



October 2020

# Scottish Friend



Kenny and Friends gather at Inverness Cathedral Peace Pole, 2019



Welcome Friends to the October edition of the Scottish Friend. Doesn't it come around so quickly! We are still in lockdown, Zooming away! Of course it's going to be Zooming with GM again too, with Elizabeth, Nicola and administrator Sue at the helm. Comments and suggestions would be welcomed. When sending in contributions, please note your LM. Also, I would like to thank Friends for their kind comments on the magazine  
In Friendship, Sila

Editor, Scottish Friend: Sila Collins-Walden, Inverness LM  
Editor's Gofer: Brian Walden

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Please send articles as an **editable attachment** to [silartist100@gmail.com](mailto:silartist100@gmail.com) or typed or hand-written to 27 Creag Dhubh Terrace, Inverness IV3 8QG to arrive five weeks before GM, ie, by **30th January 2021**. If you submit **images**, please ensure that they are about 1Mb in size. Any captions provided with your images should be short!

Scottish Friend will be posted on the GM website and can be emailed to you at the same time as it goes to the printer. If you would like an email copy instead of a paper one, please email [scotfriends@gmail.com](mailto:scotfriends@gmail.com) to let your new Administrator, Sue Proudlove, know. You are strongly encouraged to do this in view of escalating postage costs – and you get the photographs in colour as an incentive!

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## CONTENTS

Calling for General Meeting for Scotland Elizabeth Allen, GM Clerk.....	4
Report on GM for Scotland 12 September 2020. Lesley Reynolds, North Scotland Area Meeting.....	5
A Future in the North. Chris Mayo.....	8
Book of Discipline Revision Committee updates Mary Woodward.....	14
Quaker Criminal Justice Network. Ren Clark.....	20
Woodbrooke Study on-line Courses Sila Collins-Walden.....	23
International Peace Day September 21st 2020. Sila Collins-Walden.....	25
Harvest Home! Roger H. Quinn.....	27
Poets' Corner.....	28
Notice Board.....	32

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain or elsewhere.

## Calling for General Meeting for Scotland Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2020

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all! I hope you are well.



How does the spirit prosper amongst us, during these turbulent times? When we, as Quakers in Scotland, next gather for General Meeting, we will start with worship sharing, focused on this question.

**Our next General Meeting will be in the morning of 31<sup>st</sup> October. It will be by Zoom. We will start with worship at 10.15 am and we will finish at 12.00 noon. I will send out details of how to join nearer the time.**

This is our final meeting for 2020 and again it will be held virtually. Normally we meet in November but as our chosen date would have clashed with a major COP 26 public event, we rearranged our meeting. Since then, the pandemic has turned arrangements topsy-turvy, and COP 26 has been re-scheduled for 2021. But in the midst of so much change, it was decided to stick with the rearranged date for GM.

The draft agenda for this meeting is at an early stage but I am pleased to tell you that we will hear about our new Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer and the busy year ahead for this work, including preparing for COP 26. Blended Meetings will be back on the agenda and our Communications Group will update us



on their work. Our treasurer has prepared the 2021 GM budget and will talk us through it, discussing various points with us. **This is an opportunity to meet virtually with Friends from across**

**Scotland. We worship together and in a spirit of worship we attend to our church affairs, concerning the spiritual life and witness of Quakers in Scotland. Please do come! All are welcome.**

Papers and the draft agenda will be circulated about a week prior to GM. if you do not receive them, please ask Sue Proudlove [scotfriends@gmail.com](mailto:scotfriends@gmail.com) for a copy. If you have any questions, please contact me, your clerk, by email [essallen@msn.com](mailto:essallen@msn.com) or telephone 01620 894834.

Elizabeth Allen ■

**Report on GM for Scotland 12 September 2020.  
by Lesley Reynolds, North Scotland Area Meeting.**

**G**eneral Meeting for Scotland took place virtually due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis with 72 participants.

We started with a worship period during which Quaker Faith and Practice 23.10 was read: we are exhorted to live in a state of deepening spirituality through prayer in the context of witnessing justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Only God can show us the way out of the mess we have created in the world.

Following arrangements for elders and reporting, along with the membership updates there was a Meeting for Sufferings report by Ann Kerr. She advised meetings are now reduced to 4 per year, held online. A challenging landscape of furlough, and reduced rental income was outlined. Reserves were required but must be recouped at the earliest opportunity.

Matthew Bittle then provided an uplifting video account of how successful Shindig was this year, albeit held entirely online. The subject of unconscious bias and stereotypes in society was tackled with the aide of Helen Minnis and Ellie Koeplinger. Personal

development and the sense of 'family' remain irrespective of our Covid situation.

Positive progress is being made toward appointing the Scottish Local Development Worker, with the postholder likely to be in place by early April 2021. The remit of the job is to observe what is working or not working within the Society and reflect this back for further action.

Joyce Taylor updated her written report on PEWG (Parliamentary Engagement Working Group). The vacant post of Parliamentary Engagement Officer has been reduced in hours but there were still 4 suitable candidates for interview and it was hoped to have the post filled by the end of October 2020.

A detailed account was given of Political Party responses to the engagement exercise by PEWG as political manifestos are drafted ahead of next year's Holyrood elections. Material to help Friends engage with candidates will be posted on the Quakers in Scotland website and will focus on party policies which help to address our priorities.

PEWG hopes to pursue further discussion on militarisation in schools following the launch of the UNCR Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill.

Adwoa Bittle then updated us on Action Churches Together Scotland (ACTS).

Business relating to The Scottish Friend and further training for GM and AM Trustees was quickly dealt with before moving on to Mary Woodward, from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. Mary spoke of the need to recruit 3 new members to the committee (including one under 25) before offering us the opportunity to worship creatively on the theme 'Open to New Light'. We were all invited to 'draw, doodle, colour, scribble' our responses to the following:

'Am I open to new light?'

'What might that look like?'

'What is on my heart at the moment?'

We opened the afternoon session with a presentation by Sally Foster-Fulton, Head of Christian Aid Scotland. She spoke of

the effective strategies needed to support long term development in emergent nations, as employed by the Scottish Government. However, four years investment and hard work was literally washed away in four days by flooding; a direct consequence of climate change.

She spoke of listening to the prophetic voice of the people they worked with. She spoke of privilege as ‘power taken, regardless of intent, that was not ours and never should have been’. She asked that we consider carefully the impact we make (no countries have met the Paris agreement) and our responsibilities and what we can do to restore the power imbalance.

Mithike Mwenda, Executive Director of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance was the final speaker. He emphasised the need for ‘Just Transition’, open dialogue and bottom up approaches which involve everyone at a community level.

I came away thinking that perhaps instead of ‘town twinning’, we now need ‘climate change twinning’ to allow us insight into how local communities can support each other internationally through dialogue and local action. ■



Bournville Meeting House

**A Future in the North. An essay on realities for the Religious Society of Friends in the North of Scotland.**

**By Chris Mayo. Inverness North.**

I find it impossible to not consider the pattern of our lives as Quakers. Not being a Birthright Friend, I have many years of life and reflection in the Anglican Tradition. I am, one might say, a 'Broad Church', finding meaning and beauty in the traditional Catholic sacraments, the penetrating wonder of Choral music, whilst at the same time finding the greatest sacrament of all to be that of the silent waiting upon that which we call God.

As a former Anglican priest, one of my primary duties and skills lay in the realm of mission. This is not to be equated with a nineteenth-century stereotype of the preacher man saving souls amongst the heathen and the lost! Rather, it is a consideration of what it means to be a bearer of the story of faith within and outwith the community from which that story arose. The story is not a fiction but the tradition lived afresh in each generation, with each generation needing to be honest about the choices it makes about what it means to be that 'bearer of faith' in this very generation.

These choices are rooted in one key question:

For what reason do we exist?

For Friends, the basis to that answer lies in Advices and Queries 1.01 – "As Friends we commit ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to teach and transform us. We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all our testimonies grow from this leading". That is our core purpose and, at least in theory, anything and everything that we do must be to express that through the



building up of the community's life. Whatever becomes a roadblock to that should be taken down. Discerning which are the stones upon which our life is built and which are the stumbling blocks is rooted in tradition.

It is important, in a missional context, to distinguish between 'tradition' and 'traditionalism'. The first is a dynamic, living thing, whereby the thought and lived experience of a community is passed on, not as an heirloom but as its DNA, which must evolve to meet and thrive within a changing environment. 'Traditionalism' is quite the opposite, a holding on to practices, objects and the paraphernalia of a history that ends up becoming more important to those immersed within that mindset than the reason for its existence in the first place.

Tradition can be heard and lived through two questions. The first is 'where have we been?' and the second is 'to where are we headed?'. The connecting thread between the two is the transmission of a community life founded firmly in the soil from which it sprouted forth yet growing, branching and being shaped by how that life makes sense in each generation. Traditionalism is oft detected in the immortal phrase 'but this is the way we have always done it'. Tradition is the path to life. Traditionalism is the road to its own demise.

'Always done it this way' can refer to many aspects of a dying community but undergirding it is fear. Fear not simply of change but a loss of identity, the diminishing of a sense of one's value to society, the eroding of the key identifiers that say 'we are here'. Most often they emerge from the facets that are the most mundane. As a former priest, I can say wholeheartedly that a Key Performance Indicator of Traditionalism lies in looking at the proportion of time spent on looking at what it means to be spiritual community both in the present and into the future, as compared to the time spent on building maintenance, financial review and so forth. This is *not* to say that such matters are not

important. Indeed as a registered charity Trustees are required to think about them, but three key questions arise from this responsibility:

- Do Trustees, and indeed by extension for Quakers, a Meeting for Worship for Business, give at least or greater attention over a year to developing its inner life as a community and the expressions of that inner life through its ordering of worship, community outreach, etc?
- Does the paraphernalia of a spiritual community enhance or drain its inner and physical life? Most importantly, if local meetings are truly honest with themselves, is the retention of a building more nostalgic than spiritually enabling? Does a building – or indeed buildings – fulfil the original need to provide a secure and effective environment for a critical mass of Friends or does it now drain finances, attention and enthusiasm? If so, the follow-on question arises: is it time to lay the building's ministry – for that is how it should be seen – down?
- This is the question almost always avoided – should a local meeting have a body of Trustees through the necessity of being a charitable body or is that better administered as a larger and more singular charity at a higher level of the administrative hierarchy? Who that higher level would be is dependent upon a particular scenario but in this instance, given a lack of adequate critical mass of numbers in the north of Scotland, is this better placed into the hands of General Meeting? There is an even larger question as to if holding any charitable status compromises the ability of a spiritual community to speak truth to power but that is beyond the remit of this essay!

In my experience it is almost always the case that Trustees, vestries, PCCs – call them what you will – spend 80-90% of their

time on matters related to buildings or financial questions – and that is a conservative estimate. On the few occasions where I have encountered it to be otherwise, the focus has been on how the community grows, both in its inner life and in its outward numbers, and serious choices have been made to create the flexibility for that to happen in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Britain.

Those three questions are a heavy responsibility for people to bear. They require rigorous honesty about what ultimately will allow Friends to live out their core purpose in the here and now. That honesty requires each member, and especially the Trustees, to be first of all directed towards themselves: how much of what I believe is right for Friends is actually about what I want, am familiar with, are holding on to (traditionalism) and how much is what I feel is the correct action to create the environment by which “God can transform” and that transformation be offered beyond the immediate confines of the Friends membership. This isn’t easy. As humans, we have an extraordinary capacity to deceive ourselves and that is why the first underlying act of any Meeting for Worship for Business and especially Trustees meetings is to repeatedly ask those three questions above with integrity.

Two further questions run tangential to the ones already discerned: how much does our corporate life bear our faith beyond the confines of members and attenders? How much do our forms, practices and environment invite others to be a part of a tradition that may uphold them in their journey?

These two questions are key. The realm of the religious tradition is something increasingly not a substantive part of the life of individuals and communities. The numbers of those who have never crossed the threshold of, say, a parish church (let alone a Meeting House), save for weddings or funerals, diminishes year on year. That lack of familiarity often builds an invisible boundary. Friends, along with other Religious communities,

become 'The Other' and if people are not suspicious of such communities – and that can be a big 'if' – they are at least nervous of the unfamiliar.

This being the case, Members and Trustees must decide, based on who Friends are, whether they exist as a closed or open Society. If open, what does that mean? How is that enabled? Once again the consideration is what are the stepping stones to that openness and what are the stumbling blocks?

Many questions and answers can only be found in corporate discernment. What I will say is this. In my opinion, I, as a priest, I found the time spent on matters of keeping buildings going, keeping vestries populated with 'new blood', finding adequate voluntary staffing for all the jobs that kept going, etc., all diminished the time spent on being grown in the core purpose for the church's existence. On the other hand, the small (and not so small), worship communities founded outside of that system – such as the house churches, pub churches, and so forth, flourished. That flourishing was sometimes in terms of numbers but it was always in terms of the quality of community and the mutual support of one another's life within it. Almost always it was in these communities that the barriers between the 'members' and the wider community thinned dramatically and became far more accessible. Often by utilising the buildings and facilities already on offer by the local community they became meeting points. Rather than expecting people to come to 'us', we went to 'them' – and the line between 'them' and 'us' blurred. People who were thoroughly reluctant to step over the threshold of an unfamiliar building found themselves engaged with those who had tradition their lives bore witness to. Was it easy? No – it took a lot of effort to move outwards. Was it perfect? No – because human life is imperfect and so are our endeavours. Yet the engagement and liveliness was far greater and, dare I say it, the quality of the life of the religious community was enhanced. For instead of focusing on what was keeping the paraphernalia

working instead the focus became on the human life within that body.

These 'missions' (a word I am uncomfortable with given its previous association but it will have to do) had no Trustee body of their own. They had no building of their own to maintain. Rotas replaced by a family that 'chipped in'. There was a higher organisation of vestries and trustees under which they fell because of the nature of 'how things must be done!' (or must they... hmmm.) but they were largely self-organising and autonomous. Similarly, could not Friends in the North ask questions about their own organisation – do we need a body of Trustees and independent charity numbers or could this lie in the hands of the wider organisation where there exists a critical mass of people to attend to such duties and wider experience to bring to bear upon the more pragmatic questions of organisational life? Do Friends in the North need their Meeting Houses and properties – do they enhance our ability to bear testimony to our reason for existing: "As Friends we commit ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to teach and transform us. We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all our testimonies grow from this leading". If the time, energy and, yes, money required to maintain 'how we have always done things' leads away from that commitment to be taught and transformed perhaps it is time to ask what does and doesn't need to be laid down.

Of course, these are simply my opinions, but they have been formed in the crucible of experience and out of a belief that who we are as Friends and why we exist remains important and vital, perhaps even more so as we consider the large and tough questions of modern society. Who we are must be a people for God (however one defines that term) but in recognition that all are a people of God. We are for ourselves, yes, but ultimately also for them. Our life, testimonies – our Faith and Practice – demands no less. ■

**Book of Discipline Revision Committee update August 2020**  
**Working with the 'Dream Team'**  
**Mary Woodward. Portobello and Musselburgh- South East.**

Our last full committee meeting was at the end of April. It was our first by zoom, and therefore shorter than our usual all-weekend meetings. During it four sub-groups were set up, including the one I'm co-convening with Jess Hubbard-Bailey, *Engaging with Friends*.

The other three groups are working on specific topics: identifying where Church Government is [and is not] in *Qfp* and starting work on the chapters on Eldership & Oversight and Marriage. All four sub-groups will report back to our next committee meeting in October.

Regular zooms with the clerking team and the convenors of the sub-groups enable us to check in with each other and report progress etc. Our most recent zoom meeting highlighted people's widely-differing responses both to the work and to the whole lockdown situation. Some Friends' personal circumstances meant they had been unable to give much time to their sub-group's work, while others found their personal isolation, and working by themselves on their writing, very difficult. One of the positive but unexpected outcomes of working in the sub-groups is that the convenors were able to keep an eye on the others in their group and, where necessary, offer help and support. Another more obvious outcome was not only hearing how the other groups were getting on but also being inspired about one's own work by telling others about it and hearing their reactions.

Our group had a somewhat different brief and timetable to the other three. Our initial thought was to try to run something virtual during the week that Yearly Meeting Gathering [YMG] would have been held, while also working out how to make best use of the rapid expansion of the use of zoom among Friends to

offer virtual sessions to LMs, AMs and other groups, either stand-alone or as part of LM, AM, etc.

Following an approach by Rosie Carnall, one of the co-clerks, to Simon Best, Head of Learning at Woodbrooke, our plans changed dramatically. Jess and I zoomed with Rosie and Simon, and it was agreed that, with help and support from Woodbrooke, we would offer four on-line sessions based on those we were planning to offer at YMG, inviting Friends to join us in *prayerfully, joyfully, creatively, and boldly revising Quaker faith and practice*.

Woodbrooke offered us technical support during the sessions and advertising through their usual channels. We approached those committee members who had offered to facilitate the Special Interest Groups at YMG to see if they'd be happy to facilitate a zoom session, and worked on the sessions' content, expanding what would have been a one-hour session into a ninety-minute one and making best use of the fact that we would now be meeting virtually.

A set of slides was produced outlining the 'who, what, when, why, where, and how' of the committee and its work, to give each facilitator a basis for the beginning of their session. These were 'road-tested' by one of our group at her AM, where she had been invited to speak about the committee and its work: her feedback on this was very valuable, both as to the slides and the content of the session.

Much discussion, both by email and by regular zooms, fed into the preparation of a 'lesson plan' outline guide to how the sessions would run [introduction, discussion in small groups, Q&A session], as well as the order and dates/ times of the sessions and how they fitted into the rest of Woodbrooke's offerings over the summer.

At the same time, we began discussing the possibility of having an electronic version of what had been going to be a hard copy book: *Our Book – Bath 2020*, to which we would invite Friends at YMG to contribute drawings, writings and/or recordings of their thoughts about how they would like their new Book to be. Anya, our teenage member, spent a lot of time researching possible websites and eventually advised us that padlet would be our best option, as it would permit moderation of contributions before they were posted. The title *Open to New Light* was agreed. [[www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonevlight](http://www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonevlight) if you want to have a look!]

We wrote the text for the web page and discussed how to make the project known to Friends – Woodbrooke would not be advertising this for us. We had to ensure that using the padlet site, which is based in the US, was approved by Friends House [confidentiality/ data protection issues were a potential drawback, as US regulations are not as stringent as European ones]. We also needed to set up arrangements for contributions to be submitted by email or snailmail for those Friends who didn't want to post directly on to the site. [[opentonevlight@quaker.org.uk](mailto:opentonevlight@quaker.org.uk) or snailmail to BDRC/ Open to New Light at Friends House]

Once padlet had been approved, Anya worked very hard to set up *Open to New Light* [it looks fantastic!] and we set about the work of making its presence more widely known. The facilitators of the four Woodbrooke sessions would mention it, but this would only reach the participants. A press release was sent to the news desk of *The Friend* and resulted in a news item in the 7 August issue. We also got an ad into the August 7 and 14 issues, and a mention in *Quake!*

Both the Woodbrooke sessions and *Open to New Light* have been posted on our various social media channels by members of the committee's Communications team - one of my contributions to *Open to New Light* has appeared on Instagram!! We also



ensured that the rest of the committee is kept up to date with our work, invited them to take part in the on-line sessions and to contribute to *Open to New Light*, and asked them to spread the word by all the means at their disposal.

Dora Czibik at Friends House has been supporting our sub-group's work in the absence of our secretary Michael Booth, who is still on furlough. With our agreement, she circulated the news of our work to other BYM committees, and this resulted in an approach from Jude Acton, Children and Young People's Officer, inviting us to run sessions at the virtual Yearly Meeting for young people [aged 11-17]. Anya, Sally, and Rosie gladly agreed to do this: their sessions took place on 3 August, and I'm eagerly awaiting a zoom to find out how they got on: what they did in their sessions could be adapted for use with Friends of all ages.

I had thought that, once the Woodbrooke sessions began my work would be mostly over, and I could have a rest while the younger members of the sub-group took over all the whizzy IT stuff. I was wrong! Emails continue to fly through the aether, in a glorious tangle of different threads, and I've found it necessary to spend hours at my pc sorting these into subjects and chronological order, to ensure that nothing gets missed, everything is followed up, and I feel I know what's going on!

Two of the Woodbrooke sessions have taken place as I write [July 28, August 11] and two are to come [August 25 and 8 September] and have been well-received. The first session was a sellout [60 people], and numbers were increased for subsequent ones. Many people have booked for all four – an interesting mixture of well-seasoned Friends and people new to the revision process. We will be looking at Friends' response to both the Woodbrooke sessions and *Open to New Light*, to see what recommendations for the future we should bring to our October committee meeting, including inviting interested Quaker groups to contact us if they

would like us to provide similar information and discussion sessions, either by zoom or, where possible, in person.

It's been a lot of work, but it's been a joy to be in the company of such loving and inspiring women – regular zooms have not only progressed our work, but kept us all connected and inspired to do the work. At our first meeting in April, one of our members jokingly called us the *Dream Team* – I don't think she knew how prophetic that was! ■

### **Book of Discipline Revision Committee update, September 2020** **Mary Woodward.**

All four of the Woodbrooke sessions were well-attended, and the feedback so far has been extremely positive. The Engaging with Friends subgroup of your committee will be looking at it in detail in the coming months, and using it to inform our next steps.

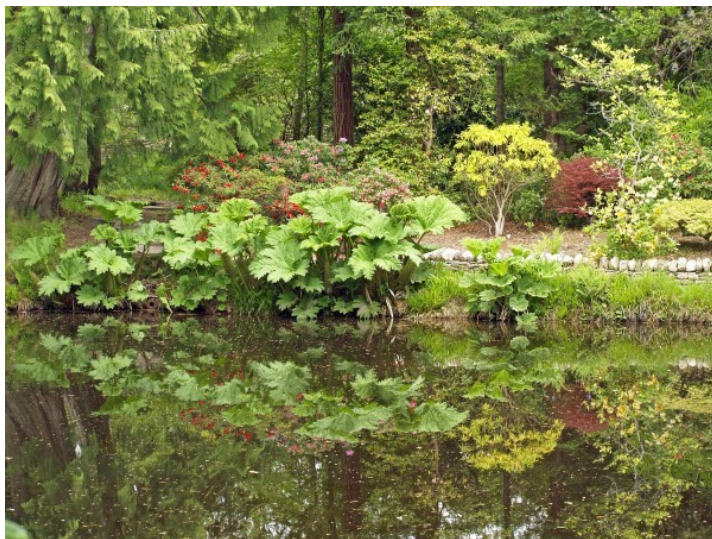
*Open to New Light* now has a wide variety of posts of many kinds – the project will stay open at least till the end of the year, so I invite you to contribute in whatever way you feel led, either directly at [www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonevlight](http://www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonevlight), via email [opentonevlight@quaker.org.uk](mailto:opentonevlight@quaker.org.uk), or by snailmail to Friends House in London, clearly marking your envelope *BDRC/ Open to New Light*.

At GM this month, Friends were given a brief opportunity to explore being creative about *Open to New Light*, and at least one of their pieces is now on the website... In November, South East Scotland AM is looking to explore how Friends can be involved in the revision process, and East Scotland will be having a short session led by myself and my co-convenor Jess Hubbard-Bailey, while West Scotland AM are planning a session in January 2021.

I hope N Scotland will also want to get involved some time next year...

I and another sub-group member will be joining Lewes LM this week as they look at the revision process by considering their favourite [and possibly their least favourite] pieces from *Quaker faith & practice*. As a committee, we are very open to invitations from groups interested in hearing more and getting involved in the revision process: with Friends' extensive use of zoom, it's really quite simple!

Our next committee meeting is in the middle of October, when we will review the work our sub-groups have been doing over the last six months and begin to discern our way forward. As ever, we rely on your prayerful help and support in this work. ■



Water Garden

**Quaker Criminal Justice Network.**  
**Ren Clark, Glasgow West**

**T**he Quaker Criminal Justice Network met recently, and asked a lot of big questions. Among them: what should society do with people who cause others harm? As Quakers, how do we approach the idea of punishment? What should prisons look like, and even, how do we work towards a world where they're not necessary? Inevitably, we did not discover all the answers in our two hour zoom meeting. But we did touch on a lot of issues that I, at least, believe are very pertinent to Quakers working to build a more equal and less violent society.

One way into this very big discussion came through the current and politically divisive issue of Community Payback Orders replacing short prison sentences. To give some background, the Scottish government has recently extended its 'presumption against short sentences' that was introduced in 2011 from three months, to twelve months.

What this means in practice is that courts in Scotland are being strongly encouraged to not send someone to prison for a short sentence, unless it considers no other course of action appropriate. To give this some context, the average prison sentence in Scotland was just under 10 and a half months in 2019, and around 90% of female prisoners in Scotland are serving sentences of 12 months or less.

Instead of short prison sentences, the Scottish government has been advocating for Community Payback Orders. These can take a variety of forms, including mandating treatment for mental illness, or drug and alcohol problems, but the most common requirement is unpaid work.

While right-wing press and politicians frequently criticise this approach as being too 'soft', evaluation of it has shown that

people given Community Payback Orders are almost half as likely to re-offend within a year compared to those given a short prison sentence.

In a video clip that the group watched together, we saw Cabinet Secretary for Justice Hamza Yousaf explain some of the benefits of supporting Community Payback Orders over short prison sentences:

‘A short prison sentence will disrupt someone’s tenancy, will take them away from their family, will not give them access to rehabilitation programmes, and then if they come out of that 6 month sentence, or 9 month sentence, they then might not have a house to go back to, there’s family dysfunctionality, there’s stigmatisation. It’s no surprise that so many of them end up back in the prison system’.

This clip comes from a short film following the journey of a fictional young man who is given a Community Payback Order instead of a short prison sentence, and you can watch it at: [www.streetcones.org/watch-our-cpo-short-film/](http://www.streetcones.org/watch-our-cpo-short-film/)

Members of the group familiar with the discussion around Community Payback Orders commented that it was still a very hot topic at the moment, and that supporting CPOs and the presumption against short sentences could be an important place for Quakers to use our voice.

The issue of Community Payback Orders led into a broader discussion jumping off from criminology lecturer Dr David Scott’s work around ‘A World Without Prisons’. We discussed the need to both support practical interventions that make material difference to the lives of people affected by the criminal justice system now, and also to make room for bigger conversations about the kind of world we wish to live in.

A member of the group observed that as Quakers, we're used to doing the radical work of imagining what a world without war could look like, and we could also be lending our imagination to think about a world without prisons. We touched on the fact that while prisons can remove individuals who cause harm to others from society, they do not do anything about the wider and more dispersed harm caused by organisations. For example, the deaths and suffering caused by the government's austerity policies, or by the policing of nations' borders.

Inevitably, any discussion of prison abolition raises a number of questions and concerns, but as a member of the group pointed out, it is not a new idea. Conscientious objectors to the First World War, who saw first-hand the dreadful conditions of prisons were among early Christian prison abolitionists following ideas from Leo Tolstoy. And within our own tradition, Canadian Friends adopted a minute in 1981 that advocates working towards prison abolition and restorative justice and reads in part:

'The prison system is both a cause and a result of violence and social injustice. Throughout history, the majority of prisoners have been the powerless and the oppressed. We are increasingly clear that the imprisonment of human beings, like their enslavement, is inherently immoral and is as destructive to the cagers as the caged.'

I cannot speak for the whole group, who are people with a diverse range of experiences and concerns, but for me the practical and imaginative work around building a society with a radically different approach to criminal justice feels like one of the 'growing-points' mentioned in our Advices and Queries, and I hope to continue these conversations both within this group and in the broader meeting. ■

**Woodbrooke Study on-line Courses**  
**Sila Collins-Walden, Inverness LM.**

**D**uring "Lockdown" I signed up for at least three courses of online study with Woodbrooke Study Centre. They kept me engaged through the past few months.

**Mothers Of Israel: The Writings of Early Quaker Women.**

The most famous female Quaker and writer was of course Margaret Fell (later Fox) known as the "Mother of Quakerism". Her famous tract, **Women Speaking Justified** 1666. In defence of the spiritual equality of women. Margaret Fell had a long life, spanning half a century 1652-1702. She was held in high esteem and used her home and social status (husband was a Judge) to support the society. She gave stability to the Quaker movement. She organized support structures, communications, fund raising for charity, launching a campaign involving the "Valiant Sixty" and so much more!

There were other women too you may not have of heard of, as I suppose Margaret Fell over-shadowed other Quaker women, although not intentionally.

There were many Quaker women who were prolific writers: Sarah Blackborrow (1658) who was an early Quaker leader among London Quakers, She wrote many tracts and pamphlets, "**A Visit to the Spirit in Prison**" ( 1658), "**The Oppressed Prisoners Complaint**" amongst others. She was involved in distributing aid to prisoners. Even today her writing is described as " richly biblical and moving.

Marther Simmons, She was a rather eccentric Quaker, who spent time in cities crying out repentance!! She became a central figure in a group that challenged the leadership of London Quakers. She wrote many pamphlets including, "**When the Lord Jesus Came to Jerusalem**", she was a friend of James Nayler, George Fox accused her of witchcraft!! She was imprisoned many

times as were other Mothers of Israel. Many of the females I came across in this study, I hadn't heard of. Dorothy White, who was next to Margaret Fell in the prolific writings of early Quaker women, was recognized as prophet. There is so much more to this study, and there were many more Quaker women, who wrote tracts and pamphlets, not enough space here!

### **Roots of the Early Quaker Way .**

Were Quakers influenced by other sects from the past? Were there connections between Quakers and other radical groups, the Rhineland Mystics, Anabaptists and the Beguines? I had never heard of the Beguines before until this course. They were fascinating women who began to form in various parts of Northern Europe over eight hundred years ago. They came from various social classes, they were lay women, not nuns, they spent their time caring for the sick, the poor, the homeless as well as attending to the spiritual needs of those in their care. They were known for their unusual business acumen. They were regarded as heretics by the church and were constantly under threat from them. The book: **The Wisdom of the Beguines, The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement.** by **Laura Swan** makes interesting reading. This was just one aspect of this course.

### **Bayard Rustin. Reflections.**

A little known Quaker, black and gay he was the chief strategist behind the Civil Rights Movement. He created the first **Freedom Rides in 1961**. He Worked with Martin Luther King, however he was kept in the background mainly because of his sexual proclivities which could have caused problems for the Civil Rights movement. He was involved in the 1941 March on Washington to press for the end of racial discrimination as well as a host of other social issues. This course was a very interesting history of this charismatic and formidable man, who should be better known. ■



**International Peace Day September 21st 2020.**

**The theme: " Shaping Peace Together" .**

**Sila Collins-Walden. Inverness LM**

**I**t seems we are always on a continuous journey for peace. The threat to world peace is real. As Quakers we work around the world for peace, justice and inclusion. We are involved in many campaigns throughout the world today. It's never been so important today for the global community to come together to engage in solidarity in building a more peaceful world. **International Peace Day** is observed around the world on September 21st. It was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly and 20 years later in 2001 the **General Assembly** voted to designate this day as a period of non-violence.

This year Quakers are among 170 organizations from around the world who have released a statement at the online opening of 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (please see the full statement in the Quake newsletter (Sept 24th) recently sent out by the clerks).

The 75th session declared this to be a time to promote peace in 2020. This years theme: **Shaping Peace Together.**

There are many challenges in the world to be met at present, one of those is **Covid-19**, which has laid bare the grave inequalities within our society. The poorest people suffering the most, with job-losses, a downturn in the economy, threat to human rights, climate change, structural violence, cultural violence, which must be dealt with if we are to have true peace. We have a peace testimony which lies at the heart of our Quaker faith which we endeavour to put into action. We are known for our stance against war, refusing to take up arms but instead helping the victims on both sides during conflict.

The virus is a common enemy that threatens our health and security, it has thrown the world into turmoil. We must stand together with the UN against attempts to use the virus to discriminate and cause hatred.

For the past couple of years Inverness LM have gathered along with other faith and peace groups at Inverness Cathedral Peace Pole to celebrate peace, and to plant messages of peace and hope, with banners and doves made by the children and Friends of LM. However because of **Covid-19** this was postponed, hopefully it can take place next year. ■



### Our Peace Testimony.

I told [the Commonwealth Commissioners] I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars...I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were.

George Fox, 1651. *Qf&P*. 24.01. ■

**Harvest Home!**  
**Roger H. Quinn. Inverness LM.**



**T**he biblical promise, that as long as Earth remains the seasons of seed time and harvest time shall not fail, is one of Divine Grace. Indeed the good book has plenty to say about both. Here is the sower going forth to sow; there the human reaps the rewards of his labours.

Today's children may not have seen the sheaves of corn, as described in both Old and New Testaments, that were commonplace in my youth. They have little contact with industrial farming, but there are signs of a culture which is encouraging the growing and nurturing of the good earth. And along with this comes gratitude.

Hopefully the great service of thanksgiving, known as Harvest Festival, will continue down the ages. This is a time when whole communities come together to give thanks to God. A time when organs are pumped up to pour forth praise and thanks for yet another harvest, without which we starve. A time when great harvest hymns like "we plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land" are sung. And once again sing the grandest of them all :

*Come you thankful people come*

*Raise the song of harvest home*

*All is safely gathered in*

*Ere the winter storms begin.*



## POETS' CORNER

### WELCOME FRIENDS.

Faces, young, old and in between  
gaze out from the gallery,  
in homes, offices, gardens,  
or framed by mountains glimpsed through a window.

Some are well kent, long known and loved, many will become so,  
over the interminable weeks.

A few remain anonymous, a small black box, a name in white letters,  
or a static portrait of bygone times.

A cat's tail marches indignantly across the screen, demanding to be noticed.  
A dog barks, perplexed by the voices of disembodied beings.

Zoom worship begins.

The chattering voices are muted  
Until  
A hand reaches out and a yellow box frames the speaker.

We are transported  
into attics, living rooms, utility rooms, bedrooms,  
studies, cellars,  
Striving not to be distracted  
by wallpaper, house plants, near empty bookcases? and the heap  
of fascinating clutter which isn't our's.

We settle, focus, and absorb the shared words that challenge, inspire and comfort,

Words from cherished writings, from ancient traditions and from the heart,

The ministry ends and we settle back into the gathered silence, joined by the unseen presence.

Namaste Friends, time for the after word.

Oriole Hall. Inverness LM. ■

### SNOW ON THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

It snowed on the summer solstice this year  
as lockdown eased  
Our pandemic fears very slowly receding  
We ventured out to places  
We desperately wanted to see again.  
Under the wind swaying in the pines.  
Mingling with perfumes from the wild roses  
Covering the purple orchids  
The harsh dark moors now white with silken snow  
Bog cotton down  
Blanketing our rediscovered world

Alastair Simmons. Inverness LM. ■

## MISFIT.

If you're a misfit  
Misdirected, lacking direction  
Because you always question  
If what's confirmed is that you don't conform

If you've been told you're too sensitive  
Because you care  
And then told you're selfish  
Because you need time to yourself

If you try not to judge, nor compare  
And follow your own path  
Only to be judged a failure

If they tell you you're out of touch  
Because you turn away from TV violence  
And then tell you you're naïve and dangerous  
For seeing good in everyone

If you refuse to be shoved from without  
And instead, welcome being pushed from within  
If you like to take a step back and  
Contemplate rather than gesticulate

It's not that you capitulate  
Only that it makes you better able to  
Reciprocate

If you're content that some follow Good whilst others follow God  
That everyone's different  
And diversity is the salt of Life's wide ocean

If you're on the run from a hostile environment  
If you've not been taken hostage by greed

And are up for empathy, not apathy  
If you find killing and uprooting repugnant  
And know that Earth is abundant  
And made for all to share

Know that you're not alone  
There are many others like you  
Who sense that what is vital and true

Is to open our hearts  
And grow into the current emptiness  
A loving openness

Ed Tyler. Argyll West. ■



A quiet corner, Woodbrooke

## NOTICE BOARD

### General Meeting for Scotland

#### Introduction to Quaker Trusteeship.

Saturday 7th November, 10.30- 12.30. By Zoom

Why do we need trustees? What do they do? Are they masters or servants of Area Meeting?

You don't need to be an expert to be a Trustee - we look at the training and support available and how your skills can be used within the trustee team.

The responsibilities and rewards of being a trustee. To what extent do trustees carry personal responsibility? What other questions do you have?

This session is intended for new trustees and those who might consider becoming a trustee if they knew more of what was involved. More experienced trustees are also welcome to join in.

Speakers: John Phillips, Gill Reid and Kate Gulliver.

Advance registration required - go to: [www.bit.ly/trustee\\_intro](http://www.bit.ly/trustee_intro)  
Martin Burnell. ■

### NSAM Quaker Notebook.

NSAM Quaker Notebook - Hopefully, be available soon! cost £6.00. P&P from Jane Booth at:

<mailto:editor@northscotlandquakernotebook.org> or contact her:  
07747396456. ■