

SESAME

Number 253: March 2024

AM on 23 March/PEO news/Gender-based Violence: Zoom session/#Stop EACOP/Mayors for Peace Appeal/'Essentials of Quakerism'/World Day of Prayer/NFPB/ Peace publication – *contributions invited*/M^{ts} for Sufferings/General M^{ts}/Two Poems/Woodbrooke Courses, April-June/'What happens in Meeting for Worship'/BDRC *key messages*/Christian Aid/Abolishing Prison – *a conversation*/HELP! – *accommodation needed*/February Minutes/ ... etcetera



Area Meeting at Polmont will be followed by a CEILIDH; possibly with dancing, certainly with music – probably not on bagpipes. If YOU have a party piece you might contribute to the entertainment, or have any questions, please contact ANNA LEVIN, who is coordinating the arrangements.

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Send material for the next issue to Alan Frith (ar.frith@btinternet.com) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 23 April**. The Editor reserves the right to condense articles. If possible, please submit articles by email. A paper copy of *Sesame* is posted to anyone who requests it (free, but normally limited to one per household). The email version, in PDF format, goes to all on the Area Meeting list whose email address is known. Contact the Editor if you wish to change how you receive it.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be at Greenpark Community Centre, Greenpark Drive, Polmont FK2 0PZ on Saturday 23 March. It will be hosted by Polmont Local Meeting, and children and young people are particularly welcome. It will be a highly social occasion, with a ceilidh to end the afternoon. Our meeting is open to all associated with the Society of Friends in South East Scotland, Attenders as well as Members.

Arrival time will be from 10.15 am, with our business starting at 10.45 with a period of all-age worship. We should each bring our own lunch. Polmont Friends will provide refreshments: tea, coffee, cake and biscuits. Additional home baking will be much appreciated. We plan to finish with tea and cake and be away around 4.30 pm.

If you are planning to bring children, please let me know in advance, with a note of their ages, as this allows for good planning. Denise Marshall at Polmont will co-ordinate children's activities, and needs help from parents or others: again, please let me know at clerk.sesam@outlook.com if you can offer this and I'll pass the word on. There will be two children's sessions: from 11.00 am to lunchtime, and at 2.00 pm for a further hour.

Business in the morning session will include considering the issue of ecocide; and hearing a report on the warm space at 7 Victoria Terrace over January and February. **Please notify me of any further agenda items.**

In the afternoon we will be discussing how we can care for each other within our Meetings and different ways to do this, including the roles of elders and pastoral care teams. We will then move seamlessly into our ceilidh. This will be a sharing of talent – music, jokes, poetry, recitations or whatever you'd like to offer. We hope to manage some ceilidh dancing, but mostly it will be an old-style, round-the-fireplace type of event, building on the theme, to reflect on how we show love and care for one another in our meetings.

Contributions to the entertainment are welcome from all; Anna Levin's family will be coordinating the afternoon, so please let them know what you'd like to do. If you're not sure, or have any queries, please contact Anna. Your Clerk will be bringing his mandolin...

Alastair Cameron
Clerk, South East Scotland Area Meeting

The figures on the cover are by Albrecht Dürer. He did also depict a mandolin player (an angel!), but in an oil painting, not a black & white engraving to match these. ED.

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 12 February 2024
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
4. Decision by between-meeting procedure
 1. *Appointment to Junior Yearly Meeting 2024*
5. Membership matters:
 1. *Applications*
 2. *Report on membership visit*
 3. *Transfers*
6. Matters from local meetings and trustees
 1. *Proposal – Afghan refugee support*
 2. *Wiston Lodge weekend* [See page 25]
 3. *Ecocide*
 4. *East African Crude Oil Pipeline* [See page 8]
7. Financial matters
8. General Meeting matters
 1. *Report on meeting of 9 March* [See page 16]
 2. *Appointment of reporter for next meeting*
 3. *Dates for 2025* [See page 17]
9. Reports and correspondence
10. Appointments: from Nominations Committee
Lunch
11. Caring for each other – followed by ceilidh
12. Closing minute

In preparation for the discussion on Ecocide, item 6.3, Friends might care to re-read the articles in Sesame 250 by Janet Saunders and Hilary Saunders of Bristol AM, following the STOP ECOCIDE event at Redland QMH in September; and see also the update regarding the Energy Charter Treaty ('Good News') on page 35.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Thursday 21 March: 6.00 – 8.00 pm, Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House

At the first of a monthly series of events, some in-person some online, Edinburgh Interfaith Association introduces a new Anti-racist Champions Programme. Geoff Palmer, Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University, will speak on "Understanding racism: its history and legacy". Please register at:

https://www.ticketsource.c.uk/edinburgh-interfaith-association/tqjgdeox?mc_cid=7f6622ba33&mc_eid=9541839030

Updates from Holyrood

In February, our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, had a letter from Richard Lochhead MSP, the Scottish Government minister responsible for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade, responding to questions first raised with his predecessor (Ivan McKee MSP) by her predecessor (Andrew Tomlinson): the crisis in Palestine; the delayed establishment of a Scottish Peace Institute (due to have opened in 2023); and, in particular, issues relating to overseas trade: arms sales to Israel, and continuing concern that Scottish Enterprise, a Government agency, is supporting firms that profit from conflict, an issue raised in 2021 in respect of the war in Yemen. At that time, Ivan McKee, who had spoken out against the war, passed on assurances from Scottish Enterprise that the sales it promotes are of products with peaceful purposes, but this has been challenged, most recently in November 2023, see <https://theferret.scot/scottish-enterprise-criticised-human-rights-checks/>

All these issues are addressed in the letter.

Israel-Gaza Conflict

Richard Lochhead reaffirms the Scottish Government's support for *a two-state solution that respects the human rights of everyone in the region to ensure that a secure Israel can live peacefully alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state*

and its view that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal and make progress harder. He adds:

There can be no doubt, however, that the Israel-Gaza conflict, alongside the Russian invasion of Ukraine, demonstrates that we are indeed living in a time of increased and considerable global uncertainty

– which a sceptic might read as the language of those urging greater military spending; Angus Robertson MSP and Alyn Smith MP have both written recently about Scotland's future role in NATO, and in response our Friend Janet Fenton wrote in *The National* on 5 March on "Why SNP must not U-turn on support for Nobel-prize winning anti-nuclear campaign" [i.e. TPNW] - her article can be found at <https://muckrack.com/janet-fenton/articles>.

Scottish Peace Institute

The independent report recommending the establishment of a Scottish Peace Institute is here:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/foi-eir-release/2023/12/update-on-what-researchers-have-said-regarding-the-establishment-of-a-peace-institute-foi-release/documents/foi---202200318448---final-report---review-to-inform-the-development-of-the-scottish-peace-institute/foi---202200318448---final-report---review-to-inform-the-development-of-the-scottish-peace-institute/govscot%3Adocument/FOI%2B-%2B202200318448%2B-%2BFinal%2BReport%2B-%2BReview%2Bto%2Binform%2Bthe%2Bdevelopment%2Bof%2Bthe%2BScottish%2BPeace%2BINstitute.pdf>

Richard Lochhead blames the financial situation ("*the most challenging since devolution*") for the fact that

ministers have reluctantly agreed to delay further work on the Peace Institute until later in this Parliamentary term

but he goes on:

The Scottish Government remains committed to peacebuilding and, since 2016 we have funded the Women in Conflict Fellowship (£2.1m to 2024 – £300,000 per year) to provide fellowships for women peacebuilders all over the world. To date this has provided training to almost 350 women peacebuilders in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

He also says, in relation to other work postponed:

I understand you [i.e. Quakers] asked Mr McKee for a consideration of what – if any – potential there is within current ministerial powers around conditionalities that could be introduced to bar some companies from receiving government support. That work was delayed [...] Currently, resource has to be prioritised toward dealing with the immediate economic situation and supporting all sectors of the Scottish economy. Therefore, work in this area will also, unfortunately, have to be delayed until the current situation has stabilised.

It might be wondered how much resource would be needed simply to consider the issue, and why it would not, in any case, be a matter of interest to ministers to know the extent of their own powers.

Free Trade Agreements (FTA) - correspondence with the UK Government

In *Scotland's Vision for Trade* (the second annual report on which is online at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-vision-trade-annual-report-june-2023/>)

the Scottish Government commits itself to use trade to project its principles internationally –

operating as a good global citizen and trading partner, respecting international law, supporting human rights and seeking to build global relationships on trade; and ensuring that international trading partners comply with fundamental human rights law

– an approach which Richard Lochhead says informs its input to the UK Government in relation to FTA negotiations.

We believe that FTAs should have clear human rights commitments, which require all parties to commit to relevant international human rights standards, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and core International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions.

Our position is that human rights impact assessments should be carried out at the outset of preparations for FTA negotiations and updated throughout the process [...] Engagement with NGOs and human rights defenders in countries entering into agreements – either directly or through our own domestic NGOs – should be carried out. Monitoring and ex-post assessment should also be undertaken.

Since the UK Government does *not* undertake human rights impact assessments in advance of negotiations, the Scottish Government prepares its own, and provides one as part of its response to each UK FTA. It has raised concerns around specific FTAs, and Richard Lochhead's letter cites in particular Ivan McKee's doing so over the trade agreement with Israel, see

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-israel-trade-agreement-letter-from-the-minister-for-business-trade-tourism-and-enterprise/>

Sarah Komashko points out that the Scottish Government may need to put its own house in order on this; Humza Yousaf can be watched being questioned by *The National* on grants to firms selling weapons to Israel, at:

<https://twitter.com/ScotNational/status/1762099413344809028?s=20>

Meeting with Scottish Enterprise

A meeting with representatives of Scottish Enterprise, probably by Zoom or Teams, to discuss human rights and due diligence checks, is to take place in April or May.

[With thanks to **Sarah Komashko**; for more from her, see page 25.]



EAPPI | Ecumenical Accompaniment
Programme in Palestine and Israel

Becoming an EA

We call our human rights monitors *Ecumenical Accompaniers*, or EAs for short. EAs spend three months in Palestine and Israel witnessing and monitoring human rights violations and standing in solidarity with local peace activists. When they come home, they give talks in their local communities and advocate for an end to the military occupation of Palestine.

EAs need to be flexible, hard-working, physically and emotionally robust, open to hearing from different perspectives, and able to represent the programme in a professional manner. No previous monitoring experience is required. Expenses will be paid and a living allowance provided.

To apply, please see www.quaker.org.uk/applyeappi. The closing date is **SUNDAY 14 APRIL 2024**, at 5.00 pm.

We recruit a year in advance, so are looking for applicants who can serve in 2025. We provide in-depth training and resources to help EAs to prepare.

EAPPI stands against all forms of discrimination and prejudice, including but not limited to antiblackness, antisemitism, classism, homophobia, islamophobia, racism and sexism, understanding that these often overlap.

We want to build an inclusive and diverse network of EAs and particularly welcome applications from those usually under-represented as EAs, particularly people from Black communities, People of Colour, and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Applicants from these groups who meet the minimum requirements for the role are guaranteed an interview.

EAPPI is a church programme but is open to all and there is no requirement to be Christian or involved in a church. We welcome applications from people of all faiths and none.

Is gender-based Violence a Quaker concern?

Our current economic system of growth and development will always lead to inequality and exploitation, including gender-based violence.

What does love ask of us as Quakers?



ON ZOOM on Thursday 21 March at 7.30pm, we will ask *Is gender-based violence a Quaker concern?* The event is being organised by West Scotland Area Meeting's Gender-based Violence concern.

Amongst our concerns for equality and justice is the place of our patriarchal economic system that creates hierarchy and exploitation, with misogyny at its root. The oppressive nature of the society thus created puts violence at its core. What change can we foster without tackling the violence within each one of us? How are we going to do this?

Let's meet to discern a way forward. To register and receive the link, email [**wsam.gbv@gmail.com**](mailto:wsam.gbv@gmail.com).

[With thanks to **Margaret Roy** (WSAM) for passing this on.]

The date of the next Act of Witness at FASLANE (and the associated one in Princes Street Gardens) is 21 APRIL; thereafter on 19 MAY. Worship starts at 11.00 am at Faslane, at 10.30 in Edinburgh; something to sit on and weatherproof clothing are needed at both.

Support the campaign to #STOPEACOP

As *Sesame* readers know, the French oil giant Total SA and CNOOC, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, plan to build EACOP (the East African Crude Oil Pipeline) a 1,443 km pipeline carrying electrically-heated crude oil through the territory of two African states. (For the route, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEqOdlO8kS4>.) Starting from oilfields near Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park, it would displace hundreds of communities, endangering wildlife and tipping the planet closer to full-blown climate catastrophe.

EACOP would on its own cause higher CO₂ emissions than the combined annual carbon emissions of its host countries, Uganda and Tanzania!

More than 100,000 people will lose the land they farm and – because the route is through an earthquake zone – the critical freshwater source of the whole Lake Victoria basin is put at risk.

Insurance markets have a decisive role to play. **Insure Our Future** – the international coalition of organisations including UK faith leaders – is calling on companies not to insure the project: without insurance, it is difficult for it to proceed.

In the Global Week of Action in February / March, some Friends from Scotland wrote to the Directors of Tokio Marine Insurance at Lloyd's of London, urging that their company refuse to give cover to EACOP. The text of their letter, to which you can add your name, is at <https://bit.ly/tokio-letter>. If you wish to write on your own account, there is the text of a template email message at <https://www.stopeacop.net/action-email-insurers> which can be sent to executives of any of companies which are believed still to be considering backing the project; more than twenty of the leading insurers which regularly back such schemes, have publicly declared they will not be doing so in the case of EACOP. The StopEACOP website has a list of these, and an equivalent list of banks, involved in, uncommitted to, or avoiding backing the project. See <https://www.stopeacop.net/insurers-checklist> and <https://www.stopeacop.net/banks-checklist>.

The Lothian Pension Fund, which administers the pension funds of almost 90,000 members from the four local authorities in the Lothians and 59 other employers (including Scottish Water, VisitScotland and Edinburgh Napier and Heriot-Watt Universities) invests significantly in fossil fuels, despite Edinburgh City Council having called in 2022 for divestment. (The Fund sets out at <https://www.lpf.org.uk/investments/climate-change/> its policy on environmental issues.) If you a member of the Lothian pension scheme and support divestment, please email StopEACOPScot@gmail.com. With a Quakerly approach, the group is encouraging Lothian Pensions to follow their policy to prioritise Climate Change in their investment strategy.

[With thanks to **Carolyn Burch** (Joint Convenor, Parliamentary Engagement Working Group) and **Carol Jennings** (S.E. Scotland AM rep., PEWG) for passing this on.]

Mayors for Peace Joint Appeal

Calling for peaceful resolution of armed conflicts and the elimination of nuclear weapons

February 22, 2024

It has been almost two years since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. While this protracted war shows no signs of coming to an end, the global state of turmoil has intensified even further due to the conflict between armed forces in Israel and Palestine, and ongoing warfare continues to deprive countless citizens of their lives and livelihoods. On behalf of the Mayors for Peace network, we offer our sincerest condolences to all of the victims and call for a ceasefire at the earliest possible date.

Before these conflicts, the nuclear-weapon states—the US, Russia, the UK, France, and China—issued a joint statement reaffirming that “a nuclear war cannot be won.” Despite this assertion, the use of nuclear weapons has been implied as a concrete and realistic option during the course of these conflicts. Moreover, programs for the expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals are underway, as if they are countermeasures against such intimidation. These tactics have the potential to trigger a nuclear arms race.

For many long years, the atomic-bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have advocated that nuclear weapons are weapons that must never be used. Thus, we are profoundly concerned to see the public perception of nuclear weapons drastically change from weapons that must never be used to weapons that might be used amidst the current international circumstances. For all these reasons, the atomic bombed cities are greatly concerned about the increasing risk of creating another Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Now is the time for the whole of civil society to unite in fostering peace consciousness: to put an end to the use of force against cities that kills countless innocent civilians, to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and to resolve issues through dialogue.

Fellow peace-loving people of the world, we urge you to join Mayors for Peace in its efforts to create momentum to gain global support for the promotion of the culture of peace—a culture in which each of us thinks about peace in our daily lives and puts it into practice—to take root across civil society. Let us foster this shared value to create an environment that does not legitimize war, conflict, discrimination, prejudice, or any other forms of violence.

We urge all policymakers to fully embrace the voices of civil society for peace, and to further engage in diplomatic efforts to pursue the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue, not the use of intimidation or force. Amidst our earnest appeal, we hereby call upon the leaders to take concrete steps toward the realization of a peaceful world without nuclear weapons.

松井一寛

MATSUI Kazumi
President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor of Hiroshima

鈴木史朗

SUZUKI Shiro
Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor of Nagasaki

Essentials of Quakerism – 24 February 2024

Woodbrooke continues to foster the vital ministry of Quakers by reaching out to us wherever we are. We were delighted to welcome Ben Pink Dandelion to Edinburgh Meeting House, when he came to talk to us on the Essentials of Quakerism as part of *Woodbrooke Where You Are* – AM's programme of five whole-day sessions. There were 47 in attendance.

Listening and talking to Ben again after such a long time was very special for me. I was fortunate to have had several wonderful conversations and got to know him a little when I was a Friend in Residence at Woodbrooke.

There was so much richness and depth to the day that it is hard for me to write about it all, as I am still processing! The following are my highlights.

A tricky question, that I am sure we all get asked, is "What is a Quaker?" and part of Ben's objective was to give us the confidence to be able to answer this query. To help explore this, the day was broken into four parts; *Experience, Worship, Discernment, and Witness* – the essential elements of being Quaker.

If we turn this question "What is a Quaker?" into "What do Quakers believe?", then we can avoid describing ourselves with negatives (we *don't* have a creed, ministers *etc*) and answer positively, and include the spiritual aspect that is a core element of being Quaker.

Each topic was discussed, explored and experiences shared. Many questions were raised and the most interesting one for me was "How has being a Quaker changed your life?" How indeed! A wonderful quote that stuck out for me was "Quakers are all ministers, one to another and could be described as Rufus Jones says '.... a collective of mystics'"

Ben's local meeting has produced a leaflet which I feel gives a perfect summary of what we discussed and catches the essence of who we aspire to be.

Welcome to our Quaker Meeting!

Quakers began as a movement in the northwest of England in the 1650s and are now a global movement. There are about half a million Quakers in the world with about 20,000 spread across 500 local groups here in Britain.

These are the key elements to our Quaker faith.

We believe it is possible for everyone to have a direct experience of the Divine.

Given this, we believe that everyone is spiritually equal and of equal worth. Everyone is important and valuable. Everyone can be a 'minister', a 'precious child of God'.

Thus, we are strongly committed to social justice and peace, and oppose war and the preparation for war. We are against any practice which discriminates against another, or which threatens somebody's life.

We find our spiritual life nurtured through silence and stillness. Our 'meeting for worship' consists of us dropping into silence and stillness, into a state of 'expectant

waiting' to see what we are 'given', which may include short messages to share with the group (what we call 'ministry').

We also make our decisions as a group using this same worship method, seeking to be guided by God or the Spirit, as 'led' in the silence.

We don't follow a creed but express our spiritual experience in a variety of ways. Words don't always match the depth of our experience and we enjoy different ways of speaking about the Divine. What is most important is that we are open to be transformed through the spiritual encounter and that in turn we try and change the world to make it more just and loving for everyone.

We hope you find warm welcome here and feel free to ask any questions you may have. Our worship lasts an hour on Sunday morning and half an hour on Wednesday evenings. We always have a brew and biscuits afterwards and time to get to know each other. People of all ages are very welcome!

Katrina McCrea

World Day of Prayer - Friday 1 March 2024

"I pray you ... bear with one another in love"

Prepared by the Christian women of Palestine

It was good to be in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral on Friday morning, but indicative of the scarcity of services: it was easier to get across town on one bus than try to find my way to a less central venue. Both the city and East Lothian were reflecting the diminishing number of WDP services. Fewer and fewer church groups are willing to undertake arranging and leading the services, and numbers are generally diminishing among the congregations, too.

Katrina McCrea and I arrived quite early, and sat near the front of the nave, so I wasn't able to judge how many other people joined us. Afterwards someone suggested there may have been about a hundred people in the congregation, but in the vast and lovely space of the cathedral it wasn't easy to hear this.

The saddest thing about this year's service is that when in 2020 the Christian women of Palestine were invited to prepare a service for 2024, there was no hint that two major wars would break out on the edges of Europe. During January's Bible study session in preparation for the service, we remembered that the women who'd prepared the service were almost certainly suffering greatly and might even be dead.

During the service we heard the stories of three Palestinian Christian women – Eleonor, a member of the Greek Orthodox Church; Lina, whose aunt Shireen was a famous journalist, killed in Jenin; and Sara, a Lutheran Christian from Jerusalem, whose grandparents were forced to leave their home in Jaffa when the state of Israel came into being. Each of them told a

story of oppression and suffering at the hands of the Israelis – and yet each managed to respond in a truly Christian way, despite the terrible things that had been done to them and their families.

The intercessionary prayers had been prepared without any knowledge of the war, and two of them referenced the then current situation in Israel/Palestine. They were replaced by very moving prayers composed very recently by the Palestinian WDP arrangements committee, praying for women who right now are losing children and other family members, praying for *the healing of hearts and the restoration of peace*; for all families who have lost members, and for the end of all wars *especially in the land you called home*.

As ever, the service ended with *The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended* and, as ever, I bellowed lustily in celebration of the unending stream of prayer that encircles the globe as it rotates to face the sun and moves on towards night. Would that that stream of prayer could move peoples' hearts to think of peace and respect for people who are different from themselves ...

After the service there is usually tea-and-a-biscuit: today we had a veritable feast! There was cake galore, and a date slice traybake which was made from a recipe in the service preparation book. I didn't sample these, but didn't hold back from wraps with hummus or baba ganoush fillings, and exotic pastries I'd not met before. Round tables facilitated conversation between people from different churches, and the fact that Katrina and I are Quakers met with a warm welcome.

Next year the service will have been prepared by the women of the Cook Islands, north of New Zealand. I hope to attend, but will have come to the end of my service as Quaker rep to the Edinburgh World Day of Prayer committee. If you are interested in taking on this not very arduous but definitely interesting service, do let AM Nominations Committee know!

Mary Woodward

[*The shooting of Lina's aunt by an Israeli sniper in 2022 is the subject of a Wikipedia page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_Shireen_Abu_Akleh; mourners at her funeral were attacked by Israeli police, and her death, described as an assassination, was referred to the International Criminal Court for investigation, see:*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/16/israel-shireen-abu-aqleh-jerusalem-police>; and

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/11/shireen-abu-akleh-friends-and-family-call-for-justice-on-anniversary-of-killing>.

The recipe Mary mentions can be found at

<http://www.wdpscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-Palestine-Print-230806.pdf>.

Other Palestinian recipes collected for the World Day of Prayer are at:

<https://www.wwdp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Leeds-prep-day-Recipes-from-Palestine.pdf>]

Northern Friends Peace Board: Sheffield, 2 March 2024

Despite its being an inaccessible venue at a time of rail strikes, there was a good turnout at Sheffield Meeting House for the first meeting of 2024, and we were pleased to be joined by several local Friends for all or part of the day, as well as three interesting guest speakers, two of them present with us in person. Routine business is omitted from this report.

Israel/Gaza

Cassie Woodard, the Middle East Programme Manager at QPSW, joined us online to update us on Israel/Palestine; ahead of the meeting, she had circulated a written summary of Quaker action since the 7 October attacks. Three statements in the name of Quakers in Britain have been issued (the most recent, following the ICC's genocide ruling, was in *Sesame* 252) and, on behalf of Friends, several joint letters signed in association with NGO and interfaith partners. The Quakers in Britain website has a new page, <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/international-work/responding-to-the-current-situation-in-israel-and-palestine>,

with a link to the equivalent page on the website of FWCC-EMES [*Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe & Middle East Section*] and to an updated page of "5 solidarity actions" that are being urged by the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI). This, as regular readers know, is an international programme instituted by the World Council of Churches (WCC), which in the UK and Ireland is administered by Britain Yearly Meeting; Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) [*see page 6 for more about their role*] were withdrawn for their own safety after the 7 October attacks, but six are now back, working in East Jerusalem, and the WCC website reports their activities (<https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/eappi>).

Question to Cassie reflected the first-hand experience of many in attendance and the knowledge and engagement of others. She was asked why, in relation to the state of Israel, Quakers in Britain (*i.e.* our central organisation, not necessarily Friends as individuals) refuses to use the term 'apartheid' when both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch consider it appropriate. (See the 280-page Amnesty report from 2022 at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>

and the 2023 article by Lama Fakih and Omar Shakir of HRW at:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/05/does-israels-treatment-palestinians-rise-level-apartheid>;

and see also Ian Robertson's article in *Sesame* 251.) The tension for peacemakers between being "prophets" and "reconcilers" (as Wolf Mendl put it in his 1974 Swarthmore Lecture – the former "speaking truth to power", the latter looking to find common ground) is felt in this instance to require us, for the sake of the Accompaniment Programme, *not* to speak out, lest it be an excuse for preventing EAs doing their work. Nevertheless, Cassie said that public demonstrations of support are welcomed by Palestinians.

Ukraine publication – see the invitation opposite

Till Geiger updated us on plans for this. It has been felt right to widen its scope. An outline funding proposal has been prepared, as trustees will be seeking to raise additional funding from grant-giving bodies.

Conscientious Objectors in World War II

Barry Mills, a co-opted member of the Board, has for some years been working on a project to gather details of all the British COs who resisted military service in the Second World War; it is thought they numbered about 60,000, of whom he has identified some 11,000, working mainly from newspaper archives, but also from records at the Library at Friends House, and at the Peace Pledge Union. As well as encouraging Barry in this research, the Board has provided support in the form of staff time to assist with editing, and has publicised his findings on the website; however trustees had referred back to the Board the question of whether we might do more, so the work can be completed before the anniversary of the end of the War next year. Ellis Brooks of QPSW is now involved in the project to develop it as an educational resource, and we are happy to support this.

Nuclear weapons and TPNW

We welcomed Becky Alexis-Martin of the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, who told us of her researches into the effects of nuclear weapons on people living near test sites such as Kiritimati (Christmas Island), in what is now the Republic of Kiribati. Under colonial rule, nine British atomic tests took place in 1957-58, and 24 American H-Bomb tests in 1962. Despite its not being a party to the TPNW, the UK has, she argues, obligations under it even so (specifically under Articles 6 & 7) for conducting tests or permitting them to take place. Becky had been at MSP2 [see Janet Fenton's report in *Sesame* 251] and was very positive about the Treaty as a force for good, despite the disdain of the nuclear-weapon states.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness – update on recent and current work

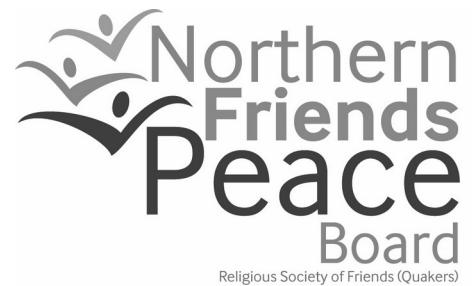
Charlotte Cooper, the Peace Lead at QPSW, joined us again; her written report highlighted three areas of work. The well-received 'Teach Peace' pack for primary schools is now augmented by an equivalent secondary pack; an event in York on 'Creative Tactics for Peace' is to take place in May (see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/events/faith-in-action-gathering-in-york-creative-tactics-for-peace>); and QPSW is gearing up for the General Election (see page 25).

Promoting peace in a belligerent world

In small groups, we reflected on the priorities, challenges and opportunities for supporting Friends – including one another – in our peace witness during the coming year.

The Board's next full meeting will be in Glasgow (and online) on Saturday 29 June; before that, we shall be meeting on Saturday 6 April for a short Zoom session which will be open to non-members of the NFPB.

Alan Frith



An Invitation

Against the background of disturbing reports of untold suffering in the Ukraine and the Middle East, many Friends are wondering how to respond to these conflicts and how we might campaign for peace in these uncertain times.

How can we speak our Truth in this moment? What can we say about our condition? What is our Witness?

Northern Friends Peace Board has supported Friends in the North and beyond by providing a different perspective on developments through its Peace Round-Ups and its website. For over a year, our Ukraine working group has encouraged Friends to share responses to the war. In February 2023, we organised an online forum with prepared ministry that invited Friends to share their feelings. At its meeting in June, NFPB adopted a statement on the war (at https://nfpb.org.uk/ukraine_nfpb_july2023/).

Building on this work, we plan to publish a collection of contributions by ten to twelve Northern Friends reflecting on the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the impact of these wars on global co-operation and climate crisis, and the meaning of our peace testimony in our time. We hope to publish this short collection in print and online in June/July 2024.

We are inviting contributions from interested Friends which reflect on current events/developments, our personal responses and our visions for the future from a Quaker perspective. *Contributions should be between 300 and 1500 words. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Philip Austin (NFPB coordinator, nfpb@gn.apc.org) or the editor Till Geiger (till.geiger@posteo.net) by the end of April, with a rough outline of your contribution.*

NFPB Ukraine working group

Possible prompt questions:

- What has your response been to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza?
- What particular issues or concerns have these raised for you and with other Quakers with whom you're in contact?
- What do you see as the challenges and opportunities in working for peace in relation to these wars?

Meeting for Sufferings: Friends House, 2 March 2024

The papers for the meeting are at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2024-03-calling-letter-agenda-papers>

and the minutes are at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>.

Our Friend Elizabeth Allen was welcomed to the table as assistant clerk.

During worship, an extract from Thomas Kelly's *Testament of Devotion* was read in which he writes of the Presence in the Midst, and we were asked to hold in the Light the innocents of Palestine who are no longer with us.

Among the Friends appointed to represent Britain Yearly Meeting at other European yearly meetings in 2024 were two from South East Scotland: Mary Woodward will again attend Finland YM on our behalf [3-5 May] and John Philips will be at Sweden YM [9-12 May].

Six Friends have appeared in court or been imprisoned as a result of their acting under concern: three in respect of climate protests, the other three having been arrested at the Defence & Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair in September.

Marisa Johnson, the new Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees spoke to the Trustees' report. She particularly wants us to remember to support those whom we appoint to serve.

We heard the report from the group to review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings. It is recommended that Meeting for Sufferings be laid down to be replaced by a 'continuing Yearly Meeting'. Despite sadness for an institution well-loved and ancient, the sense of the Meeting was clear that this is the best way forward and this report will be sent to Yearly Meeting for its discernment in July.

During the course of this meeting, we heard much about the value of meeting together for discernment, and were reminded of the words of Isaac Penington (*Quaker Faith & Practice* 10.01):

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

Jane Kelly

General Meeting for Scotland: Edinburgh, 9 March

We were joined at GM by James Patron Bell, the Ecumenical Officer for the Methodist Church in Scotland, and by Paul Goldfinch of the Scottish Episcopal Church; also (online) by Lesley Richards, of Worcestershire & Shropshire AM, convenor of the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group. Lucy le Roux of Christian Aid joined us after lunch.

Dates and host meetings for General Meeting in 2025/6

The following dates and host area meetings for 2025/26 were proposed, to be discussed at Area Meetings and approved at General Meeting in June:

2025	8 March	South East Scotland AM (<i>already agreed</i>)
	7 June	North Scotland AM
	13 or 20 September	East Scotland AM

(We usually meet on the second Saturday in September, which clashes with a BYM event for clerks; however the third Saturday may be inconvenient for other reasons.)

	8 November	South East Scotland AM
2026	7 March	West Scotland AM

Families Weekend May 2024; Summer Shindig

Mary Troup reminded us that booking is open for both these events. The Families Weekend will be at the Atholl Centre, Pitlochry, 3–5 May, with some Friends staying at nearby guesthouses; the theme is Democracy and Young People. Shindig, for 11–16 year olds, will this year take place from 27 July to 3 August, at Milport Field Studies Centre on Cumbrae, so perhaps more accessible for Scottish participants. For more information, and the application form, go to: <https://summershindig.wordpress.com>.

Trustees' annual report

Robin Waterston, clerk of GM Trustees, spoke to the report of work in 2023.

Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group

There is to be a Special General Meeting on **Saturday 6 April, 10.00 am – 1.00 pm**, for considering Area Meeting responses to the proposals from the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group (ours is in Minute 2024/03/06 – see pages 33-34). It was agreed that this meeting should be online *only*, although it was hoped that Friends who have no access to Zoom will be able to take part by joining in small groups with someone who does.

In preparation for this, the Coordinating Group was arranging two online sessions – which, however, will have taken place by the time you read this. [Since General Meeting, the Coordinating group has circulated notes to be read in preparation for the special session on 6 April – see page 20.]

Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group

Kate Philbrick, attending online, spoke to the Group's written report.

In the light of concern about the English mechanism of 'Imprisonment for Public Protection' which, although the legislation that provided for it has been repealed, still affects hundreds of people who can be recalled to prison after their release for 'offences' that are not criminal, such as being homeless or drunk [see <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2024/mar/10/family-of-man-who-took-his-own-life-criticise-indefinite-sentences-ipp>], the Group had been asked to consider whether the Scots equivalent, the Order of Lifelong Restriction, is similarly disturbing in how it operates, and concluded that it is not, although it is possible that issues with it might arise in future.

The Group is organising an event at Glasgow, and online, about prison abolition [see page 31] and Mike Nellist spoke about this. Friends' attention was drawn to a BBC Scotland documentary, filmed mainly in HMP Perth, which can be accessed at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001w5vl/disclosure-prisons-on-the-brink>

(The SQCJWG was set up in 2021 initially to work for three years; there will be an evaluation at GM in September of whether to keep it going.)

Meeting for Sufferings

Ann Kerr had provided a written report of December's Meeting for Sufferings, on which Katrina McCrea wrote in *Sesame* 251; the request for responses to a proposed change to the options for the marriage declaration at Quaker weddings has gone to Area Meetings, and so will not be brought to General Meeting unless one of the AMs refers it. The major structural changes discussed at the March meeting [see *Janes Kelly's report, page 16*] is to be on the General Meeting agenda in June. (Ann Kerr herself is on the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings, and is to be its co-convener until the work is complete.)

Nominations

As well as bringing us the names of Friends to serve in various roles (all of whom were appointed) the Nominations Committee noted that various positions are unfilled. These include a **GM Trustee from South East Scotland AM**; our Friend Katrina McCrea is a Trustee *ex officio* as GM Treasurer but we should have a Friend serving on behalf of the Area Meeting, (although not as a representative as such).

Parliamentary Engagement

Carolyn Burch, attending online, spoke to the report of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG). An event for MSPs on 13 March was being arranged as follow-up to Lesley Morrison's 'Time for Reflection' talk last year, with three speakers setting out how climate protection and human health protection measures overlap, and a showing of a 15-minute-film made for *The Lancet*, which can be watched at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16gncCVPR9xsXxIjfEduc7VldOsKY4Qj/view>

The PEWG had made a submission to the Consultation on the Scottish Government's Heat in Buildings Bill, and had encouraged Friends to do so individually. Work on peace education, following the 'Peace at the Heart' exhibition at Holyrood in September [see *Sesame* 250], is now being done mainly by Ellis Brooks of QPSW. The Group is in contact with Richard Lochhead, whose ministerial brief includes various matters of concern [see page 4]; its work on these is often in collaboration with other organisations, enabling Carolyn to introduce our guest speaker, Lucy le Roux, whose talk was the next agenda item.

Christian Aid Scotland

Lucy le Roux is Campaigns and Advocacy Coordinator for Christian Aid

Scotland, one of the organisations working alongside Quakers to promote the values we share. Her presentation was mainly on 'loss and damage' – making reparation for those consequences of climate change which are beyond the scope of 'mitigation' or 'adaptation' – an approach proposed in 1991, but which only appeared to be recognised around the time of COP26 in 2021. Lucy set out what is being done internationally (at COP28, the UN set up a global fund for making loss and damage payments, to which the UK, disappointingly, contributed only £60m, and even that was diverted from money earmarked for other action against climate change); at Holyrood; and in grassroot activism, through days of action, vigils or initiatives such as 'Creative for Climate Justice' [see page 30], as well as by letter-writing. It was, as our Minute said, an inspiring talk.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Engagement

We heard from three of the Friends who represent us in ecumenical work. **Kate Arnot** told us that the meeting of the Religious Leaders' Forum due to happen this month had been cancelled because of the impossibility of finding a date when more than a third of the leaders were free to attend; it is to be hoped that planning for the next, due in September, will begin in time for it to get into the diaries of more of them. Kate also spoke of the work of the World Day of Prayer Scottish Committee; this year's worship had been prepared by Christian women of Palestine [see page 11]. One Friend present had attended a service in Dunblane and been very moved; but we also heard that a church in Edinburgh has substituted its own order of service, the minister finding the prepared one unacceptable, a decision which was deplored as contrary to the spirit of the World Day and disrespectful to the writers and organisers. **Mary Woodward** spoke to her written report of her work as GM Ecumenical Officer; and **Nigel Dower**, online, reported briefly on QCCIR [*Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations*].

Matters not dealt with

Held over – again – was a discussion on Ecocide, and consideration of the Minute from West Scotland AM on Racial Justice: a collective response to the former (*i.e.* the proposal that there be an offence in international law which criminalises reckless damage to the environment) is still being considered by Meeting for Sufferings, and the GM Clerk is to write to the staff member at QPSW who is supporting the Ecocide Network which has been set up (but which is not yet to be found on the Quakers in Britain website).

The text of West Scotland's Minute of 25 February 2023 is on pages 22-23.

Also to be brought back to GM was the guidance for clerks and committees on signing public statements in the name of Friends.

General Meeting next meets for a regular session on 8 June, in Glasgow and online; and, for the special online-only session, on 6 April.

Editor

Becoming 'Quakers in Scotland'

Why, what does it mean, what would it affect?

Why

The work required to run a charity has increased substantially with new regulations and laws. We are finding it increasingly difficult to fill key roles, including the trustee roles that carry our legal responsibilities. In response, in many UK regions Area Meetings are looking at amalgamating their charities. Many other organisations are doing the same. For Quakers it should reduce the number of role-holders, releasing energy and enabling some economies of scale. It is likely to entail paid central administrative support.

Also an opportunity? We do a number of things together across Scotland already, with success in amplifying our concerns. Our permanent presence at the Scottish Parliament has been particularly notable. Situating our charity at a national level could strengthen both our community and the impact of our activities.

How we got here

- 2015 North of Scotland Friends (NSAM) began to ask about future organisation
- 2017 NSAM asked GM to consider a single body for Scotland
- 2018 Options considered at a dedicated meeting – reported diverse views to GM
- 2020 NSAM re-approached GM
- 2021 Options for Scotland group (OfS1) set up by GM
- 2022 OfS1 reported to GM in March. OfS2 appointed to consider more radical options.
- 2023 OfS2 reported to GM in June, recommending a single organisation. Further details of possible ways forward that were requested. GM in September then recorded agreement from AMs to work towards a more detailed vision.

Where we are now

GM appointed a QiS coordinating group (QiS-CG) to outline and create a single charity Quakers in Scotland, that AMs might choose to join, laying down our current six charities (four AMs, GM, and Dundee Friends Property Trust). It seeks endorsement from AMs of the creation of the notional single charity as the first of several steps towards a single Quaker organisation for Scotland.

The wording of a governing document (constitution) for QiS is at an advanced stage, but needs further opinions and legal review before coming back to Friends. This document does not need to include details of how we will work at local and regional levels.

Discussions are under way on how we would manage property and money.

Discussions are beginning on other essential aspects of how we would organise our other spiritual affairs, under the heading of Community. It includes

how we could best arrange such matters as fellowship, eldership, membership, nominations, marriages, funerals.

Steps if moving to single body

(1) Agree constitution for new body and seek advice from the Scottish charity regulator (OSCR) and others; (2) agree how to transfer and manage property and money and other statutory necessities; (3) agree how we would manage other spiritual affairs.

Then (4) existing charities join as they agree; (5) when transfers of responsibility, property and funds are complete, lay down the old charities.

We are working on 1 and 2 and beginning work on 3. No commitment to joining is possible until these are agreed.

What would having a single organisation mean for us?

In our Local Meeting – we shouldn't anticipate perceptible changes for Friends attending local meetings. If a local meeting has a meeting house, it will still need to have people locally responsible for its day to day management. The responsibilities and participation of QiS and the local meeting would be agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding. Any employees would now be employed and paid by the central organisation.

In our Area Meeting – Area Meetings could still meet, whether labelled with a new term or still called AMs. New groupings, including non-geographical groupings (for instance young Friends, remote Friends) could also be created. Several things would become simpler for existing AMs with removal of employment, property ownership, need for annual reporting and accounting. Fewer trustees would be required from each region. Should an AM still have difficulty making appointments, informal amalgamations would be simpler under the umbrella of a single charity.

Functions such as membership, eldership, nominations, could be looked after regionally, as they are now, or differently if Friends agreed that would be better. These are for discussion.

FURTHER INFORMATION

These links are also on the General Meeting webpage, in blue text just beneath the title.

FAQ Frequently asked Questions about (1) the draft governing document, and (2) wider questions:

<https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/qis-news/faq>

QiS-CG news (*details of how to contact the group are at the foot of this page*):

<https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/qis-news>

FAQ from OfS2 (June 2023):

<https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/optionsscotland/ofs2-report/faq-ofs2>

The full OfS2 report, with links to OfS1:

<https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/optionsscotland>

Neil Turner
For QiS-CG

Racial Justice

Minute 016/23 of West Scotland AM was forwarded to General Meeting for Scotland in February 2023 and was introduced at GM on 16 September by Ann Kerr. It was noted then that Edwina Peart, BYM Inclusion & Diversity Coordinator, was setting up an equity network, and that among Scottish Friends a number of groups were addressing the concerns raised. However there was not time in the meeting to respond to the Minute, nor in November, nor, again, at this month's meeting. Friends may nevertheless like to reflect on it, and consider the suggested actions, opposite. – ED.

016/23 Race and Privilege

The session was introduced by a small group of Glasgow Meeting elders and previous elders who first reported in August 2020 recorded in minute 92/30.

We accept there has been some progress in tackling racism but much still needs to be done including our use of language including 'black, brown' etc. We have some difficulty in knowing where we will go and what we can do. It is important that we choose to do something and not be overwhelmed by the task ahead.

We accept that religion has often been based on 'othering' groups such as "saved/unsaved", those part of a belief system and those not. Quakers believe that there is 'that of God' in everyone so our witness to equality should make this easier. However we recognise that we do not reflect wider society in terms of race, class etc. We have challenges to become more diverse. This may mean connecting more positively with other people, groups, religions to join in actions together.

We are aware that our society is changing and that minority groups and people who were not previously seen as part of society are now visible. We can now be more able to sense the feeling of those groups that are being excluded/limited in our society. To use the image in Helen Minnis' 2022 Swarthmore Lecture, we are more able to feel the temperature of the water we swim in.

Our society has also been changed by the higher profile/numbers of refugees from many countries and by the antagonism and racism that has emerged. However we are also aware that this has produced an increase in Love.

Our governments' leadership needs to move on from the 'never apologise/never explain' model to where we can start to accept the complicated and sometimes brutal nature of our nation's past and present connections. We hope our nation can move to a more positive relationship with those countries our nation has previously colonised.

We need to change ourselves as well, including having the courage to challenge racism when we see or experience it.

A number of Friends, personally, had minority group friends at school who were treated equally. This has not been the experience of all Friends.

Anti-racism is a process. 'Othering' is a concept that we oppose, although it is sometimes useful to identify groups that subsequently can be supported to their advantage. Examples were given of women, the gay community, the Black Lives Matter movement.

A number of actions were suggested for Friends to consider:

1. *Work with anti-racism groups and actively oppose the racism of the growing far right.*
2. *Support work done with countries suffering environmental 'loss and damage' through Quaker organisations like the Quaker Congo Partnership and the Quaker Africa interest group, and through organisations furthering Scottish Malawi links.*
3. *Reflect on how we personally answer the racism we encounter.*
4. *Seek ways to improve education for minorities including refugees in Britain and those living in countries abroad who are suffering 'loss and damage' as a result of current and historical structures.*
5. *Support refugees in our country and publicise ways that Friends can get involved, e.g. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and work with Refuweege. [see <https://www.refuweege.co.uk/>]*
6. *Encourage Friends who meet with refugees to share with others what they have learnt from their time with refugees.*
7. *Explore possible Quaker links to slavery in the past.*
8. *Consider how we can review our progress, including considering how we can see ourselves and our actions through a non-white lens.*

We are keen to bring a Quaker approach which is open to listening and learning with all those we meet.

Until we are all free, none of us are free.

We send this minute to General Meeting for Scotland for their consideration.

Alastair Reid, Clerk of West Scotland Area Meeting

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

***The 2022 Swarthmore Lecture: Perceiving the temperature of the water
by Helen Minnis***

Helen is a professor of Child Psychiatry, and was reluctant to lecture outside her own specialism, thinking Friends would be resistant to hearing more about racism. She made careful preparations, with workshops for Glasgow 10-16 year olds, and discussions with her support group.

During my lifetime there have been great improvements in the status of women and it is possible not to realise what more needs to be done. In the same period, among Friends I have seen a lot of work on anti-racist attitudes but a tendency to think that (at least among ourselves) *no* more needs to be done.

Helen records in the book of the lecture all the post-lecture effort she has put into making Friends aware of adverse experiences of black and brown people, and urges cross-cultural exchange.

It is very good.

Rachel Frith

Household Words

*Faced with domestic foible, the response of our late Friend **Geoffrey Carnall** (1927-2015) was to “chide in verse”. His daughter, Rosie Carnall (now, among other things, co-clerk of the BDRC) reports that her polyglot uncle Ambrose is a poetic fiction; but that the dog Smooge was, in real life, just such a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles – or at least unguarded ones – as is described in the second poem. – ED.*

WASHING UP AFTER MEALS

My child, what means this sour, demurring frown?
And please don't use that harsh four-letter noun:
Yes, washing up is work, no doubt of it,
But work that gives the amplest scope to wit.

Preparing pots and dishes for the sink
Needs organising more than you might think
Its knotty problems for th' ingenious mind
Leave chess and crossword puzzles far behind.

And then the rapture when the fingers feel
Soft soapy water o'er the dishes steal –
The globuled fat in ooze dissolves away
And, rinsed, the dishes gleam like a spring day.

At Christmastime, when two, or three, or four
Converse while washing up, the spirits soar –
Keener the jest deeper the argument
Which in the cheerful kitchen finds its vent.

And if alone you do this pleasant task,
Oh! what more could the lively genius ask?
The radio's instructive stream of sound
Brings intimation of the world around.

Your uncle Ambrose, now so widely known,
Learnt eighteen languages by Linguaphone,
And as he washed up for his family
Cassettes played Finnish, Pushtu, or Hindi.

So let not prejudice your mind control:
The washer-up plays no base menial role.
There is no chore to which I'm more inclined:
The sweetest morsel's *after* we have dined.

NOT CLEARING UP AFTER MEALS

Milk on the table left to sour
Makes a parent's visage lour;

Mugs and knives in sordid state
 Rouse passions close akin to hate;
 But worse, far worse, crumbs scattered round
 Show how that watchful glutton-hound
 Smooge the obese has struck again –
 My warnings uttered all in vain –

She's swept the bread with stealthy paw
 Into her vast capacious maw.
 And what is this? – that platter green,
 By the table's edge, and oddly clean:
 I'd placed on it a pound of cheese –
 But not for that vile dog to seize.
 Seized it she has with greed insane:
 I hope she has an awful pain.

But it's not right to vent my ire
 Upon a dog, when I should fire
 My verbal rockets at the oaf
 Who had to leave the cheese and loaf
 Where crafty Smooge could get the stuff:
 We know her spirit well enough.
 Besides, young people should be able
 To clear the food from off the table
 Whether or not dogs lie in wait
 Voracious appetites to sate.

QUAKERS IN BRITAIN has published a new webpage encouraging voter registration in advance of the General Election and with some guidelines for campaigning. There is a note about how your local meeting can become a 'voter champion' to ensure that people don't lose the opportunity to have their say at the ballot box, especially in the light of new voter ID laws. The webpage, which will be updated in the run-up to the election is at:

<https://quaker.org.uk/our-work/politicalengagement/general-election-2024>

[With thanks to **Sarah Komashko** for passing this on.]

Quaker Weekend at Wiston Lodge

THERE WILL BE a weekend for all Friends in South East Scotland at Wiston Lodge, near Biggar in Lanarkshire, Friday to Sunday, 6–8 September. **Ian Edwards** of Portobello & Musselburgh Meeting would like to hear from anyone who could help him organise it; please get in touch with him [see *the Book of Members*, page 78]. (We shall have more on this event nearer the time.)

Woodbrooke Courses, April to June 2024

See <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/> for full details of the events and courses listed below, all of which will take place, or commence, before the end of June. With the few exceptions noted, they are online, and many of them are FREE or 'pay as led' (i.e. participants are asked to pay what they can afford); it is still necessary to book, however, as places are limited. A price shown is the standard fee for the event or course, and a 50 % **discount** is usually available to participants aged 18-35. Also, bursary help may be available from Area Meeting; speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com for more information.

- Being a Quaker Clerk** £125
5 weekly sessions, 2 April – 7 May, **excluding** 30 April, 19.30-21.00 BST
Michael O'Connor, Judith Roads
- The Shared Quaker Story: spirit, community and scripture** £72
6 weekly sessions, 3 April – 8 May, 19:00-21:00 BST Benjamin Wood
- Centering Prayer** £86
6 weekly sessions, 4 April – 9 May, 19:30-21:00 BST
Rosemary Field, Dana Littlepage Smith
- Bayard T. Rustin: the pragmatic Quaker and his political life** £48
4 weekly sessions, 5 – 26 April, 15:00-16:30 BST Carlos Figueroa
- Resilient Communities: Quaker permaculture design**
Wednesday 10 April 2024, 18:30-20:30 BST Evan Welkin
- Meeting for Worship Through Dance**
Tuesday 16 April, 14:00-15:00 BST Robin Bowles, Ann Bettys
- Ecological Homecoming: nature-connection retreat to support our climate witness** [RESIDENTIAL COURSE] £255
Friday to Sunday, 19-21 April, at Glenthorne, Ambleside LA22 9QH
Jack Durtnall, Kim Harrison
- Story Weaving with George Fox: departures**
Friday 19 April, 19:00-20:30 BST Till flo* Krapoth
- Resilience and Renewal in Turbulent Times**
Monday 22 April, 14:30-17:30 BST Deborah Haskew, Will Johnson
- Feminist Theology for Quakers** £58
5 weekly sessions, 23 April – 21 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Rhiannon Grant
- Welcome, Belonging and Disability: coming together as Friends**
Tuesday 23 April, 18:30-20:30 BST Esther Loukin, Tanya Hubbard
- Resilient Communities: placemaking to meet the climate crisis**
Wednesday 24 April, 19:00-20:30 BST Cherice Bock
- Truth and Integrity: an interfaith exchange**
Wednesday 24 April, 19:00-20:30 BST Gerald Hewitson

- George Fox: a conservative Quaker perspective*
Thursday 25 April, 19:00-20:30 BST Stuart Masters
- George Fox and Early Quaker Culture* [RESIDENTIAL COURSE] £285
Friday to Sunday, 26-28 April 2024, at Glenthorne, Ambleside LA22 9QH
Hilary Hinds, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion
- Applying Our Quaker Testimonies to Economics*
Monday 29 April, 18:30-20:00 BST Tanya Hubbard
- Conversations With Our Children: climate change and justice*
Tuesday 30 April, 20:30-21:30 BST Rachael Swancott
- Opening to Quaker Conciliation* £72
6 weekly sessions, 30 April – 4 June, 19:00-20:30 BST
Judith Baker, Tanya Hubbard, Ivan Hutnik
- Essentials of Quakerism* £25
4 weekly sessions, 2 – 23 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Rachael Swancott
- Enquiring Into: the promptings of love and truth*
Thursday 9 May, 19:00-21:00 BST Rosie Carnall, Jude Acton
- Freeing the imagination: creative writing retreat* £35
Sunday 12 May, 14:00-17:30 BST Rosie Carnall
- Quaker Ecochurch Network: support for meetings*
Monday 13 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Gordon Benson, Kim Harrison
- Understanding Ezekiel: a prophet's response to trauma*
Thursday 16 May, 19:00-20:30 BST James Priestman
- (Re)Discovering Joy in Worship*
Saturday 18 May, 14:00-17:00 BST Simonne Wood
- Woke Bible Study: does the Bible support colonisation?*
Monday 20 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Cherice Bock
- What is Quaker Gospel Order?*
Wednesday 22 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Simon Best
- Meeting for Worship Through Dance*
Thursday 23 May, 15:00-16:00 BST Robin Bowles, Ann Bettys
- The Upside-Down Bible: what Jesus really said about money, sex and violence* £68
6 weekly sessions, 23 May – 27 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Symon Hill
- Women Waging Peace in Myanmar: Noon*
Thursday 23 May, 18:30-20:00 BST Tanya Hubbard
- Human Lives, Divine Grace: inspiration from past Friends* £48
3 weekly sessions, 29 May – 12 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Simonne Wood
- Women Waging Peace in Myanmar: Monica*
Thursday 30 May, 18:30-20:00 BST Tanya Hubbard

- Trusteeship in a Nutshell*** £35
 Saturday 1 June, 10:00-16:00 BST Sarah Donaldson, Jacquie Cole, Linda Craig
- Quaker Theology and Whiteness*** £54
 6 weekly sessions, 3 June – 8 July, 19:00-20:30 BST Mark Russ
- What Happens When We Worship Online?*** £36
 3 weekly sessions, 3 June – 17 June, 19:00-20:30 BST
 Simonne Wood, Rhiannon Grant
- Migration and Peace in Europe*** £48
 4 weekly sessions, 11 June - 2 July, 18:30-20:00 BST
 Saskia Basa, Catherine Henderson
- Resilient Communities: transition towns and our Quaker community***
 Tuesday 11 June, 18:30-20:30 BST Kim Harrison
- Tackling Taboo: discerning difficult topics*** £72
 6 weekly sessions, 12 June - 17 July, 18:30-20:00 BST Windy Cooler
- Isaac Penington: metaphor and divine mystery***
 Sunday 16 June, 14:00-17:30 BST Phil Dahl
- George Fox: a feminist Quaker perspective***
 Tuesday 18 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Stuart Masters
- Meeting for Worship Through Dance***
 Tuesday 18 June, 19:00-20:00 BST Robin Bowles, Ann Bettys

CRQS/QSRA/CQHA Quaker Studies Conference: Fox 400 [BLENDED EVENT]

The conference will begin at 16:00 BST on Thursday 20 June, and end at lunch-time on Sunday 23 June.

As a RESIDENTIAL event, at Lancaster University, the cost including meals and accommodation is **£595**; for ONLINE participants it is **£125**.

Jointly organised by Woodbrooke, the Quaker Studies Research Association and the Conference of Quaker Historians & Archivists, the conference provides an opportunity to hear the latest scholarship in the field. The anniversary of the birth of George Fox offers a valuable point for reflection by historians, archivists and others to consider the life and times of Fox as well as his legacies, and a coming together of new and exciting ideas around Friends and their history. The George Richardson Lecture will be given by Nigel Smith.

The Quaker World: Quakers and Disability

Monday 24 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Oscar Lugusa Malande, Benjamin Wood

Toolkit for Roleholders: online discernment £10

Monday 24 June, 19:00-21:00 BST Jacquie Cole, Chris Skidmore

Conversations With Our Children: navigating the online world

Tuesday 25 June, 20:30-21:30 BST Rachael Swancott

The Gospel of Mary: a friendly study group £68

5 weekly sessions, 25 June – 23 July, 19:00-20:30 BST David Curtis

Truth and Integrity: an interfaith exchange

Wednesday 26 June, 19:00-20:30 BST

Gerald Hewitson

Being and Doing: finding the balance

Saturday 29 June, 09:30-16:00 BST

£35

Jennifer Kavanagh

Quakers in Business: a new history

Saturday 29 June, 10:30-16:00 BST

£35

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Simonne Wood: What Happens in Meeting for Worship

The next in our 2024 programme of one-day 'Woodbrooke Where You Are' events will be on **Saturday 11 May** at 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL, starting at 10.00 am. A light lunch will be provided.

Simonne Wood is Woodbrooke's Programme Coordinator for Worship & Spirituality. Her own spiritual journey gave her experience of Christian, Buddhist and Jewish spirituality, before she found her home in Quakerism.

As with other events in the series, there is no charge to participants but it is necessary to book your place in advance at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/sescotland by **2 May**; the password is **Cented24**.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee – January 2024

[The report by **Mary Woodward** of the Committee's online January meeting is in the latest (February) issue of the General Meeting newsletter, *Scottish Friend*, pages 9-13. Readers of *Sesame* should receive *Scottish Friend* as well; it is sent by email as a PDF to all Friends and Attenders on the General Meeting for Scotland mailing list, or can be posted as a printed copy (on recycled paper). Please contact the GM Administrator, Jane Booth, at scotfriends@gmail.com or by telephone at **07747396456**, to change how you get it – or if you don't. *Scottish Friend* can also be read at <https://www.quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/newsletters>. – ED.]

The key messages from this committee meeting were:

Our fourth report to Meeting for Sufferings was well received. [It is online at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/bdrc-fourth-report-to-meeting-for-sufferings-dec-2023>.]

We are developing the structure of our new Book. Church government will be embedded throughout the text.

There will be a section in the new Book on Quaker theology, our personal collective experience, which grows with new Light and reflects our varied experience.

Children and young people's voices will be integrated throughout our text.

We draw our experience from art and music as well as from the written word.

The publications team at BYM will explore possible ways of presenting material.

We are urged to uphold members of the Committee in their work for us.

Booking for **YEARLY MEETING** is now open: ym@quaker.org.uk or **020 7663 1040**.

Christian Aid

Act on Poverty

Christian Aid has worked with the Methodist Church, United Reformed Church, Church Action on Poverty, the Trussell Trust, the Baptist Union of Great Britain & Ireland, and others to empower churches to act on poverty in 2024. Together they hope to enable churches and individuals UK-wide to gain a deeper understanding of experiences of poverty, local and global, and will be offering inspiration for actions big and small that we can all take to tackle poverty together.

The first resource available is a six-session course for use by study groups or individuals. Designed for Lent groups, it can be used at other times; or each single session can serve on its own to explore the issues of most concern. The packs of the materials for each session can be downloaded at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/act-on-poverty>

– packs include Bible study materials, audio recordings of anti-poverty activists, questions for small group discussion, videos of practical action being taken, and guidance on steps for groups to take to advocate change.

Creative for Climate Justice

Creative for Climate Justice is an exciting new project which will see schools across Scotland creating artwork in response to climate justice, and those artworks will be brought together for an exhibition at the Scottish Parliament in September 2024. In partnership with SCIAF [*Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund*] and Oxfam, and supported by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, Christian Aid is aiming to bring the voices of young people to the nation's leaders and to share their thoughts on the climate emergency. There is more information, and other material, at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/creative-climate-justice-scotland-resources>;

and there is more about campaigns for Climate Justice, including a report of the event in Edinburgh as part of the COP 28 Global Day of Action, at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/get-involved-locally/scotland/scotlands-climate-campaign>

Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

Christian Aid organises a monthly Zoom session to pray for peace in the Middle East; in February, Jean Byrne, who was serving at Bethlehem as an Accompanier with EAPPI [*Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel*] until she was withdrawn after the 7 October atrocities, shared some of her experiences. More information, and a link to the event, are at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/prayers-peace-middle-east-monthly-vigils>.

Christian Aid Week, 2024: 12-18 May

We hope to have details in the next issue of events in South East Scotland that Friends may wish to support.

Two opportunities to help refugees

God comes to us in the midst of human need, and the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response.

(These words, by Parker J. Palmer (*Q.F. & P.* 23.48), were read during the opening worship at General Meeting for Scotland on 9 March 2024.)

THE REFUGEE FAMILY sponsored by Failte Edinburgh since 2022 will have to find alternative accommodation by the end of August 2024 because their landlord has intimated that he intends to sell the flat. There is currently an unprecedented shortage of rental housing, both managed by the Local Authority and privately let in Edinburgh. People living on benefits are particularly vulnerable.

The family, whose three children are aged 6, 10 and 14 are seeking a 3-bedroomed flat, preferably in South Edinburgh where the children are settled and well-supported in local primary and secondary schools, and where they have access to a nearby medical centre, halal food shops and the Mosque.

Do you know of anyone with a suitable flat who would be willing to rent it out at the **Local Housing Allowance rate** (£316.44 per week in 2024/25, equivalent to *c.* £1,370 per month) or thereabouts?

Another option being considered is to form a **Scottish Quaker Housing Association** whose members might either offer to purchase the flat or buy something similar. Would this idea interest you?

Please contact **Lynne Barty** (Central Edinburgh) or **Esther Shreeve** (South Edinburgh) if you can help and/or would like to know more. Thank you. [*Contact details in the Book of Members, pages 45 and 88.*]

Quakers and Prison Abolition: A Conversation

Glasgow Quaker Meeting House & Online: 13 April 2024, 10.00 am–3.30 pm

- What does prison abolition mean?
- What would it look like?
- Why should it be a Quaker concern?

Join us for an explorative day of talks and discussion around these questions – no prior knowledge required!

Organised by the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network

To register for the event in person or if you have any inquiries, please contact Anneke Kraakman at: Anneke.kraakman@gmail.com. Tea & coffee will be provided; bring your own lunch.

PLEASE NOTE: This is NOT a public meeting, but a chance for a complex and contentious issue to be explored by Friends (and Attenders) among themselves.

The Picture in my Attic

A FEW years ago, in Meeting for Worship at Victoria Terrace one Sunday, I had a minor mystical experience, or, at least, a revelation. I was trying to centre down in the meeting, but my mind was too restless. Although I accept that a Quaker's authority is based on experience, I was still looking for something extra – a key, or a sign, to summarise my spiritual experience, (to add to the already existing millions of Christian proverbs and symbolic crosses). Where was I to look for this secret message? I had recently heard a discussion on the radio about Oscar Wilde's 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which a beautiful young man sells his soul to the devil. He could be as evil as he pleased and would retain his beauty despite his future crimes. But a portrait of him, which he eventually banished to his attic, would bear the ugliness and scars resulting from his evil ways (representing his inner self).

The 'evil ways' did not appeal, but supposing I had a picture in my metaphorical attic, bearing an important message, which could provide the key, but it had become covered in grime from neglect over the decades. I started to imagine a picture in a heavy frame completely covered in a sticky black tar in my metaphorical attic. Could I remove this to reveal what lay beneath? I slowly started to peel it off mentally from a corner of the frame. As I progressed to its inner side towards a corner of the canvas, I wondered what form this key might take – a statement, a symbol, a picture, a diagram, a formula or perhaps a poem? I carefully peeled off this nasty sticky black substance, and suddenly exposed the corner of the expected canvas. But it was not a canvas! It was a pane of clear glass in a window, through which a multitude of different beams of brilliant, blinding, coloured light shone. Thus shone the answer to my metaphysical question. I had my message. It was not to seek a key, but to concentrate on the experience of the reality of light or life itself, in whatever form it comes. We do not need any new keys or messages. Jesus has already given us the greatest one, The Love Commandment: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind' and 'Love [not just family and friends, but] thy neighbour as thyself [including the stranger – and even thine enemy – love the person, while abhorring the deed]' (Matthew 22: 36–40, King James version). A simple message but difficult to carry out. This is the essential key to justice and peace.

And is a revelation always merely something that we already know, but of which we need to keep being reminded?

Annie Miller

The intent of all speaking is to bring into the life, and to walk in, and to possess the same, and to live in and enjoy it, and to feel God's presence.

George Fox (1657)

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Monday 12 February 2024
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh
and by remote videoconferencing**

2024/02/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship, we have heard read excerpts from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 20.71: conflict is inevitable and can help us to learn. There are skills which can be used in dealing with it creatively.

We have ensured those present know each other's names and local meetings. The attendance will be recorded in the concluding minute.

...

[The full minutes are included in both the print edition of Sesame, and in the PDF emailed to Members and Attenders on the circulation list, but are redacted in this publicly available version. – Editor]

[Redacted]

Central Edinburgh 18	Central Fife -	East Lothian 4	Kelso 3	Penicuik -
Polmont 1	Portobello & Musselburgh 3	South Edinburgh 11	Tweeddale -	Visitors/Others 1

We record our thanks to staff at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House for hosting us this evening.

We next meet on Saturday 23 March 2024, hosted by Polmont LM; this will be an all-day, all-age meeting.

(Signed)

Alastair Cameron, Clerk
Cath Dyer, Assistant Clerk

GOOD NEWS: *The UK has announced its withdrawal from the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT), the world's most litigated investment agreement, which, as described by Hilary Saunders in Sesame 250, enables oil companies to claim damages from national governments if their environmental policies impact on profits. France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands have already left. A brief report is at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/feb/22/uk-quits-treaty-that-lets-fossil-fuel-firms-sue-governments-over-climate-policies>.*

There are reactions to the news at

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/leaving-the-energy-charter-treaty-has-untied-a-straitjacket-on-uks-ability-to-bring-about-just-transition-campaigners-say/>

and a summary of how public pressure influenced the decision at

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2024/02/how-people-power-forced-the-uk-to-leave-the-energy-charter-treaty/>

SARAH KOMASHKO, our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, sends out by email a fortnightly bulletin of 'Parliamentary Engagement Opportunities' listing current and upcoming matters on which Friends might wish to take action – a recent issue had a template letter for contacting MSPs on COP28 goals; an invitation for groups to sign a joint letter to party leaders; guidance on running hustings for the General Election, when it comes; news of a Friends of the Earth event at Holyrood; and details of two consultations. To sign up for it, email SarahK@quaker.org.uk; N.B. by doing so, you are NOT committing yourself to seizing all (or any) of the opportunities it offers!

SHARYN LOCK, the Attender who fasted for five days outside the Parliament at Holyrood last year, wrote in *The National* on 26 February about the worsening crisis in Gaza and the varied responses of European governments; her article is at <https://www.thenational.scot/politics/24143172.i-shot-palestine-one-womans-story-volunteering-gaza/>

QUAKER MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP IN SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

Contact details of named Friends are in the Book of Members. 'QMH' = Quaker Meeting House

MEETING IN PERSON

Central Edinburgh – QMH, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

Sundays at 9.30 & 11.00 am. Tea & coffee afterwards; soup and bread & cheese lunch, 12.30.

Wednesday, 12.30–1.00 pm. Tea & coffee; you may bring your own lunch.

Contact the office, centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk or 0131 225 4825, for updates; see also <https://www.quakerscotland.org/central-edinburgh/covid-guidance>.

Central Fife – The Old Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy KY1 1EH

On the 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am. On 1st Sundays, also at 10.30 am, at

Linburn Scout Hall, Abbey View, Dunfermline KY11 4HA.

Contact **Laurie Naumann** for further information.

East Lothian – Dunbar Town House, 79 High Street, Dunbar, EH42 1ER

On the 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Contact **Phil Lucas** for updates.

Kelso – QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

Sundays at 10.30 am. Contact **Anne Macnaughton** for updates.

North Edinburgh worship group – 4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm, meeting in Friends' homes. Contact **Tony Gross** or **Rufus Reade** for further information.

Penicuik – For confirmation of the venue, contact penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.uk

1st Sundays at 11.00 am – contact **Mark Hutcheson** for updates and further information.

Polmont – Greenpark Community Centre, Greenpark Drive, Polmont FK2 0PZ

Sundays at 10.30: contact **Mariot Dallas** for updates, and if bringing children.

Portobello & Musselburgh – Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 11.00 am, with a children's meeting.

1st Sundays: Evening meeting at 7.30 pm; NO children's meeting.

Contact **Robin Liebmann**, **Sarah Martin** or **Marian Willoner** for further information, portymussclerks@gmail.com.

South Edinburgh – The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 5HY

Sundays, 10.30 am. For information contact the clerking team, sedclerks@gmail.com.

Tweeddale – 2nd Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, and 4th Sundays at 10.30 am, meeting in Friends' homes. For further information contact **Lesley Morrison**

MEETING BY ZOOM

Central Edinburgh – for login details contact centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk

Every Sunday at 9.30 am ONLY (blended with the meetings in person).

Central Fife – for login details contact **Laurie Naumann**

On the 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with the meeting in person.

East Lothian – for login details contact **Phil Lucas**

Tuesdays at 7.30 pm

Penicuik – available if requested in advance – for details contact **Mark Hutcheson**

South Edinburgh – for login details contact sedclerks@gmail.com.

Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with meetings in person.

1st Thursdays at 7.30 pm (online only). Meeting for worship (30 mins) followed by chat.