

The Northern Quaker

Spring
2013



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Forthcoming events

Area Meetings for 2013

11 May: Caithness

23-25 August: Pluscarden (residential)

9 November: Inverness

General Meetings for Scotland in 2013

June 15th Edinburgh

September 7th Perth

November 16/17th Aberdeen (residential)

The following online newsletters are available on the GM website:

<http://www.quakerscotland.org>

Tayside Quaker

West of Scotland Quaker News

Northern Quaker

Scottish Friend

Remember North of Scotland Quaker Trust has funds for attendance at courses and conferences. Check the Woodbrooke catalogue at www.woodbrooke.org.uk or tel. 0121 472 5171

Contributions will be most welcome to
future issues of *The Northern Quaker*

The deadline is two weeks after Area Meeting

Please send contributions to:

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North Scotland Area Meeting

Comments

Welcome to the 2013 Spring edition of the Northern Quaker.

As in the Winter edition, we begin with a memorial to a departed friend, this from Skye Friends to the late Charlie Burrell.

The minutes of the North Scotland Area Business Meeting held in Aberdeen in February are followed by a personal reflection on the meeting from Juli Salt.

As well as reports from Meeting for Sufferings, we have several articles that Friends have kindly submitted, including from Roger Quinn a reflection on the nomination of elders and overseers. I hope you enjoy them.

The recent dispersal of prisoners from HMP Peterhead has meant our visits to the small group of attenders have come to a temporary halt. However, a short piece from PrisonerActionNet reminds us of the importance of spirituality for prisoners and ex-offenders. (Just to confuse you, this was included in the Winter *email* edition).

My copy tray has lots of space, so please don't be afraid to send contributions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ Tel. 01224 706989 harry.horsley@uk.bp.com or harrydhorsley@gmail.com

Kindlers on the road

Aberdeen Meeting are holding a Kindlers on the Road event on the 1st June 2013 and have chosen the topic *Recognising God within us and around us*. This will be a full day event, and all are welcome. We are waiting for final details and will be circulating them as soon as they are known but people may wish to put the date in their diary in the meanwhile.

Scotland and Chile connection

With reference to the enquiry in the Winter edition about the "Ovalle Worship Group" in Santiago, Chile, Philip Bryers kindly provided some information that it was set up by a Chilean refugee who came to Glasgow Meeting for about 12 years before returning to Chile. Some contact has been maintained and a group of Scottish Friends (including an Aberdeen Friend) have been supporting him for well over 10 years to support his work with children and young people at risk of getting pulled into the drugs trade. This information has been passed on to the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).

Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig

Now is the time to be applying for a place at Summer Shindig, which takes place at Ackworth School, near Pontefract, from 27 July to 3 August. If you know anyone between the ages of 11 and 16 who might not have received information about it, contact Bronwen Currie (email scotfriends@gmail.com or 01496 850006) . Shindig welcomes youngsters from anywhere in the UK or further afield, and it doesn't matter at all if they have no direct connection with a Local Meeting.

This year a weekend is also being organised for 10-12 year-olds in Scotland, plus parent, to give them an opportunity to get to know each other and find out more about Shindig. This event will be held at Nethy Bridge from 31 May to 2 June, bookings are now being taken, and more information is available from Bronwen Currie (contact details as above) or Madeleine Harding (madinleith@yahoo.co.uk or 0131-556 6794)

Bronwen Currie, Argyll & Islay LM

New Meeting for Worship

A Meeting for Worship at Connel near Oban takes place 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays of each month. Details will be posted on the AM website: www.quakerscotland.org/north

Alert for LMs-conman may be targeting Quaker Meetings

A warning has been received from Central England Area Quakers in response to an incident in early February which resulted in a Dudley Friend being persuaded to part with a quite substantial sum of money on the basis of an appeal for help from a confidence trickster.

Dudley Friends were approached by a middle aged man, quite portly, wearing a flat cap, who spoke with a strong Northern Irish accent. What made him convincing, was that he appeared to know a lot about Quakers, peace campaigns in NI, the age profiles of meetings now and the decline in the numbers of Quaker meetings in the province. He talked about being part of a meeting in Portadown, NI.

The details of the scam point to him being a highly experienced and manipulative operator who may be tempted to repeat his ploy.

Skye Friends Memorial Meeting January 2013 for Cecil Percy Charles Burrell 1922 - 2012.

We were delighted to welcome thirty visitors to a memorial Meeting for Worship at Portree, Isle of Skye, on Sunday 27th January 2013, to celebrate the life of Charlie Burrell who had been a regular attender at our small Meeting for many years.

A couple of weeks before it was a privilege to spend a morning with Marion & her granddaughter, Breagha, chatting about Charlie over a cup of freshly made coffee in front of a warm fire in their home of nearly fifty years. Charlie had often told us his stories as we drove to Meeting on Sunday mornings and it was clear that he had always been something of a free spirit, a frugal man who had a simple lifestyle, who lived according to his principles, and that as a young man he'd had some interesting experiences.

Charlie was born in Wallasey in Cheshire, near Birkenhead, across the Mersey from Liverpool, and was brought up with a brother and three sisters. His father was a telegraph engineer and his mother taught the piano. His grandfather had been aboard the ship that laid the telegraph cable under the sea for the first Trans Atlantic telephone link. Interestingly this early fascination in radio and communications has continued through the generations and now Rob, Charlie's son, continues this trend, working for the MoD in communications.

He inherited his mother's musicality and having begun to learn the piano, Charlie took lessons on the fiddle and became a competent player, until he cut a tendon in his hand and could no longer manage the fingering. He also loved singing: he had a good bass voice and sang in a local choir some years ago.

Charlie and his brother were quite adventurous and Marion told me about an occasion when the two boys took a bike ride from their home into North Wales. They must have ridden a long way before turning round to go home, by which time they were tired, so they called at a police station and told their story to the sergeant who arranged for them to be driven home in a police car with their bikes! Would that happen in Portree today? Just maybe!

Charlie won a scholarship to Wallasey Grammar School where he developed an interest in languages and science. When he left school he worked as an analytical chemist for Bibby's, a company that made cattle feed, soap and oils. In the evenings Charlie studied at Liverpool University and became a friend and student of a Russian professor. Charlie had already learnt French and German at school and now added Russian to his languages.

War came and Charlie was conscripted to Durham Light Infantry with whom he did his basic training. During this time Charlie's linguistic talents were recognised and he was transferred to the Intelligence Corps. Charlie later added Serbo-Croat, Czech and Polish to his repertoire. During the War Charlie's role with the Intelligence Corps included interrogating crews of ships arriving in Liverpool; he was behind the D Day landing translating and passing messages; he was stationed on the French / Belgian border, keeping watch and reporting to the authorities; and he was proud of the fact that, having made good time on his motorbike, he was the first British soldier on the Danish border when Denmark was liberated.

After the War he was sent to the Far East, to Malaya and Java, to counter the communist threat. In 1947 Charlie was demobbed and wanted to learn farming. He didn't want to do an indoor job so he worked on various farms for experience. However, he didn't earn enough farming so he took a better paid job with Esso, as a tanker driver, based in Northampton.

There he met Marion, a librarian, at an evening class where they had enrolled to learn Russian. Asked whether it was love at first sight, Marion smiled and answered 'No, it was a friendship, which developed'.

In 1965 they were married and after six months they moved to Skye, where they had holidayed several times and Charlie had bought their croft. They had little experience of the life which lay ahead of them. The croft house had been burnt down and needed to be completely demolished and re-built. They packed all their possessions into Charlie's Fire Tender and towed their caravan, which was to be their home for the next few years - a five day journey.

At that time the ferry to Skye held just six cars, and Charlie drove his vehicle and caravan proudly on to one side, while a Rolls Royce occupied the other. The ferryman, wondering what to charge, asked if this was a commercial vehicle ... no, it was not ... and Charlie was pleased to cross for the price of a car!

The croft was grazed by sheep, the house was a ruin, and the caravan was installed. Charlie and Marion set to work to clear the house site and discovered that the ruined house had no foundations. Charlie winched out one of the cornerstones and erected it in memory of the old house and its occupants. They began to dig foundations for their new home in 1973. Marion helped with the work until their daughter, Jenny, was born in 1974 and Rob followed two years later. The young family moved into their new home, built entirely by Charlie, when Jenny was six years old.

There was a story that linked the house fire and the cutting down of the rowan tree in front by the previous owner of the house, a big strong man, known as Buffalo. The tree has never been cut down since and is still growing strong.

Charlie & Marion kept three cows, one for milk, and hens for eggs. They fenced their garden so they could grow vegetables: no chemical fertilisers for Charlie, he was very principled.

Charlie built a weaving shed, set up a loom, bought in yarn from Hunters of Brora or the Isle of Lewis and worked through the winters making tweed. Marion spun local fleeces and knitted

hats, gloves, scarves, sweaters (made to measure when requested). A sign on the roadside invited visitors to come and see the weaver at work and to buy their hand made products. Charlie was a great reader of travel books, particularly of Lawrence van der Post, and of history, especially of the Napoleonic wars.

For Charlie and Marion, attending church linked their lives with the local community, but Presbyterianism was not for Marion. She read widely about religion and attended an exhibition in the library about the Quakers and felt comfortable with what she saw. Charlie had met Izik through the singing group and he introduced them to the Portree Meeting.

Asked to describe Charlie in three adjectives, Marion had no hesitation in saying he was loyal, he had great integrity, he didn't make compromises and lived true to his beliefs, and she added stubborn to her description. Breagha, who had listened with great interest throughout, described him as generous.

Charlie lives on in our memories. A real character, a proud man, a humble man ... proud and humble don't usually go together, but in Charlie's case I think they do.

Ann Galbraith, Skye Meeting

Review: The Shoemaker's Wife by Adriana Trigiani

For her latest novel, this Italo American author has taken as her theme the priestly abuse of young adolescents, which has rocked the Catholic Church in America.

This tearjerker of a book is in two parts. The first part is set in a small village in the Italian Alps, where the word of the parish priest in the early part of the last century is law. In this instance the word of law is used to protect an ambitious worldly priest from the consequences of his actions. The story now moves to the New York of the great days of Caruso and the Metropolitan Opera House. It is to this faraway city that the youthful unintentional witness to the scene of the abuse has been banished.

The book also looks at the Western Front and the terrible effects of chemical warfare long after the event. In passing it explains how the structure of American society was changed with promise, on enlistment, of automatic American citizenship for returning veterans of other nationalities. So vivid are the descriptions of the injustice of the priestly cover-up and its long term psychological damage that the reader is in a state of constant empathic emotion.

Roger H Quinn, Inverness LM

Report of North Scotland Area Business Meeting held 16th February 2013 at Aberdeen

Opening worship: Reading from Woodbrooke Young Persons Conference in December.

13.1 Clerking Arrangements:

Ann Millar has asked to be released from service as Clerk. We accept Ann's request with regret and thank her for work on our behalf. In the mean time David James and Peter Heald will act as co-clerks until a Clerk is appointed.

Present:

Gail Nieman, Diana Brockbank, Mary Dower, Marion Strachan, Penny Selbie, Derek McLean, Peter McCaffery, Jane Palmer, Oriole Hall, Clive Potter, Pamela Affleck (A), Juli Salt, David Sanders, David James and Peter Heald.

Prevented:

Eva Deregowska, Seonag Robertson, Ann Millar, Johanna Quinney, John Melling, Nigel Dower, Eleanor Fairclough, Ian Bonner-Evans, S Mills.

13.2 Meetings Represented:

Aberdeen, Banchory, Forres, Inverness, Lochaber and Lorn, Oban, Syke.

13.3 Report to Northern Quaker:

We appoint Julie Salt for the 16th February 2013 and Mary Dower and Diana Brockbank for the 11th May 2013

13.4 Representatives to General Meeting:

We appoint David James for GM on the 2 March in Glasgow.

13.5 Report from Nominations Committee:

We have received a report from David James. We ask nominations committee to respond to the need for information about the posts at present in NSAM in consultation with Elders and Overseers, to encourage offers of service from members and attenders who are not currently involved. A revised offer of service form is being drawn up by the Nominations Committee alongside a document outlining the posts at NSAM, information would also prove useful to NSAM.

We have received a report for the Nominations Committee for 2012. We thank Nigel Dower for the work that he has done in convening the Nominations Committee

13.6 Report from Trustees

Derek McLean reported that donations for 2012 recommended in minute 12.24 have been paid. We ask the Treasurer to bring forward donations for 2013, Woodbrooke 500pounds, BYM 1500 pounds, NFPB 500 pounds Summer Shindig 500 pounds. We will consider this item again in November in light of our financial position at that time.

We have received the report and accounts for the year ending December 2011. We thank our previous and present treasurers for their work.

The Trustees will be drafting a new Contributions Schedule and a Gift Aid form. Friends will be given more advice on the financial needs of Local, Area and BYM to guide their giving.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding is being drawn up which will be adapted to the needs of Local Meetings in consultation with each Local Meeting.

Trustees have approved a safeguarding procedure, which will be distributed to Local Meetings along with the safeguarding policy.

13.7 Report from Outreach Conference “Reaching in Reaching out “ on the 18-20th January:

Jane Palmer attended the conference and is to prepare a report for the Northern Quaker.

13.8 Report from Meetings for Sufferings:

David Sanders spoke about some matters arising. Perhaps we should bear in mind the dates for Meetings for Sufferings when arranging the dates and frequency of Area Meeting. .

13.9 Area Meeting at Pluscarden Arrangements:

The Abbey and Pluscarden Hall have been booked. We ask the Pluscarden committee to contact Ellen Moxley and Helen Stevens and informally NFPB for suggestions for a presentation at Pluscarden residential weekend.

13.10 Report from CYP Advocate re Guidelines for Area Meeting and the appointment of a named elder for CYP:

We have received a report from Johanna Quinney. Local Meetings are advised to download 'Area Meeting Children and Young people's work advocates leaflet.

Clive Potter and Jane Palmer report back from discussions regarding an inter-generational residential AM in 2014. This could be an additional AM or one replacing the residential Meeting at Pluscarden. Money from the Ernle Beyts's Bequest will be used to support this Meeting. We ask Clive, Jane and Johanna to look into possibilities.

Children and Young Persons Advocate Johanna Quinney has requested an Elder/Overseers to work alongside her. We ask Inverness Local Meeting Elders and Overseers to discuss this with her.

13.11 AM at Caithness:

We intend to hold AM at 11.30. We ask LM clerks to contact Phyllida with details of Friends intentions for the weekend. This should include intentions Friday, Saturday and Sunday and should be sent by the 14th March. The clerks will circulate the program for the weekend with these minutes.

13.12 Elders and Overseers:

We have received a notification regarding Eldership and Oversight at Nairn Meeting from Johanna Quinney. E and Os have considered this notification and we ask Nairn Meeting to let AM know of a Friend who would serve as a representative on the Eldership and Oversight Committee.

We considered "Spiritual Reviews" within the Area Meeting we ask Local Meetings to consider this.

13.13 Membership:

Certificates for Transfer of Membership in to NSAM have been received for the following friends:

Gabrielle Anderson
Anne Barnes
Jane Bromley
Amanda Manouvrier
Geoff Palmer
Jean Thompson
Beatrice Wood

We ask the membership Clerk to prepare a Certificate of acceptance and send it to the requesting Area Meeting.

13.14 Leaflets Maintaining Boundaries and Maintaining Communities:

We have received leaflets “Maintaining Boundaries” and “Maintaining safe Communities” we draw these to the attention of Local Meetings, E and Os and the Pluscarden Committee.

13.15 New Meeting for Worship

A Meeting for Worship at Connel near Oban takes place 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays of each month. We ask for the Meeting to be added to the AM website and mention in the Northern Quaker.

Signed in and on behalf of AM
Clerk Peter Heald

Area Business Meeting in Aberdeen – a personal overview – 16th February 2013

By the time the newsletter is out the minutes will have been made available to you through your correspondent/ clerk/ convenor, so this as always is a personal feeling about the day. (May not be 100% accurate but the best my memory cells can offer!!) Conference reports are in the newsletter – contain loads of interesting and good stuff – I won’t repeat- but our representatives work hard on our behalf and love to hear from you and what you may think. Sometimes giving out the reports feels like going down a big void – do let them know you appreciate and support them!

During the opening MfW this was read to us:-

“Joys, passions, sorrows, understanding, genuine relationships with all ages, deepen our Spiritual Community” From Friends General Conference Toolkit.

If we are to create vibrant, spiritual and intergenerational communities we as Friends, must make a fundamental shift. A change in how we see and relate to one another. We must shift towards intergenerational communities and engagement, which requires us to see that we are all part of the PRESENT of Quakerism and that together we create the FUTURE of the Religious Society of Friends.

How can that be done, how to move from separation, to linking and working, playing together?
from the Woodbrooke Children’s and Young Persons Conference December 2012.

Usually about a week before every Area Meeting, our Eldership and Oversight committee meets, mostly by telephone conference. The first thing we do is to check in around each meeting to see how we all are and if there is any news. Although not every meeting may be present in that moment – one way or another we will have been in touch with each other. This means that at ABM, there is a good awareness of our whole Area Meeting, however many attend.

ABM is always residential for some and this February, fourteen Friends, some travelling hundreds of miles and across water, took the opportunity to have the privilege to attend ABM, and I was interested to note that 8 of us were currently on the Eldership and Oversight Committee.

This doesn't mean that we all think the same – oh no. I notice (oh dear) that I often mentally greet an idea that apparently is different to mine with intolerance, yet on reflection, or maybe after a few more ministries, come to see the wisdom and discernment in the offerings.

Nominations – noted that although we are challenged to fill posts as an AM we actually have no more posts to fill than QF&P advises. To lessen the number of jobs, amalgamating the posts for the 2 Trusts is a possibility – already done to a certain level anyway, and the Charity Commission in England and BYM are encouraging this kind of amalgamation.

A new offer of service form is being finalised – look out for it and do consider offering whatever you may have to offer! J

Marion Strachan had me giggling and enlivened giving the “Report and accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2011.” She made the serious point that “This is the means by which we live our Quaker Lives.” She also implored us to support our local treasurers by keeping our transactions well documented. “Treasurers aren't necessarily wonderful with money – they are just the ones that didn't escape”. (The Friends who didn't say no quickly enough when the post came up- my wording!)

It was so nice to hear that a new Meeting for Worship has started up at Connel near Oban (taking place 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays of each month.) We are a family of little meetings who come and go as needed over the years.

Juli Salt, Forres LM

Meeting for Sufferings, 1 December 2012

The 'Canterbury Commitment' of Yearly Meeting 2011 committed Quakers in Britain to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. Meeting for Sufferings was asked then to take forward this commitment, and in order to establish a baseline for future reference it asked all local meetings to carry out assessments of their own current patterns of behaviour. It also set up a group to encourage and assist meetings with the concern and to report back regularly. In December we heard that the group has been finding this task challenging, and is now asking for help with finding unity on the way forward.

Where does our worship – where do the promptings of love and truth – lead us in relation to this concern? Do we recognize the concern? Are we unsure what to do about it? Are we aware of contradictions in our lives but either unable to resolve them or reluctant to face up to them?

There are some inspirational examples of Friends and meetings responding to the challenge, and good work is being done. As regards the assessments asked for, 40% of meetings have completed a 'carbon calculator' and 25% have responded to a 'meeting check-up'. Some other meetings have been in touch to say why they did not carry out the assessments, but most have remained silent. In order to help the Canterbury Commitment group, MfS representatives are invited to explore with those meetings why this is, and what further help might be welcome.

North Wales Area Meeting had sent to Meeting for Sufferings a minute proposing a revision of *Quaker Faith and Practice*. Possibilities considered by the Canterbury Commitment group also include a revision of *Quaker Faith and Practice* to embed sustainability in our faith and witness and perhaps to include some 'green' advices and queries.

The Yearly Meeting Treasurer presented a budget for centrally managed work in 2013, together with estimates for 2014 and 2015, which both include income from legacies and gifts to the value of around £2.5 million, or one-quarter of total revenue. We also read in BYM Trustees' minutes of a suggestion to impose a cap on the extent to which centrally managed work depends on legacies and gifts. For example, out of all legacies and gifts received in any one year a maximum of £1.5 million might be allocated to core centrally managed work, with any amount over this dedicated to more 'adventurous', or occasional, projects. The effect of this would be to set the core of centrally managed work at a more sustainable level and to highlight the need for Friends' continuing regular contributions.

A special meeting of Quaker Finance and Property Committee was held on 7 December to consider what advice they should give about the possible reintroduction of a quota for contributions through area meetings. There is some way to go before this will be resolved.

We heard from Northumbria Area Meeting of the 'Pilgrimage for Peace and Justice', along a route from Iona to London, beginning 19 May 2013. This is being organized by Hexham Quakers and Northumbrians for Peace and is intended to highlight the inadvisability and injustice of the UK government's proposal to spend up to £100 billion at this time renewing the Trident nuclear missile system.

The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) has received four documents from the World Council of Churches (available at www.quaker.org.uk/qccir via links in the Autumn/Winter 2012 e-newsletter) and intends to engage with these. The committee asks us to uphold them in this testing process. I hope that with the help of those Friends among us who are familiar with Christian language, we can find words that speak to members of other Christian churches. One of the four WCC documents, with the title *Economy of life, justice, and peace for all*, is a prophetic call to action, likely to resonate with Quakers generally.

Throughout the day – including in the Trustees' morning surgery – it was possible to discern through various strands a subtext about the benefit of good communication all the time, especially for establishing a basis of trust.

Please feel free to ask either of your MfS representatives, David Sanders or Jane Palmer, if you would like more information about the work of the meeting.

David Sanders, Skye LM

Of nominations elders and overseers and other matters

It has been suggested that articles about the various offices within our AM might be written to give a better understanding of what is involved. My qualifications for writing this article are simply that I have had, of necessity, experience of these roles over a long period of time. It is hoped that others might write of their experiences both in the same and in other roles.

Forty years ago Nominations Committee was made up of three Friends all ex officio, namely the Clerk of Es and Os, Clerk of Aberdeen and the Correspondent of Inverness Meeting (myself). It must be remembered that the Committee can only nominate from the talent it has available, sometimes with disastrous consequences. In particular the occasion when an ex prison officer

was appointed Clerk of MM (Hobson's choice) and a stand up row ensued during the business meeting.

A present cause for concern is the current practice of requesting "expressions of interest" from Friends who think their field of expertise may be of use to the Society. Which it probably is, but by formally requesting these expressions is not Nominations pre-empting the process of discernment and thereby missing out the talents of less prominent Friends? One feels that returning to the ex officio system would be a good option.

The current idea of Es and Os representatives from smaller meetings needs to be questioned. Either one is or is not an E or an O, although I do value the contributions of the present reps. In our priest-less society somebody needs to be available to lend a confidential listening ear, with authority to act when necessary. But just as a vicar or minister needs to consult with others under the seal of confidence, so do Es and Os. Therefore our business should be in private.

No writing of Es and Os in NSAM would be complete without mention of Jim and Jo Wickens who all the time that the children involved in the Orkney Child Abuse were away from home, gave so much time and took so much trouble to bring succour to the parents. Each Monday they would set off, returning on the Friday so that Inverness Meeting could be kept informed of the current state of the battle to get the children returned to their homes. Another great service Jim and Jo did was to visit outlying Friends, in particular those on the West coast. For a number of years in the summer they would go west to try and see as many Friends as possible. Perhaps some newly retired and physically active Friend might make this a concern.

Another cause for concern is the behaviour of Friends at business meetings. As well as the instance mentioned earlier, sometimes, just sometimes, we forget the worshipful part of our business meetings!

Soon it will be Easter, the greatest festival on the Christian calendar. True our Society does not follow the accepted path of designated saints' days and in earlier times did not recognise the fixed dates of nativity or resurrection. Both festivals having been instilled into our northern psyche ever since man ventured northwards out of Africa should be times of great rejoicing and thanksgiving. In this I am reminded of something the late Stan Jones* once expressed to me, saying how he wished he could be in Greece at Easter time to hear the great Orthodox cry of "Christ is risen".

Roger H Quinn, Inverness LM

*Stan Jones was a member of Inverness Meeting

Spiritual Beings?

"What is man that thou are mindful of him?"

What are we?

Body, mind and spirit?

A body which becomes weaker

A mind that is sometimes confused

A spirit that can become broken by life's woes?

"That of God", say Friends –

Our spirit can still rise
Above cares and troubles,
Illness and pain,
Held in the Light we can know strength again
And love and peace,
If we are mindful of the Spirit both without and within.

Anne Harding,

Submitted by Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen LM

A Blessing for Death

I pray that you will have the blessing of being consoled and sure about your own death.
May you know in your soul that there was no need to be afraid.
Now your time has come, may you be given every blessing and shelter that you need.
May there be a beautiful welcome for you in the home that you are going to.
You are not going somewhere strange. You are going back to the home that you never left.
May your going be sheltered and your welcome assured.
May your soul smile in the embrace of your anam cara.

John O'Donohue, Irish poet and mystic who reaches back into his Celtic spiritual past for his inspiration.

Submitted by Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen LM

10 reasons why spirituality is important for prisoners

1. Many prisoners are deeply shocked and even traumatized by the idea and the experience of going into prison. They need *comfort and consolation* for what has happened to them. Spirituality can offer that.
2. All religions, whether Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism, contain ideas of religious *practices* like prayer or meditation. These practices can be consoling in themselves, but they can also create a more reflective, calm frame of mind.
3. Some people talk about mindfulness. The idea is not just to be aware of what you are thinking and feeling, but to be totally *conscious* of your thoughts and feelings, thinking about thinking and feeling about feeling, as it were. There is good evidence that this produces therapeutic benefits.
4. Mindfulness can also contribute to *self-control*, and one way of looking at crime is that it is the result of a lack of self-control, focusing on immediate gratification and ignoring the potential for harm to others and risks to your own longer term prospects.
5. Religious belief almost always contain the notion of *atonement* or *redemption*. The emphasis is placed on recognising what you have done wrong and doing something to make amends, over and above simply deciding not to do it again. This idea is closely akin to ideas of restorative justice and these have been found to be extremely effective.

6. Many prisoners can be depressed or have mental health problems. Religious belief can certainly contribute to combating feelings of isolation, loss or abandonment.

7. Chaplaincies have been an important part of prison life since the 19th century. They are an alternative centre of *kindness and calm* within prison life which can sometimes seem regimented and even hostile or threatening.

8. Many chaplaincies are also a bridge to the outside world on release. Ex-prisoners can be connected to local faith communities near to where they may be living.

9. Faith communities also have many volunteers committed to helping people in need of support such as ex-prisoners.

10. Religious believers will often have an ethos of *forgiveness* and never giving up on anyone, however bad they have been. That means that religious communities can be places where people who may feel extremely guilty about what they have done can find people to talk to who may be less judgemental than the public at large. Serious offenders, like sex offenders, have sometimes found a warmer welcome among religious people than in among a suspicious and retributive public.

(received from Mike Nellis of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network, and posted on the PrisonerActionNet website (www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/prisoneractionnet) "Helping those working to strengthen positive identity and belonging in prisoners and ex-offenders")