



Oct 23

# Scottish Friend



Photograph 1: An autumn evening on the banks of River Ayr near Auchincruive.

Scottish Friend is distributed by Jane Booth, on behalf of the General Meeting for Scotland.



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*Published by Quakers in Scotland, 01382 730 842. [www.quakerscotland.org](http://www.quakerscotland.org)  
(Quakers in Britain website: [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)).*

*Printed on recycled paper by Print Force, 0141 956 1052.*

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# Christian Aid statement on Israel- Palestine situation, issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> October

General Meeting for Scotland has added its signature to this statement, along with other churches.

Background to the situation can be found if you Google *QUNO (Quaker United Nations Organisation)* and *EAPPI The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel*). The latter includes five solidarity actions you can take for Palestine/ Israel.

Christian Aid with the undersigned church leaders and Christian organisations are gravely concerned by the mounting death toll across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. There can be no justification for the deliberate killing, maiming and kidnapping of civilians, which is a crime under international law and for which the perpetrators should be held accountable. We unequivocally condemn the violence carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

Since then, innocent Palestinians in Gaza are yet again bearing the brunt of the Israeli government's relentless bombardment which has left no place safe, while a siege effectively strangles life. The death toll in Gaza is approaching 5,000 and, with no end in sight, will no doubt dramatically rise.

We call on all governments with influence to help bring an immediate end to the violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

- Protection of civilians and an end to all violence now and publicly call for a ceasefire without conditions.
- Release all kidnapped victims.
- Unfettered humanitarian access for aid, as urged by UN, now, including immediate reconnection to water and electricity.
- Unequivocal support for the ICC to conduct a truly independent investigation into all war crimes to ensure accountability.
- Acknowledge the failure of the international community to effectively engage with any meaningful peace process and to commit to work ceaselessly from now on to address the root causes of the violence which must include an end to the occupation.

# 1 GM affairs

## 1.1 Calling for General Meeting for Scotland Michael Hutchinson, GM Clerk

Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all!

**Our next General Meeting will be on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, in Perth and online through Zoom.** This is the fourth and final meeting scheduled for this year, and it will be a 'blended' or 'hybrid' meeting, with some Friends present in the Sandeman Room at the **Bell Library, York Place, PH2 8EP**, and others joining by Zoom. The agenda and papers will go out at the end of October.



**After preliminary refreshment at the Library from 10:30 am, we will start with open worship at 11.00, break for lunch from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm, and our afternoon session will finish by about 4.00 pm.**

PLEASE USE this registration link for November GM, however you attend: <https://tinyurl.com/bdsud4ye>. *Please note that you will receive Zoom log in details even if you have registered to attend face to face– this is a default setting of the registration set up.*

**Please do join us! All are welcome. Perth Friends will be providing hot drinks, biscuits, etc., for those coming in person, BUT PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH as there is no kitchen available. Early registration will be important for those wishing to attend in Perth as the Sandeman Room can only take 40. Because of this limit on numbers, please register to make sure we know how many intend to come and can let you know if numbers have been exceeded. We may not be able to take in Friends turning up in Perth without booking, so please look to care for Friends who may not manage digital ways.**

This is an opportunity to meet together with Friends from across Scotland.

In a spirit of worship we attend to our church affairs, and matters concerning the spiritual life and witness of Quakers in Scotland.

*Quaker faith & practice* 8.01 reminds us that “In our Quaker work, are we sure that our decision-making is rooted in prayer and thought, those dual bases of all our actions?... Both the work and its oversight have to be rooted in the silence of worship”.

At this General Meeting, our business will include looking at the wide variety of our General Meeting responsibilities and activities. We aim to begin with our GM Budget for 2024, including confirming our regular donations and affiliations. We will consider and approve our input to the priorities for the work of our Local Development Worker, Zoe Prosser, in 2024. We will hear from Mary Troup and hopefully others on work with our children and young people, including the report on the Shindig summer school this year. We will have an update from our new group to take forward potential change in our Quaker ways of operating in Scotland, the **Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group** (QiSCG) and consider its terms of reference. **THE DRAFT WORKING TERMS OF REFERENCE ARE AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON THE GENERAL MEETING WEBSITE: <https://www.quakerscotland.org/general-meeting>. Click on ‘DOCUMENTS’ on the lower right hand side of the webpage.**

Other business will be to hear from our Parliamentary Engagement Working



Photograph 2: A view of Arran from Great Cumbrae.

Group, including reviewing its Peace work, and we particularly look forward to meeting our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, during this item. We will have the report of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group. With the latter we will consider how we deal with Meeting for Suffering's request to us on how Public Protection sentences are dealt with in our legal system. We will return to a consideration of Ecocide and Racial Justice. We'll also receive a nominations committee report and deal with other business to keep Friends' work and witness in Scotland going.

A second mailing a few days before GM will include draft minutes and any additional papers. If you do not receive them, please ask our Administrator, Jane Booth, for a copy ([scotfriends@gmail.com](mailto:scotfriends@gmail.com)). If you have any questions, please contact me, your clerk, by email [scotfriendsclerk@gmail.com](mailto:scotfriendsclerk@gmail.com) or telephone 0141 770 7865.

The following General Meeting will be blended again on 9<sup>th</sup> March, physically in Edinburgh and online.

Michael Hutchinson, Clerk  
Susan Mitchell, Assistant Clerk.  
General Meeting for Scotland.



Photograph 3: A view from top of Tinto hill.

## 1.2 Report of the GM for Scotland in September Mary Woodward, SE Scotland AM

Change isn't easy. While some people look forward eagerly, others look back longingly, wishing that things could be as they always were. "The system has worked brilliantly up to now, why do we have to change things?"

Alas, things in Scotland haven't been working brilliantly for some years – Area Meeting nominations committees have struggled to find names of Friends willing to give service, and those Friends who are willing and able to serve are often giving more than they can really manage and are on the verge of burnout.

Options for Scotland and Options for Scotland 2 groups have been discerning the way forward. All four Scottish AMs were asked to consider their suggestion of taking the next steps towards becoming a single community - Quakers in Scotland. At recent meetings, all four answered 'yes' to the four questions put to them. All four AMs have thus agreed to take further the planning for a single charity; to have GM Nominations find any further names needed to serve Quakers in Scotland in particular ways; to work with Friends across Scotland to consider what the various aspects of Quakers in Scotland (beyond the single charity) might look like; and that Meeting for Sufferings be informed of the work in which we are engaged.

During our very well-attended meeting in Inverness, members of the Options 2 group spoke of their experience of gradually coming together as they discerned our next steps. Sensitive clerking enabled Friends with reservations about the changes to express themselves and know they were heard. We were reminded that GM was simply being asked if it agreed with the four questions. Details of what change might look like will become clearer as the process was taken forward, and no decisions will be made until these details were clear. The decisions will be made by AMs: GM has no "power over" AMs.

The morning session ended with Friends agreeing to the questions, and to moving forward together as a community, seeing where we are being led. In the afternoon, nominations for the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group to begin this process were approved. All four AMs will have two members on the committee: GM Nominations are still seeking a second name to represent N Scotland AM .

During the morning, one Friend had expressed the hope that GM's 'usual' business would not be neglected when, in future, 'Quakers in Scotland' business was being attended to. The extensive range of this 'usual' business was



clearly demonstrated by the rest of the day's agenda. We thanked our departing GM Administrator, Sue Proudlove, and welcomed her successor, Jane Booth of Banchory Meeting. We noted new members, transfers, and deaths within GM; noted that some Scottish Friends have joined the Quaker Truth & Integrity Group [QTIG]; and heard a report from Busa Cochrane-Muir, our representative to Central Europe Yearly Meeting in Gdansk, Poland. Zoe Prosser, our Local Development Worker, told us a little about her past and future work on our behalf. Zoe is employed by Britain Yearly Meeting, so we can't tell her what to do – but we can make suggestions, and have been invited to submit any we may have by the end of September.

In the interregnum between our Parliamentary Engagement Officer Andrew Tomlinson's leaving us and a new PEO being found, our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group has been working very hard. Work for Climate Justice has proceeded in close co-operation with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. Some of our children will perform at Holyrood on International Peace Day (September 21). The Peace at the Heart [PATH] exhibition, which has already been seen in some parts of Scotland, will be at Holyrood at the same time, before going on the road again later in the year. We look forward to meeting our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, at our next GM.



North Scotland AM sent GM a minute asking that we consider the StopEco-cide Manifesto for the Criminalisation of Ecocide. This subject is currently being considered by Meeting for Sufferings, and we look forward to hearing

what they discern at their October meeting. W Scotland AM sent a minute about Race & Privilege: details of the equity network being set up by BYM will be circulated by the GM Administrator. We considered how we might include N and E Scotland AMs in arranging future enquirers' days. Much correspondence was received.

Despite our extensive and wide-ranging agenda, we managed to finish our business at 4pm. We turned our attention to the plentiful supply of goodies which survived our lunchtime depredations – grateful thanks to Inverness Friends for supplying them all. Thanks, too, to Andy Bryer, the Methodist minister in Inverness, who had welcomed us to his church in the morning and was around at break times throughout the day. He and I were delighted to greet each other: we had had good conversations at the Methodists' synod in Perth and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland earlier this year – one of the lovely benefits of being Scottish Friends' ecumenical officer!

We look forward to gathering for a blended meeting in Perth on 11 November, where we will continue our consideration of what Quakers in Scotland might look like – working together as a worshipping community as we all contribute to this “great big adventure”.



Photograph 4: Walled garden at Dumfries House.

## 2 Ecumenical Matters

### 2.1 Scottish Episcopal Church Synod Mary Woodward, SE Scotland AM

*St Paul's & St George's Church, Edinburgh. 8-10 June 2023.*

As ever, I looked forward eagerly to the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) Synod, and was not disappointed. It was a joy to greet old friends including my buddy from last year – Liz from Pitlochry – and make new ones, including my buddy for this year, Hamilton Inbadas, the minister at Nairn. His church's website makes it sound a really interesting place where a lot goes on: Hamilton assured me of a warm welcome if and when I manage to visit.

Thursday's opening eucharist offered plenty of opportunity to rise up and sing, and I did with a right good will. The opening hymn painted a very desirable picture – *Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live*, with a chorus proclaiming that *all are welcome in this place* – would that this were always so!

The Primus welcomed delegates and guests. In his address he asked *What is this church?* – *A vehicle to allow the spirit of God to be heard, followed, and lived*, so that its members could bring the love of God to a world that needs that love. He alluded to the absence of Bishop Anne, at present suspended following accusations of bullying. He could not say much, as the matter was as yet unresolved: he urged us to pray for all concerned, and for a just and fair resolution of the issue.

After some housekeeping, the bishops took it in turn to give their view of *God's Church for Scotland?* Bishop Kevin urged us *to bring Scotland to God*; Bishop John felt that Christian nurture is not about offering a chunk of information but accompanying people, engaging the whole person and helping them to become someone whose faith affects their whole life. We need to work with other denominations, rather than alone. Bishop Andrew talked of responding to human need by loving service: how we could turn outwards from our concentration on our own difficult times? Bishop Ian spoke of all that is being done, especially by the Mothers Union (which is not just for women) to challenge gender-based violence and domestic abuse: Bishop Keith talked about the integrity of creation which touches us all and can be a joy and delight.

Our following round table discussion seemed to have a lot to say, but none of it made it into my notebook!

The next item – a report on the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) meeting in Accra, Ghana, in February this year – talked of *a colourful and collegiate occasion*, held every three years, and attended by laity (including youth reps) and non-episcopal ministers. There was division yet again around differing sexualities, but also unexpected discoveries of common ground. Our reporter likened the ACC to a flotilla of ships, all progressing under their own steam, in roughly the same direction: he said it was also like a group talking about their own prized recipe for a traditional dish – each one is slightly different, and there are fierce arguments about authenticity!

After tea Synod was asked to approve two motions concerning the Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) – to receive and approve the Plan, and request Standing Committee of the Provincial Environment Group to approve the provision of necessary funding. Our table’s discussion about the Plan included very familiar comments – *this plan will only scratch the surface: we need to consume less; social and ecological justice are inextricably linked; we need to break the matter down into simple, comprehensible steps; how best can we use our buildings to their full potential?; we need to think holistically; how can we work with ecumenical and interfaith groups?; we need to beware the urge To Do A Good Thing; we need to work out what can be dropped – we are exhausted.*

Bishop Ian was taking the lead on the NZAP, and was in the seat to my right at the evening’s Synod Dinner. We had an interesting, enjoyable, and wide-ranging conversation, and the following day I asked him if I could connect him with the leaders of the recent SESAM climate action day held at Edinburgh’s episcopal cathedral – he was delighted at the prospect of working together.

Friday, after morning prayer, was the turn of the Mission Board. *What is mission?* It’s different in every place and every situation; we need to go beyond our own doors. *The Season for Christian Life is an invitation to live your best Christian life, tell each other and the world what we do in it, and celebrate this* – and not just within this denomination. . . [my notes exclaim YES!!!]

We were then addressed by this year’s Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the incredible Sally Foster-Fulton, about whom I have already waxed lyrical in my report on the General Assembly. As ever, she was an inspiration and a joy – celebrating the historic day on which the Moderator is invited to speak to another church, and naming the intentional ecclesiastical partnership it represents. Living out the gospel is powerful – we need to get over ourselves and get together with others, step out in faith with those of other faiths. In doing this our faith is not diluted but enriched and enriching. *Ubuntu* – I am because you are – means we will be more authentic together. The recent St

Andrew and St Margaret Declarations are a cause for rejoicing as we work together to meet the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of our congregations. Change, growth, reformation are painful and scary, but if we can remember to see people as ‘stand-ins for god’, the body of Christ, of which we are all members, can dance for joy.

The rest of the morning was taken up with what could seem to be very dry and dusty matters – the revision of Canons [the rules] – but if you looked at what the effect of the proposed changes would be, it was pretty exciting! These changes will make it possible for the proposals made in the St Andrew and St Margaret Declarations to be legally put into practice – as someone remarked *it allows the canons to allow us to do what we’ve agreed to do* [and in some cases are already doing]. In essence, and somewhat simplified, ministers of other denominations will be able to assist at Episcopal services and, more importantly, be able to hold communion services in their own tradition



in Episcopal churches. Another canonical change being considered, in this case for the second time, was that referring to the process for electing bishops. There was much discussion, with strong feelings both for and against the changes, but they were in essence agreed. This business took somewhat longer than the time allotted: I was very glad to be able to relax and enjoy the lunch for ecumenical and overseas guests, especially as Moderator Sally was also present – she’s always a joy to talk with.

Friday afternoon’s business was mainly concerned with lay and ministerial ed-

ucation, health and safety with respect to church buildings, and the addition of new liturgies to another Canon. Each of the bishops present then responded to things that arose in Thursday's discussion. The Primus, thinking about power and authority, said *I need to work on myself, with someone else's help*. Other comments – how do we make the college of bishops a better model of the inclusivity of our church? Don't expect the bishops to do it all – it's a communal effort. We need to take children and young people and their views seriously. How can the church's power be used to create a voice to speak out on matters of social justice, etc? Yes, bishops lead, encourage, support – and also need to get out of the way and LISTEN more...

Saturday's business began with prayers – which began with silence [!] Safe-guarding matters required the first reading of a new Canon which would reflect policy agreed in 2020, simplifying and clarifying the language used wherever possible. Following last year's decisions about ethical investing, a permanent body to continue to advise those responsible for investing has been asked for. It was agreed that reserves should be used to help fund changes needed to achieve Net Zero, rather than increasing the diocesan quota.

I had asked for an opportunity to address Synod, and was invited to do so immediately after our coffee break. I had been wondering about offering Francis Howgill's *caught and gathered as in a net* [Qfp 19.08] but found myself guided towards Pierre Lacout [Qfp 2.12], reflecting to Synod how silence is creeping into their worship and their business...

*In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to glow – a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamour of our emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out.*

*Words must be purified in a redemptive silence if they are to bear the message of peace. The right to speak is a call to the duty of listening. Speech has no meaning unless there are attentive minds and silent hearts. Silence is the welcoming acceptance of the other. The word born of silence must be received in silence.*

The rest of the business concerned elections, and the work of the Provincial Youth Committee. Youth representatives to Synod spoke of their particular concerns – refugees and asylum seekers “are our responsibility”; students need a support system during term time, which churches could offer; grants don't cover the long summer break, but often they can't get work or are very poorly paid; students need a place simply to BE, and be together, which is warm

and comfortable and doesn't cost anything; do wear one of the 'gender label' badges [showing pronoun options] – it shows that you are sympathetic and open to difference. Tending to needs is, they said, *a less confrontational way of doing evangelism*.

In our closing act of worship, Synod was declared closed until next year, when we hope to meet again. Joyfully we sang *great is thy faithfulness, o God my father*, and we were sent out *to love and serve the Lord*. Amen.



Photograph 5: A marker on Northumberland coastal path.

## 2.2 Report from United Reform Church meeting Margaret Roy, West Scotland AM

*St Augustine's, Edinburgh, 9 September 2023*

After collecting our papers and signing in, we were welcomed in with tea/coffee and Danish pastries before taking a seat at one of the tables set out for six attendees. I had met this set up of tables before when I attended an Episcopal synod representing GM and can recommend it to GM as a way of encouraging community and participation.

The warmth continued in a worship service calling us into community with each other and the Earth (my words). The retiring moderator regaled us with an address that went back to his childhood and ministry in different areas of the country, warm, personal and laced with many jokes. He started off with a big foot! And he had lots of little feet to hand out to remind us to walk in the way. He was obviously a well-loved character. Under synod aspirations, how do we do discipleship introduced 10 'Holy habits from Andrew Robertson's work but boiled down to five by Michael F..t who encouraged us to surprise the world in the small things – 1. Bless others, 2. Eat with others to develop a capacity for hospitality, 3. Listen, especially to the voice of God in prayer, 4. Learn, Christ has much to teach, 5. 'Being sent' not the E word but being present in the neighbourhood.

Later, the roll was read remembering those who had died since the last synod. New Elders and Ministers were introduced and welcomed. The new moderator was presented, Lindsay Sanderson. Then the guests were welcomed, myself from the Religious Society of Friends, Mary Welch from the Catholic Bishops Conference and an officer from the Salvation Army. The moderator came down from the platform and shook us each by the hand.

The business of synod started with the minutes of the last synod in the Spring then various reports were presented. A couple of pieces of this were of interest to Quakers. They had sold several churches and manses and were in the process of refurbishing another two manses. All in the course of things. The Treasurer went on to discuss a problem that had arisen from a decree of the Scottish Government in 2000. This was confusing. A Board of Trustees is not a company but the Synod with one vote is a company. This became relevant when it was the company that adopted the accounts. The majority vote of the Synod was just ONE vote. To change this for OSCAR would require a new parliamentary act which was costly so all was left as it was. *Now I may have got this wrong and be as confused as some of that gathering but . . . the Treasurer was willing to help any understand it.*



The afternoon was given over to a talk by Karen Campbell, United Reformed Church Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, for Racial Justice. Her talk was a continuation of a previous talk on the Legacy of Slavery. It was most entertaining as she assured us we could ask the questions without her taking offence. I was prepared to hear the usual stuff. Not so. This was challenging and personal, even intimate as she read from many of her poems. Where did the name Karen Campbell come from? Her history had been taken away. To say one is not racist is passive whilst anti-racist is a challenge to unjust structures. Reparations, etc. were not enough and could be another form of colonialism. ‘Black churches’ live it and know what they need. There was a need for communication and a space for GRACE. The Q&A brought up the thoughts that there are more slaves today than at any point in history. I went searching for her poems on the internet but alas, up till now, unsuccessfully. There is another Karen Campbell, a Scottish author. And so we ended with another short service and a hymn. 7 people came forward from the attendees to read a short prayer.



Photograph 6: St Cuthbert's Centre URC, Holy Island.

### 2.3 Visit to Finnish Friends October 2023, including Finland Yearly Meeting Autumn Gathering Mary Woodward, SE Scotland AM

*AitO Centre near Tampere, Finland. 6-8 October 2023.*

During my visit to Finland Yearly Meeting's Spring Gathering this March I was warmly invited to attend Autumn Gathering in October. With the help of grants from the Pollard & Dickson Trust, the Francis Camfield Trust, and West Scotland AM, for which I am extremely grateful, I was able both to attend the Gathering and spend time with individual Friends in various parts of Finland.

Helsinki's worship group meets every Sunday. Sakari Oksanen had put me in touch with four of its members who were happy to meet and spend time with me during my stay in the city. Synnöve, Susanne, and Eivor are all Finns whose mother tongue is Swedish: I had deep Quaker conversations with them as they shared with me some of their favourite places in Helsinki. Gwyn-daf, who grew up Quaker in West Virginia but now lives and works in Finland, met me and piloted me to Meeting, after which we shared a wide-ranging Quaker conversation over lunch.

Meeting on Sunday was small. Synnöve, is present most Sundays, and is joined by a [usually] different small

group each week. It being World Quaker Day, I was moved to minister about my joy in being able to join in worship with Friends in America, Canada,



and Europe, as well as around the UK, during my twenty years as a Quaker. Afterwards, over coffee and cake, there was more wide-ranging conversation.

I then went to visit my friend Ville–Pekka and his family. I first met V–P in 2019, at FYM and when he represented FYM at Britain Yearly Meeting in London. He is an isolated Friend whose work and family commitments mostly prevent him from attending the weekly Tampere worship group. It was a joy to share time with him and his family, and stay in his idyllic sauna house on the edge of the lake.

At the Gathering at AitO, just outside Tampere, I was warmly embraced by my adoptive Finnish Quaker family. I was honoured to be asked to serve as Elder for the Saturday’s business meeting – even though I could only do it in English. The day’s business was, as usual, conducted mostly in Finnish [though non-native Finnish speakers can and do contribute in English]. Leena sat beside me and made sure I could understand what was going on. My Finnish is improving, but is as yet nowhere near the level required to play a full part in Quaker business meetings...

It was good to see the progress of various items of business I’d seen begin in previous YMs. The Finnish Quaker archive project is completing; the library project continues – how can its books be made available to Friends now that they do not own a flat in Helsinki? One Friend offered to scan all the hard copies of Quaker News [QN], going back decades, and add them to the Quaker archive.

The current QN editor wished to lay down the office. She gave feedback from a questionnaire sent out to gather Friends’ levels of interest in continuing or laying down the publication, and we held a threshing meeting. The need was clearly felt for some version of QN to exist, but the how and the who were not so clear...

An ad hoc group had formed around the need to assist with the funerals of several deceased Friends. Copies of memorial minutes for these Friends were brought and read aloud, and will be added to the Finnish Quaker website. The group had produced a leaflet to assist ministers of Finnish churches [Orthodox and Lutheran] and funeral directors if they were asked to arrange a Quaker funeral, together with leaflets for the three Finnish worship groups offering guidance about practicalities.

The funerals group now asked YM to consider their thoughts on the formation of a Funerals committee or a Care of FYM committee. It would ideally involve representatives from all three worship groups and “share matters concerned with caring in FYM, which would include support for arranging funerals where

necessary”. It was hoped that this committee would also foster more direct contact between the three groups [Helsinki, Tampere, and Northern Friends worship groups].

The production of a translation into Finnish of American Quaker Thomas Kelly’s *A Testament of Devotion* was proposed. It was felt that it would be good to have this not simply for Friends, but because there is very little Quaker literature in Finnish available. The executive committee [ex com], which deals with business between Gatherings, was asked to investigate cost. If the amount were small, ex com could decide whether or not to proceed: if substantial, a special meeting for all the YM would be held via Zoom.

At the start of the weekend, we had been invited to share our thoughts on *Life is about listening and speaking*. Lari had invited us to think over the weekend *What hinders me from listening to others?*, and in the Saturday evening post-sauna epilogue one Friend offered their answer into the silence. This led us into a deep and rich silence around the wood fire, in which we offered our deeply personal responses. The silence continued to deepen, and the warmth and love it contained wrapped around us all, making us reluctant either to break it or leave – a truly gathered meeting that is a wonderful memory for all of us.

On the Sunday morning our Meeting for Worship was followed by a talk from Kati, a Lutheran minister from Tampere, whose official title was Pastor of Social Responsibility. This work involved her in working multiculturally, ecumenically, and with the rainbow community. Ten congregations – Methodist, Orthodox, Catholic, Free Church, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Charismatic, Adventists, the Salvation Army and the Silent Movement - in Tampere work actively together, saying *there is more unites us than divides us*. Most agreed to proposed guidelines “respecting diversity”, but some church members left their congregation because they couldn’t cope with the idea of rainbow people. Kati commented We have to be sensitive to what it is possible to say and added that they continue to work together even though it’s not always possible to say “We”.

In the final feedback session there were many appreciative references to our Saturday night silence by the fire. One Friend, who was fairly new to Quakers, summed it up:

*The silence helps you hear and understand the words  
And when you have finished speaking, the silence wraps around the words  
Like a blanket and keeps them safe*

My dear friend Jane in Muhos had not been able to host me on this trip, so we stayed in Tampere on the Sunday night, caught up on news, and talked of Finnish Friends and about the FWCC/ World Gathering next year. Next morning we met Lari, who is currently an executive committee member, to talk over the Gathering and other matters of concern for Finnish Friends. I then spent a wonderfully enriching time with Lari before preparing to fly back to Scotland the next day...

I have been invited to attend FYM next May: I really hope to find a way to do this, as my connection with Finnish Friends is a deep and abiding joy in my life.



### 3 Book of Discipline Revision Committee Mary Woodward, SE Scotland AM

*Radcliffe Conference Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry 11 and 13-15 October 2023*

The first part of our committee meeting was on the Wednesday evening, via Zoom. We dealt with ‘simple’ matters – the receiving of draft texts completed ‘for now’; the laying down of topic groups which have completed their tasks; and the noting of draft texts which required consideration during our weekend meeting. Rosie Carnall, one of our co-clerks, told us of her meeting with Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee [YMAC]. Our work will not form a part of YM agenda in 2024, but we will offer Friends opportunities for engagement with our work.

Most of us met in Coventry at the weekend: three joined us via Zoom. One of our number was prevented by ill health, and one has asked for temporary release from the groups in which they were working as the pressure of their work prevents them from giving us their time. Our work load is increasing, and many of us are struggling with other major concerns. We are hoping that YM Noms will find other people to join us.

Those present in the meeting room were fascinated to see a large grey ‘owl’ in the middle of our square of tables – this was part of new equipment being trialled by Friends House in blended meetings. A small camera on top of the owl rotated to point at whoever was speaking, which was grand much of the time, but could expose inadvertent rustling or shuffling during periods of silence! The quality of the link was impressive and those Friends joining us remotely were very happy with the way it worked and made them feel completely part of the meeting – something for us all to note and perhaps make use of.

On the Friday evening we shared our thoughts about sharing text with Friends in future. Ben Robinson from the Quaker Communications Department was with us for the first half of the weekend, and made valuable contributions. Why would we want to share more text? What would we hope to learn? Might it be helpful to share text with specific groups of people who could offer constructive criticism? What do the publications department require from us, and when?

On Saturday we considered our Project Timeline, noting how it is changing as our work proceeds. Some groups would need more time than projected, due to changes arising from the temporary absence of group members; some groups



Photograph 7: Lindisfarne Priory, Holy Island.

can't complete their topic until other BYM committees have completed their work [e.g. the current review of some YM bodies and the consideration of Membership].

Consideration of the various stages of the publication process will start soon. We need to work out how to deal with 'gaps and overlaps' [which sounds like a fun topic group name!] It is important to remember that 'complete' is not the same as 'finished'. What can't we do ourselves? What else do we need to know? Professional copy-editing could be extremely valuable as well as time-saving.

Ben Robinson said it was very helpful for him to be in our sessions and get a clearer idea of how we work and what we produce. He pointed out that writers' and readers' perspectives are different, and both are valuable. We need to be very clear about stating the primary source for the extracts we include – huge amounts of time can be spent trying to track down the copyright owner. Music, audio, and video recordings all have different, and generally more complicated, copyrights.

We also need to be clear about which formats we want to use. Are we pre-

pared to accept that the quality of some media forms [e.g. videos] might be less than perfect – and is that imperfection distracting or inaccessible to some people? Friends House have improved recording facilities and it would be possible for volunteers to make audio recordings – but a trained voice actor would be preferable for a final recording. Would we want multiple readers for the extracts? What about audio description for video material?



Photograph 8: A view from Dunstanburgh castle.

We propose to offer a complete draft text to Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2027 – this would be an excellent test of all these considerations. It could be helpful to have some parts of our text produced in various formats before this date.

We received a set of Advices & Queries from the Diversity and Inclusion group and advice for drafters of text from our Accessibility group. Our work up to now does not always fit into these guidelines. It could be helpful to have some texts copy edited by Ben and his team and receive their feedback. We are continually mindful of the need to be simple and clear in our writing without losing the richness of our subject matter.



We discussed reports from the groups set up to look at our use of anthology material and consider our first steps towards finding a structure for the completed Book.

Anthology – do we need to add explanations and or context for extracts from early Quaker writing? Where can we find extracts about subjects that have arisen since the publication of Quaker faith & practice? Our diversity of experience is all valid: it melds into a unity, not a uniformity. We can't include absolutely everything, but our core text needs both 'voice of the book' and anthology extracts.

There were a number of diagrams and pictures accompanying the report from the Structure group. Do we want to arrange our material alphabetically? Alphabetically within sections, e.g 'Faith', 'Practice'? Do we follow divergent then convergent thinking, starting from unity and moving through diversity to a concluding unity? Do we use Sinek's Golden Circle: "Why? What? How?" Is the structure of the book a tree, a forest, a spiral, a solar system? We want to be creative and bold... Can we combine some of these structures? We were reminded that, while making material as accessible as possible, it is impossible to make everything accessible to every person who has a disability – e.g. British Sign Language is inaccessible to someone with vision impairment.

The Spiritual Experience and Theology Group reported on their progress and asked us whether Theology needed to be a separate topic, as it didn't fit well into their current text. We felt this was something that needed exploring, and Rhiannon Grant was asked to produce a paper on 'what a theology topic might contain' for our next meeting. The group also asked for clarity about how we should refer to ourselves – do we write about Quakerism, the Quaker faith, the Quaker Way? There is no 'official line', but we were reminded that we follow "not a notion, but a way".

After lunch we looked at the draft papers on Service, Witness, and Testimony. It was felt there was still work to be done on the first two. Testimony did not make specific mention of particular testimonies – would they be elsewhere in the Book? Our testimonies change over time – there is not a fixed list. Again, we are aware of overlap between topics, especially in the use of extracts – at present one extract may appear in several topic drafts.

The Funerals group, of which I am a part, will meet later this month to consider the texts we have produced individually. We wanted the committee to be aware that we are writing about more than 'just' funerals themselves, and therefore there could be overlap with the Personal Journeys topic. Other

topics also overlap – it was felt there needs to be a conversation between the Funerals, Personal Journeys, Diversity and Inclusion, Spiritual Experience and Close Relationships topic groups fairly soon, to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The Faithful Lives group brought another question – does this topic need to exist as a separate entity? It worked well in earlier 2-volume Books of Discipline, but fits less well into a single volume Book. Some people felt that singling out some Friends as examples might imply that some people were ‘better’ than others. Should there be a place for complete *Testimonies to the Grace of God in the Life Of...?* These would give a more rounded picture of someone’s life. It was decided to discontinue the Faithful Lives group, keeping the material which had been collected for possible inclusion in other topics.



The Radcliffe Centre’s meal timetables meant that we had had to forgo our usual Friday night sharing session in order to get our necessary business done. We had got on so well with our work that we were able to take time on Saturday afternoon to share the examples we had been invited to bring with us as possible extracts for the Close Relationships topic. In small groups we shared the extracts we had chosen and talked about them and what sub-headings we might want to see in the topic. We had been asked to consider if we would be willing to offer to be part of this new topic group. I was aware both of the need of the group and my own current challenges, and was mightily relieved when the number of ‘offer-

ees’ meant that I would not be needed.

We had worked hard all day, so were very happy to reconvene for a short, light, session Saturday evening. I had not known that our Friend Geoffrey Carnall had a love of rhyming couplets. His daughter Rosie had brought a very short play Geoffrey had written many years ago, describing Art Ender’s first visit to a Quaker Meeting and his search for enlightenment as to the nature of Quakers. Volunteer readers had been asked for – and Rosie had asked me if I’d read God’s part, which I gladly did [though I was sad not

to be able to follow the stage direction that I should be seated on top of a stepladder and veiled until it was my turn to speak...]. It was a fitting end to a strenuous day.

On Sunday we considered our co-clerks' proposed report to Meeting for Sufferings in December: I commend it to you [when it becomes public] as a superb summary of what we've achieved so far, our immediate next steps, and our longer-term timetable. The Close Relationships group was appointed, and additional members found to act temporarily for those of us who have had to step aside for a while. Our own Nominations group had been unable to find names to bring forward as Elder or new member of the Communicating with Friends group. This reflects both everyone's 'stretched' state and the number of committee members who have, for various reasons, had to step back or be released from our work. Some of our members are coming to the end of the three years for which they were appointed. At our next meeting we will need to set up topic groups to work on Yearly Meeting Structures and Resources & Stewardship. The conversation about how the work of several of our topics fits together may also result in changes to our groups.

Before our closing worship, we approved our **key messages**:

1. *We are glad to be on track to share a first complete draft of the new book for Yearly Meeting 2027, with a finished draft for Yearly Meeting to agree for publication in 2030.*
2. *We have produced some Diversity & Inclusion A&Q for use in drafting content.*
3. *We are exploring further ways of sharing draft content with Friends more widely.*
4. *We have started working with Britain Yearly Meeting Content and Publications Team to think through the process for producing content for publication in multiple formats.*
5. *We welcome the new OWL audio and visual technology provided by BYM that has enabled us to have a more effective and inclusive blended meeting.*

This report may not read with the zing! of some of my previous ones – I, like others on your committee, am finding it hard to balance and find energy for 'personal' and 'Quaker' in my life. More than ever, we can't do this work without your prayerful support.

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## 4 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

### 4.1 Wangari's Trees of Peace & Peace Education Exhibition in Parliament

**Sarah Komashko, Parliamentary Engagement Officer**

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself to those for whom my name is new: I'm Sarah Komashko and I started in July as the new Parliamentary Engagement Officer (PEO) working in Scotland to articulate Quaker views to politicians and civil servants, and supporting Quakers to engage with and influence the Scottish political process. It's been a busy first few months, picking up the reins of the previous PEO Andrew Tomlinson, and working in particular with Carolyn Burch and Richard Raggett, the co-conveners of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG), as well as the wider PEWG members. I'll be attending General Meeting on 11 November and hope to meet even more Scottish Friends in person there.

One of the main focuses of my work recently, and the focus of this article, has been an event and exhibition which took place in the Scottish Parliament on 21 and 26-28 September respectively. Building on a previous motion in the Scottish Parliament supporting the release of the Quaker Peace Education report "Peace at the Heart", we worked with the support of Michelle Thomson MSP to put on these events. Michelle also submitted a new motion calling for greater recognition and funding of peace education across Scotland, which many MSPs from different political parties have signed.

Peace education is already indirectly in the Scottish curriculum, being part of the Sustainable Development Goals and falling under 'Learning for Sustainability' which all Scottish schools should be teaching. However, provision can be patchy, and a lot depends on the willingness of each local authority to encourage teachers within its boundaries to incorporate it into their lessons. We hoped with the event, exhibition, and motion, to raise the profile of peace education and have it more firmly embedded in all Scottish schools.

#### **Wangari's Trees**

The event on 21 September (International Peace Day) was a performance by a group of Primary 6s from Oakgrove School in Glasgow of a musical version of the story of Wangari Muta Maathai.



Photograph 9: The children in front of the Scottish Parliament. With some of the children visiting Edinburgh for the first time, excitement was high!

The project had started last year with Mary Troup, a Friend from Glasgow, who was volunteering with the school. Mary shared the picture story, Wangari's Trees of Peace by Jeanette Winter, with the Primary 5 children. Wangari is famous for founding Kenya's Green Belt Movement and leading mass action for reforestation despite political intimidation. The children were excited by the story, and using Mary's skills as a musician, and in collaboration with the class teacher, the class wrote, composed and choreographed their own performance to tell the story of the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Three Royal Conservatoire students worked with the pupils to help them with the composition, and also attended the performance in Parliament.

The performance went without a hitch – and there was a great response from MSPs with ten attending the event. The MSPs' interest was captivated by the engaging and enthusiastic display from the young people – quite a different sort of event from the normal meetings and powerpoint presentations that MSPs are exposed to!



Photograph 10: The children, their teacher, Mary Troup, the Conservatoire students, and MSPs Michelle Thomson, Claire Baker, Liam Kerr, and Foysoil Choudhury after the performance.

Colleagues Ellis Brooks and Izzy Cartwright from the QPSW peace education team at BYM were also in attendance at this event, as were a number of contacts from the peace education space and from EIS, the teaching union. Following the parliamentary event we had a networking meeting with these guests which left all participants with newly strengthened links and ideas for how best to promote peace and global citizenship education to Scottish schools. In particular, Ellis connected to Charlotte from IDEAS/ScotDec who do a lot of work on global citizenship education, and has since had the opportunity to connect in relation to their advocacy goals and how our interests on peace education are aligned.

### **Peace education exhibition**

The following week (26 to 28 September), it was time for our peace education stall to be erected at the doors to the Debating Chamber. Ellis and Izzy had done a great job in putting this together, both in the forms of panels and a video display showcasing the Wangari's Trees event and some interviews with peer mediators. For anyone interested in seeing the videos, they may be found at the following web-address: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/peace-education/peace-education-case>.

Placed right at the heart of the Parliament for three days, this gave us an excellent opportunity to speak with MSPs as they came by – many of whom made a point of coming after having been invited by their constituents, show-



Photograph 11: Sarah Komashko, Richard Raggett, and Carolyn Burch standing in front of the exhibition.

ing the difference that an email to your local constituency or regional MSP can made.

MSPs from all parties stopped to spend time with us, leading to addi-



Photograph 12: Cath Dyer speaking to Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP.

tional signatures on Michelle Thomson’s motion, and the chance to speak to them about the benefits of peace education and especially peer mediation, for helping children and young people learn to understand themselves and each other, and how to cope with disagreement. MSPs also enjoyed identifying

which ‘conflict animal’ they (or their colleagues!) were, and some took the time to write on a peace heart what ‘peace’ meant for them and how we can gather it.



Photograph 13: Sarah Komashko, Graham Boyack (Scottish Mediation), Ivan McKee MSP, and Carol Jennings in front of the peace education stand.

As well as Friends on the stand, we were joined by Graham and Heather from Scottish Mediation, who have successfully run peer mediation projects in all schools in Fife and with whom Ellis and Izzy have collaborated previously. Graham and Heather were able to speak to MSPs about the particular benefits of peer mediation.

Our very last visitor was Humza Yousaf MSP, fresh out of First Minister’s questions. He spoke with us about our aims, and took away a Peace at the Heart executive summary paper for further consideration.

### **Next steps for the peace education (and the exhibition)**

The peace education exhibition wasn’t put together just for Parliament: it’s already been, and is continuing to go, on a further tour around Scotland. So far, as well as Holyrood it’s been displayed at Pluscarden Abbey for the North Scotland Area Meeting; the Educational Institute of Scotland conference; the Carnall Peace Awards; the Stair Community Centre (West Scotland Area Meeting); and Glasgow Meeting House. It will also be at the AK Bell Library, Perth on 18-21 October; and at the Alloa Spiers Centre on 16-18 November. More dates are still to be arranged, and if your local meeting would be able





Photograph 14: Ellis Brooks, Heather Zajac, Humza Yousaf MSP, Graham Boyack, Sarah Komashko, and Richard Raggett in front of the peace education stand.

and willing to host the exhibition then please email [ZoeP@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ZoeP@quaker.org.uk) to discuss when the exhibition might be free.

While the photos in Parliament show several aspects to the exhibition, it has been designed to scale up and down so can fit in very small or very large spaces! We took the peace hearts and conflict animals to Parliament, but there are other potential interactive elements which can also be included depending on your target audience. As I said at the beginning of this article, peace education provision can differ from local authority to local authority, so hosting the exhibition and inviting your local school teachers along can be a great way of increasing their awareness of peace education and the resources that are available for them to teach it.

*All photos for this article are courtesy of Sarah Komashko..*

## 5 Community Matters

### 5.1 West Scotland Area Meeting Learning Group – a work in progress

Sheila Semple, West Scotland AM

How are we to support the learning of Friends and attenders in our Area Meetings? Building from the base of a learning group serving Glasgow meeting, this Area Meeting-wide group was formed this year, a sub-group of WSAM elders. (Note – we are defining ‘learning’ broadly to include learning activities, spiritual nurture and community development.)

How do we know what the learning needs of Friends (including attenders) are? We started by doing a structured survey of all local meetings through interviewing the elders of the meetings, covering, amongst others:

- Particular features of your LM that might impact on learning needs or ways of delivering learning
- What has been happening in your LM to support and encourage learning activities, spiritual nurture and community development amongst Friends?
- How are learning needs identified, as an elder what seem to you to be the learning needs of your LM, and what is planned?

We analysed the results, producing a report for WSAM in August. This was accepted, so all we needed to do was to make some of the recommendations happen! So far, we have produced the beginnings of a newsletter on learning opportunities available in Autumn 2023, including Woodbrooke (the Quaker Study Centre) events in Glasgow and Edinburgh, a Joseph Rowntree Foundation seminar on Poverty in Scotland, a series of 5 discussion/worship sharing groups on Five Spiritual Waymarkers of Quakerism (material provided by Stuart Masters of Woodbrooke, available on Zoom across the Area Meeting and in small physically present groups in Glasgow). We hope to add more in to this list.

It was clear that some LMs had structured programmes of learning, and we hope that these LMs will be willing to offer at least some of these across the Area Meeting. We’ve also made a start on a calendar of events for 2024, with our aim being that there should be at least one learning experience each month, available either by Zoom only, blended or physically present.

We hope to make links with what is happening across Scotland, and beyond,

and to work closely with Woodbrooke, and would very much like to open these discussions!

(Anyone who would like a copy of our final report, or of the set of questions we used to interview elders, or the short questionnaire that we produced to ask individual Friends about their learning experiences and needs... please contact Sheila Semple [sheila.semple@btinternet.com](mailto:sheila.semple@btinternet.com).



## 5.2 Thank you! to the Quaker Mental Health Fund Mary Woodward, SE Scotland AM

During lockdown, a very dear friend of mine experienced serious mental health difficulties. I knew about the Quaker Mental Health Fund's short-term grants, which would pay for six free sessions with a therapist from the Retreat in York, and encouraged him to apply. He found the on line sessions invaluable for helping him cope with his isolation during this difficult period.

One Sunday some time later, I found myself bursting into floods of tears on three separate occasions. I had thought that I was pretty okay, but this suggested that I was probably not as okay as I thought. Mindful of my friend's experience, I sent a quick email to the Quaker Mental Health Fund, outlining my situation and wondering whether I would qualify for their short-term therapy sessions.

The following day I received an email saying "Mary, this is exactly what the sessions are designed for". I filled in the attached form and by the Wednesday had got an appointment with one of their therapists. The six sessions, spread over a number of weeks, enabled me not only to look at my life and identify the things that were causing me so much [di]stress, but also to work out strategies to help prevent similar meltdowns in future. These strategies were put to the test – I was unexpectedly hospitalized before I had had my final session, and was very grateful for all I had learned about looking after and protecting myself and learning to say "no".

If that were all, I would have reason enough to be grateful to the Quaker Mental Health Fund, but the story doesn't end there. I realised during a visit to my daughter's that I still had serious unresolved issues around my separation and divorce from my husband some decades ago. I tried unsuccessfully to get free counselling sessions near where I live [my income is not big] – so I thought I'd approach the Fund and see if they could help.

The short-term counselling sessions are a 'one-off' offer, but I was told that each individual applicant could receive up to £1,000 from the Fund – so there was still some money I could use to fund some sessions. I was offered the possibility of sessions with a therapist near where I live, but I preferred to reconnect with the therapist whom I'd seen previously and with whom I'd got on so very well for some further sessions. I found it most helpful that she already knew me so we didn't need to spend time establishing my personal situation before we got down to work.

Without going into detail, I have to say the sessions were little short of mirac-

ulous. With a lot of hard work on my part, and kindly and loving support on my therapist's, I was able to lay down a burden I'd been carrying for decades – and, incidentally, experience a 'knock-on' effect on other difficult relationships in my past and present life. It was amazingly freeing, and I am extremely grateful to the Fund for what they have enabled me to do.

Do, please, bear in mind that help exists, and it's not a sign of weakness to ask for it – you don't have to suffer alone! The Quaker Mental Health Fund can be contacted via their website [www.quakermhfund.uk](http://www.quakermhfund.uk), by phone 07395 565 428 or by email [grants@quakermhfund.uk](mailto:grants@quakermhfund.uk).



Photograph 15: Quaker Meeting House, Settle.

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### 5.3 Sex, gender and trans questions

#### Robin Waterston, East Scotland AM

In simpler times, the words sex and gender had a fairly clear meaning. Sex was biologically determined, gender referred to socially conditioned expectations and behaviours. We tried to bring up our children with freedom to be themselves as they grew up, unconstrained as far as we could by stereotypes of male or female roles. **December 2020**

At the end of 2020 I was shocked by the resignation of the much-respected MSP and land campaigner Andy Wightman from the Green Party, of which I am a member. What was this about?

It turned out to be about the concept of sex and gender. Things were becoming more complicated. An amendment to legislation before the Scottish Parliament had been discussed on the subject of victims of sexual assault being able to choose a forensic examiner of the same sex as themselves. The Green Party wanted sex to be replaced by gender in the wording. This was to recognise that people could feel or be a different gender from their biological sex, and that using gender in the legislation was more respectful of trans people. But Wightman thought this was not respectful of women who had suffered trauma from a man. In the event, MSPs voted for sex in the legislation.

I took part in several discussions in the Party at the time, and realised how strongly many people felt. There were those who argued that trans people were systematically discriminated against in society, and they had rights under the 2010 Equality Act (UK) which were being ignored. And there were those who argued that women had rights too, including under the Equality Act, for example to safe single-sex spaces for women in refuges. Language became more complicated. Is a trans woman a woman under the Act? The public debate became more heated, more polarised.

#### **August 2021**

In 2021, Yearly Meeting Gathering was held online, open to all Quakers. One of the sessions was on inclusion of trans people. There was a prepared introduction and subsequent discernment. The Minute concluded “We seek to provide places of worship and community that are welcoming and supportive to trans and non-binary people who want to be among us”. But there was also recognition that we need to keep listening and searching together, and reference to conflicts over legislation reform.

Throughout this period, and until December 2022, the Scottish Government was consulting on the proposed reform to the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (UK). This process produced widespread interest and concern, but the debate became ever more acrimonious. Public demonstrations even included banners urging violence against opponents. The legal battle between the Scottish and UK governments on the subject continues.

What have Quakers said about all this? Very little since August 2021, until



Photograph 16: Water fountain at Dumfries House.

recently. The Epistle from YMG 2021 said “We have discovered the challenges of attempting to make statements as a unified ‘we’ in a way that acknowledges the different experiences among us”. But can we find a way of bringing our tradition of respectful listening across deep divides to assist in reducing the level of toxicity in the public debate? We did this in Northern Ireland. The same Epistle said “Prophets are visionaries, calling out those in power, and reconcilers stand in the middle of conflict. In this, both run great risks”. I believe that on the trans issue, we could have a valuable role as reconcilers. We can show that there is a way to show empathy to both trans people and to those who have suffered trauma from abusive men. Our Meetings contain many women finding a place of safety with us.

## July 2023

At the end of July this year, a statement was issued by the Yearly Meeting Recording Clerk that has attracted considerable comment. It was headed “Quakers in Britain pledge to stand with trans community”. It gave support to a pledge by a group called Charity so Straight to “support the rights of trans, non-binary and gender-diverse communities”. Its first sentence was that “Quakers believe that all people are equal, and that gender and sexuality are sacred gifts”.

Referring to gender as a sacred gift goes well beyond any public Quaker discernment, and is not language that we would expect to use. The meaning of gender is part of the divide. I believe that making this statement makes it more difficult for Quakers to play a reconciling role.

When questions like “What is gender?”, “What is a woman?” give rise to such strongly expressed responses, and positions become ever more entrenched, the people who suffer worst are the most vulnerable. These are trans people who just want to live their lives unmolested, and women whose emotional security depends on being able to access spaces that will not trigger past traumas. Can we help those speaking on behalf of these groups to listen better and be more respectful? And to model this ourselves?

### Transphobia

We know that discussing these questions can be hard. There is in addition a major issue of contention about how schools and the NHS respond to young people expressing doubts about their gender. One of the difficulties is that accusations of transphobia can arise, when no hatred is felt or intended. Transphobia can be defined in such a wide way that it precludes discussion of, for example, whether social media interactions among clusters of friends can influence perceptions of gender. This then shuts down serious discussion.

### Where now?

I believe that as Quakers we can get beyond this. I hope we can listen respectfully and discern among ourselves, and thus be better prepared for wider conversations.

Our goal is to live in the spirit of Advices and Queries 17 and 18.



## 5.4 A proposal on working with male refugees Neil Crabtree, North Scotland AM

The most demonised refugees are single men who are often vilified in the media as being economic refugees and not escaping war or environmental upheaval. They are regarded as a threat and not worthy of asylum except in barges and ex-military camps. Many are regarded as potential, if not actual, criminals. They are vulnerable to poverty, crime, hatred and violence and thought needs to go into these people. The current situation cannot be allowed to continue, and I suggest that those concerned about their welfare start to imagine a near future in which single males are welcomed into communities and supported. In a previous article I described a future in which these men receive full benefits plus seventy pounds a week for working with an obliging employer, in their field of interest; undertake voluntary work, or study. Families are paid two hundred pounds a week for providing board and lodgings.

I also mentioned the use of volunteer befrienders, and this probably needs to be looked into further. I think there is a role here for working class men and these are notoriously difficult to involve in voluntary community activity. Apart from feeling that their full-time work constitutes voluntary work as it is, the problem also stems from not wanting to go alone, lack of confidence and a fear of embarrassing themselves, especially in the eyes of their friends.

Sometime ago now, I was working with young care leavers, and I designed a befriending initiative where a group of volunteers were lightly trained to befriend a group of care leavers. This was attractive to the volunteers as they were not going in on their own and there was no self-conscious one-to-one relationships. The situation was fluid and depended on the activity or moment. As a consequence, the two groups built a relationship within which there was friendships and support for the care leavers.

In my mind, such an initiative could be designed to work with male refugees, with working class men as the volunteers. Many refugees are going to end up living in these areas and they are going to feel isolated and threatened. On the other hand, there are many thoughtful and kind men who would be keen to step forward if they were not on their own. Activities could involve taking refugees to football matches, playing indoor and outdoor football, playing various activities in sports halls, visiting snooker halls, trips to cinemas and music venues, joining working men's clubs and introducing them to community clubs and organisations.

It is not impossible to imagine this. Community Service Volunteers, for example, have a national expertise in volunteering and a Quaker approach might be

listened to. Similarly, in the world of football steps have been made to stamp out racism and homo phobia, so why not hatred against refugees? Could clubs be encouraged to adopt refugees?

Although it is difficult to imagine such a scenario in the current political climate, something has to give and I suggest that those who are concerned with refugees, start sharing their visions of a positive future.



## 6 Poetry corner

### Lysana Robinson, North Scotland AM

#### 6.1 Making sense of turmoil

Sitting in silence for an hour every Sunday morning since the War in Ukraine began, I have waited for words to arrive. Words which I hoped would help me make sense of the turmoil in the world beyond the contrasting, idyllic view from my home in Skye. I do not amend or correct the writing later, so they are not polished poetry, rather they are musings and insights captured within the one hour each week.

I hope they bring balance and positivity, without judgement. I hope to continue writing each week until there is peace in Ukraine. Here are three recent ones: 78<sup>th</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> Sundays of War.

#### 6.2 Seventy eighth Sunday of War

Sun and scudding clouds today  
pushed along by a warm breeze  
coming in from the Atlantic.  
A strangely almost tranquil scene.

The sky is now empty of swallows.  
Other birds, also preparing for winter,  
have nothing much to say these days,  
all except my gardening companion Robin,  
who's singing September a little early.

This turning of the seasons feels  
so very rhythmical and comforting.  
Yet beyond my view, I'm told there's  
chaos, wild-fires, floods and war.  
I'm going outside to admire flowers.

They'll tell me their own story,  
how they've evolved and adapted  
over eons, their wisdom will guide me  
to nurture beauty, harmony and peace.

### 6.3 Eightieth Sunday of War

What tells the moon to come closer,  
to bring higher tides depositing seaweed,  
conveniently for us to fertilise our land,  
as she cleans the shore twice daily?

The Super Blue Moon obeyed this week.

Who tells the swallows to fly south  
to over-winter in Africa's warmer clime,  
replaced by hungry Redwing and Fieldfare  
feasting on our autumn's bountiful berries?

This twice yearly change-over just happens.

A honey bee Queen brings stability and order  
to her colony, each devoted bee fulfilling  
their specific role to benefit the whole,  
intricate messaging ensures unified action.

Without her leadership the hive perishes.

Where does humanity find selfless leaders  
to serve our vast diverse community?  
Each of us has a role uniquely ours  
to perform for the Greater Good.

Our Guidance arises from within.



## 6.4 Eighty fourth Sunday of War

Summer's lush vibrant green  
is now decorated with gold  
and red autumnal jewellery.

I see the weeping willow,  
still wearing her summer frock,  
is dancing with the wind.

Mist shrouded mountains hide,  
their white winter coat  
is still in the wardrobe.

White horses are cantering  
across the Sound chasing  
the high tide ashore.

Fatigues and camouflage  
are still the dress code  
for Ukraine's brave defenders.

I'll gaze into the flames  
of a cosy fire tonight,  
and dream of World Peace.



## 7 Notices

### 7.1 Giving Advocates



## Giving Advocates

Could you talk about money and giving with Friends in your local or area meeting? Could you offer encouragement to Friends who may not know how vital their support is to Quakerism? If yes, BYM needs you to be part of our network of Giving Advocates.



Giving Advocates are Friends from all over Britain supported by the BYM Fundraising Team. Some are treasurers or collectors and others simply want to make sure that the work of area meeting **and** yearly meeting is resourced. As one Friend said, *'Quaker work cannot live on air and love alone'*. We meet four or five times a year via Zoom. We provide support to each other, discuss challenges and share ideas and resources. Whether you are a treasurer, collector or just someone interested in talking about money/giving, we'd love to see you there. Email [beth@quaker.org.uk](mailto:beth@quaker.org.uk) for more information.


## 7.2 Naming the Mystery

In meeting for worship, we come together in expectant waiting and to listen – but what are we waiting for? And what are we listening to? This Woodbrooke day event at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House will play with ways to name this mystery, sometimes known as God, Spirit, Love, or Light. For more information visit: [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/naming-the-mystery/](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/naming-the-mystery/)

**Naming the  
Mystery**

**£35**

**SATURDAY  
18 NOVEMBER**  
10:00-16:00  
Edinburgh Quaker  
Meeting House

  
**WOODBROOKE**



Photograph 17: St Aidan's statue, Holy Island.



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