th October 2023

John Wragg (NSAM) on 9th January 2023 (no AM minute was recorded at the time)

[ESAM = East Scotland Area Meeting; NSAM = North Scotland Area Meeting; and WSAM = West Scotland Area Meeting]

### **23/11/06 GM Budget for 2024, together with donations and affiliations**

Our Treasurer, Katrina McCrea, has presented the General Meeting budget for 2024 (Paper A), which was approved by GM Trustees at their meeting on 17th October. The budget projects an income of £28,500.00, and expenditure of £30,500.00, giving a projected deficit of £2,000.00. As last year, the budget is made with a view to reduce current surplus funds. The budget also reflects a continuing change over funding of Britain Yearly Meeting staff working in Scotland, particularly the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. We will still forward £6,000 contributed to this from Area Meetings, but by arrangement are no longer adding to this from GM funds. We also note that this year we are working to budget.

We have also received the list of donations and affiliations for last year. We agree to continue our support for the organisations on the list at the same level as this year. A full list will be circulated.

We are content with the budget, a copy of which will be filed with the minutes of this meeting.

We thank Katrina and our Trustees for their continuing work on our behalf.

### **23/11/07 Appointment of Independent Examiner**

On the recommendation of GM Trustees, we appoint Chris Holman to act as Independent Examiner for the 2023 accounts.

### **23/11/08 Local Development Worker – priorities for 2024**

Further to minute 23/09/16, Our Local Development Worker (LDW) for Scotland, Zoe Prosser, has spoken to her report (Paper B) which explains the background and process for how priorities are chosen for her work next year. Although not her direct employer, we can contribute by suggestions for the priorities and the report lists those received from Friends and Meetings.

The current priorities agreed by this process last year are:

1. Expanding role-holder networks
2. Supporting Quaker community building - locally, for families, and for everyone
3. Pointing the way to information about available resources and materials, including videos and non-traditional resources, to help Quaker Meetings and role-holders identify what they need.

The Area Meeting and General Meeting clerks met with Zoe on 23<sup>rd</sup> October to review the suggestions. The clerks recommend that the current three priorities are flexible, broad objectives which should continue. The points suggested by Friends and Meetings generally can be noted under these to give the emphasis to Zoe's work. We can trust Zoe to take these into account without listing them at length. The broader context, however, has changed with the way we are examining our structures and suggesting change, and this affects all current priorities. Hence this should be recognised by a fourth listed priority on supporting the change process through working with the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group. In particular this will involve advice and support for how we develop ways of pastoral care and spiritual development as well as other aspects of Quaker life affected by change.

We agree to add a fourth priority:

4. Supporting the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group to work for change.

The experience of reviewing the priorities has indicated that the process should begin earlier next year (minute 22/06/09 refers).

We thank Zoe for her useful presentation and for her continuing work on our behalf. We are enthused by her work and note that that requires our practical support. We are very aware that all our work depends on a right listening to the Spirit.

### **23/11/09 Working with children & young people**

Mary Troup, our children and young persons advocate, has spoken to us about how Meetings in Scotland, including General Meeting, are working with

children and young people through their advocates.

We have also heard video accounts from Andrew Craig and Joanna Craig (both Glasgow Meeting) of Shindig (Northern Young Friends' summer camp) held this year at Ackworth Quaker School 29th July – 5th August. We note that Shindig next year will be held on the Isle of Cumbrae, at Millport.

The Shindig theme was 'building communities': *Quaker faith & practice* 10.03 refers. This reflects well with the wider work with younger Friends both in Scotland and in Britain Yearly Meeting as a whole, such as in helping to organise Junior Yearly Meeting. Building communities involves building confidence through paying attention to inclusion, as was seen in the successful Pitlochry families weekend and our engagement with the PATH (Peace at the Heart exhibition – see minute 23/11/12). The latter provided the theme for children and young people at North Scotland Area Meeting's Pluscarden weekend.

We also record how, on 21<sup>st</sup> September, a group of children from Oakgrove Primary School in Glasgow, led by Mary and accompanied by professional musicians, gave a wonderfully planned and executed performance of 'Wangari's Trees of Peace', the story of how one Kenyan woman's determination founded the green belt movement in Kenya. Educational professionals and MSPs alike were moved and inspired. With its core theme of 'Never give up' it was the perfect 'all singing all dancing' way to lay the foundation for our 'Peace at the Heart of Scottish Schools' exhibition the following week.

We thank Mary Troup and all involved for this inspiring work and valuable contribution. We are indebted to Mary's commitment in ensuring that children and young people's voices are heard as we all work for peace and justice.

### **23/11/10 Appointments and Nominations Report**

There has been one appointment made by between-meetings procedure since our last meeting:

Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group (QiSCG), to serve from appointment on 18<sup>th</sup> September until the process is through, or as determined by the General Meeting:

Nigel Dower (North Scotland AM).

Further to minute 23/09/09, we note that QiSCG appointed Lesley Richards as its convenor.

Nominations Committee has brought us the following nominations:

QUAKERS IN SCOTLAND COORDINATING GROUP

To serve on the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group, from appointment until the process is through, or as determined by the General Meeting: Edmund Holt (North Scotland AM).

#### EDITOR OF THE SCOTTISH FRIEND

To serve a second triennium from 1 January 2024 to the 31 December 2026: Amer Syed (West Scotland AM).

#### QUAKERS IN SCOTLAND FACEBOOK PAGE MODERATOR

To serve a second triennium from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026: Jane Booth (North Scotland AM).

#### PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

To serve during 2024 as an extra year: Cath Dyer (South East Scotland AM).

To serve a first triennium from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026: Pete Clarke (West Scotland AM).

#### THE SCOTTISH QUAKER COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKING GROUP

To serve from appointment until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024\*: Andrew Collins (North Scotland AM).

\* extended until the end of 2024 by minute 23/11/15.

GMS REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN FRIENDS GATHERING 2024: Busa Cochrane Muir.

#### NORTHERN FRIENDS YOUTH EVENTS CHARITABLE TRUST TRUSTEE

To confirm service until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025: James McLeod (West Scotland).

#### CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS

To serve from appointment until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026: Paul Burton (West Scotland AM).

Nominations Committee is asking General Meeting to consider agreeing an 'Assistant' role to support Paul with the hope that Paul can provide mentorship so they can take on the role themselves in future. We agree to this.

We appoint our Friends named accordingly.

We note the following outstanding nominations:

#### EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING APPOINTMENT AS GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND TRUSTEE

This role is still currently vacant. If anyone in General Meeting or specifically East Scotland AM has someone in mind, please can they contact Jill Marshall.

## MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS

We are being asked for General Meeting Representative for Meeting for Sufferings and an Alternate, to serve three years from the end of Yearly Meeting 2024. We are seeking Friends who may be interested in this role, or see gifts in others who may be approached, to contact Nominations Committee.

## IONA COMMUNITY BOARD

Bob Dixon wishes to be released from service as our link person to the Iona Community Board. We thank him for his service and ask Nominations Committee to bring in the name of a replacement.

## PEACE & JUSTICE (SCOTLAND)

Mary Alice Mansell has resigned as a trustee of Peace and Justice (Scotland). We thank her for her service and ask Nominations Committee to find a replacement.

We thank members of our Nominations Committee for their service. We thank too those Friends who reach the end of their term of service at the end of this year for their contribution to our life and work.

## **23/11/11 Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group**

Further to minute 23/09/08, we have heard a verbal update on the work of the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group (QiSCG) from Neil Turner.

The Group has drawn up a draft Governing Document for the new charity and this is posted on the General Meeting website for Friends to consider. Online consultations on the document open to all Friends will be held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November from 2-4 and 6.30-8.30 pm. Details will be circulated.

Two area meetings have already updated their governing documents to permit appointment of trustees from any area meeting in Scotland to their trustee bodies. This is a response to, or protection against, difficulty in recruiting trustees.

The Group plans a number of parallel streams of discussion, likely to include:

- Treasurers in discussing closer working and convergence of financial management;
- Eldership and pastoral care;
- Membership, marriages, deaths. How to manage in a larger organisation;
- Nominations;
- Property management;
- Staffing and payroll arrangements;

- Who does what: Memoranda of Understanding between the new organisation and local meetings, and any regional or other intermediate bodies that are needed.

Draft terms of reference for QiSCG (Paper C), as drawn up by the clerk, have been available for view on the General Meeting website. We thank those Friends who sent in comments.

We adopt these terms of reference, as amended in this meeting. This version will be posted on the General Meeting website.

### **23/11/12 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report & Peace Witness Review**

We receive the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) Report to General Meeting November 2023, including the review for GM on Peace Witness (Paper D) and Richard Raggett has spoken to it. Activity since our last General Meeting has included a submission to the Scottish Government's consultation ahead of its Human Rights Bill, continuing work with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, liaising with Quaker Truth & Integrity Group in 'seeking kinder ground' and engaging with the Scottish Government and Parliament. The report gives a good flavour of the latter work.

The two peace education related events in the Parliament were inspiring: Oakgrove Primary School's performance of Wangari's Trees of Peace on 21<sup>st</sup> September (minute 23/11/09 refers), and the "Peace at the Heart" (PATH) Exhibition from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September. The exhibition attracted a good level of support and interest among MSPs, and 21 of them went onto sign a Parliamentary Motion calling for more backing and training for Peace education to broaden and build on existing good practice in Scottish schools. The Exhibition has been shown at the Educational Institute of Scotland conference in June, North Scotland Area Meeting, at Peace & Justice's Carnall Peace Award evening in Edinburgh, West Scotland Area Meeting, Glasgow City Chambers, Perth, and it will be in Alloa next week. It will remain available for Local and Area Meetings to host next year: contact the PEWG convenors or Zoe Prosser if interested.

Friends continue to contribute to the Parliament's weekly Time for Reflection slot, and on 28<sup>th</sup> November Martin Mansell will be delivering his reflection on "Peace". Lesley Morrison also has a date for her event in the Parliament with MSPs on her theme "the Climate Crisis is a Health Crisis" on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Friends are referred to the General Meeting website to find detail of all the work carried out and upcoming issues and opportunities.

Richard has spoken personally of his experience of working more closely with MSPs and coming to realise how human they are. We are all advocates to them. It is a privilege.

We welcome our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, who is with us today in Perth. Sarah has given us some background to her appointment and what the first five months have been like. There, the big event immediately on the radar was the Wangari's Trees performance and Peace at the Heart exhibition at the Scottish Parliament. Interaction with MSPs is helped by constituents emailing them, as this stimulated them to attend. The main other pieces of work she has been doing have revolved around working with the PEWG and the Community Justice Working Group on our submission to the Human Rights Bill consultation.

Upcoming work will focus on the climate emergency and encouraging more Friends to participate in the Time for Reflection and preparing for the UK general election that is likely next year. We can back up and make Sarah's work more effective by engaging, as Quakers, with our MSPs.

Sarah has recently been active in supporting Sharyn Lock, an Argyll attender who has only very recently moved from England to Scotland. Sharyn is a midwife with extensive experience as a volunteer in Palestine. Last week she held a 5-day fasting vigil outside the Scottish Parliament to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. She has released a moving statement which will accompany these minutes. Sarah has given us details of how to engage with her work and details are in the copy of her talk to us which will accompany the minutes from this meeting.

We have been delighted to meet with Sarah and get to know her better. We are inspired by the range and depth of what has been achieved and planned and thank her and PEWG members and supporters for their work.

We also thank our Local Development Worker, Zoe Prosser, for her organisation of the PATH exhibition, Ellis Brooks and Isabel Cartwright who lead the Quaker Peace and Social Witness Peace Education work and who created the exhibition material, and Grace Da Costa, also from Britain Yearly Meeting, for her valued support to the Group. We thank again Mary Troup for her involvement as Children & Young Persons Advocate in the performance at Holyrood. We are grateful to retiring members of PEWG: Martin Mansell and Martin Pippard for their service.

### **23/11/13 Meeting for Sufferings report**

We receive the Meeting for Sufferings report (Paper E) from our representative, Ann Kerr, who is unable to be with us today. The October meeting was the first residential meeting held on one site (Hinsley Hall, Leeds) since before the Covid pandemic.



The main items included hearing from Friends in Wales about their affairs, hearing from Doncaster Friends about their involvement with Sudanese refugees, the nature of membership, governance structures of Britain Yearly Meeting, modern day slavery and Ecocide.

In October 2022 Meeting for Sufferings was unable to go forward with the recommendation that attenders should be allowed to sit on central committees and a number of questions about the nature of membership were sent to Area meetings. A substantial number of Area Meetings responded with wide ranging views. The conclusion was that nomination should be based on suitability for the task rather than membership status, and Meeting for Sufferings will return to this.

Following the decision at Yearly Meeting that change was necessary in the central governance structures of Britain Yearly Meeting, the group reviewing Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings presented their proposal that Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting should merge. This idea was endorsed and the review group will now work up the proposal to bring back to a future Meeting for Sufferings.

Minutes from several Area Meetings calling for Britain Yearly Meeting to join the churches recognising ecocide as a crime lead to further consideration of the issues. Quaker Peace & Social Witness will keep the matter under review and local areas are supported to continue their work on the matter. We will return to this later in the agenda.

We have heard how moving and inspiring this Meeting for Sufferings was and how important it is to follow its work – and perhaps to join it as a representative or alternate. We have reflected on the need for the ability to listen in an attentive way: both to ourselves and to God.

We receive the following minute from Meeting for Sufferings:

At a meeting of

**Meeting for Sufferings** Held at Hinsley Hall, Leeds and by video conference  
6–8 October 2023

### **MfS/23/10/16 Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences**

Central England Area Meeting sends us their minute expressing their hope that Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences be ended at the earliest opportunity since the legislation under which they were imposed has been repealed.

We ask our clerks to liaise with Quakers in Criminal Justice so that a letter can be sent to members of Parliament and other elected representatives as appropriate asking for a 'resentencing exercise' to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity for all IPP prisoners. We ask that other means of communicating this concern be considered.

Friends throughout the yearly meeting are encouraged to write in support of review of these indeterminate sentences.

We understand that there is separate Scottish legislation which has not been repealed. We send this minute to General Meeting for Scotland and encourage them to work with those working in community justice in Scotland to consider whether they could engage with this issue.

Robert Card, Clerk

Siobhán Haire  
Deputy Recording Clerk

To: Central England AM  
General Meeting for Scotland

We send this minute to our Quakers in Scotland Community Justice Working Group.

### **23/11/14 Minute from North Scotland AM on Ecocide**

Further to minute 23/09/18, we agreed to return to this consideration following Meeting for Sufferings in October. Meeting for Sufferings on 6-8th October minuted that "We support the work of local Friends on the issue of ecocide law and encourage them to develop it with support from the QPSW Faith in Action team. We ask QPSWCC\* to maintain a watching brief open to new ideas and links ready to take the matter forward as opportunities may arise".

\* Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

We have Paper F giving the background to the concern on ecocide. North Scotland AM has asked that General Meeting consider signing the Manifesto for the Criminalisation of Ecocide. We have heard some concern on the practicalities of this suggested route, and unease as to whether the manifesto meets our testimony and witness in its wording. Nonetheless, we also see how the Ecocide movement can 'raise the bar' on how we work for the environment and oppose the underlying culture that causes the damage to our Earth.

At this point we do not feel able to sign the Manifesto, despite having sympathy with its intent. We will wait for further information and advice from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee.

We can, though, as individuals and as Meetings, contribute to a Quaker view by responding to the current Scottish Parliament consultation on its Ecocide Bill.

### **23/11/15 Report of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group**

We receive the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group report (Paper G) and Kate Philbrick (convenor) and Jenny Copsey have spoken to it. The Group continues to work to the Quaker testimonies of Peace, Equality and Justice to seek

small openings to help to bring about a more just and compassionate society. The inequalities and inadequacies of our current society contribute hugely to the harms done and the offences committed.

The Group liaises closely with the Scottish Community Justice Network, which continues to flourish and provide a broader involvement with Friends. The Group's work has focussed on working to raise awareness of issues of Community Justice across the Area Meetings in Scotland, to develop an awareness of Quaker work within Scottish prisons, and to advance advocacy that the use of Community sentences rather than incarceration should be the norm rather than the exception. A retreat for Scottish prison chaplains was helpful in opening up support for such chaplains.

The Group is working to bring us consideration of prison abolition in November 2024. We are glad the Group feels affirmed by the interest shown among Friends in Scotland, and that productive links with Sarah Komashko have been made.

We have referred minute MfS/23/10/16 (Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences) from Meeting for Sufferings to the Group for advice, and ask the Group to report back to us when ready.

We note that the 2024 Swarthmore Lecture, during Yearly Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> July, is to be given by Ben Jarman who will “explore the “messy middle ground” between severe punishment and calls for prison abolition.” This gives cause for reflection about the direction of our society in relation to its use of its prisons.

We have had a short time to respond to the spoken report. We share the Group's concern and encourage them in their work. Friends can also join the Network.

The Group was established by General Meeting minute 21/03/11, to serve one triennium until the end of May 2024. The minute includes the instruction that “Towards the end of this period GM will carry out an evaluation of the group's work, and recommendations will then be brought about its future”. In the meantime we extend the term of service of the Group to the end of 2024 (and extend the appointment of Andrew Collins similarly – minute 23/11/10 refers).

## **23/11/16 Ecumenical & Interfaith update**

### **a) Ecumenical Officers Forum**

Mary Woodward reports that representatives of the various Christian denominations in Scotland and other interested bodies including Christian Aid and ACTS [Action of Churches Together in Scotland] met at Edinburgh Meeting House on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

In January this year they had met to discuss proposals for the future of Ecumenism in Scotland and, hopefully, the establishment of a Scottish Christian Forum [SCF].

The Ecumenical Officers Forum [EOF] were charged with producing proposals for the way forward, which they did over the summer.

The proposals included the establishment of the SCF as an umbrella body linking together ecumenical work across Scotland. Under this umbrella would be various fora, some of which already exist – the Scottish Church Leaders Forum, the EOF, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office – and some which might be formed as new needs emerged. There would need to be some sort of administrative support for the SCF, to facilitate communication between its constituent fora.

ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) would also shelter under this umbrella, and its trustees are themselves engaged in working out its future structure and purpose.

The October meeting agreed in principle to these proposals, and charged the EOF with producing more detailed proposals to be brought to a meeting early next year. This meeting will take place on Tuesday 6 February, again at Edinburgh Meeting House. Prior to that the EOF will have two meetings at which they, together with invited 'experts' with relevant experience, will produce more concrete proposals for discussion and, hopefully, agreement, in February.

#### **b) United Nations 16 Days of Activism Against Gender- Based Violence to Women and Girls**

Margaret Roy, our representative on the Interfaith Group for Domestic Abuse reports that Side-by-Side for Gender Justice has arranged prayer sessions in connection with Scotland's main cathedrals. An opening service will take place at 11am in Glasgow Cathedral on 25th November. The GM clerk will attend. Also at Glasgow Cathedral, in the Lady Chapel will be on display the Interfaith on Domestic Abuse new banner exhibition of their shoes theme. Further events will happen at St Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral, Inverness; St Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Dundee; and St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh. Further information has been sent out by Margaret Roy and is also available from Christian Aid by emailing [edinburgh@christian-aid.org](mailto:edinburgh@christian-aid.org)

#### **c) Bus passes for refugees**

Further to minute 23/06/15c, Kate Arnot, our representative on the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum of Scottish Inter Faith, that the campaign to provide free bus travel for asylum seekers has been successful and the Scottish Government will include this in the upcoming budget. The General Meeting clerk signed the letter urging the Government to do this.

### **23/11/17 Correspondence and other business**

#### **a) Global Citizenship Education**

On 29<sup>th</sup> September, Ellis Brooks, BYM Peace Education Coordinator, signed with our agreement a statement for better promotion of Global Citizenship Education from IDEAS (International Development Education Association for Scotland global advocacy) of which Quaker in Scotland are members. The aims align the PATH (Peace at the Heart) ones.

#### **b) Rosebank oil and gas field development**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, the clerks agreed to sign an open letter, with other 'Scottish church leaders' from the Operation Noah team to the Prime Minister, in response to his approval of the Rosebank oil and gas field development approval.

#### **c) Christian Aid statement on the Israel – Palestine situation**

The assistant clerk signed, on behalf of General Meeting for Scotland, the Church Leaders statement on the Israel – Palestine situation, drawn up by Christian Aid and issued 23<sup>rd</sup> October. The statement read:

Christian Aid with the undersigned church leaders and Christian organisations are gravely concerned by the mounting death toll across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. There can be no justification for the deliberate killing, maiming and kidnapping of civilians, which is a crime under international law and for which the perpetrators should be held accountable. We unequivocally condemn the violence carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

The subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza has added enormously to the toll of civilian suffering. Innocent Palestinians are going through an increasingly grave humanitarian crisis as a result the Israeli government's strategy of relentless bombardment, which has left no place safe, and of siege, which effectively strangles life. The death toll in Gaza is over 7,000 and, with no end in sight, will no doubt dramatically rise.

We call on all governments with influence to help bring about an immediate end to the violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Specifically, we call for the following steps to be taken:

- Protection of civilians and an end to all violence, with adoption of a ceasefire without conditions.
- The unconditional and immediate release of all hostages.
- Unfettered and immediate humanitarian access, as urged by the UN, including immediate reconnection to water and electricity.
- Unequivocal support for the ICC to conduct a truly independent investigation into all war crimes to ensure accountability.
- Acknowledgement of the failure of the international community to effectively engage with any meaningful peace process, and a commitment to work ceaselessly from now on to address the root causes of the violence which must include an end to the occupation.

#### **d) Scottish Faith Leaders statement on Loss and Damage**

Following participation of the clerks at a meeting of 'church leaders' at the official home of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the GM clerk signed, on 30<sup>th</sup> October, a joint statement from the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum on Loss and Damage. 'Loss and damage' is a term used in UN climate talks to refer to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to. At the United Nations climate talks in 2022, governments agreed to create a loss and damage fund.

The statement called on the Prime Minister to:

1. Push for the companies and countries most responsible for loss and damage to pay the most into the new fund;
2. Ensure the money in this fund is new rather than taken from existing climate finance and aid budgets, and is delivered as grants, not loans;
3. Ensure the money in this fund reaches the communities affected by loss and damage.

There will be a day of action for Loss and Damage on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December in Edinburgh. Details will be circulated.

#### **23/11/18 Racial Justice: minute from West Scotland Area Meeting**

Further to minute 23/09/19, we hold over this issue.

#### **23/11/19 Upcoming business**

On 9<sup>th</sup> March, the business is expected to include the report of the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group, the annual report to us of our Trustees, receiving the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report, and having updates on our ecumenical and interfaith activity. This may include hearing from Christian Aid Scotland, with whom we work closely, or this will come to a further meeting. We are also planning a session on the nominations process, and a review of our way of using our general meetings. We will also examine our criteria for signing petitions in the name of the General Meeting.

#### **23/11/20 Concluding Minute**

We record our thanks to East Scotland Area Meeting Friends for being our hosts today, for all the arrangements for our venue in Perth and their hospitality that enabled this blended meeting. We also thank our Zoom host for this General Meeting.

There being no further business to bring before General Meeting, we conclude, intending to meet next for a blended meeting in Edinburgh and online on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024, if nothing occurs to prevent.

Michael J. Hutchinson,  
Clerk

Susan Mitchell,  
Assistant Clerk