



## SOUTH EDINBURGH MEETING

August 2025



The beginning of the Quaker Meeting in Princes St Gardens on Sat 19 July. Close to 70 attended.

### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

We meet on **Sundays 10.30-11.30 am** at the Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, and remotely by Zoom (hybrid).

Recent notices and late changes are sent by weekly email. Join the email list by clicking the link at <https://quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh>

On the **First Thursday** of each month we meet for **30 min at 7.30 pm** by Zoom, followed by chat.

Children are welcome anytime. For details of planned activities, see online.

### Other local meetings

Central Edinburgh and Portobello-Musselburgh are closest. Times are listed in SESAME, but for full info and a map, see <https://quakerscotland.org>

Several South Edinburgh Friends also attend **Midweek Meeting on Wednesdays**, 12.30 for 30 mins at Victoria Terrace meeting house. Tea and coffee available, you can eat your packed lunch.

### SPECIAL COLLECTION

Our collection in August is for **Prison Phoenix Trust** which seeks to foster spiritual welfare through the practice of yoga and meditation. Margaret Anderson will speak to this.

<https://www.theppt.org.uk> for more information, and there is a Donate button at the top right.

## QUAKER EVENTS

Latest updates at <https://bit.ly/SEdQuakEvents>

**No to Nuclear Weapons** A Christian ecumenical gathering commemorating the 80th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. **Sat 2 Aug**, 10.30am at Faslane – free bus leaves Edinburgh 7.45 am. Info <https://bit.ly/45e9U82> Book a bus seat by email [office@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk](mailto:office@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk)

**Hiroshima bomb 80th anniversary, Aug 6.** Nagasaki was bombed on 9 Aug.

**Local Meeting for Business** after Meeting for Worship and a shared lunch on **Sun 24 Aug**.

**Fringe 2025** While South Edinburgh Meeting will be held as usual, Edinburgh Meeting House in Victoria Terrace is again a “C Venues” location with reduced access for Friends until 31 August.

*Sunday Meetings:* 9.30 online only; 11 am Meeting as usual, but tea and coffee afterwards in the Meeting Room itself, and sorry, no lunch.

*Wednesday midday meetings* will usually be held in the Bow Room, usually available 12-2, but in the hall for a more limited time on 20 Aug.



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From Rachel Frith of Edinburgh Central:

**Coffee** at Rachel's house usually on first and third Thursdays, revised for August to 14th and 21st. 10.15 am: please confirm with Rachel.

**Central Book Group** – *resumes September* (third Sundays after soup) with “any book by Jane Gardâm”.



Thousands march through Edinburgh (p2)

## Genocide in Gaza. BYM Minute 30



First Minister's house, Palestinian demonstration in Edinburgh on 19 July, and the Palestinian Museum in Dundas St.

### Minute 30 from Britain Yearly Meeting (23-26 May 2025)

Our clerks have prepared the following statement on the current situation in Gaza drawing on our discernment earlier in our Yearly Meeting. We are deeply distressed by the conflict that we are praying over, and we have struggled with how to find unity. We are led to unite with this statement, as amended in our meeting.

“‘Fear is what happens in the absence of love.’ (Emily Provance, Swarthmore Lecture 2025)

Radical peacemaking requires us to engage with and to acknowledge truth in all its discomfort, complexity and cruelty. Quakers historically have spoken truth to power. We need to heed the promptings of love and truth in our hearts and speak up now.

Last year, Meeting for Sufferings minuted its alignment with the International Court of Justice rulings that the term apartheid was an accurate description of the situation in occupied Palestine and that there was a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza. Meeting for Sufferings felt compelled to speak out following decades of direct Quaker witness and peace work in Palestine and Israel.

Since then, we have watched with horror as the Israeli government has deepened its collective punishment of Palestinians for the heinous, unjustified crimes of Hamas on 7 October 2023.

Over the last three months, we have witnessed the deliberate mass starvation of a people and dismantling of almost all life-sustaining systems within Gaza. We have seen the forced movement of Palestinians and a stated intention to expel them from Gaza. We have heard Israeli government ministers incite hatred against and dehumanise Palestinians. We have heard language and witnessed actions that cannot be justified and strike at the core of our common humanity.

In a world where we are seeing cases in many countries of outrageous inhumanity, dehumanisation and the cruel actions that follow from denying the worth and dignity of all, what is being done in Gaza is no less terrible for not being unique. Our long history of witness and peace work in Palestine and Israel gives us particular experience from which to speak on this issue. The fact that we are speaking about Gaza does not absolve us of our responsibility to learn about and respond to other atrocities around the world.

We understand that genocide under international law must meet certain strict criteria. It means specific acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Genocide scholars are clear that genocide does not constitute one overwhelming, horrific act only, but is a process with many stages.

With this in mind, and guided by the testimony and judgment of Palestinians, Israelis, and genocide and legal experts we look to and work with, we are therefore led to say that we believe that genocide and mass displacement are underway in the actions of the Israeli government and its military towards the population of Gaza, recognising that a legal judgment on this is a matter for the International Courts.

We know that for many in the Jewish community, this word brings deep and real fear. Fear that the term ‘genocide’ fuels antisemitism, that it attacks their core Jewish identity and safety. That it reduces a complex, existential conflict to a simple story of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. We acknowledge the historical weight of this term for Jewish people, set against centuries of anti-Jewish hatred and crimes, and the ultimate horror and

genocide of the Holocaust. We acknowledge the history and present day reality of anti-Jewish hatred in the UK, a hatred that was exported worldwide by British and other European colonial powers. We acknowledge the historic and current role of the British state in creating the context of this conflict and the tragedy we see playing out now.

Central to Quakerism is the experience that there is that of God in everyone. From this belief – that all people are unique, precious, children of God – all others follow. We therefore abhor racism, including antisemitism, in all its forms. We grieve the pain and fear that our friends in Jewish communities are experiencing at this time.

We see and uphold those in Jewish communities and in Israel working for peace and justice for Palestinian people.

And so, we cannot say clearly enough: it is this current Israeli government that we are led to say we believe is committing genocide. Jewish people are not committing genocide. The Israeli people are not committing genocide. We abhor, and will challenge, any attempt to exploit our words to incite, fuel, or commit anti-Jewish and antisemitic hatred or violence. We abhor, and will challenge, any attempt to use our words to question the existence of Israel or the Israeli people's right to live in peace and security.

It is also a tenet of Quakerism that violence can never be the answer. That the means are just as important as the ends. This is our peace testimony that has led us for more than 350 years to eschew all war and all violence at all times. We cry out for the violence in Gaza to stop – for an end to the killing of Palestinians and for the Israeli hostages to be returned home. We cry out for Palestinians and Israelis to be safe and to live thriving, joyous lives in their homelands. Everyone deserves a place to live where they don't feel scared. Our long work for peace tells us that security for some bought with the insecurity of others tears at our collective humanity and is only ever temporary. Peace can never be brought about by the systematic oppression of others.

We therefore use the word 'genocide' after deep discernment. We use this word with the aim of opening eyes, minds and hearts. We use this word in the deep hope that the actions it describes will stop."

We know that making a statement is not enough. We draw Friends' and meetings' attention to Meeting for Sufferings minutes S/11/04/4 from April 2011, which asks Friends throughout Britain Yearly Meeting to boycott settlement goods, until such time as the occupation is ended, and MfS/18/10/19 from October 2018, which asks BYM to avoid investing in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine.

We ask Friends and meetings to reach out in love to Jewish people and communities they have connections with, and to understand and learn about atrocities across the world.

We send this minute to Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and uphold them as they communicate this statement to partners working for peace in the region.

We send this minute to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, and uphold them as they communicate this statement and seek to reassure our friends in the Jewish community and in other faiths of our continued support and love.

We hold in the light the people governing Israel and Palestine and pray that they are moved towards peace and compassion.

We uphold those in positions of power and pray for them as they "seek light on the road to peace."

*Adwoa Burnley, Clerk*

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## What can I do?

Oliver Robertson, head of Witness and Worship for BYM, has **some suggestions** in the BYM blog at [www.quaker.org.uk/blog/what-you-can-do-to-help-stop-the-genocide-in-gaza](http://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/what-you-can-do-to-help-stop-the-genocide-in-gaza) – including what to write to your MP, how to share, don't support the Palestine occupation, build peace in your community.

**QPS-Scot Palestine WhatsApp group** – Over 200 Friends keep in touch via a WhatsApp group, which also has a Scottish subgroup QPS-Scot. You can request to join the group at <https://bit.ly/QPS-Scot>

**Article: Who's afraid of Palestine Action?** by Huw Lemmey in the London Review of Books. Open access at <https://bit.ly/4m6iQ5S>

**Palestine Museum Scotland** has recently opened at 13a Dundas Street. Befitting its location, it is mostly a small art gallery. Open Wednesday to Sunday, 11–6, *closed Mon+Tue*. Has Facebook and Instagram pages. Not far away at 123 George St is **Hadeel, Fairtrade Palestinian Crafts**.

**The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme** sends volunteers to Palestine and Israel. Multi-denominational but based in Friends House [www.quaker.org.uk/action/palestine-and-israel/eappi](http://www.quaker.org.uk/action/palestine-and-israel/eappi)



**It is human nature to hate the person whom we have wronged.**

*Tacitus (AD 56-120), Roman historian, via Rosamond.*

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## Things to look out for in the Fringe

Recommendations from Friends  
Times, venues and tickets at <https://edfringe.com>

### PALESTINE, PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS

**Dreams of Peace & Freedom. 11-24 Aug** at 13.55 daily, C Alto – Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House. A song cycle about why we have the European Convention on Human Rights on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and its connections to Edinburgh's David Maxwell Fyfe (more from Law Soc Scotland at <https://bit.ly/3TZad1a>). *'The most incredibly stimulating piece of history that most people don't know'* (Helena Kennedy QC). Discount code: PEACE (not case sensitive) when booked at <https://res.chearts.com/event/34:5010>

**Palestine stands up** – at The Stand venues, featuring Palestinian comedians. Deirdre's pick is Alaa Shehada's *Horse of Jenin*. "Funny, moving, tragic". 4 weeks from 30 July.

**The Fringe Palestine** – A mini-festival to celebrate Palestinian art and culture, with theatre, dance, comedy, food, storytelling, music and poetry. Portobello Town Hall, Aug 12-15.

### AND MORE

**Mind How You Go** – friends of David and Deirdre present this musical show about a catholic upbringing in County Cork: "makes you laugh, poignant, beautiful music". 3 weeks from Fri 1 Aug.

**Taking the biscuit back** Quaker radical dietitian and poetitian Lucy Aphramor on food and flourishing. 'Transmuting trauma through food and body stories ... wordsmithery, trans joy, compassion and queer nutrition science' 11-13 Aug.

**Songs for the 2020s** – Majk Stokes (Edinburgh Central) has his own show 3-8 Aug.

**The Joy of Spines** – free show with film of hundreds of book spines "revealing the broad and deep collecting practices of the National Library of Scotland, while telling the story of who we are". 4-8 Aug, 2pm.

**'Resistance' exhibition** at Modern two till Jan 2025, [www.nationalgalleries.org/exhibition/resistance](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/exhibition/resistance) is recommended by Margaret Anderson.

## The history of Quaker meetings in Edinburgh according to ChatGPT

This is part of a History of Quakers in Scotland compiled in a few minutes by the Artificial Intelligence engine ChatGPT. Output formatting unaltered. Beyond failing to mention other Edinburgh meetings, how did it do? The full conversation, with nudges, and references to sources as requested, can be seen at <https://chatgpt.com/share/6884d937-0c44-800e-91cd-b3eddc8aef>

"This overview draws extensively from *The Story of Quakerism in Scotland, 1650–1950* by Burnet & Marwick, and archival resources maintained by Quakers in Scotland".

It's worth drawing attention to one of the sources that is frequently referenced for Edinburgh info, written by David Mealand for SESAME 146: <https://bit.ly/4fcv8Yn>

- **1653–1657:** Two pioneering English Friends, **John Bowram** (1653) and **William Caton** (1655), conducted open-air ministry at Mercat Cross. In **1657**, **George Fox** visited Edinburgh, preached on Castle Hill, and attended a meeting in Leith.
- **Mid-1650s:** Colonel **William Osborne**, a retired soldier, hosted meetings in his Edinburgh home (1655–56).
- **1669:** A more organized Quaker presence emerged as a formal structure was set up.
- **1675:** Quakers secured a burial ground at **the Pleasance**.
- **1681:** They purchased a meeting house in the **West Port**; local hostility persisted, with mobs attacking and even soldiers guarding doors around 1720.
- **c.1730:** A significant meeting house was constructed in **Peebles Wynd**, off the Cowgate, with capacity for about 600 worshippers.
- A separate, informal "bread-and-cheese" meeting took place at Meadowfield in the Canongate, hosted by **William Miller**.
- **1789:** Urban redevelopment for South Bridge led to demolition of Peebles Wynd meeting house .
- **1791:** A new meeting house was built adjacent to the Pleasance burial ground; this remained in use until 1944.
- **1838–1944:** The Pleasance meeting house continued to serve the community.
- **1865–66:** A new central meeting house was designed by Paterson & Shiells in Italian Gothic style at **7 Victoria Terrace**, Old Town.
- **Stafford Street** in the West End was established as a meeting venue in **1938**.
- **1944:** The Pleasance meeting house closed, with its benches later relocated to **Glasgow Meeting**.
- **1938–1987:** Friends gathered at **28 Stafford Street**.
- **1956–1960:** The building at 7 Victoria Terrace was taken over by the Boys' Brigade, remodeled, and later sold to Friends.
- **November 1988:** The **new Central Edinburgh Meeting House** at Victoria Terrace hosted its first meeting.

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### Timeline Summary

Period	Location(s) & Highlights
1653–1669	Outdoor meetings (Mercat Cross, Leith, Osborne's house); first burial ground at Pleasance
1675–1681	Acquisition of burial ground and West Port meeting house
1730–1789	Large Peebles Wynd meetinghouse; informal Canongate gatherings
1791–1944	Pleasance meeting house in continuous use
1866 onwards	Major meeting house built at 7 Victoria Terrace
1938–1987	Meetings at Stafford Street
1988–present	Central Edinburgh Meeting House begins service

## Other news and future events

**Moral Maze discussions.** Tali Brown (Porty-Muss) has set up a group to meet once a month on the evening of the 1st Tuesday each month. Each will discuss issues arising from an episode of *The Moral Maze* (BBC Radio Four). First meeting **Tue 5 Aug** 7pm, *Measuring the Nation's Happiness*. Not exclusively a Quaker event. Info and sign up at <https://bit.ly/4o8yK1A>

**Holyrood Mass Lobby for Climate Action – Thur 18 Sep.** Manifestos are being drafted, new Government plan in development, but commitments being rolled back. Speak directly to MSPs about the need for urgent, fair climate action, in groups by region. Middle of the day. Sign up and full details at <https://bit.ly/3TvIMwN>

**Opportunities to join PEWG** The Quaker Parliamentary Engagement Working Group has some spaces. Find more about its work and the commitment involved from co-conveners Carolyn Burch [ecarolynburch@gmail.com](mailto:ecarolynburch@gmail.com) or Richard Raggett [richardjraggett@gmail.com](mailto:richardjraggett@gmail.com)



## Decode me

Friends there was a disappointing response to our item requesting explanation of the engraved marks on walls relating to water supply. So here is another example from Canaan Lane:



*Our newsletter is published near the last Sunday each month. August August analyses to [neilturn@gmail.com](mailto:neilturn@gmail.com) Find this edition, plus archives of previous, at [www.quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh](http://www.quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh)*