

The Northern Quaker

Winter 2015

North Scotland Area Meeting



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Welcome to the latest (bumper!) edition of the Northern Quaker (officially, Winter starts on December 21st, so I have taken the liberty of calling it the Winter 2015 edition).

Migration and refugee issues continue to dominate news coverage, and this is reflected in some of the material in this edition, including an account of several Edinburgh's Friends' journey to the border between Serbia and Croatia to offer practical assistance in the form of donated clothes and other items. I would urge you to read Miranda's moving account of her experience. As well as reports from Sufferings, Northern Friends' Peace Board and Quaker Life Representatives' Council, we also have a summary of the third in the Spirituality series at Inverness Local Meeting

If you are receiving this in the printed edition, please consider if you might wish to switch to the email version which contains coloured photographs as well as a "clickable" contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. If you wish for your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

As usual, please send contributions for future editions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ, harrydhorsley@gmail.com

Announcements [contents](#)

Record keeping; Clare Trinder writes:

As the AM 'archivist' (I prefer to think of myself as the person who looks after our AM and LBM records as I have no experience of proper 'archiving') I have been asked to prepare a report for the AM detailing the records that we hold for the AM. This request has come through from BYM following an update on governance about keeping records. The governance sets out the importance of record-keeping:

The Religious Society of Friends has throughout its history sought to be meticulous in the keeping of records. The National Archives defines a record as 'recorded information regardless of media or format, created and received in the course of individual or organisational activity which provides reliable evidence of policy, actions and decisions'.

Records are kept to fulfil administrative, business, financial, accounting and legal obligations. They provide evidence of decisions, activities, relationships, rights and obligations, and inform current and future work. Some records are of historical value and should be retained permanently as archives. See www.quaker.org.uk/records-custodians for further information.

Quaker Faith and Practice says: "It is advised that the following be preserved in Friends' ownership:

- a. minute books of yearly, general, area and local meetings;
- b. minute books of elders and overseers and of standing committees of meetings for church affairs;
- c. official registers of members (11.37), printed lists of members and attenders (11.39), marriage registers (16.55), registers of burials (17.12), burial ground plans (14.31), registers of properties and trusts (15.18);
- d. such other documents as it is reasonable to expect may be needed for future reference.

It is an essential part of the stewardship of the meeting's assets that the custodian should maintain a full catalogue of records and where they are located, whether kept in meeting house safes or strong-rooms or elsewhere. It is advised that area meetings should check the accuracy and completeness of their catalogues at least triennially." *Qf&p* 4.40

And here's where you might come in: do you have at home any records of minutes, meetings or committees you have been involved with at any time over the years that fit the list above? If so, please could you let me know so I can update our records, or arrange to deliver them to

me so they can be stored at the Meeting House in Aberdeen. We currently have 2 locked filing cabinets in the boiler room at the MH for our records. Some of our more important historical records are kept in the National Archives in Edinburgh. If there are any issues relating to confidentiality of records, please could you let me know so we can discuss the best approach to keeping our records up to date.

Clare Trinder, Aberdeen LM

the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust

We the trustees of, are keen to encourage Quakers and others based in Scotland, who are living in straightened circumstances, to apply for our awards. We are perplexed that, in spite of the government's austerity policy, which means that many more people are suffering from its effects, there has been a fall in the number of applications in the last six months.

We are asking if you know of potential applicants, who might gain comfort and enjoyment from a grant of up to £500, to whom you could give the details of our awards. Application forms can be obtained from LMs. These lay out the criteria as given in John Wigham's Will on one side and has some simple questions to be answered on the other.

We know that it is often hard for people to ask for financial aid, but if the suggestion comes from a trusted friend, it can ease the discomfort. A long-standing Quaker who is well-known to their meeting, and who has known the applicant reasonably well, can be asked to countersign the application form, and to offer further information to the trustees, if needed.

It may help if we give examples of what was requested in some recent successful applications:

Journeys to visit significant people and places, or to go on holiday;
The purchase of a garden shed, cycling accessories, a soup-maker,
the annual membership of a local authority gym and swim centre;
The purchase of an iPad, and other technological equipment;

Participation on courses.

Hilary Davies, Annie Miller, Audrey Sinton. Trustees of JW(E)T.

Meeting for Sufferings September 2015 [contents](#)

There was a packed programme on the agenda in September, covering everything from the new Long Term Framework and how to make our meetings more vibrant, through our response to the World Council of Churches' paper 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision', to continued consideration of Quaker concerns about refugees, economic justice and the proposed memorial to the innocent victims of war at the National Memorial Arboretum, as well as the annual report from Quaker Peace and Social Witness.

I will deal first with our (hopefully vibrant) Faith in the Future. You may remember the consultation at AM last year about the new LTF to replace 'A Framework for Action 2009-14'. One of the jobs of Sufferings is to discern the priorities for centrally managed work, and the LTF is meant to guide future decision making at all levels. Some thought AFFA was too prescriptive and restrictive - some areas of work were not mentioned, things had moved on. The new LTF is more descriptive of our vision for the future, distilled from the 330 responses to the four consultation questions, and is about how we do things rather than what we do.

Sufferings adopted the text of the framework, and local meetings should have received a copy of it. It's succinct, in the form of a leaflet of A4-and-a-third so it can be put up on a meeting house wall, and has 6 themes, expressed as objectives:

Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where...

- *Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker*
- *Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age*
- *All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline*
- *Quaker values are active in the world*

- *Quakers work collaboratively*
- *Quakers are well known and widely understood.*
- *a future where we let our lives speak.*

It is deliberately undated so that it can be used until it is discerned to need revision. The LTF group is working on more detailed supporting documents to accompany it, which will be available in due course. I mentioned in February's report last year the Vibrancy in Meetings initiative. This is a joint Woodbrooke/BYM project to support local meetings to be stronger, more connected, confident and sustainable, which should lead in turn to vibrant AMs and a vibrant Yearly Meeting. The initiative follows a study involving 99 local meetings to find out what makes a meeting thrive. A project developer was employed to take this further and there is now a proposal for a pilot project, which is being considered by BYM and Woodbrooke trustees and may be funded by legacy income. The pilot is likely to involve employed regional workers in a small number (maybe 4 or 5) of areas.

You will have read in at least the last two reports from MfS of the Quaker concern for the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The statement we received from the Conference of European Churches and is printed in David's July report is a useful summary of some of the issues. QPSW has been working on it, and QCEA and QUNO are taking forward the concern about protection at sea. Back in April, our Recording Clerk sent a letter to David Cameron about deaths in the Mediterranean. The July minutes urge Friends to support and work alongside other initiatives and challenge the rhetoric that was going around then. Some of us may have tried this, and it's not always easy. (I had a lively exchange of views at a BBQ; we amicably agreed to disagree!).

We were presented with a draft statement and press release from Quakers in Britain on the European refugee crisis to approve, which we did after it was beefed up, and it was released that afternoon. It calls for the UK to take in more refugees and for the creation of safe and legal paths to Europe, and is printed below.

September's MfS occurred a few days after pictures of Aylan Kurdi washed up dead on a Turkish beach were all over the media, and it did seem that public and maybe government opinion had been shocked into something of a change. A single awful and poignant image can move people more than any quantity of facts, letters and reasoned argument. The government has relented and agreed to take in more refugees, albeit on its own terms. Grassroots support seems to have grown, with collections of items for refugees taking place all over the country and people putting up 'refugees welcome' signs.

The power of images, and symbolism, might perhaps apply to the proposed memorial to the innocent victims of war at the NMA, which got the support of MfS at the meeting. This is a concern of Southern Marches AM. They see it as an opportunity to broaden awareness of our peace testimony and have had agreement from the NMA committee that such a memorial would be appropriate at the arboretum.

However to go ahead it needs national approval from Quakers in Britain. The AM was therefore asking for a stronger expression of support from MfS than had been given previously. As usual, Quakers get very animated about words and the term 'innocent victims of war' has met with reservations (is anyone innocent? isn't everyone innocent? what about victims of conflicts that are not called wars?). We were asked not to get too hung up about this and regard it for the moment as a working title (though a suitable alternative has not been found - any suggestions for Southern Marches AM?). We are also told that the project should not divert money from other peace-promoting projects.

The other AM concern brought to MfS was North Wales AM's proposal for a national Quaker Credit Union. It is a response to the Quaker concern about economic injustice and inequality, as expressed in minute 36 of BYM 2015. It would be run on Quaker ethical principles, and AMs could set up branches, particularly in areas where there is

currently no credit union coverage. Many people in poverty do not have access to financial services, and might therefore resort to high cost credit sources and loan sharks. North Wales AM has done a lot of research and was asking MfS to consider whether we, as a Yearly Meeting, are called to develop this proposal and set up a group to establish whether a Quaker Credit Union is feasible and should go ahead.

Quite a few reservations were expressed - should Friends act locally, for example by getting involved with their local credit unions, rather than set up a national one? There are also questions about keeping a Quaker influence over governance (one member, one vote - which the AM has discussed with the Association of British Credit Unions Ltd) and the nature of the 'common bond'. It is worth noting that the Quaker Business Group is discussing the idea of a Quaker bank.

North Wales AM was encouraged to continue working on this, linking with other AMs and central committees where appropriate.

The final item I wish to share with you is QCCIR's response on behalf of Quakers in Britain to the World Council of Churches document 'The Church, Towards a Common Vision'. The **WCC document** is a **convergence document** i.e. it aims to identify grounds of unity of faith and practice among Christians worldwide.

We received a briefing paper for the first draft of our response 'A Spirit-led church' back in February, but the full draft response was not required reading then and not everyone had read it. Those who had, and did not have theological training, in general had problems with the language - i.e. we could not understand some of it! Those with a theological background agreed that it reflected the Quaker viewpoint and a revised draft in less highly-wrought language was requested. ('The tradition of plain speaking is one of our treasures to share'). This makes it much more accessible.

Sufferings endorsed the document for sending to the Faith and Order

Committee of the WCC on behalf of Quakers in Britain, and hope that it will be used, along with the accompanying study guide, in local meetings to help them '*grow in unity and articulate what we can say, as Quakers, to the wider Christian Church*'. The response is at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Spirit-led-church-2015.pdf>.

We also received QPSW's Annual Report, which gives an update on its work and also outlines how it is responding to the 2015 Yearly Meeting's Call for Equality. As with all the MfS minutes and background papers, it's available online: (<http://old.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/MfS-2015-09-09-QPSW-report.pdf>).

Jane Booth (Banchory and Aberdeen LMs)

Meeting for Sufferings, Quakers' representative body, meeting in London on Saturday (05 September 2015) made this statement:

"That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right" (A Quaker statement in 1822, *Quaker faith & practice* 23.26).

"Quakers in Britain urge the UK Government to welcome those desperately seeking a place of safety, in Europe, from the dangers in their own countries. In this urgent situation it cannot be right to harden hearts against people who are struggling and dying on European soil and in the seas around us.

In Britain we have a tradition of sheltering those in danger, as we did with the Kindertransport, rescuing thousands of children from Nazi-occupied Europe so many years ago, and more recently, when we welcomed refugees from countries including Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosova. It is time to open our hearts and communities again.

This exceptional time of need calls for a proportionate response from

all the governments of Europe working together. We call for mechanisms to be created that will enable people to travel safely and to secure legal protection – including in Britain.

Refugees are fleeing from fear. Further violent interventions in countries such as Syria will not provide a solution. Difficult but compassionate decisions need to be made to secure peace for people in these regions.

Quakers assert that all human life is precious – each person is a child of God and the loss of one diminishes us all. In this severe crisis, we hear the Spirit calling us to throw ourselves into the fray with all the love and courage we can muster.”

North Scotland Area Meeting held in Aberdeen 31st October 2015 [contents](#)

Twenty one Friends attended October Area Meeting held in Aberdeen Meeting House. The initial agenda had announced the start as 10:30 but this was corrected to 11. The clerk asked that we be in our places at 10:45, which meant those of us who had not read the latest email were caught out and either arrived for less than 5 minutes worship or were prevented from entering until 11 15 only to find meeting business had begun. This was particularly disappointing for the car load who were only just late because they did not know that you are not allowed to turn right into Crown Street from Union Street (see endnote).

With wisdom our clerk announced the first item of business to be the report by our rep on Meeting for Sufferings. It was a delight to listen to this report in full rather than be told there is no time and we'll be able to read it in the newsletter.

Report from Quaker Life Representative Council [QLRC]. Our two reps made clear this body exists to both hear from all the AMs via our reps and to serve us via them. The preparation they had had to do was to take a symbol to show what for them is the ground and foundation of a

gathered meeting. One had taken a shell as her meeting is near the sea and it is an object which represents listening, to God and to each other. The other had taken in an origami circle of hearts each made of different paper as we are all different. This represented that in meeting we are filling our hearts with that of God, but we all bring our individual hearts.

"A Young Person's Guide to Quaker Worship" was strongly recommended as reading for all of us as well as our children. Sadly we don't yet know the cost of this publication though my googling tells me it costs \$15 in USA. The American review on The Worship Kit: A Young Person's Guide to Quaker Worship ISBN 13-9781907123146 says "John Lampen's latest book is for children and younger teenagers who attend Quaker Meeting. It will help you find a way to be calm and quiet in meeting; how to think about people you love in the silence; suggestions for getting help in the silence if you have troubles; ways of caring about world problems during worship; thoughts on listening, reading and speaking in meeting and ideas about what it is that we are worshipping. A British book but full of useful ideas that cross the Atlantic well" Our rep reckoned some of us might find it helpful for our own selves too.

They invited us to take part in exercise drawing round each other's hands and then after thought writing in each digit a phrase that came into our mind about our experience of meeting for worship. I suspect I have over simplified this now but at the time I found it a really useful exercise.

Writing about the report on the work of the North of Scotland Trust I'm aware I'm on very sensitive ground here so would ask Friends speak to Tom Sayles, John Melling and Derek MacLean to get a more accurate picture. Friends today are not as generous relatively as our predecessors were. John has been saying for years that we need to plough more back into the Trust fund rather than keep plundering it. Tom similarly warned that we should be putting on one side 10% as minimum for the upkeep of the two buildings that the Trust owns i.e.

Aberdeen Meeting House and 100 Crown Street, the latter of which provide the Trust with letting income. This is the first time I have understood this properly. Nowadays few of us can donate at the levels earlier Friends did, perhaps because we are less well-off, or because we are only half of a partnership, not both in membership, or, dare I say it, because our faith does not mean as much to us as it did to preceding generations. My experience is that it is often the least well off who give a far higher proportion of their income than those who are better off and sometimes actually more in concrete terms.

We heard the testimony to the light of God in the life of Peter McCaffery. It ends by quoting his younger son, Martin. He didn't practise what he preached; he just practised! I was delighted to hear this whole testimony read again at the start of GM. Not all testimonies forwarded to GM can be read so it was special to hear Peter McCaffery's there. It only covered his work for our local meeting, not his service in the wider society. How many of us knew he served on a central committee? In fact being Peter there's probably a lot none of us knew!

We also heard a report from our rep on Northern Friends Peace Board. This includes their work with Muslims on the theology of Muslims & Quakers. We were told about the mini posters that some are placing in their windows saying refugees welcome here. We were strongly recommended the new film "Joyeux Noel" telling of the famous football match between soldiers of both sides that first Christmas of World War One.

Please note the dates for Area Meeting in 2016 as we need to take part in our meetings for church affairs if we possibly can. Reader you are needed! Please uphold Area Meeting in prayer if travel is impossible for you.

Feb 20 Inverness

May 7 Isle of Skye

August 26- 28 Residential at Pluscarden Abbey

Nov 5 Aberdeen

Feb 2017 Inverness

I apologise as there was more but I did not complete this report promptly enough and I now can't remember the remainder. Would anyone who regrets a gap please send a bit about it to our editor for an addendum in the next issue?

[endnote. If you miss turn one street before at Dee St it is a rather a long way round especially on a busy Saturday morning to find a way in. Once on Dee St it's probably best to go to the bottom of that street and turn back up Crown St to park in the meeting house car park.]

Mary Dower, Aberdeen LM

General Meeting for Scotland held in Edinburgh on 14th – 15th Nov 2015 [contents](#)

This was a very special weekend for me as I was able to renew contact with old Friends from east and west Scotland, in my former meeting house at Victoria Terrace.

During the opening worship on Saturday the testimony to the life of Peter McCaffery was read to us. This was quite heart-warming as I'd known little of Peter's life.

I enjoyed hearing Marian Grothey's report of the **Pitlochry Family weekend** last October which included families from our area meeting. The original purpose of the weekend was to provide young people with the opportunity to get to know each other before going to Summer Shindig. The programme provided activities as well as time for reflection and worship. 18 adults and 22 children and young people aged 4 – 15 attended. The children particularly enjoyed the freedom to be outside, walking to the salmon dam and climbing trees. It was especially valuable for those who are the only Quaker family in their area. The weekend was deemed a great success. There is a need for adult volunteers to help with future weekends. There was agreement that GM should invest in children and young people to help overcome isolation.

John Phillips presented **budget proposals for 2016** which were accepted. John reminded us of the major decision last year to create the post of parliamentary engagement worker founded jointly by BYM and GM. While the funding doesn't cover all costs, the deficit for this year is less than anticipated.

GM has been asked to take part in the **Quaker Meeting Houses Heritage Project** which will carry out a UK wide survey of property in the ownership of each AM in use as a meeting house. The aim is to record the significance of the building to enable BYM to compile a new property database. The project does not cover property used for other purposes. GM agreed to appoint Marianne Butler to act as GM Co-ordinator. She will liaise with LM volunteers and with the consultant from the project.

On the Saturday afternoon Anne Hosking and Patsy Wilson from *Quaker Concern on Death and Dying* led a session to help us talk about living and dying so that we could then talk to Friends in our own meetings. We began by looking at situations of personal loss and identifying what was helpful and unhelpful at those times. We then looked at practical ideas, resources and information about living wills, advanced directives and other means of preparation. We ended by sharing thoughts about what would be important to us in the final stage of life.

After tea, our assistant clerk, Adwoa, introduced us to Death Cafes and we had the chance to experience how they work. We discussed the following questions from the 'menu' below in small groups. After the rather sombre atmosphere of the earlier session, this felt quite liberating and surprisingly light hearted at times. If you want to try the experience, there's a Death Café in Perth!

Starter: Why are you here? How do you feel about your own death?

Main: What do you want to happen when you die?

What do you believe happens when you die?

Pudding: You have 1 year to live. What 6 things are on your list

On the Sunday morning Elizabeth Allen gave an inspiring report of the work of the **Parliamentary Liaison Function Group** and of the parliamentary engagement officer Mairi Campbell-Jack. Mairi is carrying out research into militarisation in Scottish schools, the first of 4 priority areas, with the aim of petitioning the Scottish Parliament in 2016 in the hope that the dossier will be sent to the Education Committee.

Other priorities are **Focus on Remembrance** in partnership with Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre where white poppies were sent to every MSP and MP with a Quaker letter expressing hope for a different way of remembering; **Trident**, where letters to Scottish MSPs have received a number of supportive replies; and the next focus **Economic Justice, Sustainability & Peace** – which will look at the right use of tax to address inequality, and fracking issues. Andrew Harvie MSP is to sponsor an event in the Scottish Parliament around the anniversary of the first Military Service Act and is asking for Quaker input. We agreed to make GM funds available to support this event.

After the close of the business meeting, we joined Edinburgh Friends for meeting for worship. Edinburgh Friends provided warm hospitality over the weekend and a splendid supper on the Saturday evening.

Derek McLean, Orkney LM

[Note: South East Scotland AM website has a *Funeral Preference Guidance* form listed under Documents which I've found very helpful.]

European Quakers Call For an End to the Cycle of Violence [contents](#)

The following is a **statement** arising from this year's Peace and Service Consultation for Friends in Europe and the Middle East, held just outside Brussels in November. Jette Howard represented Northern

Friends Peace Board at the gathering. For further information, visit <http://www.fwccemes.org/news/european-quakers-call-for-an-end-to-the-cycle-of-violence>.

“As Quakers from across Europe, meeting in Belgium in the aftermath of the recent murders in Paris and Beirut, we mourn with those who have lost someone close to them. We also acknowledge the anxiety and fear people are feeling across France, Lebanon and elsewhere.

No one is secure unless all of us are secure, and that includes the people of Syria and other war-torn countries as well as the people of France and the rest of Europe.

We call upon our respective governments and the European Union to break the endless cycle of violence that has been fuelling war and terror in recent years. We need to move away from expensive, indiscriminate and ineffective military power and stop fuelling war and the spread of arms.

Instead, to prevent violent extremism, European governments should support the political settlement of the conflict in Syria, and foster economic development in the region. Both in Europe and the Middle East, appropriate funding and civil-space must be provided for community groups, social services, educators and families, to support people who are susceptible to ideologies of violence.

Sustainable and shared security can be created only by addressing the root causes of violence. The stream of refugees testifies to the fact that all people need safety, ways to earn their living, and a hopeful and positive future for themselves and their children. The refugees are fleeing from persecution, war and violence in their countries. Please listen to this clear message.

The faith that led us over the past centuries to deny war, oppose slavery, support conscientious objection, help rescue Jewish children in the 1930s, care for refugees and rebuild war-torn Europe, impels us today to pledge ourselves to serve our neighbours, whoever and

wherever they may be, and to take a principled stand against the belief that violence is the solution to conflict.

We call on those in power to reject military responses, and adopt non-violent strategies to bring about stability and safety for all people.”

(kindly supplied by Juli Salt, Forres, NSAM rep for NFPB)

Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) 28th November 2015 held at Lancaster Meeting House [contents](#)

Being your rep for NFPB is so much more than NFPB. I felt very enthused on arrival, and very frustrated on leaving.

Firstly NFPB reaches out across to the different peace work groups, and different LM's, sharing information on work and concerns.

Secondly, for me, this is a 3 day commitment in travel and time, with many opportunities – any which way, from reading books, meeting interesting people and other Friends, or family, and an insight into different geographical areas and communities. I have a lot of different coffee cards from the various coffee house chains, with points to use up!

The first extra opportunity was to attend a “Global Justice Now” meeting, on the Friday night in Kendal, held by the ‘South Lakes group’, (not Quaker.) speaker was the National director on Global Justice Now (used to be called the World Development Movement), Nick Dearden. The room was packed and many of the participants were going across to Paris to protest at the Climate Change Conference being held in December. Many had been to other similar conferences and wondered if any difference would be made- but they would still go. (I wonder if they got there?)

Saturday saw an hour's commute from Kendal, from my host's home on the bank of the River Kent, to Lancaster. My word it was windy. I

was feeling very enthusiastic, but my goodness what a lot more information, which I was supposed to impart to you asap- some items needing attention by Tuesday:-

Equality and Sustainability from Friends in Lancaster meeting and Brigflatt's meeting. The latter sharing the concern *"to make a clear stand on the dismantling of the welfare state, the "austerity" agenda, military spending and the structural violence of the state underlies this – something that has been called "conscious cruelty".*

The FWCC Europe and Middle East Section, Peace and Service Consultation (what a mouthful!) – one of us had been to this held in Paris one week after the terrorist attacks ! The theme was "Who is my neighbour?"

Quaker response to terrorism – you should have received statements at least from BYM at the time. We were asked "who is not our neighbour?"

Trident. from a Friend from Barrow in Furness, where the submarines are built. Then from Brian Larkin, Edinburgh Peace Centre who talked about the "Scrap Trident Coalition"...."let Scotland lead the way to a nuclear free world". The coalition has focussed on connections between military spending on Trident and military cuts. 2016 sees the UK parliamentary decision on replacement of trident- some MP's may have to ask themselves do they want trident or the union.

Then we heard from Sam Walton QPSW. QPSW will be working with political parties to try to convince them to oppose nuclear weapons, and Tim Wallis QPSW will be touring meetings offering to help them lobby on Trident. The Young Friends rep told us of the campaign to get as many signatures from Youth groups as possible against Trident.

QPSW – Sam Walton gave us much information about Syria, being allowed by Friends house to spend a solid 2 weeks just on this.

Militarisation – QPSW (with NFPB support) will be running workshops

in the N of England and Scotland.

Well Friends – that is such a précis and yet I have left out loads. My meeting was at the end of November, by our next AM at the end of February – that will be a full 3 months later and so much will have moved on by then. My frustration is on how to share relevant info with you – most reps are going back to big LM's and reporting THE NEXT DAY. What would you have me do?

As for reporting back the next day – well I was in Cumbria. My train journey from Oxenholme was eventful. Anything that went right was a bonus. Initially delayed at Oxenholme by trees on the line – which when falling had taken out electric cables, we travelled by train, bus, sat on a train in Carlisle with passengers waiting to go to Euston, whilst we waited to go north- a refuge from the cold! My journey amazingly was only delayed by 5 hours, and I kept thinking about refugees, not knowing what was to come next, and not speaking the language of wherever they were. I at least could have booked in to a hotel overnight. I knew where I was going. I had a home to go to.

Apparently I was on the last train out of Cumbria. My host was flooded the next Friday (only her much used basement room – she was lucky). I wonder how many others from that meeting on the previous Friday were able to go to Paris. Climate change is hitting Cumbria hard.

Juli SaltNFPB rep

Northern Friends Peace Board Update November 2015 [contents](#)

Meetings

Northern Friends Peace Board has met three times during 2015. Its fourth and final meeting of the year was in Lancaster on 28th November. Previous meetings have been in Perth, Leeds and Glasgow. After our meetings in Scotland NFPB members joined with Scottish Friends for Meetings for Worship at the Faslane naval base (and home of Trident nuclear submarine). In Leeds we joined Leeds Friends in a public witness for the non-renewal of the UK nuclear weapons' system,

Trident. This concern will also be on our agenda at our Lancaster meeting.

Interested Friends and Attenders are welcome to join us at our meetings to consider these and other areas of concern. Contact the NFPB office (see overleaf) for further information.

Challenging Militarism, then and now.

As well as the Meetings for Worship at Faslane mentioned above, there are regular Meetings at **Menwith Hill and at Fylingdales**. Our website calendar has information about these.



NFPB has been part of a working group of peace bodies that have worked together to promote and produce resources for the **Global Day of Action on Military Spending**. This will be taking place again in mid-April 2016 and it could be timely if readers want to begin planning for that.

NFPB Members and other Friends have been busy developing resources that mark the centenary of the first world war, with a particular focus on the introduction of conscription in 1916. Events and resources are publicised via our website calendar and social media sites.

Building Peace in Diverse Britain

We ran a second young people's event earlier this year, bringing teenagers together for a day of workshops and discussion on the theme of '**Young people, peace and community**'. This brought our most recent phase of work on this concern to a close and a **report** of the last five years' work was published at the end of September (see <http://bit.ly/20tuHwQ>).

NFPB members have expressed a strong hope that we can continue to develop this strand of our work and we are currently looking for new members to join the project group. We were pleased to be able to share this work at the recent conference in London on Interfaith Peacebuilding, organised by the Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relationships.

Alternative approaches to building security

Before the UK General Election we produced and distributed a short leaflet encouraging candidates to engage in thinking around building security through non-military means. Using the title '**Security for the Common Good**', we have subsequently adapted the leaflet for Friends and others to use with sitting MPs, and with members of the Government. Copies are available to download from <http://nfpb.org.uk/genel2015> and in printed form from the NFPB office. At our NFPB meeting in Perth we considered the 'Ammerdown Invitation' document and encourage others to explore and respond to these issues. The text can be found at: : "**Security for the future: in search of a new vision**" - <http://bit.ly/ZdlLQ2>

Our project group on Sustainable security is planning a spring conference to give support to Friends and others in engaging with **media** around these concerns. We shall publish details of that event in due course.

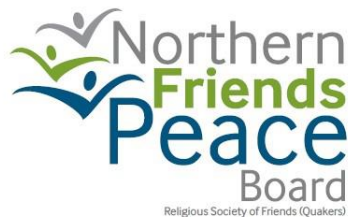
Gathering, networking and sharing information

We are keen to support small and informal **regional NFPB gatherings**, for Friends and Attenders to spend time sharing concerns and information, engaging in some joint activity, in worship and over a shared lunch ... or whatever else Friends would find helpful. If you would like to discuss hosting one of these, *please contact Philip Austin at the NFPB office.*

Our **website and social media pages** are regularly updated and we are always happy to hear from Friends with news and information that we can share with a wider audience using these tools. We have for **sale** posters and postcards, as well as tea-towels, that were initially produced for our NFPB Centenary in 2013. Follow this link - for an order form (<http://bit.ly/1Mco6Ny>) - or phone the NFPB office for information. If you would like some of these for an event on a sale or return basis, we would be happy to supply these.

NFPB Trustees review

Our Executive Committee, which acts as the trustee body of NFPB, had a short residential meeting at the end of October. They considered current and anticipated priorities and challenges. They also, since they were meeting at Swarthmoor Hall, took the opportunity to meet with local Friends. This was a chance to hear and explore a range of peace concerns, with the issue of Trident submarine production at neighbouring Barrow in Furness being particularly high on the agenda. We sometimes appoint as trustees Friends who have not been NFPB representatives. If you are interested in possible service in this or other capacities (including Clerking) with NFPB, please do get in touch.



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QPSW Autumn Conference, Swanwick Derbyshire 2015 [contents](#)

Arriving on a cold dark evening at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick after a very long journey by train from Aberdeen I was somewhat relieved to find a very warm welcome and friendly atmosphere at the centre.

It was my first visit there and I was unsure of what to expect. The conference centre is large and based around a grand house with accommodation and conference rooms in the house and grounds. This newly formed Autumn conference of over 80 Friends was made up of correspondents, committee members and AM nominated friends.

In reporting back I will focus on 4 areas of the weekend's very full programme. In addition I will end with a question for Friends to reflect on which came out of the plenary session.

1. Alistair Fuller from Quaker Life at Friends House led us in a session which asked us to consider our roots and witness. He asked how much each of us knew about the work of others in the meeting and suggested there may be ways in which this work could be supported by and communicated to QPSW.

He also asked us to consider what the roots of our witness were and that our witness was part of our worship. Quaker Faith and Practice provides many of the stories and leadings for us to base our witness on. It was challenging to hear the question "What does Love require of us" Also "How do we do the work on ourselves as well as work in the world"

Alistair spoke of it being the work of a lifetime, starting fresh every day and beginning in our hearts. He told a lovely story about a man who sculpted in stone and was working on a piece. It was to be a lion. He was asked by an observer how he took the huge piece of stone and turned it into a lion sculpture. He replied that he chipped away

everything that wasn't lion!

2. Helen Drewery told us about the newly constructed timeline in the grounds of Friends House in London. There are 21 dates in it. These were significant in Quaker history. They changed the world. She chose 3 of them.

The first was 1758 ...the work on abolishing slavery. The second 1813....the work of Prison reform by Elizabeth Fry The third 1947.... the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Quakers for their War Relief work.

These reminded us of the historical development of Quaker witness in the world...something to be proud of. In order to build on the past we had to move forward and changes were necessary.

She talked of breaking down barriers between the work of sections of Friends House and developing coordination and cooperation between them.

Speaking out more publicly on Quaker issues was also new. She told us to look out for a recent initiative on welfare reform coming soon called "Enough"

New ways of working with IT and video conferencing were minimising the numbers of people having to travel long distances to be able to share ideas.

3. In workshops we focused on the work of QPSW and how we might link with them getting support for local concerns. At the same time the work of QPSW wanted to know more about our local work and witness and offered its help to take these forward. It was helpful to consider the way our concerns came into being. Were they what we WANTED to do or were they what we were CALLED to do. This was for me a very significant and important insight.

It was also useful to be reminded of the fact that although the messages we wanted to send out to people were well intentioned they may not always be heard by others as we might have intended. Strategies for turning concerns into clear messages were explored and help for this was offered by QPSW

4. There were a number of small groups which met arising from Open Space –a workshop forum for pulling ideas and interests together from participants. This included around 14 topics suggested by conference members written on flip charts and taken to rooms and corners of rooms for discussion.

The feedback notes were then used to support feedback for a plenary session. It was a good way to get a lot of discussion happening.

I was involved in one group which looked at how meetings can be overwhelmed with so many concerns and where its members can sometimes feel unable to deal with them effectively because there seems to be so much to do. Members of the group felt that prioritising concerns was essential and sometimes "time ending" the work that might be done could help.

One member talked of setting a 2 year limit on the work to be done on their Meeting House. Also someone talked of the limited time that some people have if they are working or bringing up families. There were thoughts given to the fact that some members might like to work on a concern individually and be happy to do it.

In the plenary session a concern was raised about how members of the Society of Friends are seen as privileged and that, as a Society, this is often reinforced by our mainly middle class and white membership. This may be perceived by working class and other ethnic groups as a barrier to our Society. The question therefore is" How might we help to ensure that people of all classes and racial backgrounds feel fully welcomed to our Meeting?"

We may feel we are doing enough or we may feel concerned that we need to do more.

Andrew Marsden, Aberdeen LM

Conflict & Quaker Life Rep Council [contents](#)

What does the word “conflict” mean to you? Is it something negative to be avoided at all costs?: in our Quaker meetings especially! Or can you see it as potential for change; for more openness and love?

“Chinese wisdom teaches us that conflict spells both danger and opportunity.” My dictionary says of conflict:

a state of opposition or hostilities. A fight or struggle.

The clashing of opposing principles etc.

The opposition of incompatible wishes or needs in a person (or meeting?!))

In “drawing the threads together” our clerks wrote:

“Quakers are wonderful at sorting out other people’s conflict – but we may not be very good at sorting out our own. Are we conflict averse? We have a tendency to sweep problems under the carpet, to avoid unpleasantness and pretend that conflict doesn’t exist. How bumpy is the carpet in your Meeting House? Do the bumps affect the spiritual life of your Meeting?”

A woman in my home group said that she did not believe it if somebody said there is no conflict in their Meeting. I felt a bit defensive as that is what I had said and thought. Whether true or not I did come to see conflict in a different light.

The clerks also wrote of our deliberations “Listening – real listening – is key. The Japanese symbol for listening teaches us to listen with our hearts as well when we give our undivided attention with our ears, eyes and mind.”

And: “At the root of dealing with conflict is our ability to love one another as we are. We were reminded of the importance of having fun with one another, of laughter, food and fellowship of truly getting to know one another as worthwhile, mistake-making human beings in the things ephemeral as well as the things eternal.”

In the early 20th Century a Quaker couple, Ada & Alfred Salter, settled in Bermondsey in the East End of London. Alfred was a doctor, always

on call and giving cheap medical attention. We were given a one person play of his wife, Ada, how she was an “upstander” not a “bystander”. She worked with (tough) girls’ clubs, with women, and those sometimes thought of as the dregs of society. We felt her grief at the illness and death of her 8 year old daughter. How, when she was ill, people came and stood outside the house of “the little ray of sunshine.” We followed as Ada had to continue, while also dealing with the depression of her husband at having, as a doctor, been unable to save the life of his only child. Ada continued. She spoke out! She became the first woman councillor in London and the first Labour mayor in the British Isles.

I was deeply touched by this wonderful portrayal and wish you could all see it.

However – conflict? There is some conflict here in myself. I hear of these wonderful, inspiring Quakers. I read in “The Friend” of the work that is being done. It is all too easy to feel a little inadequate to see what “they” are doing, while most of us are chugging along, quietly (probably!) doing the best we can – living our lives – carrying our own personal lights.

Diana Brockbank Joint Quaker Life Rep

A Spirit-led Approach to Conflict in our Quaker Communities at Quaker Life Rep Council [contents](#)

I felt this was a good weekend because we did a number of practical exercises, not always relating directly to conflict situations, but to help us try and get a better handle on conflict and equip ourselves a little better for it. We looked at different tools: exploring our identity, listening, language, conflict styles and community.

Identity: drawing on her peace-building work Issy Cartwright from Quaker Peace and Social Witness explained that identity is multi-dimensional. If we are only known, for one aspect of our identity, then it is easy to be excluded or distanced from the group, or for groups to

draw apart, which may lead to conflict. It seems to me that the more rounded our identity within a group the better. Instead of 2D cardboard cut-outs we become rounded personalities. Getting to know each other: talking and listening to each other is important.

Listening: The listening exercise we did I found challenging both as the listener and the speaker. We took turns to do both. But it helped if I thought about the symbol for listening that Diana mentions which is made up of ears, eyes, mind, attention and heart. Real listening, like our silence, is not passive but active. But as someone in my home group said, "Trying to listen and not just think about what you're going to say next is tricky."

Language: How can we be open and better express ourselves without resorting to blaming others?

We learnt about "I" statements. Learning to express our views and feelings without the element of accusation and defence, without blame. (A description of this is given in the booklet "Once Upon A Conflict" p.39.)

Another activity we did involved a scenario set in a meeting house being played out in 3 different ways: using passive-aggressive language, blaming language and non-blaming language. As the scenes were happening in front of me (even though I knew it wasn't real) I found myself reacting to the language. It was so clear that the language we choose is important. Non-blaming language makes a constructive conversation possible and is a way of keeping the situation under control.

Conflict styles: "Most of us generally haven't been encouraged to think about how we deal with conflict, and we may not be very aware of our own conflict styles, or whether they serve us well. The styles we identify are:

Withdraw and try to avoid conflict (turtle)

Smooth things over to keep relationships sweet (teddy bear)

Talk things over and reach a compromise (fox)

Confront and discuss but speak your mind (owl)

Force your point, insist you are right and keep going until you get your way (shark) (or bull).

Can you identify your conflict style? There aren't right ones and wrong ones and we may use different styles in different situations. "It's about being more conscious of our conflict styles, and the styles of others. It can help us think about what happens when, for example, a shark comes into conflict with a teddy bear."

Community

Mending conflict is hard. Being open, talking and listening to each other may make us vulnerable. As Tim Cook from my home group says: "I might have to confront some of my own flaws and vulnerabilities when I look at why I find other people's behaviour difficult to deal with". We may have to take risks. "US Quaker George Lakey says: "To risk, we need safety". We need a "strong container" to be willing to make ourselves vulnerable." It follows that "we need to put energy into building and strengthening our communities, so that when conflict does arise we have the courage to walk into it – and hopefully the wisdom and tenderness it requires."

For this report I have drawn heavily on an article by Issy Cartwright in Quaker Voices July issue "With a Tender Hand: A Spirit-led Approach to Conflict in our Quaker Communities" based on the talk she gave at QLRC. I would recommend this and the booklet "Once Upon A Conflict" by Tom Leimdorfer produced by QPSW 2014 which I've referred to above.

Pamela Affleck Joint Quaker Life Rep

How does a shell connect with "The Ground and Foundation of a Gathered Meeting"? Quaker Life Rep. Council. October 2015 [contents](#)

We were asked to take along something that reflected for us an aspect of our experience of our local Meeting. A shell? Well, we meet in the village centre by the sea – obvious. Also a large shell can be put the ear

to “hear” the sea and for me this represented listening. This is both the good listening to each other I experience in our local meeting, and listening to that spirit which interpenetrates our lives which some of us call God.

We took the objects, pictures, stories, sculptures etc. to our first home group meeting. This took the form of worship sharing, which worked quite well for me. When we had 2 more worship sharing sessions “just” on the theme, I floundered and heard myself thinking that this could get me leaving Quakers. Well it did not work for me, and for our last group together one of my home group people said “We are not having another worship sharing are we? Please!” That session was then very useful and positive.

Quaker Life Council has these meetings to for a two way sharing; them and us, representatives from all the Area Meetings in Britain. They were hoping for some good ideas from us to help them work with the way forward. I hope the week end worked better for them than it did for me.

From their side, a session which inspired me was about the programme for reading “The Red Book” as a preliminary to guiding the group discussing the creation? of a new edition. How much do we out here know of the book? Do we read it at all or perhaps just to look up a point of contact? The programme has been planned for an 18month period after which we will (all?) be, hopefully, much more familiar with the contents. The programme includes ideas and activities for each month's chapter(s) and can be found on the internet as a free download from the “Being Friends Together” website at <http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk> or qfp.quaker.uk/reading. There is also a wee leaflet around.

Pamela and I adapted the exercise we did at QLRC to present at AM. Are you ready? Do you have a piece of A4 paper and a pencil or pen?

First we read 3 short pieces from October; chapter 21. we started with 21:49, a piece by George Fox shortly before his death, beginning “I am glad I was here”. Next was 21:22, a piece about taking time for leisure. Last 21:53, was an amusing poem; includes

“Will your body
Come back again, Grannie,
After you are dead? “

Do read these.

We then asked people to get into pairs and draw round each other's hands. This was followed by writing in each finger a reason for “I am glad I was here”, and talking about it with our partner.

I highly recommend following this course. I am still trying to persuade somebody to do it as I do to give me even more incentive to keep up with it and to discuss it. We are on chapter 23 now (November).

Diana Brockbank: Joint Quaker Life Rep

Responding to terrorism: a statement from Quakers in Britain [contents](#)

As Parliament prepares to debate next steps in Syria, Quakers in Britain have made this statement.

“The attacks in Paris on 13 November were deeply shocking and our hearts continue to go out to those killed, injured, bereaved and traumatised.

It is human nature that the closer suffering comes to us, the more acutely we feel the pain and grief. But that experience should sensitise us to the suffering caused repeatedly by acts of war and violent crime in more distant places, including Beirut, Sinai, Bamako and Aleppo. It should strengthen our determination to build a safer world together.

Terrorism is a deliberate attempt to provoke fear, hatred, division and a state of war. War – especially war with the West - is what ISIS/Daesh

wants. It confirms the image they project of the West as a colonialist 'crusader' power, which acts with impunity to impose its will overseas and especially against Muslims.

The military actions of Western nations recruit more people to the cause than they kill. Every bomb dropped is a recruitment poster for ISIS, a rallying point for the young, vulnerable and alienated. And every bomb dropped on Syrian cities drives yet more people to flee and seek refuge in safer countries.

Our political leaders seem determined that Britain should look strong on the world stage. Quakers in Britain believe our country should act with wisdom and far-sighted courage. A wisdom that rises above the temptation to respond to every problem with military might. A wisdom that looks back at our failures in Libya and Iraq and Afghanistan and learns from experience. The courage – and strength – to think through the likely consequences of actions to find a long term, lasting solution.

The courageous response of ordinary people who refuse to give up their way of life and refuse to be driven by fear is one that politicians could learn from.

Although there are no quick or easy answers, there are things we can do, all of us together, which will defeat the terrorists more assuredly than military action. Quakers in Britain commit to playing our part in these actions.

We can quieten ourselves and listen to the truth from deep within us that speaks of love, mutual respect, humanity and peace.

We can and will refuse to be divided. By bridge-building among faiths and within our local communities we can challenge and rise above the ideologies of hate and actively love our neighbour.

By welcoming refugees, we can not only meet the acute needs of those individuals but also undercut the narrative of those who seek to create

fear and mistrust.

And we can ask our political leaders to:

- Treat terrorist acts as crimes, not acts of war
- Stop arming any of the parties fighting in Syria
- Observe international law and apply it equally to all parties
- Build cooperation among nations, strengthening those international institutions which contribute to peace

Export peace rather than war, so that we can create the conditions the world needs to address its most serious problems, including climate change.

The statement concludes with this extract from a statement made by Quakers in Britain in 1943 (Quaker Faith and Practice 24.09):
“True peace cannot be dictated, it can only be built in co-operation between all peoples. None of us, no nation, no citizen, is free from some responsibility for this.”

Aid for Refugees: Team Humanity Van [contents](#)

In November Miranda Barty-Taylor and several other Young Quaker Friends arranged to drive a van to Serbia to take direct aid to refugees stranded between borders. The following is a report written by Miranda on her return to the UK

Dear David Cameron,

I write this from the ferry from Dunkirk to Dover. I am standing at the back of the boat staring back at the frothy, grey-blue waves.

I have just delivered tents and sleeping bags to Grande-Synthe refugee camp, and before that had driven with five friends to Slovenia, with two supply vans full of shoes, winter clothes and medications. We're on

our way home.

I write this not to boast, but to contextualise my impotent rage as I stare at the arbitrary piece of sea which means that I can depend on sleeping in a bed tonight, and that those we left behind cannot. I write to justify my frustrated tears as I think about those we helped at Dobova train station.

As I walked past the debate on the TV to come out here to the sea and the salt-wind, I heard you all discussing "the risk of civilian casualties." I rage, rage against what I know to be inevitable.

I write not to beg and plead. I know you will make a decision based on your own version of what is right - a reality so far from what is happening at that station as to be farcical. My head is filled with faces from that night shift, faces full of uncertainty. I remember the young man who gripped my arm compassionately when I explained to him that I didn't have a hat for him - that we'd run out. HE comforted ME.

I remember the two year old who told me clearly he needed a jacket. His parents were busy finding shoes. But he knew enough to grab my attention and gesture to the piece of clothing he desperately lacked. The winds were bitter that night. I'm glad I found him a jacket.

I remember the eyes of the boy travelling alone, not more than fifteen, who at 3am stepped out of the line and, shivering, pointed to the ground and asked, "Osterrich?" He didn't even know where he was.

You have a chance to be remembered in history as making the brave, fore-sighted choice. Of breaking the cycle - the obvious, obvious cycle - of war, displacement, resentment, hatred and terrorism. You have the chance to make the humanitarian choice.

I wish you would do a night shift at Dobova train station.

I write this with no expectations. I am exhausted from days of driving through Europe. I write this because I don't know what else to do.

I am weeping into the wind. And I am praying to whatever the hell may

be out there that you make the only choice that makes any sense at all.

Miranda Barty-Taylor

I wrote that letter on Wednesday. The following morning I woke up to the news that MPs had voted to authorise UK military action against Islamic State in Syria. I have been struggling to see the light since.

It took us two and a half days to get to Dobova, a small town on the Slovenian border with Croatia. The military and police presence is strong there. We had originally planned to meet up with the director of Humanitas, however due to the greater need in Idomeni at the time, their team had gone straight to Greece. Instead we went to Dobova in Slovenia, in conjunction with Karitas.



We distributed donations to the central warehouse in Dobova, to the Family Tent at the train station – which is being run by a Hungarian couple who have just set things up themselves, and who try to distribute supplies specifically for women and children – and to Dobova camp itself. We were not allowed into the camp – no volunteers are – and the Red Cross limited what we were allowed to deliver; mostly shoes and boots. It is a transit camp; people arriving here stay for up to 12 hours before being shuttled back to the train station. Our contact, Petra, talked of the numbness that comes with long-term aid provision, a numbness that she has noticed in the officials who are dealing with the refugees on a daily basis.

We had heard that some women, children, and pregnant women were arriving on foot at the border with Croatia further south, and were being allowed through. Three of us drove one of the vans loaded up with just children's and women's things. We stopped next to a shiny new barbed fence that has been erected, and were interrogated by the border police. They told us that nobody had arrived on foot for weeks and we should head back to the camp.

We had signed up to do a night shift, and help the local Caritas team in their work at the train station overnight. We arrived at 8pm, just in time for the first train to arrive. It was absolutely manic. The train pulled in and one carriage at a time, the people disembarked, queued up for registration, received their food pack, and then got onto the empty train waiting on the other side. They had come from Macedonia. Most of them didn't know where they were.

We were told not to ask them what they needed, but to assess what their most desperate need was (a hat, gloves, a jacket) and go to the store room and find it. In theory this should have worked. We all quickly learned to mime clothing articles. But each time you walked back to the store, three more people would clutch your sleeve and ask for items. "Sister, sister - please, he needs a hat." Then by the time you got back with those items, they'd moved further down the line/out of the carriage onto the platform, and you had to find them again.

The police and military personnel were brusque and sharp, but, for the most part, reasonably humane. On the one hand, we saw one police officer shouting at a young man trying to present his papers: "Why are you here? You're a man! You should be fighting for peace in your country!" The young man clearly didn't understand and just stretched out his papers. On the other hand, one of the soldiers beckoned Miranda over at one point and indicated a group of men who were shivering, gruffly saying "they need blankets. There's the pile. Go and give them some blankets."

The refugees themselves were exhausted. They were shuttled from place to place and did so with nothing but compliance. They were polite - parents telling their children to say thank you to us - and considerate - moving each other out of the way when we were trying to rush past with clothing. Some were good humoured, rolling their eyes when we had to give them a wholly inappropriate article of clothing ("What is THIS? It is made for a woman!") while others didn't make eye contact, and simply took whatever we were giving them without even looking at it.

The 1000 people from that first train boarded the empty carriages on the other side, but the train did not leave until 4.30 in the morning. Some of them were there for up to 8 hours on the unheated train.

The second train came in at 1am. It also contained a thousand people. We started the process again, but this time were told we could not give out clothing to those waiting for registration - only to those who had come through the other side. But registration took 4 hours. So a couple of us defied this order; the people were standing/sitting huddled together in bitter winds in the early hours, on a freezing platform with no shelter, and no warm clothing.

We handed out scarves, hats, gloves, blankets, jackets and shoes. The men who had refused pink hats 3 hours ago now took whatever we brought. The children either cried or else were utterly silent. Two of us

were handed babies, and had to give them back. They smiled at us, and we took our facemasks off completely, and smiled back at them. It was the least - and the most we could do.

This was one night, in one station, in one country. The people keep coming, and they will continue to come. I have few words to express how I feel about what is happening. The need is overwhelming. What we did may seem like a big deal in some ways – but it was a drop in the ocean. As Quakers I feel we must exert pressure and galvanise action to provide better, and do more. We have a chance to try to change the course of events over the next few months. We must organise, persuade and fundraise to make more of a difference. We must speak out against the government’s decision. We must live out our faith actively.

If you would like to see pictures and read more, please find us on Facebook under Team Humanity Van.

Miranda Barty-Taylor



Ways of eldership & oversight at Swarthmoor Hall [contents](#)

Introductions and expectations; mapping our experience

We started by identifying our LM model for carrying out eldership and oversight responsibilities on a vertical grid between ‘separate responsibilities’ and ‘joint responsibilities’, and on a horizontal grid between ‘appointed roles’ and ‘corporate responsibility’ i.e. where the whole meeting takes responsibility. So my position for Orkney LM was placed in the ‘appointed roles’ / ‘joint responsibilities segment’, while most other LMs were more towards the ‘corporate’ / joint responsibilities’ end of the chart.

We were asked to consider 3 queries:

‘Pastoral care, which in many other churches is given in part by a separated ministry, is in our yearly meeting a responsibility shared by all members.’ (Qf&p 11.12).

How far is this true in my meeting?

In my meeting, how aware are Friends generally of what we are trying to achieve through our system of eldership and oversight?

How does my meeting’s demographic – or other factors affect the pastoral care system we need to provide (or are able to)?’

This made me realize that in my LM oversight is not widely shared, that we have not had any explicit discussion about our system of pastoral care, and that as an island meeting we are isolated. So there’s a need to raise awareness in the meeting of our responsibilities for eldership and oversight to make them more explicit. We do well on the tasks of eldership as we all take part in drawing up the meetings rota, share the task of opening up the hall for our public meetings, for hosting MfW on the other Sundays, including reading from Advices and Queries or QF&P, and for planning the monthly all age meeting.

Roles & Responsibilities: different perspectives and ways.

Why does a Quaker meeting need a system of pastoral care?

A Quaker meeting needs a system of 'pastoral care' to fulfil the responsibilities of eldership and oversight outlined in Qf&p 12.12 and 12.13, to ensure that people who attend meeting are supported in the things that enable them to be fully part of the worshipping community. It includes everything we do to uphold our worship, to nurture the spiritual life of the meeting, to encourage Quaker learning, to build community and to care for the needs of individuals. In attending to these things, pastoral care underpins our outward activity as Friends in collective and individual ministry and witness.

Do meetings need elders and overseers in order to provide pastoral care?

Not necessarily, but every meeting should 'ensure' that the responsibilities are fulfilled. Each meeting finds its own way of doing this, but Qf&p Chapter 12 is the reference point for any system of pastoral care.

What do we need to do to ensure that people are supported in the things that enable them to be members of our meeting?

We explored this question by working in pairs to think about which responsibilities (from the lists in Qf&p) were Essential, which would make us a Good Quaker meeting, and which are Less Necessary for our meeting.

Leadership and community: gifts of the Spirit

We discussed the idea of 'servant leadership' and the idea of service having four aspects which promote leadership:

sharing of gifts

spiritual nurture

building community

discernment

We discussed these issues:

As Friends active in eldership and oversight, it is very easy to become – or be seen as - the people who busily do everything ('serve' everyone).

Is this right for us?

Is it right for our meeting?

What pushes us in this direction?

How can we address it?

How is leadership shared / not shared?

How are tasks delegated?

This discussion made me aware of how easy it can be in a small meeting to take on too many things and the importance of sharing and utilizing our different gifts.

Challenges and creative solution

Issues of difficulty

In this session we shared our experiences of difficult behaviour in our meetings and how it was addressed.

Difficult issue: Spiritual nourishment – group exercise

'The meetings for worship are frequently silent. Seasoned Friends are able to cope with this, but people newer to the meeting are finding completely silent meetings too dry. Some say they gain little spiritual sustenance from coming to meeting and have suggested that there should be a reading from *Quaker faith & practice* at the start of each meeting. There is already a well-attended programme of study evenings. How could eldership / oversight encourage more spiritually nourishing meetings for worship?'

In a small group we held a 'threshing meeting' to explore the issue from different angles. This allowed us to express strong feelings and opinions. We recognized the importance of caring for the feelings of other members of the meeting, and how hard it can be to address difficulties in our own meeting.

Building community and deepening the spiritual life of the meeting

By this last session on the Saturday evening we were all tired, and so we were invited to choose from three activities to explore our spirituality. I chose to have a conversation with another participant.

Spiritual conversation

'Reflect on the questions below, then take it in turns to ask your partner a question of your or their choice, allowing plenty of time for thought and listening. Allow this process to develop into a conversation, if that feels right.

Suggested questions

What for you is the nature of God / Spirit?

Has your Quaker faith been affected by any particular spiritual experiences? What were they?

What does prayer mean to you?

Is Jesus / Christ important to you? In what way?

What does meeting for worship mean to you?

What in your life gives you most spiritual sustenance?

What are your main doubts or questions on matters of the spirit?

To have this opportunity to have a spiritual conversation was a great privilege. I chose question 6 and my partner question 1. It was very interesting to discover that we both have an interest in St Francis and the Franciscan order. I also realized that most of my deep spiritual exploration I do on my own or outside Quakers.

Resources, ways and means in eldership and oversight

In this session we discussed confidentiality, the importance of seeking permission from members of our meeting before we discuss them as overseers, and the need to be open and explicit about the roles of elders and overseers.

Reflections on our learning. Worship and goodbyes

This took the form of worship sharing and we were asked to say something about what we come with, what we had learned and what we were taking away.

I went to the conference with a concern about the spiritual health of my meeting, and came to the realization that Orkney LM is in good spiritual health.

I learned a great deal about the corporate model of eldership and oversight and came to the conclusion that this is very appropriate to my small meeting. It seems to me that asking everyone in the meeting to participate in whatever way they feel comfortable is the best way to involve more people in the life of the meeting. I realized that I have not been reporting back from our AM quarterly Es & Os meetings, and while these meetings are helpful to me, I'm not sure what I can report back. Perhaps our AM meetings should be open to all.

We are preparing to undertake a spiritual review in our meeting and I will be asking

Orkney Friends if we can widen it to a review of 'pastoral care' so that we can consider adopting a corporate system.

Zélie Gross and Ros Baverstock were excellent facilitators.

Zélie's recently published book *With a tender hand – a resource book for eldership and oversight* is published by Quaker Books, £15, and is an excellent resource. She has also written Vol. 3 in the E & O handbook series on *Spiritual Review*. Vol. 5 of the series is entitled *Quality and Depth of Worship & Ministry*.

Derek McLean Orkney LM

Inverness Local Meeting's autumn Spirituality series - third presentation [contents](#)

In November I was privileged to attend the third and last presentation in Inverness Local Meeting's autumn Spirituality series. About a dozen of us gathered in Eleanor Fairclough's house to hear Julia Gordon, an attender at Inverness meeting, share input and personal reflection on her spiritual journey in 'New Thought' and its blending with her Quaker journey.

Although I have a background of quite a lot of study in spirituality, New Thought was new to me so I was excited to hear about it and Julia didn't disappoint. She split the evening into two halves, in the first half giving an overview of the contextual arising of New Thought and its main expressions and characteristics. From the seed of an emergent awareness in Europe and America of the power of the mind in the early 19th century, through the transcendentalist movement and into expression through groups such as Christian Science and the North American Unity Church, Julia gave us an overview of New Thought as an evolving spiritual philosophy premised on the understanding that life happens through us, not to us; that the divine spark is within each of us and we can work with the energy of divine consciousness to bring about inner change. Thus healing has been and is a major dimension of New Thought.

In the second half she became more personal, sharing from her story: her encounter with the content of Neale Donald Walsch's 'Conversations with God' series of books and her consequent personal and spiritual healing, growth and development. "Through these writings I find the answer to every question I have ever wanted to ask about life..and the answer is always one of love " she said. She concluded by identifying shared features with Quaker life and practice: spiritual growth through study, recognising that if God in everyone, the cultivation of a loving nature, a desire for peace, the compassionate caring for others and the planet, service to the greater good of humanity, integrity in relationships, valuing

community, the practice of stillness and going within to connect with God.

Much of what she spoke about resonated with me and what I articulate as the perennial wisdom tradition ie the wisdom and core qualities that we now know (with global awareness) transcend but are expressed in and through different religious and spiritual traditions - love, trust, the invitation to be more fully the gift that we are, the grace at the core of all.

As I said at the beginning, this was the third of a series : each of the three I have enjoyed, been enlightened and graced by, each has been different but very personal, each a unique expression of the journey in love which is the human journey.

Julie Gibson, attender, Inverness LM