

# SESAME

Number 226: November 2019

---

AM at Portobello / A New Diggers Song / BDRC at Edinburgh / 'Singing for Their Lives' at the arms fair / General Meeting at Aberdeen / 'Reflection' at Holyrood / Meeting for Sufferings / AM Minutes *etc*

---



At the Scottish Parliament, 1 October 2019 – *see page 14*

---

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to Alan Frith (email: [ar.frith@btinternet.com](mailto:ar.frith@btinternet.com)) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 7 January 2020**. The Editors reserve the right to condense articles. If possible, please submit articles by email sending as an attachment *and* in the body of the email. An email version of *Sesame* is available in PDF format. Contact the Editors.

## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Area Meeting will be held at Bellfield, 16b Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP on Saturday 9 November. It is an all-day affair, starting with tea or coffee at 10.00 am and finishing at around 4.00 pm, at the end of our meeting, with more refreshments and cake. You are welcome to come to all or any part of the day, as suits.

*Bellfield is a community-owned building in a residential street: we are encouraged to arrive by means other than car. There is a good bus service from the city centre and from East Lothian – LRT route 26 and EastCoast 124 stop at Bellfield Lane. Other routes come to Portobello Town Hall, which is a 10-minute walk. Brunstane railway station, on the Waverley-Tweedbank line, is a 15-minute walk. There are railings for bike parking. If you have to bring a car, there is on-street parking nearby, but it is very limited on Bellfield Street itself – try the main road or streets towards the Musselburgh direction. Sadly, there is as yet no disabled parking; if you are dropping someone off, please do so without double-parking.*

*Access to the building is step-free, but there is no hearing loop.*

The theme of the day is from *Advices & Queries* 28:

*‘Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness’.*

### PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

10.00 am Tea/coffee will be served in the Celebration Foyer – this is through the main door of the former church

10.30 All-age worship will be held in the Large Hall – this is accessed through the garden gate to the left of the main building

11.00 We will have a workshop-style session for adults and ‘older young people’ focussing on the interplay in our Quaker life between reflection and activism. This will involve discussion in small groups as well as plenary sessions. Before lunch, we will hear from young people about the school strikes movement

*There will be activities for pre-school and primary-age children at the same time*

1.00 pm Lunch will be provided by our hosts, Portobello & Musselburgh Local Meeting, who will supply vegan soup, bread, cheese and spreads, hopefully catering for most dietary needs

2.00 Meeting for worship for business – see opposite for the full agenda

*There will be a programme for pre-school and primary-age children at the same time, and space for ‘older young people’ to meet*

4.00-ish Business meeting will end, and there will be tea/coffee and cakes &c before we leave. Contributions to this will be greatly appreciated.

## BUSINESS MEETING DRAFT AGENDA

*This will include a report by Oliver Grothey on Junior Yearly Meeting and another on last month's General Meeting for Scotland. We will consider Trustees' recommendation that we express an interest to Britain Yearly Meeting in hosting a local development worker to support our Quaker community. We will also be reviewing the STIR process – a revision of how we organise Area Meetings which has now been in operation for three years – and considering whether it is meeting our needs.*

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 4 September 2019
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Reports
  - 4.1. Junior Yearly Meeting
  - 4.2. General Meeting for Scotland
  - 4.3. Meeting for Sufferings
5. Membership matters
6. Nominations Committee
7. Matters from Local Meetings
  - 7.1 East Lothian
8. Recommendation from AM Trustees – *Experiments in Faith*
9. Festival Committee: review of Venue 40 2019
10. The STIR effect: review of how we do Area Meeting
11. Inclusion & diversity: how are we doing?
12. Conferences & events
13. Correspondence and announcements
14. Closing minute

Please contact me if anything seems to be missing, or with any questions about the day. I look forward to seeing you on 9 November.

In peace

*Alastair*

**Alastair Cameron**

Clerk, South East Scotland Area Meeting

## Diggers' song for today

It was great to see the wonderful Diggers' Song in the last issue of *Sesame*. Friends may be interested to know that Jane Lewis, who attends Portobello Meeting, has written an inspiring new version of the song for the climate crisis. *Leave the oil in the ground* uses a beautiful 17th century melody, and urges "gentle people all" to stand up now for the planet. Jane has agreed to let us reproduce the song below.

1. Leave the oil in the ground, sing out now, sing out now,  
 Leave the oil in the ground, sing out now.  
 For a future clean and fair, full of life for all to share  
 We can show the world we care, no more carbon in the air  
 Leave the oil in the ground
2. Leave the gas beneath the sea, sing out now, sing out now,  
 Leave the gas beneath the sea, sing out now,  
 This is an emergency, limit change to two degrees,  
 The earth's our treasury, so leave a hopeful legacy,  
 Leave the gas beneath the sea
3. Leave the coal in the seam, sing out now, sing out now,  
 Leave the coal in the seam, sing out now,  
 Let us turn our planet green, making energy that's clean  
 Sun and wind and tidal schemes, come let's realise our dream  
 Leave the coal in the seam
4. You gentle people all sing out now, sing out now,  
 You gentle people all sing out now  
 This planet to maintain, profiteering we disdain,  
 Shameless companies we name, public ownership we claim,  
 Leave the oil in the ground.

The score and voice parts are on the website of the singing group, Protest in Harmony: <https://www.protestinharmony.org.uk>.

One of the few good things to come out of the climate crisis has been the proliferation of wonderful new songs, and Jane's have been taken up widely nationally and even internationally. Singing can be a powerful force both for the singers and for those sung to. Protest in Harmony offers a warm welcome to new members and to visitors to Edinburgh at its monthly sessions at 7 Victoria Terrace.

**Hilary Patrick**

# Book of Discipline Revision Committee

## *October meeting in Edinburgh*

Your committee met in Edinburgh over the first weekend in October, working very hard on the Friday and Saturday at the Quaker Meeting House so that we could join with Edinburgh Friends' all-age worship on the Sunday morning, and share their soup, bread and cheese lunch before going our separate ways.

Much of our time was spent working in small groups, and we are continuing to do so in preparation for our next committee meeting in December. On the Saturday night those of the group who still had some energy left came together to share something that they felt connected them with Scotland: we heard some very interesting stories and poems. I read Edwin Morgan's *Open the Doors! For the Opening of the Scottish Parliament, 9 October 2004*, which always chokes me up...

These are the key messages from our weekend:

As part of clarifying our process, we have been thinking about the purpose of the Book of Discipline. Part of our minute reads: *Our understanding now is that the purpose of the book of discipline is to reflect who we are as a community and where we might be going. It shares our Quaker story of where we have come from, in order to explain why we have reached where we are. It gives guidance on what it means to be Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting, reflecting, expressing and nurturing our spiritual life and our Quaker way.* This is the start of a process and leads in to our Woodbrooke conference. Places on the conference are still available and we encourage Friends to book.

Accessibility and inclusion have been themes throughout our work so far. We are aware of the diversity within the Yearly Meeting and want the revision process to be a journey that we take together.

Many of your committee will be taking part in the Woodbrooke weekend *Why Have a Book of Discipline?* (8-10 November) and we hope that those attending will themselves feel a part of the revision process and help to engage those who aren't able to be there. Our next committee meeting will also be at Woodbrooke (6-8 December): please uphold us as we take the next steps on our journey.

**Mary Woodward**

---

**CORRECTION:** In *Sesame* 225 there was an article, 'At the Book Festival' which referred to to new works on Gandhi and John Maclean, two in a series of 'Revolutionary Lives' which also includes biographies of Gerrard Winstanley, Shelley and Paul Robeson, as well as Jean Paul Marat, Sylvia Pankhurst, Hugo Chávez and others. The publishers of this commendable series are the **Pluto Press**, and not, as we mistakenly said (more than once), Verso. The Editor apologises for his confusion.

## Singing for Their Lives

The Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Centre (ADNEC), which has its head office in the United Arab Emirates, owns the ExCel Centre in East London. A large sign above the front entrance advertises the fact. The complex occupies a 100-acre campus that includes five onsite hotels among other facilities. Less well-advertised is the fact that the UAE is part of the Saudi-led coalition currently bombing civilians in Yemen where it also has a dismal record of coercion.

Human Rights Watch has documented abuses by proxy forces under UAE leadership in southern Yemen, including the use of excessive force during arrests, detaining family members of wanted suspects, detaining children along with adults and forcibly 'disappearing' dozens more. Former detainees and family members have reported abuse or torture inside facilities run by the UAE and UAE-backed forces. Yemenis who have criticized these abuses have been threatened, harassed, detained, and 'disappeared'. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/united-arab-emirates>

A surprising neighbour, you might think, for the citizens of Newham who have regularly opposed the Government-supported arms fair held there every two years. This time the Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz, sent the following statement to *The Canary*:

"It is abhorrent that such an event should happen in Newham and it is important that we make clear our opposition to the Defence & Security Equipment International (DSEI) going ahead. Newham is a very diverse borough and many of our communities have links across the globe to those areas that have been affected by conflict, displacement and the horror of war. This council, in line with the motion approved at Full Council, is doing everything we can to prevent DSEI coming to Newham ever again."

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, echoed her concern: He said: "London is a global city which is home to individuals who have fled conflict and suffered as a consequence of arms and weapons like those exhibited at DSEI. I will take any opportunity available to prevent this event from taking place at the Royal Docks in future years."

A 2017 poll for the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) showed that 76 % of UK adults opposed the government's promoting arms exports to countries with poor human rights records, while 77 % believed it should not promote arms sales to buyers that had been accused of violating International Humanitarian Law.

But what does public opinion matter? The front page of the DSEI website is already advertising the next arms fair in September 2021. "It will have five key domain-focused Zones: Aerospace, Land, Naval, Security and Joint, all showcasing the latest equipment and systems." Their countdown shows that, as I write, there are only 727 days to go!

They gladly explain: “The event is curated to consistently support both the prime contractors as well as small and medium-sized enterprises while, crucially, giving the UK exports a significant boost. On a rolling 10-year basis, the UK remains the second largest global defence exporter. In 2017, it won orders worth £9 billion and £4.8 billion respectively, up on the previous year (£5.9 billion and £4.3 billion)”. <https://www.dsei.co.uk/event-news>

As the Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace MP put it in a speech on 11 September: “For those who didn’t catch the headlines it’s worth summarising. UK Defence has secured an extra £2.2 billion. An increase of 2.6 % above inflation between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Well above government’s commitment to grow the defence budget by 0.5 % above inflation every year of this Parliament. It means that by 2020/2021 this year’s £39 billion defence budget will rise to over £41 billion, the first time it’s topped the £40bn mark”.

(Meanwhile an Oxfam report has estimated that Britain has to date earned eight times more from arms sales to the Saudi-led coalition than it has spent on aid for its injured, traumatised and starving population.)

Ben Wallace continued: “As DSEI shows, the potential of our Defence sector is limitless. **But seizing our opportunities, realising our potential, demands we think big. It demands we all have a vision.** I hope you leave with the message that UK Defence is on the up, that our Defence industrial base remains the spine of our nation, allowing our forces to be the tip of our spear for Global Britain.”

All very stirring, unless, of course, you’re the parent of one of the estimated 85,000 children under five who have died since the Saudi-Arabian coalition started bombing Yemen in 2015. (One child dies approximately every ten minutes as a result of the ongoing airport blockade.)

Since that time the UK has licensed nearly £6.2bn worth of arms exports and related equipment to Saudi Arabia. In an article in *The Guardian* last June the UK’s role in Yemen’s war was spelt out by Arron Merat: “Every day Yemen is hit by British bombs – dropped by British planes that are flown by British-trained pilots and maintained and prepared inside Saudi Arabia by thousands of British contractors. Britain does not merely supply weapons for this war: it provides the personnel and expertise required to keep the war going. The British government has deployed RAF personnel to work as engineers and to train Saudi pilots and targeteers – while an even larger role is played by BAE Systems, Britain’s biggest arms company, which the government has subcontracted to provide weapons, maintenance and engineers inside Saudi Arabia.”

A successful challenge taken by CAAT to the Court of Appeal brought a temporary halt to this dreadful trade later that same month. But how effective has it been?

“British arms sales to Saudi Arabia have been ruled unlawful by the court of appeal in a critical judgment that also accused ministers of ignoring

whether airstrikes that killed civilians in Yemen broke humanitarian law. Three judges said that a decision made in secret in 2016 had led them to decide that Boris Johnson, Jeremy Hunt, Liam Fox and other key ministers had illegally signed off on arms exports without properly assessing the risk to civilians. Fox responded by suspending new arms sales to Saudi Arabia while promising to appeal against the verdict. Later, Fox was understood to have privately told at least one MP that he expected that the review process called for by the court would take about 10 weeks – and would not lead to any of the previous licensing decisions being overturned.” *The Guardian* 20/6/19.

Sales have indeed continued, apparently in defiance of this ruling. In September the international trade secretary, Liz Truss, was obliged to apologise to a court for two breaches of a pledge not to licence exports to Saudi Arabia that could be used in the Yemen conflict. She said the granting of these licences had been “inadvertent”.

Interesting, that use of the word “inadvertent”. There was nothing inadvertent about the rigidly-forbidding mesh fencing which surrounded the ExCel Centre more than a week before the world’s biggest arms fair was due to begin. To reach the East Gate, where people of faith gathered on Tuesday 3 September, meant a ten-minute walk around the fenced-off area from the hotels at the heart of the complex, overseen by DSEI security personnel and police officers standing along the route. A Freedom of Information Request into the 2017 costs illuminates the scale of this security operation. “The cost of policing DSEI 2017 was £823,750.00 and the overtime cost was £154,084.00. These are only Metropolitan Police costs and do not include any policing costs that may have been incurred by Ministry of Defence Police or British Transport Police. Total officers (all ranks): 2,810; Vehicles (all types): 440; 6 mounted officers.”

The 2019 costs will certainly be higher. The security presence was formidable with more and more police vans arriving as the day progressed. While they were busy protecting DSEI from non-violent people of faith, the residents of nearby communities were left vulnerable. The day after No Faith in War Day a fifteen-year-old was stabbed to death three miles away in Byford Close, Stratford.

Several hundred Quakers from across the UK and beyond joined representatives from many other faiths on 3 September at the East Gate, where Roots of Resistance, “a community of Friends building a creative, vibrant and radical Quaker response to the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair” guided and supported us through the day. There was worship, protest, a vibrant display of banners and flags, singing and there was calculated disruption to prevent the lorries from delivering their sinister loads. The mood was largely upbeat - “*We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives,*” - at least until the arrests began just after 3 pm. Then each of those who chose to be arrested for their

beliefs were applauded as they were led away to be charged and the feeling grew more sombre.

There was no obvious evidence of police misconduct except for their intervention in the midst of the second Meeting for Worship (contravening the Human Rights Act, 1998, Article 9.) Oliver Robertson, Head of Worship & Witness for British Quakers, spoke to the senior police officer involved and elicited an apology from him. But it merely delayed the arrests. "Seizing our opportunities, realising our potential ... demands we all have a vision." But we do, Mr. Wallace. We do. It's just that ours is so radically different from yours you might not see it as such. Ours envisages a society where arms fairs are no longer sanctioned and it is no longer possible to kill children with British weapons and British military technology.

So in 2021 if the DSEI fair is allowed to happen again we will also be back, following our own vision, singing, singing for their lives.

**Lynne Barty**

*There are photographs of this protest at <https://rootsofresistance.org.uk/> Ed.*

## **General Meeting for Scotland**

### ***Aberdeen, Saturday 14 September 2019***

Extra seating needed to be brought in as we gathered in Aberdeen Quaker Meeting House, where the principal theme for the day was our response to the climate emergency. In all, some 60 were in attendance, including the Church Relations Officer of the Scottish Episcopal Church. During opening worship, a passage from Helen Steven's Swarthmore Lecture was read, reminding us that love and anger can legitimately combine through prayer and lead to committed prophetic action, which in its turn can bring about change. Eldership of the meeting was slightly formalised to assist the clerks in ensuring right ordering following the less than satisfactory ending to the previous GM in Edinburgh.

The first substantive business involved seven brief and often moving talks about how individual Friends had responded, either recently or over lifetimes to the developing climate and environmental crisis.

**Mike** explained how, against a background of family awareness, marred by tragedy and a personal sensitivity to the effects of biocides, he had developed acute awareness of health and environmental issues and a related teaching career. Young Friends **Maeve** and **David** spoke about being motivated to follow Greta Thunberg's example and participate in the Friday school strike movements. Faith, said Maeve, can be used to help avoid things, but Quaker faith helps her to engage and she has been led back to vegetarianism. **Richard** was first moved years ago by Al Gore's film *An*

*Inconvenient Truth* and more recently, since spending three months at Pendle Hill, has been inspired by James Nayler: 'Art thou in darkness ... ? Art thou wounded in conscience ... ?' He has greened his house and bought an electric car. Little actions can make a difference.

**Cath**, who grew up in Africa, is acutely aware how severely countries of the South are already being affected by climate change. Her career as a GP in this country has given her direct experience of how patients' health is affected by air pollution. She has been driven by these things and by Quaker testimony to green as far as possible her own lifestyle. **David** got involved in demonstrating against the building of the nuclear power station at Torness many years ago and spoke of the power wielded by the military/industrial complex. He changed his career from architecture to energy conservation and spoke about how race and class issues and neocolonialism are all linked into the climate crisis. Finally, **Elisabeth** told us how she got involved in tree-planting in Yorkshire 25 years ago before expanding on the work she has been involved in in Dunbar during the past four years. Dunbar was Scotland's first zero waste town, has a local resilience action plan and numerous projects which not only help to develop a sustainable economy but also create employment opportunities.

We returned to the subject of the climate emergency later in the meeting, when we were told about COP26, the 26th United Nations international conference of parties concerned with climate change issues, which is due to be held in Glasgow in November 2020. British and Scottish Quakers have already applied to be given observer status at the conference and we shall be exploring ways in which we can support it from the fringe and more directly by ensuring that delegates from poorer countries are given the support they need to attend. West Scotland Friends are receiving support from Friends House staff as they begin to address the work involved.

A wide range of Meetings' responses to the proposed QPSW zero carbon worker project had been received and GM agreed to support the hope that one of the worker placements will be in Scotland.

In other business during the day, we made three appointments including that of Nicola Maharg (West of Scotland) to be assistant clerk of GM from January 2010... Margaret Roy reported on the World Day of Prayer, Mary Woodward on the progress of work towards revising our Book of Discipline and Michael Hutchison on the work of our Trustees. We also agreed to invite the Journeyman Theatre to perform one of their plays when General Meeting is in Elgin next June.

Joyce Taylor and Mairi Campbell-Jack told us about our Parliamentary Engagement work:

- The militarism in schools petition has run its course but we have been invited to raise the concern again in a year's time if we are not satisfied with the way our concern has been addressed;

- A very successful and well-attended event we organized at the Edinburgh Book Festival on land reform has made its mark and bodes well for future bids to be part of their programme;
- The Parliamentary Engagement project is currently being evaluated and we were encourage to contribute individually to the evaluation;
- We are making input to Holyrood's work on the climate emergency; and finally
- GM agreed we should join 'Together Scotland' forthwith to contribute to its work on children's rights.

It was a shame that the busyness of the afternoon agenda (which the clerks managed very well) prevented us returning to the climate crisis issue and exploring the possibility of taking forward meaningful corporate action. Despite this, it was a richly stimulating General Meeting and well worth my 6 am start and 10 pm return home to be there!

**Phil Lucas**

## *The Basis of Quakerism*

**T**HE GRAND MAXIM OF QUAKERISM is the claim that what unites us is the belief that there is that of God in every one. The fact that people mean widely different things by this is no drawback. It is a cast-iron answer to any claim that Quakerism can say anything more definite about religion at all.

What puzzles me is the distinction that seems to exist between the traditional Quakerism of Fox, Penn, Penington, John Woolman, Edward Grubb, Rufus Jones, yes, and that of the heretics Elias Hicks, John Wilbur and Joseph John Gurney. When they used words it was as part of an argument. Their utterances had a context, they were part of a terminology, they had meaning because they derived from a coherent and consistent theological framework. They used the disciplines of history and theology.

Compared with this rich dialogue growing out of experience, I find one-line summaries of a profound faith trivial and depressing. I just do not see how they can form any basis at all for the continuation of a vital religious tradition. They seem to operate as literary devices, stating and reinforcing emotion and sensibility, rather than conveying a challenging and transforming religious message. They form the substance of many Friends' understanding of Quakerism, as you know, and they are often claimed as the best contemporary explanation of it that can be given. They have no specifically Christian content and have produced the situation in which, in the unprogrammed tradition, it by no means follows that if you are a Quaker, you are also a Christian.

Indeed there are quarters where Christianity is seen as an option for Quakers as a matter of personal choice but in no sense part of the corporate testimony of our Society. Anyone seeking to say that it is, may be told (as I have been) that they might be happier elsewhere. This apparent tolerance is often the mask for antagonism to Christianity, not indifference to it.

You have seen the way our meeting has developed over the last few years. Many people have joined us, who, as time has gone by, have been more and more outspoken about what they will not have. Some of them have had bad trips with evangelical sects of one sort or another, others have come among us with almost no understanding of the Christianity they criticise. The nature of our meeting as a worshipping group has reached the state in which I am highly inhibited in saying anything specifically religious at all in case I tread on somebody's toes. The ministry is bland, the elders do not know where they are, the children's committee has not got a clue about what it is supposed to be doing. The one thing that is out of the question is explicit Christian teaching.

And no wonder. In place of Friends' traditional doctrines and ways of discerning guidance, many modern Quakers take the view that the essence of Quakerism, and the feature which distinguishes it from the Christianity from which it has sprung, is that it has no doctrines. When any argument is put to such Friends in the form of an appeal to Quaker history or tradition as an authority for particular beliefs and practices, certain quite predictable moves tend to be made to try to nullify the force of the argument. I guarantee that if we had a discussion group about it in this meeting, each of the following points would be made within the first twenty minutes.

Look again at what I have called "the Grand Maxim". This produces the *minimalist* move which says Friends have many diverse beliefs, but unite round the conviction that there is that of God in every one. That is the spiritual sun round which they orbit. Now really. That statement is so unspecific as to be algebraic. You can read anything into it you like. Unless you know what you mean by *that* and what you mean by *God*, it is not much help.

In addition you have to show how things like the peace testimony and the business method relate to this "God" and that raises the question of the attributes of "God" and how you know about them – whether "God" is personal or not, or a creator or not, and the whole blessed theological agenda the move is supposed to save you from. It won't do.

You can avoid the awkwardness of this by making the *values* move. This denies all doctrinal commitment and says that in spite of wide variation of belief, Friends share many common values. What count are things like peace, justice, equality, non-violence, simple lifestyle, *etc.* This is, of course, perfectly true, but it is beside the point. I go to meeting to worship God, not to have values. Most of my values come from somewhere else, largely from my upbringing and education, and the number of people who have

the same values as me far outnumbers the Quakers. The values argument is attractive as a substitute for Christianity, but its fatal flaw is that explains too much. If it were true, the Society could enrol the whole readership of *The Guardian*, but if it did it might not still be the Society of Friends.

Finally, the *individualist* move can be utilised to do away with any sense of corporate commitment whatever. It is said in some quarters that the Society of Friends has never made any unalterable statements of belief. Hence, such statements as there are operate solely for purposes of information, to indicate what a given group of Quakers happens to believe at a given time.

This applies to standard personal expositions like Barclay's *Apology* or Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*. It also applies to the *Letter* to the Governor of Barbados [1671], the *Richmond Declaration* [1887], and all yearly meeting Disciplines. It is the very fact that Disciplines are provisional which permits us to change them when we see fit.

Many people deduce from this that no gathering or body may make any authoritative statement about what Quakerism is, so no subsequent generations can be bound by any such statement. Nor can there be authoritative teaching about matters of faith which members of the Society of Friends are under a duty to accept.

I sometimes hear Universalists arguing from these principles that the Society is precluded from denying membership to non-Christians, so its Disciplines should be amended to make Christianity a permissible option but not the basis of membership. Hence, no argument about the substance of Quaker belief can be derived from the tradition because the tradition denies the authority of tradition.

Unfortunately, this argument can be stood on its head. It is a set of assumptions about the nature of the Society of Friends which is in fact open to question. Who says that statements of doctrine were understood to be provisional? Or that yearly meetings cannot make binding statements? Or that it is a principle that Friends cannot prescribe the beliefs of their members? I know you do, but on what basis?

As soon as you move beyond personal preference and say that it is what you have observed, or that this is what you were told when you came to Quakerism, you are using an argument from tradition, and are open to challenge as to whether what you were told is, or is not, a faithful interpretation of that tradition. Now it is indisputable that Friends believe in "continuing revelation". But it is highly arguable whether that doctrine will support those who reckon that it is continuing revelation that is leading Quakerism toward Universalism.

The reason lies in the intentions of those who introduced the doctrine into the tradition in the first place. They understood it to mean that we continually receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mode of Christ's continuing presence with us, in both our individual and collective lives. But the

gift is not automatic. There are conditions laid down for its continuance. We have to be faithful or it will be withdrawn from us. Openness to the leadings of truth in their understanding, rested on conversion to a faith in the triune God of the Christian revelation.

Continuous revelation is cumulative, not selective. It teaches us to believe more deeply, not more narrowly. It should create unity among us, not an association so loose that it is hard for anyone to speak on behalf of the group. It is not continuous revelation that has reduced our faith to few saws and maxims and transformed the powerful and demanding doctrine of the Inward Light to a vague conviction that there is somehow something of God in everyone, however you understand it, if you look hard enough.

Thus, you cannot answer the question "Who says?" by citing the doctrine of continuous revelation because it is part of the distinctively Christian doctrine of the Society of Friends and that is where you got it from. You ought either to accept the tradition, or else jettison it entirely, and face the fact that it may be human preference and not divine guidance that causes Quakers to change their collective minds.

**John Punshon (1935-2017)**

*From 'Letter to a Universalist', Pendle Hill Pamphlet 285: written in 1989, because "since so many yearly meetings are now revising their Disciplines, this seems to be the right moment."*

## ***'Time for Reflection' – Holyrood, 1 October 2019***

*On 1 October, our Clerk Alastair Cameron led the 'Time for Reflection' at the start of the afternoon's business at the Scottish Parliament. These are his words, from the official transcript:*

Friends, as clerk of south-east Scotland Quakers, it falls to me to notify our national body [i.e. *Meeting for Sufferings*] of arrests of our members. This year, there have been eight arrests, involving six individuals. Those are some of the Quakers who have been arrested this year throughout the United Kingdom, mostly as part of extinction rebellion, or demonstrating against fracking. There were around 40 more arrests last month at a series of demonstrations against Defence & Security Equipment International's arms fair in London.

The practice of recording arrests in our "Great Book of Suffering" dates back to Quakers' earliest days in the 17th century. In those days, Quakers could be fined just for holding unauthorised worship in their homes.

Quakers are no longer persecuted, but some of us feel driven to do things that lead to arrest. Our book of guidance has something to say about this.

We are told:

"Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes."

We hear plenty of voices saying, "If you're so worried about the climate,

why not focus on China or the US, where most pollution is happening? Why block traffic on North Bridge when Scotland already has some of the most progressive climate legislation in the world?"

Quakers will continue to do what we have always done: work in the place where we are and in the ways that we can, speaking truth to power.

Quakers addressed Charles II directly in 1660, declaring:

“our principle is to seek peace ... seeking the good and welfare and doing that which tends to the peace of all”.

Today, that means living out our convictions about the climate crisis, as well as about the causes of war. We feel driven to act. For some, that will mean a change in our diet or our decisions about how we travel. Others will go further, sometimes getting arrested, and they will do that with the support of the Quaker community.

We commend the work of this Parliament to address the issues, but we are worried. We worry that change is neither going far enough nor coming fast enough, and that good efforts will come under constant pressure from backsliding interests.

In a world turned upside down, the clearest messages are now coming from those who have done least to create this emergency, and who have the greatest stake in seeing it resolved: our children and grandchildren, as they lead the school strikes. We are amazed and heartened as we hear them speak truth to the powerful and, hard though their messages may be, we know that we must listen.

## **Meeting for Sufferings: two reports**

### ***6 July 2019***

All the papers for the July meeting are available online at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2019-07-agenda-papers-package>

The minutes and other follow-up material are available from

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2019-07-follow-up-package>

### ***Court & Prison Register***

Some 14 Friends were reported as having been arrested in connection with one or more alleged offences undertaken as part of Extinction Rebellion actions. Five of these are from South East Scotland Area Meeting:

Cath Dyer  
Justin Kenrick  
Saul Kenrick  
Lesley Morrison  
Eva Schonveld

## ***Gender diversity***

Meeting for Sufferings was to consider this matter in more detail at its October meeting.

The background for discussion was the November 2018 statement by Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) *Quakers and gender diversity*, and the YFGM *minute and values statement* from Young Friends' General Meeting. (The YFGM statement is at least in part a response to the QLCC one.)

We were asked "to encourage Friends [to reflect on these statements and] to explore this in our local Quaker communities."

My personal view is that it is the very politically-charged issue of shared spaces that is implicated in conflicting interpretation of the wordings where it is felt that "the two statements contradict".

Although the MfS agenda quoted above continues "... perhaps using the resource provided at the end of this paper", I doubt that this issue can be explored without participation from both sides of the matter, as third party assertions of the form 'feminists think X' or 'trans-rights people think Y' are rarely either accurate or useful.

QLCC are happy to receive submissions, which will be treated confidentially if so requested, from individuals and Meetings on this matter.

## ***Other business***

### ***Sustainability***

Three thoughtful minutes were received. I particularly like the *West Weald AM Statement from the Quaker Meeting for Worship held at the Extinction Rebellion camp at Marble Arch, Easter Sunday, 21st April 2019*.

MfS took no action to speak of.

### ***Refugees and asylum seekers***

QPSW Central Committee is trying to raise £75,000 to keep support for its 'Sanctuary Everywhere' project going for another year. It is hoped not just to continue providing support, resources and advice to Sanctuary Meetings, but also to develop more infrastructure, tools and resources, to help the network be more sustainable.

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-justice/migration>

(I *think* this is an England-&-Wales-only initiative at the moment.)

### ***Trustees***

At their June meeting, shortly after Yearly Meeting, YM Trustees (in conjunction with Woodbrooke Trustees), made a major decision about the future of Britain Yearly Meeting.

The two bodies issued a joint statement, commending "a meeting-centred approach to providing support [which] can deepen our worship and transform our communities." They said:

We share the aspiration to

- a) *extend and expand the current model of Locally Based Development workers so that there is a local development worker within reach of every Meeting in Britain within 5 years.*
- b) *work rapidly towards more local support for Meetings and begin to experiment with new regional bases, hubs or clusters.*

Sufferings' minute reads, in part:

*Change will not happen overnight and [?trustees] have reminded us that some work that is dear to our hearts will have to be laid down to find the investment for meeting-centred support.*

*However, the time to invest in the future of Quakers in Britain is now, whilst we have reserves to enable the management of change – of infrastructure and of culture.*

Caroline Nursey, the Clerk of Trustees, said the details on how this will happen are still “totally up in the air”. What is envisaged is “not a cookie-cutter” [i.e. something undifferentiated]; the same thing is not going to work everywhere, and “evolution not revolution” is to be worked for.

One example mentioned of how change could come about was that an Area Meeting with a lot of money could fund a worker for itself and for a neighbouring AM. Centrally, we will use reserves to cover the [short-term] overspend; transition planning is in the hands of Management Meeting.

It was made clear that we're not closing Friends House! Management Meeting are working actively on what will be devolved, and where, when and how this will happen; also, what IT infrastructure will be needed. Hubs/clusters/bases are important for staff welfare: 100% lone-working is not always an easy life.

When asked what was meant [in (a) above] by “within reach of”, Caroline replied that that was a challenging question.

Many people expressed surprise that we'd gone from pretty broad statements of support for some kind of follow-on to the Vibrancy project by Sufferings (in April) and Yearly Meeting (in May) to a firm decision about major restructuring of our central work without *any* further discernment being asked for or given by those two bodies.

My personal view is the cost is not just financial – we are admitting we can no longer say that we take care of our business ourselves, we have to pay someone to do it for us. This may well be necessary, but it saddens me to lose such a central part of our understanding of our distinctive nature.

## ***4-6 October 2019***

All the papers for the October meeting are available online at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2019-10-agenda-papers-package>

The minutes and other follow-up material are available from

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2019-10-follow-up-package>

This was a residential weekend meeting, at Woodbrooke, which was welcoming and peaceful as always.

We heard a number of reports (all in the linked-to documents above), and had some thoughtful deliberation, but very few actual actions were taken.

### ***Court & Prison Register***

We spent rather a lot of time agreeing guidelines for what does and does not count as “suffering for the faith”.

It surprised many that there was a presumption that any Friends setting out on a course of action likely to result in arrest should test their concern with their Meeting in advance if at all possible.

### ***Sustainability***

“How might we be called to act next?” We heard introductions on the five ‘strands’ identified.

#### *- Eldership*

Eden Grace, this year’s Swarthmore Lecturer, had two striking phrases: “All creation was being set free to be true to itself” and “Right purpose, right use, right relationship”

#### *- Oversight*

We were reminded that action depends on community since, acting alone is too hard; and of the need to change community norms (with regard to energy use, in particular) and of the conflict of economic growth *vs.* finite resources. This was continued in:

#### *- Living Faithfully*

We must think about energy as *part* of a decision, not a ‘retro-fit’. Is the Eco-church movement a possible source of guidance?

#### *- Right Ordering*

The introduction was by Martin Ford of the Quaker Stewardship Committee, see below; and, finally,

#### *- Witness*

Some anger was expressed about the narrowness of our witness: “too neat, too tidy”: an impact is needed on the wider community (*i.e.* not just the “white middle-class”).

In a small group, I heard for the first time the phrase “Just transition” [*i.e.* *just* as in ‘justice’]; to bring the less privileged with us on sustainability, we need to show there is a way forward that does not destroy what little livelihood they may have. See [1] for an introduction to this idea as included in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Trees came up a lot in discussions of action that can be taken locally, and the suggestion of creating Quaker burial grounds to grow trees and save the huge energy costs of cremation.

## *Trustees*

We returned to the topic of structural changes in Britain Yearly Meeting.

“Meeting-centred support” (see [2]) is the new buzz phrase; ‘vibrancy’ is no longer mentioned.

On Woodbrooke, we heard that numbers attending are down over several years, and of the need for renewed purpose to meet Friends’ and others’ needs. A survey had been done; the main points noted were:

- \* Woodbrooke needs to come to Friends;
- \* BUT it’s too expensive (particularly when compared to getting someone from Friends House ‘for free’).

The planned changes are an opportunity for renewal. J.W. Rowntree said “Woodbrooke should not be a privilege for the rich”.

## *Quaker Stewardship Committee*

We learned about this little-known body, which works to help Meetings take proper care of their resources: principally, but not exclusively, property.

A member of Sufferings said of the Society that “we are a bottom-up organisation, and I don't know of any other” to which Ursula Fuller, the Clerk to the Committee, added: “The bottom *is* the top.” She also said: “Yearly Meeting decisions are taken with care because they are understood to be, as a matter of our faith, decisions by *all* of us.”

## *Assisted dying*

This has come around again from concerns sent to Sufferings from several English AMs. We attempted to focus on what we *as Quakers* have to say. My memory of our experience in Scotland is that we are unlikely to reach unity on the question, but might that in itself may be a worthwhile contribution to the wider public discussion?

“Not reaching unity is not a failure” (Paul Parker, Recording Clerk)

The MfS session reflected a wide range of positions.

Studied neutrality is also a possibility (See [3].)

We were usefully reminded that even *considering* assisted dying is, at least currently, very much a possibility only to the privileged.

## *Speaking out*

We were reminded that there is a policy governing “public statements and comments” from, among others, Area Meetings (typically having been agreed in an Area Meeting for Business and published over the name of the Clerk), and individual Friends, particularly in the context of marches/vigils/protests where any of us may find ourselves confronted by a microphone and camera. (See [4].)

It was mentioned that there is a moderated Facebook group related to this. As I said in my report of the discussion of our 'Post-truth world' at Meeting for Sufferings on 2 February this year [*see* Sesame 222, p. 5]:

"Finding the courage to challenge lies is hard enough to do in person; and it is even harder to do on social media, where the response may well be both manifold and obnoxious, the latter particularly in response to challenges from women.

"Can we find ways to provide safe online spaces, perhaps taking EAPPI as a model?"

**Henry S. Thompson, SE Scotland AM representative**

- [1] <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/publication/climate-change-and-the-just-transition-a-guide-for-investor-action/>
- [2] <https://quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/meeting-centred-support>
- [3] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3505400/>
- [4] <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/speaking-out-briefing>

## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Wednesday 4 September 2019  
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House**

### **2019/09/01 Worship and introductions**

During worship, we have heard a reading from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 14.18 about stewardship. We are reminded of the need for integrity not just in looking after our funds, but in all our dealings; whether formally appointed or not, we each have a responsibility.

We have also heard of three recent deaths: Jimmy Smith, on 29 July, and Pat Newbury, on 15 August, both members of Polmont local meeting; and Merylin Smith of Central Edinburgh LM on 7 August. We express our sympathy with the families and with those who were close to all of them. In particular, we stand with Polmont meeting in their sadness at the loss of two Friends so close together.

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

### **2019/09/02 Minutes of Meeting of Saturday 22 June 2019**

We ask our Clerk to ensure that minutes of our Area Meeting held on 22 June 2019 at Kelso Quaker Meeting House, are signed and entered in the minute book.

## 2019/09/03 Matters arising from the minutes

### 1) Roots of Resistance (2019/05/09 and 2019/06/03.1 refer) [See also p. 3]

We have heard from Cathy Holman (P&M) who has just returned from London, where along with others she participated in challenging the DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International) arms fair being held this week.

Hundreds of Quakers gathered, and took part in spiritual and practical preparation at Friends House on the previous day.

The action itself included two meetings for worship, held with people of other faiths, which succeeded in blocking roads to the arms fair. In an epilogue a Catholic nun from Africa spoke of movingly about her experience of war. This brought the day to an end.

We have appreciated seeing some of the banners Cathy brought back with her, prepared by members of our meetings.

We thank all who took part in this impressive witness for peace.

### 2) Robin Naumann/Anna Liebmann wedding (2019/06/06 refers)

We appoint Sarah Martin and Chris Booth to serve as Elders at the meeting for worship for the marriage of Robin Naumann and Anna Liebmann on 16 November.

## 2019/09/04 Decision by between-meetings procedure: Falkirk peace bench

Our clerking team took the following decision on 4 July, in consultation with the treasury team:

*By minute 2019/03/06, Area Meeting authorised our treasury team to pay up to £500 for the Peace Bench being installed by the Peace Pole in the Helix, Falkirk. The price of the bench was £487.68 but it was subject to VAT. We now authorise our treasurers to pay the full amount of £585.22 including VAT.*

## 2019/09/05 Membership matters

### 1) Deaths

We record the following deaths:

of our Friend Jimmy Smith (Polmont) on 29 July, in hospital. The Quaker funeral was held at West Lothian crematorium on Monday 5 August;

of our Friend Merylin Smith (Central Edinburgh) on 7 August, in the Marie Curie hospice, after a long battle with cancer. The funeral took place at Mortonhall crematorium, Edinburgh on Thursday 22 August;

of our Friend Pat Newbury (Polmont) on 15 August, in hospital. The Quaker funeral was held at Falkirk crematorium on Wednesday 28 August.

### 2) Transfers in

We have received a certificate of transfer from Northamptonshire Area Meeting for Marion Littler, who has moved to the Borders. We ask our Assistant Clerk (Membership) to send a Certificate of Acceptance of Transfer to Northamptonshire Area Meeting. We welcome Marion, who is now attending Kelso Local Meeting.

We have received a certificate of transfer from Bristol Area Meeting for Gareth Rae, who has moved to Edinburgh. We ask our Assistant Clerk

(Membership) to send a Certificate of Acceptance of Transfer to Bristol Area Meeting. We welcome Gareth, who is now attending Central Edinburgh Local Meeting.

### 3) Transfer out

We have received a certificate of acceptance from West Scotland Area Meeting for the transfer of Maureen Anderson (formerly Polmont) from our area meeting.

### 2019/09/06 Appointments

Nominations Committee forwards the following names for consideration:

1. To serve from 1 July to 30 November 2019
  - a. Pastoral Care & Oversight: Ruth Follan (CE), *reappointment*
2. To serve from 1 October 2019 to end September 2022
  - a. Library Committee: Tony Peach (CE)
  - b. Elder: Cathy Holman (P&M)
3. To serve from 1 October 2019 to end September 2020
  - a. GM Nominations: Rachel Frith (CE)

We appoint these Friends accordingly.

Alison Burnley (South Edinburgh) has offered to represent our Area Meeting at the Woodbrooke event *Why Have a Book of Discipline?* on 8-10 November. We agree to appoint her and ask her to report back in due course.

### 2019/09/07 Memorial minute for Brian Mayes (30 Aug 1926 to 24 Jan 2019)

We have received the following memorial minute from Central Edinburgh local meeting:

*Edinburgh Friends remember Brian Mayes, who died on 24 January 2019 at the age of 92, with warmth and gratitude.*

*Madeline Paterson was a contemporary of Brian's at Edinburgh University in the late 1940s, and both were active members of the Edinburgh University Dramatic Society (DramaSoc); she remembers in particular the production of Othello in the Little Theatre in the Pleasance, in which he played Cassio, and the charity shows, 'Varsity Vanities', in which they both disported themselves: she as a dancer – the girls' dresses were of surgical gauze from the Royal Infirmary – and Brian as an actor.*

*The picture of a loving man immersed in music and drama was strongly conveyed at Brian's funeral in February. Rachel Frith first got to know Brian when she moved to Sheffield in 1983 at which time he was property manager for Sheffield University, and so it was instead his expertise in practical matters that impressed her. As Monthly Meeting Treasurer he was one of the Friends most involved in the work that arose from the decision to sell Hartshead Meeting House: finding and securing a site for a replacement building and negotiating with the architect. His experience was invaluable, and he continued as Treasurer into the 1990s. (Alan Frith, who then was co-clerk of Balby MM, always found his contributions at monthly meetings helpful and supportive.)*

*When Brian returned to Scotland in 2007 he quickly became involved in the life of the meeting serving at different times as Overseer, on Premises Committee*

*and as Trustee. Simon Jackson, who first met him then, was often impressed by the insights of Brian's ministry, which were delivered with a distinct sense of humour – something Simon particularly appreciated. He often thanked Brian for his spoken contributions and in this way began to know him better. He writes: "The better I knew him the better I liked him. After Brian developed an illness that put him in a wheelchair, I continued to visit him at home. This led to my getting to know his [second] wife Bea and also his son Martin. I often sent Brian 'greeting' and 'get well cards' of my own design which had the effect of increasing my connection with his family before he died. I am deeply grateful to have known Brian towards the end of his life and I find it impossible to forget the warmth of his personality."*

*We agree to send this minute to Area Meeting.*

We thank those who prepared this record of Brian's life, and remember him with affection.

## **2019/09/08 Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31 December 2018**

Ken Jobling, convener of Area Meeting Trustees, has introduced the report and financial statements, indicating that because of the very generous legacy of £538,000 from the estate of Catriona Collins, received during the year, we needed a full audit, hence the different format from previous years. The report has been agreed by Trustees, and requires the signatures of the AM Clerk, the Convener of Trustees and a member of the treasury team before submission to OSCR, the charity regulator, following this meeting.

Jacqueline Noltingk, a member of the treasury team, has presented the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018, and has answered questions. The document includes a satisfactory statement from the auditor, Alexander Sloan. A summary paper has been circulated, and the full accounts can be had from Jacqueline.

While our 'fixed assets' – the value of the meeting houses in Edinburgh and Kelso – have increased considerably in value, this is a notional figure so long as we wish to remain in these buildings, so the treasury team have not taken account of this in considering our future financial commitments. This is reflected in Table 1 of the handout.

While trustees are still considering our suggestions of how the legacy money might be used, it is safely and ethically invested. Last year we used some of it to make a more substantial contribution to Britain Yearly Meeting than had been possible in the past, and trustees have agreed to do the same this year.

We note the following:

- Contributions from members and attenders, and trading income (mainly from external use of 7 Victoria Terrace) have risen;
- Costs associated with the meeting houses and Venue 40 have also risen;
- The treasury team advise that, whatever we do with the bulk of the legacy funds, we use some of it to restore our reserves to the target level of roughly six months of operating expenditure – currently about £100,000.

We authorise the Clerk to sign the Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31 December 2018.

We join Jacqueline in thanking Mark Hutcheson, the outgoing treasurer, for his many years of service in this role; our accountant, Heather Hartman, without whom the treasury team would not manage; local meeting treasurers; committee treasures; the meeting house managers and all others who provide or check figures for the accounts. Further thanks go to all who contribute through financial donations to the work of Area Meeting.

We thank Jacqueline for this clear report, and John Phillips, the other member of the treasury team, who is unable to be with us at this meeting.

### **2019/09/09 Matters from local meetings**

We have received the following minute from Portobello & Musselburgh LM:

#### ***Climate emergency / Climate Citizens' Assembly***

*Mary Jane Elton wrote to our constituency and list MSPs and received a number of responses, which have been circulated and are attached to these minutes. Six MSPs replied to our requests:*

- *All expressed concern about the climate emergency, but at different levels. We were told that the government is attempting to be more ambitious but has pressures and constraints.*
- *Very little comment was made about our request asking the government to be strong in standing up to vested interests. Neil Findlay (Scottish Labour) was the exception: "I support a move away from economic growth being the model of our success and to sustainability and well-being as a better measure". We agree with this.*
- *There was a disappointing response to our request for support for a climate citizens' assembly. Colin Beattie (SNP) gave his support, Jeremy Balfour (Scottish Conservative) was against, and most did not comment.*

*We agree to send this minute to Area Meeting together with the responses from MSPs and ask it to strongly support the principle of a climate citizens' assembly which will help our decision-makers act in the interests of our country and the climate. We ask MSPs to have the courage to take the strong action that is needed now on the climate crisis.*

*Beth [Cross] has offered to continue corresponding with our MSPs about taking action.*

We have received the following minute from South Edinburgh LM:

#### ***Climate [and Ecological] Emergency - CALL FOR ACTION***

*We reflected on the appeal sent by Adwoa Bittle, clerk, General Meeting for Scotland.*

*We recognised that individuals do what they can, that even small actions help and that wider change is needed. We delayed decisions about how to support those incurring legal fees and other expenses – following the nonviolent direct action at North Bridge on 16 April and other actions – until we have clarification as to what is required.*

*Some of the Meeting are happy to support Extinction Rebellion (there was a strong Quaker presence during their Festival Residency at Summerhall); while others with reservations find other organisations with which they are more in sympathy.*

*We heard the UN Climate Change Conference is due in Glasgow in December 2020.*

*We are very concerned about the Ecological and Climate Emergency and wish to be part of the civil society movement responding to it.*

*We heard of the QPSW initiative to appoint field staff to support local work on a zero carbon future and we hope that Area Meeting and General Meeting for Scotland will consider making the case for one of the staff appointed being located in Scotland.*

*We ask that this appointment be allied to the evolving Vibrancy initiative as we feel this is spiritual work – the Quaker emphasis on faith and action being totally integrated.*

*We will approach school strikers associated with our meeting to see if they might attend General Meeting for Scotland on 14 September in Aberdeen – not long before a General / Climate Strike called by Scottish Youth Climate Strike Friday 20 September.*

We have considered the call for a citizens' assembly on the climate crisis.

We recognise that such an initiative could be highly influential. On the other hand, we foresee difficulties for such an assembly in resolving complex problems, and in identifying appropriate and authoritative sources of information to assist clarity.

We are not yet clear what calling for a climate citizens' assembly would imply for our Area Meeting, and what would be required of us to make it happen.

We give our blessing to those in our area meeting who are committed to this approach, and ask them to continue to work on it, and to keep raising our awareness as proposals develop, bringing it back for our endorsement.

We are reminded of the need to take individual and corporate action on the climate crisis whatever is done through the citizens' assembly proposal.

We encourage local meetings to co-operate on these matters.

We agree that the appointment of field staff to assist local Quaker action on issues related to the climate crisis would be valuable, and ask our Trustees to consider this, alongside any proposal for appointment of a vibrancy post.

### **2019/09/10 Enquirers' day for Scotland**

Rici Marshall Cross, Mariot Dallas and Henry Thompson have organised an enquirers' day on behalf of General Meeting for Scotland. This is for people looking to deepen their relationship with Quakers, and will take place on Saturday 12 October in Stirling, using a meeting facility of the Stirling Baptist Church. For those who can stay over (or live nearby), there

is the opportunity to attend Meeting for Worship with Dunblane Friends on the Sunday and then share lunch and have a final session together.

The planning group proposes that South East Scotland AM should meet the costs of any young people who are attending. The planning group also asks that bursary support up to the full cost (likely to be £25 or less for the day plus travel) would be available to others who wish to attend and who request financial support.

We agree to these proposals, and ask local meetings to publicise the event, encouraging participation. Friends can find details and a downloadable booking form at

<http://www.quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/events/friendly-introduction-quakersscotland>.

We thank the organisers for the work done to prepare this event, and wish them well in October.

### **2019/09/11 General Meeting for Scotland – ‘menu for change’**

Our clerk has presented an outline of the menu for change agreed at General Meeting for Scotland in March, and has drawn our attention to the points most relevant to our situation in South East Scotland. Key issues highlighted include:

- How we bring in, and bring on, newcomers – *e.g.* through social events, learning opportunities, and equipping ourselves through skills development
- Building community within our meetings (see minute 2019/06/11 for our discussion of how Kelso meeting approaches this) – *e.g.* through events, having fun, eating together
- What can we do jointly with other AMs? – *e.g.* sharing certain roles, sharing training
- Developing our meetings – what can we do to stabilise fragile meetings, to seed new meetings? And should we be reviewing all our meeting places, owned or rented to see if they are in the right location, with the right facilities?
- Communicating – *e.g.* using ‘Zoom’ to cut down on travel; how we use our websites and social media; and our use of print media.

We recognize the shortage of time to discuss these issues fully.

We encourage AM Trustees in their consideration of how to spend our legacy funds, and ask them to include the possibility of using them to develop a vibrancy approach.

We note that issues of how Area Meeting is organised and held will be discussed further at our November meeting, when we review three years’ experience of the STIR proposals of 2016.

We ask the clerk to send this minute to General Meeting for Scotland.

We thank the clerk for his presentation.

### **2019/09/12 Proposed dates and venues of Area Meetings in 2020**

We agree the following provisional dates for Area Meetings in 2020, and ask the clerking team to confirm these with local meetings invited to host, or with the meeting house managers as appropriate:

Monday 20 January	evening	7 Victoria Terrace
Saturday 21 March	all day	East Lothian
Tuesday 12 May	evening	7 Victoria Terrace
Saturday 27 June	all day,	South Edinburgh
Saturday 28 November	all day	Penicuik or Peebles

We note that a further evening meeting at Victoria Terrace will take place in early September 2020, and ask the clerk and meeting house managers to liaise over a suitable date.

### 2019/09/13 Announcements

We have heard from Tweeddale LM that local organisation Tweedgreen will be holding weekly vigils in Peebles, starting on Friday 20 September as part of the international climate strike. Friends are encouraged to support this.

We have heard that our AM Clerk has been invited to deliver *Time for Reflection* at the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 1 October, and wish him well.

An information pack has been received from Northern Friends Peace Board, and is available on the clerking table.

### 2019/09/14 Closing minute

21 members and three attenders have been at all or part of today's meeting. Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh <b>12 members</b> <b>1 attender</b>	Central Fife <b>1 member</b>	East Lothian -	Kelso <b>2 members</b>	Penicuik <b>1 member</b>
Polmont <b>1 member</b>	Portobello & Musselburgh <b>2 members</b> <b>2 attenders</b>	South Edinburgh <b>2 members</b>	Tweeddale -	

We next meet on Saturday 9 November 2019 at Bellfield, 16b Bellfield Street, EH15 2BP, hosted by Portobello & Musselburgh local meeting.

(Signed)  
Alastair Cameron  
Clerk  
Mariot Dallas  
Assistant Clerk this time

## *Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland*

### **Every Sunday**

Central Edinburgh: 7 Victoria Terrace	9.30 am & 11.00 am
South Edinburgh: Open Door, 420 Morningside Road	10.30 am
Polmont: Greenpark Community Centre	10.45 am
Kelso: Quaker Meeting House, Kelso	10.30 am

### **Every Wednesday**

Mid-Week Meeting: 7 Victoria Terrace	12.30 – 1 pm
--------------------------------------	--------------

### **First Sunday in the Month**

Penicuik: Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik <i>Children welcome, bring and share lunch</i>	11.00 am
Portobello & Musselburgh: Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP <i>Half an hour – no children's meeting.</i>	7.30 pm

### **Second Sunday in the Month**

East Lothian: Dunbar Town House, High Street, Dunbar	11.00 am
--	----------

### **Second and Fourth Sundays in the Month**

Portobello & Musselburgh: Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP. <i>Children welcome.</i>	11.00 am
Tweeddale: Nomad Beat, 10-11 Cavalry Park, Peebles <i>All welcome, but please phone to confirm 01721 721 050 or 01896 850 389</i>	10.30 am
Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am

### **Fourth Sunday in the Month**

North Edinburgh Meeting: Broughton St Mary's Church, Edinburgh	7.00 pm
--	---------

### **Fifth Sunday in the Month**

Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am
--	----------

### **Last Sunday in the Month**

East Lothian: Dunbar Town House, High Street, Dunbar	11.00 am
--	----------

So far as we know, there are no regular meetings for worship on University premises. **Mark Borthwick** is the named Quaker contact on the University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy website, and there is a Facebook Group at [www.facebook.com/groups/EUQuakerSoc](http://www.facebook.com/groups/EUQuakerSoc)

### **Distribution of *Sesame* and *Scottish Friends Newsletter***

The current practice is to distribute one copy of *Sesame* and the *Scottish Friends Newsletter* to every Member and Attender household. Contributions to the costs of *Sesame* are always warmly welcomed by the Area Meeting Treasurer. An email version of *Sesame* is more ecological and is free; if you would prefer to receive it this way, or to change the address to which a paper copy is sent, or if you would like to get one by post and currently do not, please contact **Joanna Swanson** at [jmswanson69@gmail.com](mailto:jmswanson69@gmail.com). A large print version is also available on request. Published by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, South East Scotland Area Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. Scottish Charity No. SC019165. Printed by Footprint UK, Riverside Works, Edinburgh Road, Jedburgh TD8 6EE.