



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

5 March 2011

Montrose

Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard two readings including *Quaker Faith and Practice* 21.55 on the experience of the eternal love of God towards the end of life.

Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome 5 attenders to this GM. We also welcome as a visitor Sister Elizabeth Moran of the Catholic Church in Scotland.

We will record the total numbers of all present and add them to these minutes.

East Scotland	23
North Scotland	9
South East Scotland	12
West Scotland	<u>7</u>
Total:	51

Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint Anne Davies to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask East Scotland AM to report on the next GM.

Min. 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting:

Anneke Kraakman (N)
Neil Crabtree (N)
Diana Armstrong (W)
Jenny Meade (W)
Sue Cohen (N)

We record the following deaths since our last meeting:

David Irwin (W)
Annabel Fairweather (SE)
Mary Jones (N).

Min. 5 Dates and venues for 2012-13

We propose the following GM dates and venues for 2012-13:

East – 3 March 12 (already agreed)
South East – 9 June 12
North – 8 Sept 12
East – 17/18 Nov 12
West – 2 Mar 13

We ask AM Clerks to consider these dates and for GM to confirm them in June.

Min. 6 Tabular Statement 2010

We note the following numbers at 31 Dec 2010:

	2010	2009	2008	2007
East	108	113	109	113
West	224	224	223	226
North	123	128	126	122
South East	265	268	269	262
TOTAL:	720	733	727	723

Min. 7 Same Sex Marriage Working Group

Phil Lucas has reported on the work of the Same Sex Marriage Group which was set up last year. The group has had some difficulties with communications among its members but has proceeded with its tasks.

The group has had useful advice from Michael Bartlet, Parliamentary Liaison Officer at Friends House, and have attempted to engage with all political parties in the Scottish Parliament. They have had mixed success in this, with expressions of support in principle from a number of the MSPs approached. Phil reported on his recent attendance at a Marriage Equality Symposium. There had been useful presentations and an interesting panel session including representatives from all the main Scottish parties. There was also a report on a survey showing a recent significant change in public opinion in the direction of support for same sex marriage.

We thank the group and encourage them to continue in their task. We ask Nominations Function Group in conjunction with the Clerk of the Working Group to review the membership of the group and to bring forward additional nominations if this seems appropriate.

Min. 8 Scottish Churches House

Margaret Peacock has reported on the position regarding Scottish Churches House.

The House has not been attracting enough bookings and is running out of money. The current position is that a new use for the House is being explored. A call has gone out for submission of possible tenders for alternative uses, to include fully worked out business plans. Continuation in its current form is not an option.

We have heard expressions of sadness about the closure of Scottish Churches House, with memories of the good work achieved through it over many years, but we acknowledge that the financial realities make the closure an inevitable step. We are reminded that the important work of Action of Churches Together in Scotland continues, and will need our continuing support in the years ahead.

We uphold the ACTS Trustees in the difficult decisions they will have to make.

Min. 9 Residential General Meeting

Further to Minute 6 of 11 Sept 2011, Central Committee propose that we do not change the pattern of Residential General Meetings. We agree to this.

Min. 10 Report on ACTS Social Inclusion Network

Philip Bryers has reported on the work of the Social Inclusion Network which is associated with the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office. Over the last year they have had talks from speakers including Alex Neill, a Scottish government Minister, and Pat Watters of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Faith in Communities Scotland, part of the Network, have organised a "Poverty Truth Commission" which aims to give a voice to communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Chloe Clemmons, Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer, has made proposals regarding a new way of working for the network. There would be more responsibility from the member churches and more flexibility in the formation of their work plan. Topics of particular interest to Friends now include Criminal Justice and Violence. The network will in future be known as the Scottish Churches Poverty and Social Justice Network.

We thank Philip for his report.

Min. 11 Meeting for Sufferings

Peter Kennedy has reported on the work of Meeting for Sufferings. Paul Parker has been appointed as the new Recording Clerk for BYM, a potentially adventurous appointment.

Meeting for Sufferings have considered a number of topics including:

- Sustainability of our Meeting Houses
- The organisation of the Experiment with Light programme
- Correspondence with government regarding detention of children
- Boycotting of goods from Israel especially illegal West Bank settlements
- The lease of Courtauld House
- A new pattern of Yearly Meetings.

We note that Jasmine Perinpanayagam has been appointed to attend The World Conference of Friends in Kenya next year, and Sue Buxton to attend Ireland Yearly Meeting, both representing BYM.

Min. 12 Tobermory Friends Meeting

David Harper has reported on the newly formed Tobermory Friends' Meeting. This has got off to a very good start and the Meeting is thriving. Visitors are very welcome.

We are pleased to hear of this new Meeting and acknowledge with appreciation the work of those involved in this initiative.

Min. 13 Appointments and Representatives

Nominations Function Group have brought forward the following names and we agree to these appointments:

Representative to Methodist Church in Scotland Spring Synod - Alyson Buchan

Representative to United Reformed Church in Scotland Synod - Pamala McDougall

Quaker Committee on Church and Interfaith Relations
(GM nomination to forward to Sufferings for appointment) - Peter McCaffery

Custodian of Records for GM for Scotland - Paul Burton (Jan 2011 – Dec 2013)

Consultative Group on Records - Lindsay Burton, Robin Davis (Jan 2011 – Dec 2013)

Min. 14 End of Life Questions

Robin Waterston has reminded us of Advice 30: "Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully." The purpose of the session this afternoon is to create an opportunity to share our thoughts, experiences and convictions, and to reflect together on how as Friends, as members of a community and as members of wider society, we can support and challenge each other.

We have considered these questions in groups and in plenary session. We have been assisted by documents from the informal group Quaker Concern around Dying and Death. In discussion, the value of sharing experiences and listening to each other has been reaffirmed. It can be liberating to have encouragement to contemplate and prepare for our death.

Specific points from the group discussions include:

- The value of strengthening neighbourhood communities – it's everyone's job to care
- The useful effect that the End of Life Assistance Bill has had in stimulating debate and reflection across Scotland on moral and spiritual issues in public life
- Strongly felt opposition to some provisions of the Bill
- The need to respond to the promptings of love and truth in individual circumstances, regarding each person as unique
- The need for investment in hospices and better palliative care
- The value of talking with relatives and friends about our own wishes, and recording them possibly as an Advance Directive
- The possible distinction between a freedom and a right to die at a time of one's choice
- The question of how to make legislative provision on moral issues in a society with people of many faiths and none.

We have been reminded that ours is a privileged society. Many people in the world die too young of preventable diseases.

We reach no conclusions today. This is a journey for all of us. We invite local meetings to continue this journey as the spirit moves them.

Min. 15 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to East Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again in Aberdeen on 4 June.

Robin Waterston
Clerk