

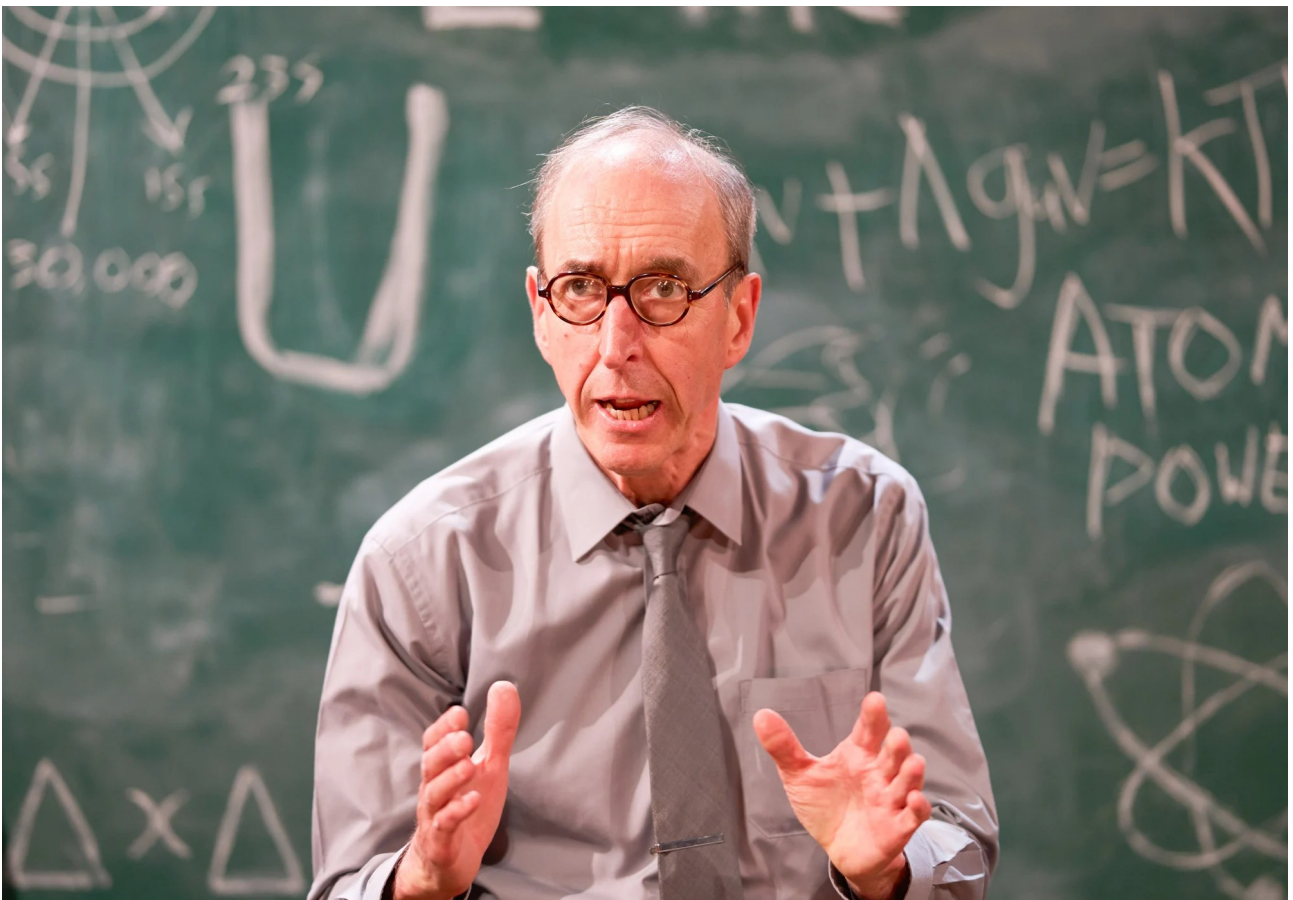
# SESAME

Number 259: March 2025

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Area Meeting, 22 March / Parliamentary Engagement / Woodbrooke Events & Courses / *Maison Quaker* Events / Peace Witness *dates* / M<sup>ts</sup> for Sufferings / NFPB / Threshing Meeting / General M<sup>ts</sup> for Scotland / Climate Justice *recent news* / StopECOPScot *update* / Christian Aid / Funeral arrangements / Book review – *a compendium of death* / Crowdfunding Appeal / TPNW / 'Becoming a Quaker' / Membership / Women's Retreat / Booking for YM / AM January Minutes / ...&<sup>c</sup>.

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*Michael Mears as Leo Szilard in The Mistake – see page 34 (Photo by Simon Richardson)*

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## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Saturday 22 March, hosted by Central Fife local meeting. We will meet at the Old Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy KY1 1EN; tea and coffee will be available from 10.30 am and our meeting will begin at 11.00. We expect to be away by 3.30 pm.

Area Meeting is open to all have a connection to any Quaker meeting in South East Scotland: you do not have to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends

Our March meeting will include a presentation from Sarah Kamashko, the Scottish Quaker Parliamentary Engagement Officer, seeking guidance on her work for 2026 and beyond, which of course includes the next Scottish Parliamentary General Election (May 2026). We will also be looking at what local meetings do about outreach and making our worship inclusive and accessible to all who might be interested in the Quaker approach: this will be led by Friends from Central Fife and each local meeting is asked to come prepared to share and to learn.

There will be a children's session if there is demand: parents are asked to let me know if you plan to come with children, so we know what preparations to make: please email [sesamclerk@gmail.com](mailto:sesamclerk@gmail.com) or phone or message me on 07900 044577.

Please bring your own lunch: we find this is easier for the hosting meeting and creates less surplus than a bring-and-share arrangement. (If you forget, there are sandwich shops nearby... )

The draft agenda as it currently stands is opposite: please let me know if there are additional items needed.

**Alastair Cameron**  
Clerk

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**CORRECTION** (and update): *our Friend Gaie Delap was wrongly described in Sesame 258 as a prisoner on remand; in fact she had been convicted and sentenced to twenty months imprisonment for her involvement in a 2022 'Just Stop Oil' protest on the M25. Her sentence was extended by twenty days because of her being "unlawfully at large" between Serco's failure in November to fit a wrist tag for home detention curfew (HDC) and her return to prison the next month: it was claimed, falsely, that she had refused the tag (see <https://goodlawproject.org/update/failing-justice-system-keeps-gaie-delap-in-jail-on-her-78th-birthday/>), which was cited as justification for this (<https://goodlawproject.org/update/failure-of-the-state-adds-20-days-to-gaie-delaps-sentence/>). A letter signed by 25 individuals and*

## DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2025
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
  1. *Warm space at 7 Victoria Terrace*
  2. *Princes Street Gardens meetings for worship for peace* [see page 13]
  3. *Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) in Edinburgh in February*
4. Membership matters:
  1. *Application for membership*
  2. *Resignation*
  3. *Recording of deaths*
5. Matters from local meetings  
*Portobello & Musselburgh – Our Resources for Building Peace*
6. Community building
  1. *The Work that Reconnects*
  2. *Wiston weekend*
7. Appointments: from Nominations Committee
8. Quakers in Scotland – threshing meeting, 1 March 2025 [see page 17]
9. Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 – preparation [see page 44]
10. General Meeting matters
  1. *Appointment of reporter for June meeting of GM*
  2. *General Meeting dates in 2026*
11. Reports and correspondence
  1. *Tabular statement for 2024*
  2. *Families weekend, Pitlochry, 2-4 May*
  3. *Sharing Uncertainties, Fears and Hopes–Quaker Truth & Integrity Group*
12. Parliamentary Engagement Officer: priorities for 2026-28 [see page 4]
13. Outreach and inclusion – *How are local meetings open to attracting enquirers? Workshop session led by Central Fife local meeting*
14. Closing minute

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*organisations called on Shabana Mahmood, the justice secretary, to use her discretionary powers to revoke Gaie Delap's recall, find a suitable tag for her to wear, and launch an inquiry into the systemic failures that led to this situation; see*

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jan/25/gaie-delap-just-stop-oil-climate-protester-prison-term-extended-wrist-tag>

*On 31 January, it was decided that the 15 cm tag previously deemed unusable could be used after all, and she was released from prison to HDC.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jan/31/just-stop-oil-protester-78-released-on-home-detention-after-fitting-tag-found>

*See also page 23.*

## *Quakers in Scotland Parliamentary Engagement*

*Our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, will be talking to us at Area Meeting about her work; here she describes what was done on our behalf in the past year.*

**I** CONTINUED IN 2024 to be encouraged by all that Friends in Scotland are doing to have a kinder voice heard amidst (what can often be) heated voices in a parliamentary context. Although there have often been louder voices arguing against our priorities, or a silent 'sweeping under the rug' of other issues, the calm, firm Quaker call for honesty, truth and integrity continues to strike a chord and testify to what is right.

Every three years, Friends in Scotland help to discern our priorities for engaging with the Scottish Parliament. This consultation helps ensure the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) remains grounded in the concerns and leadings of our Quaker community. The current three-year period of work ends in December 2025, so we are seeking your guidance on where we should focus our efforts for 2026-2028. Over the next few months, Carolyn and Richard (the co-conveners of PEWG) and I will go out to the Area Meetings to discuss what our next three-year period of work should look like, before taking a proposal to GM in November. I look forward to engaging with you as part of this process!

As part of my role, I maintain an occasional mailing list for those who would like to be kept abreast of opportunities which arise for engaging with our representatives in relation to our identified parliamentary priorities. It is so encouraging to see this being shared and people taking action as a result – I love to hear from you about how you're engaging with parliamentarians. If you're not yet on the 'parliamentary engagement opportunities' email list and would like to be, please do email me at [sarahk@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sarahk@quaker.org.uk) and I'll add you.

### **Peacebuilding**

#### *Peace Education*

Work on peace education has continued apace, building on the event and exhibition at Parliament in September 2024 [See Sesame 250]. Ellis Brooks of QPSW continues to do a lot of work with other organisations in Scotland who care about peace and global citizenship education.

As part of this group, we wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Jenny Gilruth, setting out arguments in favour of peace education and calling for its incorporation into the curriculum. She responded very helpfully, putting us in touch with key people to speak with on curriculum potential for peace education and related approaches.

Following on from this, Ellis and I, together with allies from Christian Aid and Peace Education Scotland, had a meeting in October with two key representatives of Education Scotland (ES – the improvement agency for Scottish education). All present recognised the importance of peace education

and its links to various different parts of the curriculum, including RME, Learning for Sustainability, social sciences, and health and wellbeing. This is particularly so in the context of global conflict as well as reports of poor classroom behaviour.

The meeting came at a good time, and Ellis was then invited to be a 'critical friend' in discussions about the 2030-2040 curriculum: he and others from our networks were able to stress the importance of peace education.

It is so encouraging to see that Quaker thinking is now part of the conversation on Peace Education in Scotland.

### *Arms Industry Funding*

Throughout 2024, PEWG and some other interested Friends engaged in significant dialogue with Scottish Enterprise (SE) regarding their public funding of arms manufacturers. We focused our work on examining SE's £300 million annual investment program and its continued support of companies like Thales, Raytheon, and Leonardo, despite their links to countries with documented human rights violations.

Building on earlier meetings with the Minister for Trade, we had a discussion with senior SE officials in June. We raised concerns about Scottish public money supporting arms manufacturers and explored the environmental impact of military carbon emissions ("carbon footprint") in relation to SE's net zero commitments. While SE confirmed it doesn't directly support munitions manufacturing, we highlighted our concerns about how even ring-fenced funding supports companies with human rights risks and questioned whether such companies truly need public funding when green industry transition is urgent.

Our discussions revealed ongoing challenges. SE demonstrated commitment to helping businesses transition to green economy manufacturing, requiring net zero action plans from funded companies. However, its focus remains solely on operational emissions rather than downstream impacts. The political context, has shown the SNP government's continued support for defence manufacturing in Scotland, with Ministers citing global instability and NATO obligations. In response, we continue our advocacy work, collaborating with Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) and others to push for more stringent human rights checks and joined-up thinking in relation to public funding and climate spending.

### *Scottish Peace Institute*

Following much earlier work on the matter of a Peace Institute, the Government announced in the summer that it was tendering for a 'Peace Platform' pilot, to be delivered by an organisation or coalition which would also manage Women in Conflict Fellowships. The winning bidder has not yet been announced, but we're in contact with the civil servants working in this area to ensure that relevant Quaker groups have a voice in the pilot.

## **Human rights**

Unfortunately the Human Rights (Scotland) Bill we were expecting to be published this session has been delayed. With other groups such as the Human Rights Consortium, we have called for preparatory work on the Bill to continue, building on the consultation that was undertaken in 2023.

## **Climate and economic justice**

### *Climate and Health event*

Led by Lesley Morrison following her 'Time for Reflection' in April 2023, the 'Climate and Health' event we put on in March 2024 was a big success. The event gave MSPs the opportunity to consider that steps to mitigate the climate crisis will bring significant positive benefits not just for planetary health but for individual patient health. MSPs were encouraged to look at all decision the Parliament makes through the lens of climate and health.

Maree Todd, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing & Sport, took the time to attend and spoke about the importance that the Scottish Government places on reducing the health service's emissions and enabling Scots to live productive and healthy lives. Other speakers included Friend Martin Pippard, Pete Ritchie from Nourish Scotland, Bridget Bradley (an eco-anxiety researcher), and Isabelle (giving a young person's perspective).

MSPs were given an information pack to reinforce this message and provide resources for them to respond to their constituents' queries on the topics of climate and health.

The event sparked a lot of interest by MSPs and we were able to speak both to those who had attended, and arrange catch-up meetings with some of the MSPs who were prevented on the night.

### *Speaking out for truth and integrity*

I have continued to be an active member of the political advocacy group in Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS). As part of SCCS I have commented on several consultation responses to ensure that the importance of truth and integrity in climate matters is emphasised. We continue to have an important voice in speaking uncomfortable truths to power, as a lot of inflated hopes have been placed in carbon capture and storage and hydrogen playing a major part in Scotland's energy policy.

### *Promoting loss and damage funding*

We have also been working with Christian Aid in relation to the importance of loss and damage funding, and together asked Sarah Boyack MSP to submit a motion on the need for climate justice at COP29, which 10 MSPs signed in support of. As the budget continues to be tight, it is important to explore innovative sources of funding which can ensure that those who pollute are those who pay for the consequential damage.

In this regard we have exchanged several letters with Acting Cabinet Secretary for Climate Gillian Martin, who seems to recognise the importance of loss and damage funding, particularly that it should be in the form of

grants not loans. We will be calling for further loss and damage commitments from the Scottish Parliament from 2026 onwards, and urging the Scottish Government to seek to influence the UK Government on the issue.

### *Land reform*

In May, I worked with a number of Friends across Scotland who have specialist knowledge of land reform issues, and together we collaborated on a response to the Call for Views in the Land Reform Bill. In our response, we highlighted in particular the need to go forward with justice and equality as cornerstones, and to consider the issue from our children's and grandchildren's perspective: how can we shape a country and planet that they can thrive in? We called on the government to give local communities a true voice, free up land from private ownership, and ensure land uses uphold the common wealth of all people and reverence for the natural world. We also conveyed our belief in the importance of community: listening well to each other; continuing to find ways forward amid tension and disagreement; and having space for everyone to be involved. Land reform matters because it helps to re-embed people into their communities of place, centring us as a nation. Land reform is about more than access to building plots, renewable energy, space for entrepreneurial activity, *etc.* It is about what it means to become a society in which the potential of its people(s) is more fully realised.

We are glad to see the steps contained in this Bill, but continue to call upon the Scottish Government to go further in reforming how Scotland's land is held and used.

### *Times for Reflection*

As part of Quaker witness, individual Quakers have the opportunity to offer a 'Time for Reflection' to open the Scottish Parliament. Contributions are sought from different faith groups (and those of no faith), and it is a nice way to interact with MSPs and provide them some food for thought as they start the business in the Chamber each week. In May, Mark Bitel gave some thoughts on the theme of the importance of integrity; and Sila Collins-Walden offered some words on Interfaith Work in December.

We've had a really good run of contributions from Friends, and invite you to consider whether you might have a short thought to share with MSPs? Listening or reading to past submissions may help spark some inspiration and ideas for what to say, and Richard Raggett has some guidelines to help you structure your talk.

The PEWG and I work on your behalf on the priorities agreed by you through GM discernment, and hope that this coming year you will be able to participate in the process for the next 3-year set of priorities.

The PEWG currently includes: Richard Raggett and Carolyn Burch (North Scotland AM; Co-Convenors), Ed Tyler (West Scotland AM), Gareth Rae and Carol Jennings (South East Scotland AM), and Tanya Jones (East Scot-

land AM). If you would like to find out more about how we work and what we are doing, please get in touch with us. Click [here](#) for copies of our consultation responses, statements and information about our other work.

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News of PEWG activities is on the General Meeting website at:

<https://www.quakerscotland.org/our-work/news>

(The items about the 'Peace at the Heart' exhibition, and the performance of *Wangari's Trees* are still available, as are videos of the presentations by Friends at Time for Reflection.)

The information pack (4 pp.) from the Climate and Health event is at:

<https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/2024.03.13%20Resource%20pack%20for%20Climate%20and%20Health%20event%20-%20online%20updated.pdf>

The motion on Climate Justice submitted by Sarah Boyack MSP is at:

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-15487>

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## Justice Clarke's Fate

*In 1666, George Fox was travelling in the north of England. He stayed at Brighthouse at "Thomas Taylor's who had formerly been a captain, where we had a precious meeting" (see Sesame 252 for more on this Friend and his family), and "from thence ... to Cinder Hill Green [near Woodhouse, in South Yorkshire] where I had a large General Meeting. ... And from thence I went into Derbyshire, where I had a large meeting. And some Friends were afraid of the constables coming in for they had had great persecution in those parts."*

*The following story of one of the persecutors, which Fox "had from Ellen Fretwell's own mouth" was toned down in early published editions of the Journal.*

**A**ND THERE WAS a justice of [the] peace [who] had taken away much of Friends' goods. And one Ellen Fretwell had made her appeal to the Sessions. And the rest of the justices granted her her goods again and spoke to the persecuting justice that he should not do so any more. And then she was moved to speak to that justice and to warn him, and he bid her come and sit down on the bench. 'Aye', said she, 'if I may do justice to the country I will sit down with you.' 'No', said he, 'then you shall not'; but bid her get out of the court. Then she was moved of the Lord to turn again and say that she should be there when he was not. And after the Sessions were done he got amongst some of his persecuting companions, and said that they would get some more goods of Friends if the Devil did not raise up that woman to hinder them. So he went home and drove away her brother's oxen for going to meetings.

And so another woman Friend of Chesterfield, Susan Frith, was moved of the Lord to tell him that if he continued on in his persecuting, the Lord would execute his plagues upon him.



And so this justice whose name was Clarke went home and fell distracted. And they tied him in ropes but he gnawed them to pieces; and he had like to have worried his maid, for he fell upon her and bit her. And they were fain to put an iron instrument into his mouth to wrest his teeth out of her flesh. And so he died distracted in chains ...

*Fox could not have heard this story in 1666, since Justice Godfrey Clarke lived until 1670. (The probate inventory of his estate – valued at £5,668, of which £1,600 was in cash at his house, Somersall Hall – survives, and is dated 6 November that year.) Shortly after the Journal appeared in print, in 1694, Morning Meeting in London, which oversaw Quaker publications, minuted having had a letter from several Derbyshire Friends saying they “suspect the verity of part of the relation and request it may be left out”. A substitute leaf was printed for insertion in existing copies: Clarke’s name was omitted, as well as his remark about Ellen Fretwell’s being an instrument of the Devil, and the lurid details in the final paragraph, between “... fell distracted” and “And so he died ...”.*

*Joseph Besse’s Sufferings of the People called Quakers does not name any of the magistrates active in Derbyshire at the time, apart from Ger. Bennett and Nath. Barton, who had had Fox imprisoned at Derby in 1650; this was the occasion when*

*After almost six Months Confinement, he was brought before the Commissioners of the Army, who offered him a Captain’s Place, but he refusing what they called a Favour, and testifying against all War and Fighting, they grew very angry, and ordered him to be confined in the common Gaol at Derby, where he was kept almost half a year amongst thirty Felons in a close stinking place.*

*Among Chesterfield Friends, Besse records a John and a Susanna Frith, both of whom were imprisoned or fined at various times for attending meeting or for non-payment of tithes; “John Frith and his wife” were excommunicated in 1668 (from the Church of England) for “absence from the publick worship”; and a “Widow Frith” was fined £13 7s. for attending a meeting in 1670, which might be Susanna, if the John Frith who appears subsequently was their son. (The widow’s fine was exceeded by the £30 charged to the owner of the house where the meeting had taken place, but was more than the other thirteen fines put together.) In 1685, a Joseph Frith was faced with a demand for £120 as the penalty for six months’ absence from the parish church, in lieu of which were seized “thirty Sheep, four Kine, two Foals, and three Horses”; Besse says the sheep and cows broke out of the field where they were taken and returned home (!) but the horses were sold. Joseph Frith is probably the butcher whose shop was the poste restante address to which letters to local Friends were sent from 1700 onwards. (It is most unlikely that any of these Friths is related to the Editor.)*

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**A** MEMORIAL MEETING for Andrew Farrar of Central Edinburgh Local Meeting will be held on **Saturday 12 April** at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. Everyone is warmly invited. Doors will open at 2.00 pm and the meeting will start at 2.30, followed by refreshments. Some of Andrew’s relatives will be present.

## Woodbrooke Courses: April and May 2025

**D**ETAILS OF EVENTS AND COURSES commencing or taking place before the end of March were in *Sesame* 258.

Unless marked otherwise, events are online. Many are FREE or 'pay as led'. It is necessary to book (at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>) as places are limited. If a price is shown, it is the **standard** fee, and a **50 % discount** is usually available to participants aged 18–35.

- Four Doors to Meeting for Worship: A Friendly Study Group*** £72  
4 sessions: Tuesdays, 1–22 April, with a follow up session on Tuesday 10 June.  
19:30 – 21:00 BST Simonne Wood
- Natural Inspiration: Elemental Qualities for Positive Change*** £48  
5 sessions: Thursdays 3 April – 1 May, 18:30 – 20:30 BST Kim Harrison
- Resistance to Structures of Inequality:  
What Can We Learn From the Prophecy of Amos?***  
Thursday 3 April, 19:00 – 20:30 BST James Priestman
- Story Weaving: Living and Loving Community***  
Friday 4 April, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Till flo\* Krapoth
- What Have We Learned From Fox at 400?*** £20  
Saturday 5 April, 13:30 – 21:00 BST Rhiannon Grant
- Climate Dialogues: Having Constructive Conversations***  
Monday 7 April, 18:30 – 20:30 BST Lottie Child
- Are Jedi Quakers?***  
Tuesday 8 April, 19:30–21:00 BST Martin Urschel, Rhiannon Grant
- Foundation Course in Nonviolent Communication*** £86  
6 sessions: Wednesdays, 9 April – 14 May, 19:00 – 21:15 BST  
Özge Altinkaya, Jenny Tipping
- Friendship and Philosophy in Tumultuous Times*** £72  
6 sessions: Wednesdays, 9 April – 14 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST  
Sasha Lawson-Frost, Anne Watson
- Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant***  
Thursday 10 April, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Paulette Meier
- Essentials of Quakerism*** £25  
4 sessions: Thursdays, 10 April – 1 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Rachael Swancott
- Nature Retreat: Navigating Challenge With Active Hope*** £15  
Saturday 12 April, 10:00 – 16:30 BST Tom Deacon, Kim Harrison
- Quakerism and Confucianism***  
Monday 14 April, 19:00 – 21:00 BST  
Wenjun Zou, Shumo Wang, Rhiannon Grant
- Resilient Communities: Empowering Local Initiatives***  
Tuesday 15 April, 18:30 – 20:30 BST Kim Harrison

- Troublesome Women: Early Female Quaker Ministers*** £48  
4 sessions: Tuesdays, 22 April – 13 May 2025, 19:30-20:30 BST Lily Chadwick
- What Is Vocal Ministry?***  
Wednesday 23 April, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Rhiannon Grant
- George Fox: A Conservative Quaker Perspective***  
Thursday 24 April, 19:00-20:30 BST  
Mark Wutka, Lloyd Lee Wilson, Lily Chadwick
- Margaret Fell: The Mother of Quakerism*** [RESIDENTIAL] £285  
Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH  
FULLY BOOKED:  
EMAIL [info@glenthorne.org](mailto:info@glenthorne.org) OR CALL 015394 35389 TO BE PUT ON THE WAITING LIST.  
The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 25 April and  
ends at lunchtime on Sunday 27 April Stuart Masters
- Exploring Quaker Decision-Making*** £10  
Tuesday 6 May, 19:00 – 21:00 BST [TUTOR TO BE ANNOUNCED]
- Resurrection: A Weekly Retreat Through the Gospels*** £54  
4 sessions: Wednesdays, 7 – 28 May, 14:30 – 17:00 BST Timothy Peat Ashworth
- Walking Cheerfully Through the Wheel of the Year*** £78  
6 sessions: Wednesdays, 7 May – 11 June, 19:30 – 21:00 BST  
Tyna Redpath, Rhiannon Grant
- Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant***  
Thursday 8 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Paulette Meier
- Nominations in a Nutshell*** £40  
Saturday 10 May, 10:00 – 16:00 BST Marilyn Higgins, Judith Roads
- George Fox and the Quaker Peace Testimony***  
Monday 12 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Lily Chadwick, Douglas Gwyn
- Quakers and Star Wars*** £36  
3 sessions: Tuesdays, 13 – 27 May, 19:30 – 21:00 BST  
Martin Urschel, Rhiannon Grant
- Write From the Heart*** £48  
3 sessions: Tuesdays, 13 – 27 May, 19:00 – 21:00 BST Rosie Carnall
- Enquiring Into: Divine Guidance***  
Thursday 15 May, 19:00 – 21:00 BST Rosie Carnall
- Understanding Power: Focusing Energy for Change***  
Tuesday 20 May, 19:00-21:00 BST Lucas De Koning
- Awakening: Spiritual Practices To Anchor Your Day*** £54  
4 sessions: Thursdays, 29 May – 19 June, 07:00-08:00 BST Simonne Wood
- Can We Know the 'Truth' ?***  
*Historical Research and the Ongoing Quest for Answers*  
Thursday 29 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST Lily Chadwick, Laura J. Rediehs

**Food, Faith and Witness**

£36

3 sessions: Thursdays, 29 May – 12 June, 18:30-20:30 BST

Wendy Pattinson, Naomi Richards

**Time with the Texts** [RESIDENTIAL]

£285

Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH

The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 30 May and

ends at lunchtime on Sunday 1 June

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

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*Bursary help with the cost of participating in events may be available; speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email [sesamtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:sesamtreasurer@gmail.com) for further information.*

*The Editor welcomes participants' reports for possible inclusion in Sesame.*

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## **Maison Quaker à Congénies – Activities in 2025**

Maison Quaker, 11 avenue des Quakers, 30111 Congénies, FRANCE

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14 – 20 April (*Easter Day*)**Semaine des Familles/Family Week***(French and English will both be used)*

28 September – 3 October

**Art Week with Kate Hale***(conducted in English)*


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More information is at <https://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org/en/events>

or email [centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com](mailto:centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com)

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## **Central Edinburgh Winter Ceilidh**

**M**ORE THAN forty people, aged from under-5 to 93, were at all or part of our ceilidh on Saturday 25 January; a number were prevented by illness or the aftermath of Storm Éowyn. Those present enjoyed crafts organised by Children's Committee, dancing to the music of Majk Stokes and Beth Clarke, a delicious bring-and-share meal with pizza, and an excellent array of musical and poetic turns, serious, political and funny. We have a surprising number of poets in Central Edinburgh!

We are grateful to all those who helped, including welcomers and those in the kitchen. The Sylvia Marshal Bequest contributed to the success of the event, paying for the pizza and the band's honorarium. Sylvia's influence was also present in the poetry: John Phillips read the Scots poem 'The flying snail' by John Waddell, which Sylvia had passed on to him one summer afternoon in her garden. We hope to hold a winter ceilidh in 2026.

**David Sterratt**

## Meetings for Worship at Faslane, 2025 (and also in Edinburgh)

**F**OR MANY YEARS, Friends have gathered periodically at the North Gate of H.M. Naval Base Clyde – the base for the Trident submarines that carry the missiles constituting the U.K.'s 'deterrent' – to hold a Meeting for Worship as an act of witness against these and all other nuclear weapons. All are welcome to join these meetings, which are organised by Friends in West Scotland AM. However Friends in Edinburgh, feeling that a 200-mile round trip to the Gare Loch by car was not environmentally sustainable, decided in 2022 to meet nearer home, in Princes Street Gardens, at (almost) the same time, on the same days. For 2025, the dates of these meetings (all Sundays) are planned to be:

(9 March)	<b>29 June</b>
<b>13 April</b>	<b>21 September</b>
<b>18 May</b>	<b>9 November</b>

Meetings at Faslane start at 11.00 am; those in Princes Street Gardens at 10.30, at the Peace Tree (between the bandstand and the Ross Fountain). In both places, you will need clothes appropriate for the weather, and something to sit on.

It was agreed at Area Meeting (see Minute **2025/01/05.2** on page 48) to review the venue for the Edinburgh meeting, which is an inconspicuous location for an act of witness; outside Register House at the foot of North Bridge was one suggestion of a more visible place to meet.

*For information and updates about meetings at Faslane, contact **Mary Alice Mansell** or **Daphne Wassermann** of Glasgow LM; about the Edinburgh meetings, contact **Alison Burnley** or **Esther Shreeve**, South Edinburgh LM.*

*Contact details for all are in the **Book of Members and Attenders**, the new edition of which is now available (to those named in it) at £4.*

### ***Recommendation: a book NOT in the AM Library***

#### ***Indigenous Soul: Gaza and me* by Nada Shawa**

ISBN 978-1-7395214-5-5 – Main Point Books, 2024

Although Nada has been living in Scotland since she was eight years old she is in close touch with the rest of her family and is well aware of the situation in Gaza. Her book is well worth reading.

I bought it at Jennie Renton's bookshop [*Main Point Books, 77 Bread Street, Edinburgh EH3 9AH*] following the mention of it in the Sunday notices, so she may have more copies or you could borrow mine!

**Rachel Frith**

## Meeting for Sufferings: Friends House, 1 March 2025

Our representative **Jane Kelly** attended online; papers for the meeting can be read at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-03-updated-agenda--papers-package>

and the minutes are at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-03-follow-up-package>

*Jane writes:*

We were encouraged to take back to our Meetings the need for better attendance at Britain Yearly Meeting which will take place from 23 to 26 May this year in London, and also online. The main focus of Yearly Meeting will be on our Peace Testimony.

Friends were asked to remind those wishing to attend that there is financial help available to make this possible. Everyone is welcome. Booking is open; it closes on **6 April** for Friends wishing to attend the online fringe week and Yearly Meeting preparation sessions; otherwise on **27 April**.

We heard reports from several working groups and committees.

The **Quaker Housing Trust** “turns Friends’ money into people’s homes”. **Mark Bitel** told us that it does this through grants and interest-free loans, finding low-rent accommodation for those in real need. Properties are renovated with attention to energy improvement and insulation.

QHT funds come from the Quaker Asset Fund and legacies from individual Friends. The turn around is good so when loans are repaid that money is released for the next project.

**Elaine Green** reported from **QCCIR (Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations)**. There have been differences in the past with other faiths but this group concentrates on what pulls us together and has a dialogue with Muslims especially in our cities. We were told that although the Interfaith Network was dissolved in January this year, Friends are represented on Churches Together in Britain & Ireland and on interfaith bodies.

We heard from **Oliver Robertson** on behalf of **Quakers for Action on Climate** about the recent changes in police powers which have led to peaceful climate protesters being arrested and imprisoned [see page 23]. We underestimate the power of upholding and supporting. Meeting for Sufferings was set up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to aid those suffering for their faith. We must keep nagging our MPs to try to repeal the repressive legislation.

More of what was discussed can be read in full in the minutes.

## Northern Friends Peace Board: Nottingham, 1 March

Notts & Derby AM is at the Southern edge of the compass of the NFPB, and so in-person attendance by Board members at our first meeting of 2025 was sparser than usual, but we were pleased to be joined by several Nottingham Friends, including Jennifer Wilson of – according to the Book

of Members – Central Fife. During our opening worship we heard read from *Hope Works* by David Gee, who died in December at the age of 52; David had led us in a session on ‘Hope in a troubled world’ at a Board meeting in 2021, when the book was newly published. (See also ‘Books of Inspiration’ in *Sesame* 256 – it was Phil Lucas’s recommendation.)

### **GCOMS-UK**

In the morning session, we had a guest speaker: Russell Whiting, the co-ordinator for the UK section of the Global Campaign on Military Spending. He was joining us at the end of the week in which Keir Starmer had announced the slashing of the overseas development budget to fund an increase in spending on the armed forces – a move condemned not just by campaigning groups such as Oxfam, but described as “a fundamental strategic error” by Richard Dannatt, former chief of the general staff:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/27/britain-armed-forces-cut-aid-fund-defence>

(Board members had seen the statement from GCOMS-UK, which is here:

<https://demilitarize.org.uk/campaigners-call-for-a-rethink-of-military-spending-announcement/>)

Against this depressing background – for although there may be pragmatic as well as moral arguments for maintaining and indeed increasing the aid budget, it seems to be taken for granted that spending on ‘defence’ *does* have to rise, whatever else is cut – Russell began by outlining the colossal sums involved in global military spending, the total last year being more than 2.44 *trillion* dollars (\$2,440,000,000,000), the UK’s share of this being some £57 billion. It is uncontroversial that much MoD expenditure is wasted, spent on systems that do not work or fail to materialise at all (see <https://www.declassifieduk.org/how-britain-is-wasting-its-defence-budget/>) although such squandered sums do no *direct* harm, unlike the monies that pay for the 30+ wars currently being fought in the world.

Every year, GCOMS organises the **Global Days of Action on Military Spending**, which in 2025 will run from 10 April to 9 May; information on activities will be posted at [https://demilitarize.org/media\\_news/gdams-2025-april-10-to-may-9/](https://demilitarize.org/media_news/gdams-2025-april-10-to-may-9/) [but had not yet appeared at the time of going to press]. They are likely to include leafleting, letter-writing to MPs and others, and a petition to be delivered to Downing Street.

### ***The Current International Situation***

In 1989, shortly after the Berlin Wall fell, our Coordinator, Philip Austin, then working at Friends House, attended a meeting organised by the Quaker Council for European Affairs, and was startled to find that there was *nothing* on the agenda about this shattering change to the political landscape which clearly was going to make a fundamental difference to the work under discussion. In the week before the Board gathered, he and the clerks had felt that events following Donald Trump’s second inauguration were similarly too cataclysmic not to be considered at our Nottingham meeting, which, it turned out, happened the day after Volodymyr

Zelensky, in a meeting at the White House, was publicly hectored and insulted by J.D. Vance and Trump himself. Among the matters giving cause for alarm were the nature of so-called peace initiatives in relation to Gaza and to Ukraine; the dramatic change in diplomatic language and relationships between the United States and Europe and the implications for UK policy; the worrying growth of far-right politics on both sides of the Atlantic; and the undermining of international cooperation on action to address climate change.

Most of our afternoon session was given over to this. Three Friends gave short introductions to help our discussion.

**Jo Alberti** focused on Israel and Palestine, of which she has particular knowledge; despite the horrors being perpetrated, she draws hope from the work of a number of groups. **Standing Together** is a grassroots movement of Jewish and Palestinian Israeli citizens “for peace, equality, and social justice” (see <https://www.standing-together.org/en/>); and **Combatants for Peace**, similarly, “is a grassroots movement of Israelis and Palestinians, working together to end the occupation and bring peace, equality, and freedom to our homeland” (<https://www.cfpeace.org/>). **Peace Now** is a Jewish group which has been campaigning against illegal settlements since 1978 (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/>) and **Rabbis for Human Rights**, founded in 1988, describes itself as “the rabbinic voice of conscience in Israel, giving voice to the Jewish tradition of human rights” (<https://www.rhr.org.il/eng/>). **Women Wage Peace**, set up in 2014 after the 50-day Gaza war of that year, has 50,000 members and is the largest Israeli group campaigning for peace (<https://www.womenwagepeace.org.il/en/>); **Parents Circle-Family Forum** brings together the bereaved from both communities “to create dialogue, reconciliation and peace” (<https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/homepage-en/>); and **Hand in Hand** is working to build integrated Jewish-Arab schools – it has six so far, with 2,000 students (<https://www.handinhandk12.org/>). Based in California, **Jewish Voice for Peace**, “the world’s largest Jewish organisation standing in solidarity with Palestine” aims “to end U.S. support for Israel’s oppression of Palestinians” (<https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/>). [*Standing Together has a supporters’ network, UK Friends of Standing Together* (see <https://ukfost.co.uk/>) in which some Board members participate.]

The two other Friends also found reasons to hope: **Raymond Chadwick**, having spoken of how he often finds himself preoccupied with world events in meeting for worship, and his dismay at the tearing up of the rules-based order, mentioned Paul Oestreicher’s book *The Double Cross* (1986) from which he read a passage; and **Philip Austin** took encouragement from American Quakers’ response to developments in their country through the Friends Committee on National Legislation and other bodies. What, we were asked, could we learn from it? How can we promote connectivity in a time of fracturing? How, when, and to whom should we be speaking? It was a remarkably positive session, in a day



that overall was unexpectedly uplifting, given the grim context in which we were meeting.

The Board meets next on Saturday 28 June, at Edinburgh Meeting House and online. Friends are welcome to join us for all or part of the day.

Alan Frith

## Quakers in Scotland – Threshing Meeting, 1 March

*The term ‘Threshing Meeting’, according to Quaker Faith & Practice, “currently denotes a meeting at which a variety of different, and sometimes controversial opinions can be openly, and sometimes forcefully, expressed, often in order to defuse a situation before a later meeting for worship for business. Originally the term was used to describe large and noisy meetings for conviction of ‘the world’s people’ in order to ‘thresh’ them away from the world.” (This explanation, at 12.26, first appeared in the 1994 edition of Q. F. & P. – there is no equivalent passage in the previous Book of Discipline, but there is a description of how the original threshing meetings operated in the 1650s in John Punshon’s Portrait in Grey (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2006, p. 71.)*

*On the first Saturday in March, all were invited to a meeting to consider the future structure of the Religious Society of Friends as it exists in Scotland. The questions before the meeting were the following:*

**I**N THE EARLY DAYS of the Society of Friends, Monthly Meetings (now Area Meetings) were planned so that the constituent local meetings were within a day’s travel on horseback. Horse travel is no longer relevant and more widely scattered AMs have gladly embraced the possibilities of online meetings, but Area Meetings remain geographically based. Do the boundaries of these groupings reflect current patterns of travel?

**A**LL AREA MEETINGS within the General Meeting have agreed to the formation of a new national body for Quakers in Scotland, to be registered as a SCIO [*Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation*]. Are we ready to agree that membership of the Religious Society of Friends for Quakers living or worshipping in Scotland will in future reside with the body to be known as Quakers in Scotland (QiS)?

**S**OME AREA MEETINGS may be ready to hand over all legal and administrative responsibilities to QiS as soon as possible and to lay down that AM. Others may not have reached that stage. Should these AMs formally hand over all responsibilities to QiS which then delegates some tasks back, through a process yet to be established?

**S**HOULD WE PROPOSE INSTEAD that the new arrangements should allow for some AMs to continue? Are we prepared to move forward without the destination being clear?

*The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator has registered Quakers in Scotland as a SCIO.*

## General Meeting for Scotland: Edinburgh, 8 March

The attendance at General Meeting, in person or online, was 100, including 11 attenders and four visitors; there were also seven young people. Much of the meeting was concerned with peacebuilding, as it is reflected in our corporate work (in parliamentary engagement, in community development and in work with children and young people, as described by Carolyn Burch. Zoe Prosser and May Troup respectively) as well as what is undertaken by individuals, local meetings and other groups. Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting was one of the visitors, and spoke on 'Building Peace in Dark Times' – see opposite.

### *Dates of meetings in 2026/27*

The following dates (all Saturdays) and host Area Meetings are proposed for next year:

7 March	2026	West Scotland AM ( <i>already agreed</i> )
6 June		East Scotland AM
19 September		North Scotland AM
7 November		South East Scotland AM
6 March	2027	West Scotland AM

It is expected that these will all be blended (hybrid) meetings. It is hoped to confirm the details at GM in June.

### *Appointments*

Among a number of appointments it was noted that **Martin Burnell** has been re-appointed by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) to serve as a trustee, and **Chris Holman** was appointed by GM to serve on the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group until 31/12/2027.

### *Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group*

The Group gave a brief update; at the time of the meeting, confirmation had not been received of the successful registration of Quakers in Scotland as a SCIO. It is expected that the proposals on structural change will be the main business at General Meeting in June.

### *Other reports*

The Meeting heard from Robin Waterston, on behalf of GM trustees, and from Elaine Millar, on the March session of Meeting for Sufferings [*see page 14 for Jane Kelly's report*]; it also received, from West Scotland AM, a paper by Laura McMurtie and Zemirah Moffat on the organisation of Enquirers' events.

### *Donald Trump's visiting Scotland*

The Clerk is to arrange an informal online meeting for interested Friends to discuss actions in protest at the visit of the President of the USA.

*The next General Meeting will take place at Aberdeen and online on 7 June.*

[Notes by the Editor based on the Minutes]

## *Building Peace in Dark Times*

*This is a slightly edited version of Paul Parker's talk at General Meeting, 8 March 2025.*

**W**HAT A TIME IT IS to be talking about peace, Friends! A fortnight ago was the third anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine, and a war that has been grinding away on the edge of Europe ever since, killing thousands and displacing millions. The democratically-elected US government, led by a capricious autocrat, is now bullying Ukraine into accepting an unjust peace, that will lead to further injustice, resentment, and the extraction of economic benefits from minerals to the disadvantage of the Ukrainian people. Vladimir Putin is emboldened, and there is no sign of an end to his repression of his own people to achieve political gain.

This in turn is upsetting the delicate balance between nuclear states, and destabilising NATO, about which Quakers have long had mixed feelings, and threatens to bring to an end the era of the so-called Pax Americana, that has maintained a degree of stability, at least in the global North, for the last 80 years. Few of us can remember the world before that.

As a result, the unmistakable drumbeat of war is growing ever louder in Europe, and here in the UK. Our government, bowing to pressure to increase spending on so-called defence, has taken the scandalous decision to pay for it by taking from the world's poorest and cutting funding for international development, already depleted both by earlier cuts here and by the closure of US Aid programmes a few weeks ago. Millions of people will lose access to healthcare and food, and many will die from hunger, AIDS and other preventable diseases. Another global pandemic is made more likely.

In the Middle East, following the murderous attacks on Israeli civilians by Hamas eighteen months ago, we see the Israeli government maintaining a situation which meets the international law definition of *apartheid* in the West Bank, and creating a plausible risk of genocide in the Gaza strip.

In Eastern Congo, a war fuelled by the West's demand for minerals used in electronic goods is ripping apart communities, displacing many, and destroying already fragile infrastructure. And in Sudan, a war with its roots in colonial history has been raging largely unnoticed for years, with huge numbers displaced, dead or threatened by famine.

Meanwhile, climate change continues unchecked, global carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise, our prospect of limiting the increase in global temperature to 1.5° above the pre-industrial average is vanishing, and significant sea-level rises, extreme weather events and other climate impacts seem all but inevitable. We know these too will lead to the displacement of peoples, and conflict over land, water, food and other resources. Those led by their consciences to protest about this, in ever more disruptive ways, are subjected to heightened repression of the right to do so, and ever longer prison sentences.

Closer to home we see a rise in racism, including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. We saw shocking racist rioting in England last summer, driven by

far-right rhetoric and misinformation. We see rising inequality leading to resentment that creates divisions, and government interventions designed to protect people from each other, rather than to foster trust and cement relationships to build cohesive, mutually-supportive communities. We also saw remarkable responses, often led by faith communities and their leaders, to counteract division and try to heal damaged and frightened communities.

But it's a gloomy picture. Dark times indeed. And it would be easy, waking up in the morning to all this, to roll over, close our eyes to it, do what we can to secure our own interests, and give in to it all.

There are good reasons not to, and we shouldn't, of course. We know, for a start, that there is that of God in all people, and that if we are, in Fox's words, to *answer* that of God in everyone, we have to work for justice for all people, who are all equally children of God. To look out only for ourselves in such times would be to wallow in our own privilege and to disregard that of God in others. And anyway, this will in time affect us all to some degree.

We know that our duty in the world is as stewards, looking after our precious planet for those who will come after us. In the words of our *Advices & Queries*, *We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will*. We know the right sharing of world resources can lead to abundance for all; that a simple lifestyle, freely chosen, is a source of strength, and that we have a duty to keep ourselves informed about the effects our way of living is having on the global economy and environment. We are told to search out in our own lives whatever may contain the seeds of war. That's quite a lot, at the moment.

All of that, I think, is why we are here today to talk about peace, and not about war. It is time to renew our focus. And at Yearly Meeting in May, we will come together again to talk about peace – the first Yearly Meeting to focus specifically on peace for a couple of decades.

As I hope the rather gloomy examples I've described make clear, we cannot separate peace from justice, nor talk about it without talking of inequality, or addressing climate change and climate justice, or thinking about migration; nor without working to safeguard democracy and human rights. All these issues, which are at the heart of our Quaker witness, locally, nationally and internationally, are interlinked.

So it's time to say something, and to do something, about peace. What can Quakers say, and what can we do, today?

We can start with ourselves. Always the easiest, not always the most comfortable, place to start. We have tools which help us to live at peace with ourselves, to find that inner stillness which gives us the firm place to stand which we need if we are to face the world and its challenges. We can use our Quaker spiritual practice to secure, as best we can, our own spiritual wellbeing. Our meetings for worship, our clearness processes, our meetings for learning, our worship sharing, our Quaker communities and the close fellowship they can create, all leave us better-equipped to do the work the world needs of us.

It's no coincidence that many of the most successful movements for change,

from Greenham Common (which I've been thinking about this International Women's Day) to Extinction Rebellion, have had a strong focus on self-care alongside their focus on care for the world outside. When I spoke, a few years ago, to XR's youth organiser in London, what had drawn her to the movement was a need for self-care as well as a need to be able to do something about climate breakdown. The first hour of all their meetings was given over to self care, mental and physical wellbeing, before they even talked about the planet. Much like our practice of starting all our meetings in worship – she reminded me of those early Friends who rode miles on horseback to worship in stillness together, before they got on with spreading the Good News.

After that, we can look to our own communities – both our little Quaker communities, where we can hope to model the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth (as they said of the early Christians, *Behold how they love one another!*\*), and the wider communities around our Quaker meetings. We can work with groups looking to build peaceful, cohesive communities, to tackle inequalities, to support refugees and migrants, and work with other faith groups to build trust and familiarity. Britain Yearly Meeting, through its Peacebuilding in Britain programme, is walking alongside many such groups, and accompanying Quakers in their local meetings who are doing this work. It is much needed, and we barely scratch the surface.

We can use our collective voice to campaign: in our own communities, in the media and on social media, at Holyrood and at Westminster, and even internationally, often together with other like-minded organisations – Quaker and others. We can and do put up notices saying *Refugees Welcome Here* outside our meeting houses. We can and do lobby our governments to contribute to the UN loss and damage fund to compensate the worst climate-affected nations. We protest to banks and insurance companies about their support for fossil fuel extraction and the weapons industry – we have protested outside Shell's HQ and met representatives of Barclays Bank concerning their ethical screening of investments in the manufacture of weapons used for the indiscriminate killing of civilians in Gaza. We can continue to campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons – Friends will be among those gathering at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk next month to protest (all over again) at the presence of US nuclear weapons there.

We can use our privileged position to amplify the voices of those most affected. We can invite Quakers from Turkana and people from Pacific islands to speak to UN diplomats about how climate change has destroyed their lives and livelihoods – people for whom the climate emergency is not new but has been going on for decades.

We can use Quaker quiet diplomacy techniques in Geneva and New York, and here in Britain, to bring together people from across divides in spaces where they can talk freely, pinning our faith, like Rufus Jones, to quiet processes and small circles, where vital and transforming events can take place.

We can send human rights observers (ecumenical accompaniers) to the West

\* Recorded by Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) in his *Apology*; the speakers are the pagan Romans.

Bank to walk alongside Palestinian citizens in a practical expression of solidarity, and to bring back eye-witness accounts of the repression they see there to raise awareness among British people, our politicians and decision-makers about what is happening and the need for a just peace.

We can and do press for the protection of civil society's right to campaign and protest, and complain about repressive policing. At Westminster and in Whitehall we urge the repeal of draconian law and the abandonment of authoritarian practices. We can and do build coalitions and networks of like-minded people and organisations. We are part of the Faith for the Climate coalition, we support Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, we join with other faiths through ecumenical groups like ACTS and Churches Together in Britain & Ireland, and we are involved in the discussions to try to recreate some kind of interfaith structure to replace the Interfaith Network for the UK closed down by Michael Gove's punitive funding cuts at the end of the last parliament.

We can and do work on maintaining our imperfect democracy, asserting its importance as a way to protect the rights of individuals, and emphasising the need for truth and integrity in how it is exercised. And a small group of us have been holding a meeting for worship in the Palace of Westminster with some of the six Quakers currently serving as MPs.

We can educate our children about peace – not just in theory but also in practice, by equipping them to be peacemakers, mediators among their peers and in their homes and communities, and helping them to be sceptical about the solutions we are too often offered to the world's problems. We can do this in our own Quaker communities, with our own children and grandchildren, and in schools. We can try to keep out, or at least balance, the military's presence and narrative in schools by offering the alternative.

All of us have a role in relation to those called to activism, civil disobedience or nonviolent direct action: helping them test their concern, upholding them in their witness, offering prayerful, practical, legal and financial support.

All these things we are already doing. Many of you are involved in them. If you are, you will know that they are fragile. In many cases they can feel like tiny acts, determined but small-scale efforts. They are under-funded in every case. This we can, between us, change if we so choose. Thank you to all of you for the support you already give in time, service and financial contributions to this work.

But above all we must remain grounded. We can together at meetings like this, today. We can come to Yearly Meeting. We can work on these things in our local meetings and groups. We must pray together, discern together, help each other to remain hopeful, to maintain our commitment and our determination. So I'll end with George Fox's words, from the letter he wrote to Quaker ministers from Launceston prison [in 1656]:

*Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God and go through the world and be valiant for the Truth upon Earth. Tread and trample all that is contrary under! (Q. F. & P. 19.32)*

## Climate Justice and the Rule of Law – *recent news items*

THERE ARE updates on pages 2-3 about our Friend Gaie Delap, finally released to Home Detention Curfew in January. Extracts from the prison diary of another Just Stop Oil activist, Louise Lancaster, are at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/25/just-stop-oil-jailed-four-years-non-violent-climate-protest-prison-diary>

At the High Court in London at the end of January, there was a two-day hearing presided over by Lady Carr, Lady Chief Justice of England, of an appeal on behalf of 16 jailed activists, sentenced to a total of 41 years for peaceful protest. (*The Guardian* covered both sessions and the protests outside the court; see also <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/court-of-appeal-reviews-harsh-climate-protest-sentences>.) Judgment followed in March. Ten of the sentences were upheld, but Roger Hallam's (described as "manifestly excessive") was reduced from five years to four, and four-year terms imposed on four others were shortened: to three years, for Daniel Shaw and Louise Lancaster, and to 30 months, for Lucia Whittaker De Abreu and Cressida Gethin. Gaie Delap's sentence was cut from 20 to 18 months.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/07/just-stop-oil-protesters-jail-sentences-shortened-after-appeal>

Nevertheless, the lawyer for many of the protestors said in response:

*"No country in Europe gives such draconian sentences for peaceful protests, proving we are out of kilter with the rest of the civilised world. We are reviewing the judgment and considering an appeal to the supreme court."*

ALSO IN LATE JANUARY, the Court of Session ruled that the decisions to permit the opening of the Rosebank oilfield and the Jackdaw gas field were unlawful, as they had not taken into account the carbon emissions created by burning any oil and gas produced. Lord Ericht wrote in his judgment that *"The public interest in authorities acting lawfully and the private interest of members of the public in climate change outweigh the private interest of the developers"* – an obvious point, one would hope; he also rejected claims that the oil companies had acted in good faith, the UK government having told them, wrongly, that there was no need to include downstream emissions in their environmental impact assessments, since *"Shell, Equinor and Ithaca knew or ought to have known at the time that the consents were granted that the law was uncertain."* On this basis, extraction of oil and gas would be illegal; but the companies were permitted to continue development work at the two fields pending new decisions by the UK government, based on impact assessments which comply with the requirement to take account of downstream emissions. The written judgment is at

<https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/v0zkbsxy/2025csoh10-petitions-by-greenpeace-limited-and-uplift-for-judicial-review.pdf>

It was reported in the *Financial Times* in February that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor still support both projects even so. Rachel Reeves was

quoted as having said: “we were really clear in our [election] manifesto that we would honour all existing licences including at Rosebank and Jackdaw and we will stick by those commitments” (see <https://www.ft.com/content/f4c09a5a-a389-4ded-b44c-ab22af45d7ab>) although whether an improperly-granted licence can be said to exist at all is arguable. In the meantime, thirteen other projects have been put in question by the Court of Session ruling; they too need consent that complies with the requirement for comprehensive impact assessments.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/feb/13/thirteen-more-oil-and-gas-licences-could-be-cancelled-after-rosebank-court-ruling>

The industry’s response has been to lobby the UK government, arguing that oil and gas should be exempt from the Supreme Court ruling on downstream emissions:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/feb/18/fossil-fuel-industry-accused-of-seeking-special-treatment-over-oilfield-emissions>

It would appear that this has not been successful, although new decisions on Rosebank and Jackdaw are yet to be announced.

**A**NOTHER FOSSIL-FUEL DEVELOPMENT in which the UK government is involved – not as regulator but as an investor – is the TotalEnergies liquified natural gas (LNG) project in Mozambique. British participation is a legacy of Liz Truss’s time as Trade Secretary. The bleak assessment of the project by the Institute for Energy Economics & Financial Analysis (IEEFA) dated 12 February 2025 is here:

<https://ieefa.org/resources/list-reasons-not-finance-totalenergies-mozambique-lng-project-grows>

Friends of the Earth has failed in previous litigation to get the government to disengage from the project, but in October threatened renewed action

[https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-government-drop-project-support-gas-mozambique-totalenergies/;](https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-government-drop-project-support-gas-mozambique-totalenergies/)

and in February the *Financial Times* reported that the government was taking legal advice on withdrawing its \$1.15 bn investment:

<https://www.ft.com/content/cacd29fb-1535-4462-bd5f-3f2bcb546a8d>

(TotalEnergies is also the principal investor in EACOP – see page 26.)

**T**HE SUCCESSFUL CLAIM by the British oil company Rockhopper for compensation from the Italian government after a project in the Adriatic was halted – the company was awarded €241 million – was mentioned in an article on ecocide in *Sesame* 250, and is discussed here:

<https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/rockhopper-v-italy-and-the-tension-between-isds-and-climate-policy/>

In that case, the law invoked was the Energy Charter Treaty, but investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) arrangements are a feature of many international agreements. The government of Greenland is currently being sued for damages of \$11.5 billion by an Australian-based company ETM (Energy Transition Minerals) for banning development of an open-pit min-



ing site where extracting terbium and neodymium, used in the magnets of wind turbines and electric cars, would also unearth uranium, likely to pollute the air as dust and to contaminate nearby water supplies. The compensation sought is nearly ten times Greenland's annual budget. ETM's legal costs are being met by Burford Capital, a finance company based in London and New York, one of several profiting from ISDS litigation; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/05/greenland-mining-energy-transition-minerals-environmental-laws-uranium-rare-earth-toxic-waste-investor-state-dispute-settlement-isds-aoe>

(This article on the Greenland case is part of a *Guardian* series entitled 'The age of extinction', which includes a piece by the Nobel Economics laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz calling ISDS suits "legal terrorism":

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/mar/07/private-investors-ability-to-sue-governments-is-a-form-of-legal-terrorism-ending-this-system-is-imperative-aoe>

The whole series is at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/series/the-age-of-extinction>)

**T**HE FIRST TWO LAWSUITS of what will probably be hundreds against the Trump administration's climate vandalism were filed on 19 February. Both concern moves to open up more of US waters to oil and gas drilling, which the plaintiffs say are illegal. In the first, Greenpeace and other national and local organizations contest the revocation of protections for 265m acres of federal waters from future fossil fuel leasing. Trump signed an order withdrawing the protections just hours into his second term. The second suit, filed by many of the same groups, calls for a court to reinstate a 2021 decision affirming protections for nearly 130m acres in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/19/trump-administration-climate-lawsuits>

**T**HE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS criticised the Swiss government at a meeting in March for its inadequate response to a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights on the duty of states to protect their citizens against pollution and the effects of climate change. In April 2024 the Court upheld the claim that members of the organisation KlimaSeniorinnen had a right to this protection (see *Sesame* 254) but such action as has been taken does not amount to compliance with the ruling.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/07/switzerland-do-better-climate-older-womens-echr-win-human-rights>

Switzerland has been given until September to report to the Committee on its proposals for measures to protect vulnerable citizens, with "concrete examples" of public involvement in the development of climate policy.

## StopEACOPScot

*This article provides an overview of the activities of the StopEACOPScot group endorsed by Central Edinburgh LM in October 2023; it is an edited version of the group's report to the Local Meeting in March. (ED.)*

**C**LIMATE CHANGE IS A COMPLEX EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGE. It affects us all. It will be the greatest underlying cause of war and mass migration this century. We therefore want to encourage Friends to engage with the topic in any way they feel able: to learn about climate change and how it impacts on our lives, and to explore how it affects our feelings for the beautiful natural world we are lucky enough to have here in Scotland. At the end are listed some activities Friends might engage in; we'd love to hear additional suggestions.

### *Why it started*

The StopEACOPScot group first met on 22 October 2023. Our Friend Janet Saunders had a concern about climate change and felt that in the context of 'carbon bombs' – super massive fossil fuel extraction projects worldwide – her recycling and gardening efforts were puny and ineffective.

All these projects need insurance to proceed. QPSW threw in its support with the **Insure our Future** campaign. This is a collaboration of many different climate concerned groups all around the world. Each group focuses on one project and one insurance company, in a staged campaign of asking insurers not to support fossil fuel extraction. Campaigners are provided with a detailed toolkit. Central Edinburgh LM supported the proposal to form a campaigning group, in which Janet was joined by John and Kerstin Phillips from Central Edinburgh and David Somervell and Carol Jennings from South Edinburgh. Through QPSW and links to Area Meetings in Scotland this group grew to include Carolyn Burch and Richard Raggett of Forres LM and the PEWG [*Parliamentary Engagement Working Group*]. Margery McKechnie from Glasgow LM is also a member, and is our link with the Glasgow Quaker climate café. We have had support from Anna Lewis from QPSW throughout.

### *EACOP – the East African Crude Oil Pipeline*

We decided to tackle a project called EACOP, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline, by addressing its potential insurers, Tokio Marine, and possible funders the Lothian Pension Fund. EACOP would cause higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than the combined annual carbon emissions of its host countries, Uganda and Tanzania, and yet offer no benefit to most of the people of these countries. Oil drilling will take place within the Murchison Falls National Park, a haven for rare and endangered animals. The area is an earthquake zone, yet the project is for a pipeline near Lake Albert to pass by Lake Victoria, endangering the water supply and livelihood of millions of people.

Land for this development is provided by the governments of Uganda and Tanzania. French oil giant Total Energies and the China National Offshore

Oil Corporation plan a 1,443 km pipeline carrying electrically heated crude oil right through the heart of Africa. The project has displaced hundreds of communities. More than 100,000 people have lost their subsistence farms and homes. They are moved to small, single room buildings with no agricultural land and have no cash compensation to enable them to move or buy other land elsewhere.

### *What we did*

Our initial actions were based on the coffee table toolkit, designed by Insure our Future. We wrote to Tokio Marine, sending them detailed letters, postcards and Christmas cards. In this we joined with other faith groups, and one of our members visited their London office to hand in a letter to the CEO. We publicised our activities using the window display at 7 Victoria Terrace and wrote a blog post for Quaker Faith in Action. A web page was created to act as a store of mail and documents and to share our campaign materials. We took part in an online Community of Practice run by Insure our Future, and through this we met John Kagganga, a Ugandan teacher and campaigner for biodiversity, who is seeking to raise awareness in Uganda and to offset the worst effects of the pipeline development by helping local people to grow food.

### *What we learned*

Drilling for oil has already started in Uganda in and around the Murchison Falls National Park. The pipeline is being built and is likely to cross the Serengeti, a National Park and a World Heritage Site in Tanzania, on its way to a new purpose-built port on the coast. There are protests in Uganda, but many people simply don't know what climate change is or what causes it. Students have attempted peacefully to remonstrate with the government but have been met with imprisonment and extreme violence.

### *Tokio Marine*

Our campaign has received no direct response from Tokio Marine. However, in 2024 Tokio Marine issued a revised and strengthened policy statement on their sustainability commitment. Insure our Future published this statement by the Program Director at Japan Center for a Sustainable Environment and Society (JACSES), commenting on the policy:

*"We welcome this policy update as the first approach by an Asian insurer to phase out support for harmful oil and gas companies that are not aligned with a liveable future. However, the policy needs further improvement to clarify alignment with the global 1.5°C warming target, and to end support for fossil fuel expansion."*

### *Lothian Pension Fund (LPF)*

LPF claims to have a strong and effective environmental policy, but the scepticism of campaigning groups prompted us to investigate. We identified members of the scheme within the Area Meeting, one of whom was willing to help by sending letters to the Fund drafted by our team.

The LPF website has a very extensive list of companies the Fund invests in [<https://www.lpf.org.uk/media/qu4fjuzl/list-of-holdings-as-at-30-sep-2024-10-pdf.pdf>],

which include Total, the EACOP developer, and other fossil fuel companies. This, it is argued, gives it access to company AGMs and the opportunity to try to influence them. Nevertheless, in an AGM, they and their environmental concern will be a minority voice amongst shareholders.

We followed this up by writing to Ian Murray MP, Secretary of State for Scotland. He wrote to LPF, and this produced a little more information. The Fund is constrained by government regulations; it is not free to divest from any holding purely on moral, ethical or environmental grounds but must consider other factors, in particular profitability. Actuaries are the experts in projecting the long-term investment returns to investors such as LPF; and recently there has been a sea change among actuaries in the UK.

### *What's new from actuaries*

In January 2025, Exeter University, along with the Institute & Faculty of Actuaries, produced a report called *Planetary Solvency*. It highlights the fact that actuaries have hitherto not had the tools to factor in climate change and climate tipping points into their calculations. Because of this, the projected range of expected investment returns from some investment funds, calculated using standard methods, have come up with bizarre projections, such as that if 70 % of the land that grows earth's wheat became unusable, the economy would still continue to grow. Clearly this is nonsense. This report takes us into a new world, one that the powers that be have managed to ignore for too long. It is primarily aimed at legislators, setting out many actions that need to be taken by them quite urgently. Politicians can be swamped by data on many topics, so it is essential to keep this matter at the forefront of their minds. The main message is that current financial modelling for investment funds – such as pension funds – is grossly underestimating climate risk.

Another important recent report, *The Parliamentarians' Guide to Climate Change*, has been produced by Exeter University with a group from the House of Lords called Peers for the Planet. This has been circulated to all Westminster MPs. Its purpose is to explain what climate change is, what causes it, how it is progressing, where things currently stand and what is expected to happen if we can't make the necessary changes across the globe. In essence, it takes things back to basics for MPs. It is hoped the report will be circulated to elected representatives across the UK.

### *Next Steps*

StopEACOPScot will continue to campaign with insurers and funders. Insure our Future urge us to continue with our campaign, even if we do not get any response from Tokio Marine. It would not give the right message if we were to step away. Friends can be confident that we will press ahead with this campaign, and we are open to any ideas and offers of help. In particular we hope that Friends will want to get involved in some way and offer a few suggestions opposite on how this might be done.

## Options for climate activity for individuals

- Engage with MPs and MSPs on climate related issues.
- Sign up for email updates from our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko ([SarahK@quaker.org.uk](mailto:SarahK@quaker.org.uk))
- Sign up for the free email newsletter *Imagine*, produced by The Conversation [<https://theconversation.com/uk/topics/imagine-newsletter-67850>]
- Support the call from Ugandan students and many others for a Fossil fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty
- Support the call for a crime of ecocide both in Scotland and in the wider world.
- Take care of a garden or space in nature. Take inspiration from Keep Scotland Beautiful [<https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org>]
- Arrange a workshop based on the Loving Earth project. [<http://lovingearthproject.uk>]

## Links to University of Exeter reports:

Parliamentary Guide to Climate Change:

<https://greenfutures.exeter.ac.uk/parliamentarians-guide-to-climatechange/>

Planetary Solvency:

<https://actuaries.org.uk/news-and-media-releases/news-articles/2025/jan/16-jan-25-planetary-solvency-finding-our-balance-with-nature/>

## *Christian Aid – News and Events*

### **Trees of Hope – Mark Christian Aid’s 80<sup>th</sup> Year**

Would your Meeting plant a Tree of Hope to mark our 80th anniversary? Trees are a beautiful representation of hope for the future. To commemorate your Meeting’s commitment to Christian Aid, you could pick one from a local garden centre, or ask Friends who are gardeners for a sapling. **The Woodland Trust has also agreed to supply free trees to churches wishing to commemorate their commitment to Christian Aid.** You can apply to the Trust directly (at <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/>) and then let us know when you’ve planted your tree! Trees come in sets of 15 or more, so it’s a great way to get other churches and schools in your community involved.

### **CHRISTIAN AID WEEK – 11-17 May 2025**

Christian Aid Week is seven days to make a difference, and there are so many ways to get involved! Learn more and order resources from:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Or get in touch for support: [Edinburgh@christian-aid.org](mailto:Edinburgh@christian-aid.org) / 0131 221 0254

### **Prayers for Peace in the Middle East – Monthly Zoom Meeting**

Join Christian Aid and partners on the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month as we continue to

pray for peace in the Middle East. In March we welcome **Ahmed Sourani**, Coordinator of Gaza Urban Agriculture Platform (GUPAP), and **Dr Hassan Jabareen**, General Director of Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel [<https://www.adalah.org/en>]. Learn more and sign up: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace>

### **RE resource for schools**

Our new RE resource, *Speak Up or Stay Silent?* provides a progressive learning opportunity for pupils in Early Years through to S3. The resource comes with case studies, a photo pack, activities, and much more, to help pupils explore 'faith in action' questions throughout the curriculum. The teaching and learning units will be downloadable from our website soon. To order a FREE printed resource email [egardner@christian-aid.org](mailto:egardner@christian-aid.org)

### **Climate Campaigning with Christian Aid**

Tackling the debt and climate crises through **Christian Aid's Restore Campaign** is one way we can join in God's work to restore creation and see the flourishing of all people.

Email [campaigns@christian-aid.org](mailto:campaigns@christian-aid.org) for the link to join the campaign launch on 26 March, 7.00 – 8.30 pm.

At the same time, reducing Scotland's domestic emissions is significant in helping our global neighbours who suffer from the climate crisis, particularly when they did little to cause this problem. Find out more and add your name to the petition today:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/what-we-do/scotland-united-climate-action-petition>

### **Creative for Climate Justice**

We are inviting schools to be part of our Creative for Climate Justice exhibition in the Scottish Parliament later this year. Pupils will learn about climate justice and take this learning as inspiration to create art, in whatever form they choose. Alongside our partners SCIAF and Oxfam, and supported by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, our aim is to amplify the creative voices of young people so decision makers in Scotland are influenced to keep the climate justice promises they have made.

You can find more information here:

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

Register your school by emailing [egardner@christian-aid.org](mailto:egardner@christian-aid.org).

### **Global Neighbours Accreditation Scheme**

Global Neighbours celebrates everything a primary school is doing towards Global Citizenship Education while providing a framework for teachers to evaluate and deepen their practice. With an online learning community to join, there are opportunities to connect with other schools and share good practice. The online training and award assessment will be free for the first 20 schools to register. Email [egardner@christian-aid.org](mailto:egardner@christian-aid.org) for more information.

## Faith Into Action Monthly Online Sessions

Our new climate and debt justice campaign is coming soon! See

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/faith-action-drop-session>

## Kiltwalk 2025

As Kiltwalk returns this year, we would love to have Christian Aid represented at all four events, to help us reach 80 miles for our 80th year. Routes range from 3 to 22 miles, all with facilities and refreshments provided:

- Glasgow                      Saturday 26 April (14-mile only) & Sunday 27 April
- Aberdeen                    Sunday 1 June
- Dundee                        Sunday 17 August
- Edinburgh                  Sunday 14 September

As one of Scotland's largest mass sponsored walking events, the Kiltwalk is a great opportunity to walk together with likeminded Christian Aid supporters, organisers and church representatives.

To sign up, visit <https://thekiltwalk.co.uk/> selecting "Christian Aid" as your chosen charity.

## St Giles' Cathedral Service, Saturday 17 May

Join us at St Giles', Edinburgh, for a special service to mark Christian Aid's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We will be joined by **Temwa Kasakula**, Christian Aid's Global Thematic Advisor for Sexual Reproductive Health & Gender, who will be visiting Scotland from Malawi. More details and timings to follow.

## Reflections on being a local funeral coordinator

**Michael Nott**, now of Central Edinburgh, was previously a member of Sussex West Area Meeting, attending Littlehampton local meeting.

**O**RGANISATION OF OUR FUNERALS is a privilege as well as a responsibility and I have been asked to share something of my experience. It may be helpful to start by describing how the role of a funerals coordinator developed at Littlehampton.

Funerals after the manner of Friends are held, as other special meetings, in the form of meetings for worship, and therefore under the care of Elders. Initially, in our relatively small Local Meeting, one Elder was appointed to be responsible, who would have assistance at the funeral from another Friend, whether Elder, Overseer (now Pastoral Friend) or member. Over several years there were few funerals, but we found the same two of us usually fulfilling this task, and the LM attached it to the list of appointments. This enabled Friends to be replaced as it became necessary – at that time there were no limits on re-appointment – ensuring continuity.

For a deceased Friend, the request for a Quaker funeral would usually come to the Clerk, who would have the contact details of our funerals organiser(s). Occasionally the request would be from outside Friends, in

respect of a relative who had left express wishes in a will, for instance: I have officiated as “minister” at the funeral of a non-Quaker.

Our first point of contact was always with the family, to determine whether there were any specific arrangements required: what their preferences were for a meeting in the manner of Friends, who might participate with a reading or tribute, and whether music would be included *etc.* Such a conversation is a great opportunity to get to know more of the history of the person who had died, and to plan what may be regarded as a celebration rather than a mournful occasion. It may indeed be the chance to bring about a family reconciliation. Liaison with the undertakers and funeral directors is necessary regarding entry, exit and timing of closure, for instance, and notes were often helpful. An introduction is needed if friends or family will be present who are not familiar with Quaker practice. Some prepared minis-try from a well-known member is valuable. The most appreciated feature of our funerals is the invitation to any other family, friends or those attending to speak, if they wish, of their knowledge of the deceased. I have found this always to be taken up. One has to be prepared for someone, *e.g.* a younger person, to be too emotionally affected to contribute. A woodland burial is a special opportunity to manage a Friends’ gathering in an outdoor environment.

It became helpful to talk to other LMs when special arrangements were requested, including the interment or scattering of ashes in the meeting house garden. We established a book to record these events which would be accompanied by a brief ceremony, normally after a Meeting for Worship. When a number of Friends were newly appointed to funerals in LMs across the AM, we arranged to meet together to share experience. An important aspect was dealing with the fees offered to a minister for carrying out these duties.

Being known in the meeting as a nominated Friend responsible for funerals occasionally led to members approaching me and quietly discussing their own preferences. These would be noted, dated, and kept available for when needed. Friends were sometimes reminded to put their wishes in writing. It was thought that this information would be readily available, from one of us, rather than “officially” available in the meeting house files. We had locked cupboards but no office. My appointment lasted for longer than the three triennia which has become the usual limit for Friends.

The benefit to the meeting of an appointed person or persons was that there was always a recognised Friend to refer requests to in the first instance, and to trust to be able to handle matters with confidence.

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*And this is the comfort of the good, that the grave cannot hold them, and that they live as soon as they die. For death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity. Death, then, being the way and condition of life, we cannot love to live, if we cannot bear to die.*

**William Penn, 1693 [Q.F. & P. 22.95]**



## What Next ?

Tim Wyatt – *Everyone's Book Of The Dead: A panoramic compendium of death, dying, the after-death states, karma and reincarnation throughout world history*  
Firewheel Books – ISBN: 978-0-9561451-5-4

I could not have imagined it! A coffee table book about Death with over 200 pictures (only a few are gruesome), feature boxes and prominent quotations. An attractive book to dip in and out of?

This is what Tim Wyatt has achieved in his *Everyone's Book of the Dead* (2021). The subtitle calls it *A panoramic compendium* and he certainly casts his net widely. Among the things he looks at are death, dying, re-birth, karma and death miscellanea.

He even manages jokes. A cartoon has a recently arrived person (now an angel) confronting St Peter at a chain-link fence. "The old pearly gates looked nice" says Peter, "but they were hell to maintain".

In setting out his credentials, Tim Wyatt points out that he has no qualifications, but does have fifty years as a journalist, and a lifelong interest in spirituality. His interest is abundantly clear in the scope of this book.

The biggest sections are on re-incarnation and on death traditions, current and historical, all over the world. If you stole meat in India it used to be thought you would be re-born as a vulture. And what is a ghost dance? And why do the Torajan people of Indonesia dig up their dead every three years for a wash and brush up?

One fascinating story Tim tells in some detail is how Christianity finally came to outlaw the whole idea of re-incarnation. It was there in the early days and in the first Christian writings, but once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire the agenda changed. Controlling the faithful became a big issue and was much easier if you allowed them a single life instead of many. "Unsuitable" material was edited out of the Bible and distortions were the result.

It seems that the final nail in the coffin for re-incarnation was the attitude of the sixth-century empress Theodora, a lady of very doubtful morals and practices. Wife of the emperor Justinian, she wanted to squash the idea flat so she would not have to atone for her sins in a later life! She would be a great character for a Hollywood film.

I find it refreshing that writing about death is more common now. This book is a very substantial addition to such works as Deepak Chopra's *Life after Death* (2006), Neale Donald Walsch's *Home with God* (2007) and last year's much-acclaimed joyous celebration of life by Simon Boas called *A Beginner's Guide to Dying*.

Susan Kime

## THE MISTAKE – *An Appeal*

**Michael Mears** is an actor/playwright and pacifist who attends Wandsworth Meeting in south London. At Edinburgh Meeting House in November he put on his one-man play *The Priest's Tale* (based on John Hersey's account in Hiroshima of the experiences of the survivor Wilhelm Kleinsorge SJ). Michael writes:

**It's 80 years since atomic bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities.**

In 2023 I toured *THE MISTAKE*, the play I wrote about Hiroshima and the first atomic bomb, around the UK, with no public arts funding – just the enthusiastic support of crowdfunders and one or two small organisations. The play was performed by Japanese actor **Riko Nakazono** and myself. This year, the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings, I feel compelled to take the play further afield to the USA and to Japan.

We will be touring in the USA for six weeks from the start of April, and it is an expensive undertaking – though in order to help the tour proceed, I have chosen to be unpaid myself, as part of my witness for peace.

Potential sympathetic funding bodies in the UK won't fund a project that goes abroad. So will you help us bring *THE MISTAKE* to the USA, to share the urgent themes and message of this play with a wider, American, audience? Join us in our efforts to enlighten, to illuminate, to change hearts and minds, through the emotional power of theatrical storytelling?

Any donation however small will make a difference help us. Here is the Crowdfunding link for donations which will give you a lot more information, with photographs and reviews.

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/taking-the-mistake-to-the-usa>

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### *The Mistake* – comments on the 2022 Edinburgh production

★★★★ “The past comes alive – a gripping piece of storytelling”  
(THE TIMES)

★★★★★ “This production received one of the very few standing ovations I have seen at the Edinburgh Fringe. A dramatic treat.”  
(UK THEATRE WEB)

★★★★ “A powerful examination of humanity in the wake of Hiroshima.”  
(THE LIST)

“The story of Hiroshima and the history of nuclear weapons should never be forgotten, and *The Mistake* is a timeless and innovative look into that period, expertly done.”  
(BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE)

“Couldn't be more timely ... Mears is brilliant in his lightning-swift changes of costume, accent and persona”  
(Mary Woodward in *SESAME 243*)

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# Bang the Drum for the Nuclear Ban Treaty

*The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons came into effect on 22 January 2021. The Third Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty took place 3-7 March 2025 in New York.*

**I**N THE VERY EARLY YEARS of the new Scottish Parliament, the nuclear weapons lurking at Faslane/Coulport were not a subject of debate. Then, on 5 April 2001, during a crowded First Minister's question time, twelve members of Trident Ploughshares dramatically interrupted normal business by unfurling a banner and demanding that the Parliament face up to the Trident question and debate it. They held up business for about 15 minutes before they were removed by police. Eleven were arrested and charged. The event led to a very constructive written dialogue with MSPs. The daft taboo against talking about an issue that so obviously affected Scotland was well and truly broken in October 2002 during a debate on a motion lodged by the Scottish Socialist Party.

In more recent years the Parliament has again and again backed the removal of the UK's weapons from the Clyde and shown clear support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and its vision for their total elimination from the world. For example in the last four years no less than twenty motions dealing with the TPNW have been lodged at Holyrood and many of them have been debated. In January, Bill Kidd MSP lodged a motion (see below) noting that the TPNW has now been in force as international law for four years.

The importance of the TPNW for Scotland can hardly be exaggerated. The Treaty's Article 4 looks as if had been written with us in mind:

*Article 4. Notwithstanding Article 1 (b) and (g), each State Party that has any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in its territory or in any place under its jurisdiction or control that are owned, possessed or controlled by another State shall ensure the prompt removal of such weapons, as soon as possible but not later than a deadline to be determined by the first meeting of States Parties.*

Add to that the fact that the UK does not have a feasible alternative to Faslane/Coulport from which to deploy its "Continuous At Sea Deterrent" and you have the potential for a new Scotland *de facto* to disarm a nuclear-armed state. No wonder, then, that our aspiration for a wholesome future gets so much negative attention from them indoors, as even the writers of the Netflix series *The Diplomat* have noticed. Hingin' to the TPNW also signals our recognition that there is a big world out there beyond the walls of the great powers, a world that demands action from these powers to take climate collapse seriously and justly, and to remove the hovering shadow of nuclear catastrophe.

These commitments are a huge encouragement to disarmament campaigners, not just in the UK, but also internationally. Recall how Humza Yousaf's strong words about the Gaza genocide made us feel, in the face of the tripe coming from mainstream outlets. When we hear these good

words we know we are not alone. Keeping the problem of the UK's nuclear weapons to the forefront also underlines the strong contrast between the Scottish Parliament's rejection of weapons of mass destruction and the shameful "triple-lock" pro-nuke pothole which the ruling UK party occupies. It also highlights what we need to do be free to make a genuine change. Plus, continually reminding people and parliament of the TPNW and its character as a disarmament tool with genuine sharpness and bite puts a bright searchlight on those who prefer the woolly and the undefined. My dear political friend, if you are serious about nuclear disarmament you will back the TPNW with no quibble. Otherwise we will suspect you are biding your time in order to adjust your position to whatever offers the best chance of power.

Of course words can be mere words. For one thing we would like the Scottish Government to use the considerable powers it has under the Scotland Act to shine a light on the road convoys carrying assembled nuclear weapons between the bomb factories in Aldermaston and Burghfield to Coulport. Nukewatch has clearly described what you can and should do [See the 2017 report *Unready Scotland, and the Scottish Government's response at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/road-transportation-of-defence-nuclear-material-in-scotland-preparedness-review/>]. Some smeddum, please!*

Bill Kidd MSP, who lodged the motion below, was in New York for the third meeting of TPNW states parties (3MSP), and was joined by others from Scotland including a civil society delegation. You can keep yourself informed about what is happening in the aftermath of the meeting by signing up for alerts from Secure Scotland and checking the regular updates on the [nuclearban.scot](http://nuclearban.scot) website. In the meantime do bang the drum for the Treaty. You will not be alone.

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*Parliamentary Motion – UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*

That the Parliament recognises that the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force on 22 January 2021, has 94 signatories and has been ratified by 73 states:

- notes that the third Meeting of State Parties (3MSP) will take place in New York in March 2025;
- notes that 3MSP will report on intercessional work and progress since the previous meeting, and that nuclear armed states and non-signatory states such as the UK may attend as observers;
- recognises that the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will take place in May 2025;
- understands that the UK is a state party to the NPT, and is accordingly bound by Article 6, which is to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament";

- understands the complementarity of the TPNW and the NPT;
- recognises the significance of the Nobel Peace Prize award to Nihon Hidankyo for their tireless activity in sharing the horrifying experience of nuclear weapons use and advocating for universal nuclear disarmament;
- responds to Nihon Hidankyo's call on all governments to take their stories as a call to action and to immediately eliminate any activities that give nuclear weapons legitimacy;
- calls on the UK Government to attend and observe 3MSP in New York, and to uphold its commitment to the NPT particularly with regard to Article 6.

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**David Mackenzie**

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## Interfaith Statement on Nuclear Weapons

The following statement was drafted by the UN office of Soka Gakkai International, a Nichiren Buddhist organization founded in 1975 and based in Tokyo.

**A**S PEOPLE OF FAITH representing diverse traditions, united in our common belief in the sanctity of life and the pursuit of justice, peace, and human dignity, we commend the States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) for your historic commitment and leadership in working toward a world without nuclear weapons. Each signature and ratification affirming this Treaty is an act of courage and beacon of hope, and we applaud you.

*At this third meeting of States Parties, we find ourselves yet again at a critical juncture, with ever-rising global tensions, humanitarian crises in many regions of the world, worsening impacts of climate change, and heightened threat of the use of nuclear weapons. In our continuous struggle against such existential threats, abolishing nuclear weapons cannot be a distant goal; it is a requirement for our collective survival.*

*This year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the horrific atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We solemnly remember and honour all hibakusha, who have suffered the unimaginable pain as a result of such inhumane weapons. We celebrate Nihon Hidankyo for receiving the latest Nobel Peace Prize, and for their unending leadership and courage in ushering in a world without nuclear weapons. Building upon the heightened global awareness of the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons, we must seize this opportunity and momentum to create tangible progress toward nuclear disarmament.*

*As people of faith, we pray. We pray that nuclear weapons will never be used again. We pray that those whose lives were impacted by such horrific weapons receive assistance and remediation as soon as possible. We pray that all nations awaken to the folly of the logic of claiming their own security at the cost of the survival of humanity and our planet, and choose the path of nuclear abolition.*

*But our prayers are not abstract ideology or wishful thinking. Our actions are our*

*prayer, as exemplified by many courageous individuals of faith, who have stood up against nuclear weapons and spoken the truth, because they truly believed that their faith demanded such actions. And this is why we, as faith communities, are again uniting our voices today.*

*As faith communities, we affirm the TPNW and celebrate this Treaty which signals the world's moral, legal, and practical rejection of nuclear weapons. We join you in your efforts to universalize and implement the Treaty.*

*We stand in solidarity with victims and survivors, recognizing the deep suffering of hibakusha, Indigenous communities impacted by nuclear testing, and all who have borne the brunt of the nuclear arms race. Their testimonies are a testament to their resilience and a clarion call for justice.*

*We commit to interfaith collaboration to educate, advocate, and mobilize our communities to support the Treaty and the broader goal of nuclear abolition. We will challenge apathy, ignorance, powerlessness and silence through our work grounded in our spiritual commitment. Our collective spiritual and moral voice is vital in shaping the world's public opinion and strengthening the norms against nuclear weapons.*

*We commend the leadership of the TPNW States Parties, and urge you to implement the Treaty with integrity, ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in its processes. We encourage each State Party to continue to invite other states to join this work, to participate in this process of nuclear disarmament as we universalize the Treaty.*

*We urge all nations, particularly those currently possessing nuclear weapons or under their deterrence umbrellas, to join the Treaty without delay, to formalize the commitment that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.*

*Addressing the UN General Assembly in 1998, Nelson Mandela stated: "We must ask the question, which might sound naive to those who have elaborated sophisticated arguments to justify their refusal to eliminate these terrible and terrifying weapons of mass destruction – why do they need them anyway?"*

*The future of humanity is a world without nuclear weapons. We are here today, because of this shared vision, and we cannot be complacent as our world is heading toward its destruction.*

*Nuclear faith is a faith that secures death. We want to pursue a faith that leads to life. We invite all of you to join us in connecting once again with your religious, spiritual and moral compass, and courageously imagine a future we want, for ourselves, and for our future generations. Let us awaken to the truth that we all are connected, that we cannot build security at the cost of others' pain and suffering. Let each of us take full responsibility in ushering in such a future—because there is no alternative.*

*More than a hundred organisations from around the world including the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the World Council of Churches, and various Quaker bodies endorsed this statement; the full list is at*

*[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TwOdnzUWbAR9-VySME0ZSlEx\\_5toOC7G1sUwKAiTNg/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TwOdnzUWbAR9-VySME0ZSlEx_5toOC7G1sUwKAiTNg/edit?tab=t.0)*

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*Reports of 3MPS are at <https://www.nuclearban.scot/> and (alone among newspapers) at <https://www.thenational.scot/topics/treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons-tpnw/>.*

## Becoming a Quaker

**H**OW DID YOU become a Quaker? It's not something you hear over lunch at Edinburgh Meeting House. 'Tell me Friend, how was it that you became a Quaker?' So far as I know, there are relatively few 'Birthright' Friends in our meeting: a Quaker whose parents were also Quakers. So most of us must have been on a migratory journey of some kind to get to where we are. And of course, some of us may still be on the move. Who knows? Though for me I think I have arrived where I want to be. At the Quaker Meeting House, in this city of Edinburgh.

I will tell how I came to be a Quaker and see if the act of searching may encourage others to seek out the origins of their own attraction to Quakerism. From the time I left school and went to Art School I would call myself a seeker. Although I did not go to a Catholic school, my school made a special effort to allow me to follow the Catholic faith. Not that I had any particular fondness for this religion, It was simply the one I had inherited from my mother. So own my own preferences were not something I had any control of. George Fox was also a seeker, he went to various 'Steeple Houses', as he called them, yet remained dissatisfied, eventually he felt himself to be touched by God in the open air. So he began preaching in the great outdoors. He wanted to speak about a God that is available to everyone. A God we all can relate to free of dogma and preachers. Available equally to women and men, at all times and in all places.

Other churches were not happy about this new movement, and early Quakers faced a great deal of persecution.

I was living in the Notting Hill Gate area while attending art school in West London. From time to time I would take a break, and walk down the Charing Cross Road till I got to Cecil Court, a side street where I would find Watkins Book Shop.

Watkins was (and still is) a famous esoteric book shop, where I would peruse various spiritual works: books on Sufism; the teachings of Muller Nasrudin; books by Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and Alan Watts; and yet others relating to the Theosophical Society. I have been told that I should not call myself 'A Seeker'. By whom? Perhaps it was the Catholic Church, an organisation fond of forbidding things. Yet in the Bible you will see, 'Seek and ye shall find', 'Knock and it shall be opened to you', 'Ask and it shall be given unto you'. It appears several times – see Matthew 7.7.

As a refugee from the Catholic Church I can think of no better description of myself at the time other than a 'Seeker'. A refugee looking for a better spiritual home.

This reminds me of an online link sent to me by my son called 'Belief-omatic'. On this site you can answer twenty questions about your beliefs and it will tell you what type of believer you are. Simple! From it I learned that I was 100% Mahayana Buddhist and 99% Liberal Quaker. Well since I

was by that time already attending a liberal Quaker meeting, I thought that was close enough for me.

My early enquiries did not lead me directly to Quakerism. However while in London I was working for Kensington & Chelsea Social Services as one of a team – two men and two women – in a Mental Health Day Centre. One of my female colleagues was getting married and all the team had been invited to Saffron Walden to attend the wedding. The man she was marrying turned out to be a Quaker.

The Quaker Meeting House in Saffron Walden was situated in what seemed to be a field covered in wild flowers: it was beautiful and it was summer. The scene was idyllic. Perhaps I fell for Quakers because of this chocolate-box presentation, but there is no doubt that I was so impressed by the shape and form of this wedding, I wanted to become a Quaker.

Sadly my wife was completely opposed to becoming a Quaker, which upset me a lot, indeed distressed and infuriated me. (Not so Quakerly.) However since my own parents had belonged to two different Christian denominations, a situation that I felt pained and aggrieved about, I took the cowardly path of denying my own calling so that she could follow hers. Thereafter we all attended the C. of E. church at Balham.

It was not long after this that my wife began to undertake training to become an Anglican priest. For some reason I found this impossible to take seriously. I think this may have been because I found it hard to come to terms with the implications for me. I must have known unconsciously that such a move would be the end of our marriage, which it was.

Finally, when my marriage did collapse, I came to Edinburgh, where my mother was now living and attending Central Edinburgh Quaker Meeting. I went along to Meeting as an attender for a while, until I applied to be a member, and was accepted. I found the application process quite challenging. Does anyone ever get told to do some more self examination and re-apply later? I don't know – fortunately it didn't happen to me and I was accepted. And here I am. Still attending after quite a few years later. I find it interesting to look back and realise that both my parents became Quakers entirely independent of my own inclinations to become one.

For a while I was living in the Black Isle, Not working of course, having retired some years back, but I moved to the Inverness area to support my sister when her partner died. While in the Black Isle I mostly attended Quaker Meeting online. Though on Zoom I never felt the inclination to give ministry, this seemed to matter less, because we had space after Meeting to attend 'Breakout Rooms.'

After two and a half years in the Black Isle, my partner Jane and I returned to Edinburgh and here I am attending Edinburgh Central Meeting again.

**Simon Jackson**

[Belief-o-matic is at <https://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/quizzes/beliefomatic.aspx> – ED.]



## “Too Many Teachers, Not Enough Biscuits”

THIS encapsulation, of what is, or was at the time, wrong with the Religious Society of Friends, was offered as their own view by the children at the residential Yearly Meeting at Warwick in 1982. (They had also surveyed the adults, finding that what newcomers to Quakers most appreciated was “the silence”, and what they most missed from their previous spiritual home was, somewhat inconsistently, “the singing”.)

Biscuit deficiency is not a complaint I ever heard mentioned again until it appeared among the comments responding to the P&M Spiritual Review (see *Sesame* 258, page 33); whereas it has often been remarked, even by those not subject to its daily supervision, that the teaching profession is over-represented among Friends. Geoffrey Hubbard said so in *Quaker by Convincement* (1974), adding that, as a result, “the Society as a whole suffers undoubtedly from being middle class”. In 1984, an attender I met at a conference in Leeds expressed this as “Too many DPFs”: ‘Daughter Plays Flute’ being her own shorthand for smug *Guardian*-reading unbearable-ness, and the preponderance of Friends in that category being her reason for not applying for membership. I thought guiltily of this about twelve years ago, when I became an actual DPF myself. The same prejudice is more often expressed with reference to the wearing of sandals and the eating of muesli, which are things I don’t do. Or not habitually.

Being middle class has not always been seen as a problem. In the *Monthly Record* of 15 January 1870, one Robert Barclay expressed himself forcefully on whether the “lower orders” – he actually used the term – should be admitted to membership of the Religious Society of Friends. He thought not:

*They have the benefit of attending our Meetings and Mission Halls ... Do you wish to invite chimney-sweepers, costermongers, or even blacksmiths, to dinner on First-day? Do you intend to give their sons and daughters a boarding school education? ... There is the crossing-sweeper! He is a Christian. ... But is that any reason ... [to] invite him to dinner and encourage your daughter to associate with him in her civil and social capacity?*

(Why “*even blacksmiths*” I wonder? – and surely the answer to the various rhetorical questions is, or ought to be, ‘Yes’; though whether the prospective dinner guests would want to come is another matter. I don’t know if the echo of the Pharisees’ condemnation of Christ’s dining with publicans and sinners (e.g. in Mark 2:16) was remarked on at the time, but I hope so.)

It is possible that such an attitude prevailed among Friends in Aberdeen in 1886: William Cooper, a joiner, a trade-union activist and a town councillor, applied for membership having been attending meeting for about two years, but, after lengthy consideration, his application was rejected on the ground that it was “not desirable [*sic*] to add to the Society at this time”. William H. Marwick, who referred to this in an address to the Friends’ Historical Society in 1969, added that it “seems to confirm the statement of

Alex Hay, a veteran member, that in his youth the Society was reputed, in Aberdeen, to be a 'secret society'". What Friends reckoned sufficient was about two hundred members in Scotland at the time – 193 in 1884, of whom half were in Glasgow. Over Victoria's reign, the total rose from 144 to 357, "despite reluctance to admit and readiness to disown" – for which insolvency, 'marrying out' and 'irregularity' were the commonest reasons.

Geoffrey Hubbard deplored this outlook:

*[S]urely if our religion really has meaning, we should expect, as the early Christians and the early Quakers did, that it should spread throughout the nations. We may perhaps take a realistic view of how fast this is likely to happen, but we should at least want it to happen and see it as conceivable. Yet some parts of the Society do see its role as essentially a minority one, a little oasis of calm in the middle of a harsh and alien desert. Despite all the efforts of those who engage in extension work and outreach ... there are a proportion of Quakers and a few meetings who really do not want to expand, who prefer to keep the Society as a club with a select and mutually acceptable membership.*

The opposite of this misguided exclusivity is the impulse to claim the whole world as already Quaker: an arrogant propensity which disturbed Andrew Clark, the former General Secretary of Quaker Peace & Service (precursor to QPSW):

*It worries me when people are declared to be "Quakers but they don't know it" or "more Quakerly than most Quakers". We seem to want to pin our label on others without their permission.*

Slightly less awful is the view that although not everyone is a Quaker *yet*, they can become one simply by self-identifying as such – a misconception that was incorporated in the draft governing document of Quakers in Scotland [see Sesame 252: s.29, page 5, and page 21 (glossary definition of 'Quaker')] which makes a spurious distinction between Quakers and members of the Religious Society of Friends. There is none. 'Quaker' and 'Friend' (with a capital F) are terms *only* to be applied to members.

It is often asserted (and frequently by people who should know better) that the first Quakers had *no* membership, from the fact that it was only in 1737 that Yearly Meeting began to require *lists* of members from Monthly (now Area) Meetings. In a time of persecution, it would of course have been reckless to set down the names of people whose liberty and property would have been endangered by recording them as Quakers – 32 died in prison in the decade of the relatively tolerant Cromwellian regime – as well as being superfluous, when Quakers marked themselves out by their speech and their dress. Even then, however, meetings knew who was of the fellowship, and who was not: from as early as 1655, those who broke the collective discipline could be, and were, disowned, which would have been meaningless without the sense of a membership being revoked. (In Scotland, the process involving John MacKenzie of Edinburgh went on from 1670, when a group was appointed to visit him, to 1673, when it was decided to publish "to the world" the criticisms of his "dangerous prin-

ciples".) Being a Quaker has never been an aspect of identity to which an individual can simply lay claim, like being a pacifist, or a crossword-solver or an atheist. Even such labels require not just acceptance of generally understood terms (it is not up to the self-styled vegetarian, say, to define bacon as an honorary vegetable) but, in most cases, action of some sort. Other labels require more. To be a Ghanaian, for example, or a Communist, needs the approval and acceptance of the Ghana government or the party leadership; an outsider *can* become one, but not just by asserting that he or she *is* – citizenship, or membership, carries rights and obligations. As does being a Quaker.

Since Friends reject credal statements as a proof of being united with us, it might seem difficult to say what we ask of applicants. The Friends World Conference in 1952 put it like this:

*The test for membership should not be doctrinal agreement, nor adherence to certain testimonies, but evidence of sincere seeking and striving for the Truth, together with an understanding of the lines along which Friends are seeking that Truth.*

More succinctly, Ben Pink Dandelion of Woodbrooke calls this “commitment”. It is not too much to ask. Nor it is unreasonable to presume that those not in membership *lack* commitment to the group and its values. The presumption is rebuttable, of course: some attenders are more active in our collective work than some members, and perhaps they have a good reason for holding themselves aloof from us, hurtful though it may be to infer that our Society is in their eyes not worth joining. (It is also strange that, as sometimes happens, such attenders should wish to speak out to others on Friends’ behalf.) Nevertheless, at a time when membership is falling, it is important that we do not imagine we can make decline irrelevant by not counting our true numbers. Outreach is the answer, in whatever form attracts enquirers. Possibly even – who knows? – with biscuits.

**Editor**

*The revised second edition of Quaker by Convincement (1985) is in the Area Meeting Library – Geoffrey Hubbard was the brother-in-law of our late Friend **John Fox**. The quoted sentences by Andrew Clark are from his contribution to Patterns and Examples: Experiencing the Spirit of Other Faiths, edited by Peter Jarman & Ruth Tucker (2005), also in the Library. The words of Robert Barclay draw on a paper he had presented at a conference in 1869, mentioned in an article by Chuck Fager on the Manchester Conference of 1895, at <https://quaker.org/legacy/liberal-history/manchester.html>; details of early disownments are in The Beginnings of Quakerism by William C. Braithwaite (1912) and John MacKenzie’s is outlined in the Journal of the Friends Historical Society 4/4 (1907). It is not mentioned in George B. Burnet’s The Story of Quakerism in Scotland (1952), which does, however, assert that Friends “did not formally constitute themselves as a Body with a properly defined membership till 1737” among other more serious errors that William Marwick corrects in his Epilogue; Burnet was a Church of Scotland minister and not altogether sympathetic to Quaker thinking. The persecution of early Friends is extensively covered in Quaker histories, and there is an interesting discussion of why it was more severe than that inflicted on other groups in Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America by Michael P. Winship (2018).*

## RESIDENTIAL RETREAT – 17-19 April 2026

**S**OUTH EDINBURGH MEETING is holding a non-directed residential **WOMEN'S SILENT RETREAT** at the Bield (Blackruthven House, Perth, Perth & Kinross PH1 1PY). This event was originally planned for the weekend beginning 31 October, but as South Edinburgh is hosting Area Meeting on 1 November, we have rearranged the booking for next year.

The event will run from late afternoon on Friday 17 April to the afternoon of Sunday 19 April. The cost is £210 per person – limited bursary funding for up to half the cost is available.

Places are open to members and attenders associated with Meetings in South East Scotland AM. This two-day period of reflection and fellowship is intended as a respite, to nurture spiritual health for women, who often focus on the wellbeing of others. The Bield offers a chapel, labyrinths in the garden, an art room and a pool.

We begin Friday evening with an opening circle, where each of us shares what we are bringing to the retreat – spiritually, emotionally, materially, whatever. Then we go into worship and are silent until the end of worship on Sunday morning, when we have a closing circle, to speak of what transpired for us during the retreat. In between we have worship, we eat together in silence, we smile at each other and laugh, pass each other in the hall, or the garden. We sit and read, go for walks, sit in our own rooms to meditate or journal or read or knit, *etc.* There is warm fellowship even though we are not speaking.

All who identify as women or non-binary are welcome. There will be pastoral support within the group. Nine single rooms with full board are available. Food will be vegan/vegetarian-friendly.

Contact **Carol Jennings** ([carol.jennings@gmx.com](mailto:carol.jennings@gmx.com)) for further information and a registration form; places are very limited due to the venue and the nature of the retreat. Please **SAVE** the date and register your interest.

## REGISTRATION FOR YEARLY MEETING 2025

Yearly Meeting will be a blended meeting at Friends House, London, and online, taking place Friday to Monday, 23–26 May 2025.

Our focus will be on our peace testimony exploring how we as Quakers address violence and conflict. How do we nurture the radical peacemakers among us? There will be time to agree, in a spirit of worship, the next steps from Yearly Meeting 2024's decision to move to a continuing Yearly Meeting in 2026.

To register to attend, go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings>

Bookings for Yearly Meeting close on **Sunday 27 April**, but if you wish to attend online preparatory sessions, please book by **Sunday 6 April**.

# SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Monday 20 January 2025  
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace,  
and by remote videoconferencing**

## **2025/01/01 Worship and introductions**

During opening worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 27.20, reflecting on the Quaker contribution to the ecumenical movement.

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

We have remembered the life of Andrew Farrar, who died earlier this month. This will be recorded formally later in the meeting.

...

*[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*]

(d) We will be welcoming Young Friends General Meeting to Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House from 14-16 February; we encourage young Friends from all our meetings to get involved.

In response to an enquiry, Henry outlined the policy on the use of the Meeting House for free. The policy is that free use constitutes a donation to the user; this is decided by the MHMC in consultation with the treasurer team and the clerking team.

### 2025/01/08 General Meeting for Scotland matters

We note that the next General Meeting for Scotland takes place here at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House on Saturday 8 March. We ask Kate Arnot (SE) to report back in due course.

### 2025/01/09 Closing minute

52 Friends (47 members and 5 attenders) have been at all or part of this meeting, either in person or by Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 19	Central Fife 1	East Lothian 4	Kelso 5	Penicuik 2
Polmont 7 + 1 child	Portobello & Musselburgh 21 + 2 children	South Edinburgh 6	Tweeddale -	Visitors/Others -

We record our thanks to the Meeting House staff for supporting us this evening.

We next meet on Saturday 22 March 2025, hosted by Central Fife Local Meeting. Times and other details will be sent out when arrangements have been made.

(Signed)  
Alastair Cameron, Clerk  
Cath Dyer, Assistant Clerk

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*'HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE?' is a vital challenge to which every one of us is personally called to respond and is also a challenge that every meeting should consider of primary importance. It should lead us to define, with such clarity as we can reach, precisely what it is that Friends of this generation have to say that is not, as we believe, being said effectively by others. What, indeed, have we to declare to this generation that is of sufficient importance to justify our separate existence as part of the Christian fellowship? If we regard the Society of Friends merely as an ethical society we have no message for a world that is bursting with sin and sorrow and suffering. It is insufficient merely to offer palliatives to physical suffering, important and necessary as they are. There are those whose needs are on a different level and we should covet to have for these others at least an equal concern. Have we 'good news' for them?*

**Edgar G. Dunstan**, *Quakers and the Religious Quest* (Swarthmore lecture 1956)

## 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](mailto:centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk) or 0131 225 4825, for updates.

**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 **Laura Pearson** for further information.

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

On the 1st, 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Worship on 1st Sundays is all-age; there is a children's meeting on the last Sundays. 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](mailto:penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.uk)

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

**Polmont** – Trinity Church, Manse Place, Falkirk FK1 1JN

Sundays, 10.30. Contact **Denise Marshall** if bringing children; **Anna Levin** for updates.

**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.

3rd Sundays: Hollies Community Hub, 183 High St, Musselburgh EH21 7DE, 7.00 pm

Contact **Robin Liebmann**, **Sarah Martin** or **Marian Willoner** for further information, [portymussclerks@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

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

**South Edinburgh** – for login details contact [sedclerks@gmail.com](mailto: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.