

SESAME

Number 236: June 2021

AM on 19 June/YMG 2021/Working with prisoners: *Saughton and Polmont, 2021*; *Spandau, 1824*/Refugees and Community Sponsorship/'Anti-Slavery Alphabet'/*Kveekarit Suomessa: Finland YM*/Quaker Life Rep. Council/ Updates: *BDRC*; *COP26 Pilgrimage*/Six Simple Suggestions from EAPPI/ *Essentials of Basic Income* (book review)/NFPB in 2020/After the Election/Engaging with MSPs/Funeral planning/Benches/AM May Minutes/... &c.



Gannet pairs on the Bass Rock (photograph courtesy Ian Goodall)

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) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 24 August**. The Editor reserves 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 Editor.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Area Meeting will be on Saturday 19 June at 10.00 am by Zoom.

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 11 May 2021
3. Matters arising from previous minutes
COP 26 Pilgrimage (from March AM – 2021/03/06 refers) [see page 21]
4. Decision taken by between-meeting procedure (*appointment of visitors*)
5. Membership matters
 1. *Application*
 2. *Report on membership visit*
 3. *Resignation*
 4. *Transfer*
6. Matters from local meetings
 1. *East Lothian LM: Pat Lucas, memorial minute*
 2. *Polmont LM: proposed support for prisoners in HMYOI Polmont*
[see page 5]
 3. *Central Edinburgh LM: co-ordination and sharing of experience with children and young people in our Area Meeting*
7. Community sponsorship of refugees – proposal [see page 9]
8. Reports
 1. *General Meeting for Scotland (GMS), 12 June*
 2. *Any other reports*
9. Appointments
10. Dates and arrangements for meetings in 2022-23
11. Eldership in our Area Meeting
12. Closing minute

The meeting will start with silent worship at 10.00 am, and there will be a break after item 10, probably at around 11.30 am. The focus on eldership in our AM will be led by members of South Edinburgh local meeting, and will involve presentations from experienced elders, with break-out groups to consider key questions, followed by a period of worship-sharing.

It is expected that the meeting will finish by 1.00 pm.

Alastair Cameron
AM Clerk

YEARLY MEETING GATHERING ONLINE

19 JULY - 8 AUGUST

Registration opened on 1 June on www.quaker.org.uk/ym. (Note that registration for the children and young people's programme closes on 27 June.)

All those taking part must register in advance for Yearly Meeting Gathering. Once a registration has been processed, participants will be able to select the events and YM sessions they wish to attend. This will be necessary for *all* events and sessions, as there are technical limits on the number that can attend individual events.

The theme for the YMG is "For our comfort and discomfort: living equality and truth in a time of crisis". Sessions will focus on these areas:

Anti-racism: our Quaker journey.

Tackling systemic racism is a spiritual imperative. Might Quakers commit to becoming an actively anti-racist church?

Acknowledging and welcoming gender diverse people.

Quakers are at an early stage of discernment on gender diversity and there is a wide range of views and points of conflict in the Quaker community, as well as in wider society. Might the Yearly Meeting name the places where there is unity, acknowledge that there are trans people in Quaker communities and state that they are welcome?

Faith-based action for climate justice.

It is time to review ten years since Quakers committed to becoming a low-carbon community, look forward to COP26 and consider what faith requires in relation to climate justice.

In the words of Clare Scott Booth, clerk to Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021: "Yearly Meeting searches our spiritual depths and refreshes our spiritual lives. Being together reinforces our sense of community. We are planning an online, all-age, inclusive event, grounded in worship."

There is an impressive three-week programme of events around the YMG theme. Participants can choose a range of welcome events, special interest meetings, interactive sessions plus videos and podcasts. The third week will have two weekends of Yearly Meeting in session, from Friday evening 31 July, then from Friday afternoon, 6 August to come together as an all-age community and to hear minutes from the children and young people's programmes.

There but for the Grace of God

The further I delve into the Criminal Justice world the greater is my gratitude that I have been fortunate in my upbringing and the subsequent relationships that have shaped my life as it is today. Having the opportunity for understanding and taking an active part in how loving kindness can be shared, helps me through the difficult patches of life. I know a few different turns that I could have taken would have resulted in a very different outlook and place in society; and watching the drama *Time* on BBC-1 confirms all that I fear most about the way we respond to those who did not get the same lucky breaks as I did.

Our Quaker Criminal Justice Network for Scotland is exploring just these themes. For those of us who are fairly new understanding the negating world of CJ, it has been extremely helpful to have some very knowledgeable members in the group. We have been introduced to so many different aspects of the potential of rehabilitation rather than the more common experience for prisoners of restriction and punishment. The causes of crime are so clearly rooted in the experience of the individual, particularly through childhood, so we will never undo the harm until we address its provenance. If people find that they have to defend themselves from the society that they live in, they may have nothing spare to create space for loving kindness. The punishment of prison is as reactive and destructive as the world of crime, so the cycle of deprivation is continued. The big question that we as a group return to repeatedly, is *How can we affect society's thinking?* How can we help Government to see that enabling people to develop their own sense of self through the cause and effect of valuing the person in us all, is the only way to reduce these harming and harmful experiences? Other countries seem to manage to avoid the "us and them" thinking – why can't we?

One approach to helping rather than punishing is Restorative Justice; and it is finally being promoted with a bit more vigour by the Scottish Government. I was given the chance to take part in a course run by Sacro and the Mediation Centre. The process of getting the person harmed to meet with the person responsible gives both the chance to explore their feelings, and the cause and effect of the harmful action. The course challenged my reaction to harm and the need for facing up to my own avoidance of disharmony and truth, even when pain is still being experienced. Keeping the objective stance while remaining compassionate and engaged, demands so much of us.

At our next meeting of the QCJN we will be meeting a member of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, based in Glasgow – an example of good practice in the community [See <http://www.sorru.co.uk/>]. There are many effective people who are working in the CJ world in third sector and statutory organisations, who could do so much more if given some of the

funding that is put into the present prison system. Some of the men I have met “inside” have expressed their own ideas about rehabilitation being the way forward, but I also sense their awareness of defeat that reduces their energy, and conviction in their own salvation. Hope; something to strive for and believe in, gives all of us the opportunity to try again in our lives. How can we help this to come about?

Jenny Copsey

Jenny Copsey is Quaker Prison Chaplain at HMP Edinburgh

Time, a three-part drama by Jimmy McGovern, is available on the BBC iPlayer – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/p09fs2qh/time?seriesId=p09fs2tp>.

See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/11/bbc-drama-britain-prisons-jimmy-mcgovern-time>

A QPSW briefing paper, <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/ways-to-witness-restorative-justice-july-2017> gives guidance on getting involved in such work.

Vietnamese detainees in HMYOI Polmont

The Scottish Prisons Service describes the Polmont Young Offenders Institution as “Scotland's national holding facility for male young offenders aged between 16 - 21 years of age”. Not all its inmates are male, however, and, in the past, children as young as 14 have also been kept there.

Polmont Meeting became involved with supporting young Vietnamese detainees at Polmont YOI in January this year when we heard from Jenny Copsey that some men were being transferred there from Saughton [HMP Edinburgh]. Initially there were two people but now there are nine, including one woman. We understand that they have been detained on drugs offences and it is likely they have been trafficked.

As a Meeting we felt it was important that these vulnerable young people had some support from the community, and after taking advice from Polmont YOI staff, we began to send £10 per person each month. This is described as ‘pocket money’ but we have learned that it is used to buy such essentials as soap and toothpaste. Cath Dyer, our Treasurer, sends a cheque each month and the finance office staff have been helpful, as has the Church of Scotland chaplain.

We contacted Aberlour Scottish Guardianship Services and submitted a referral form in January because we were concerned that the detainees would be vulnerable and unsupported. (Aberlour is a charity committed to helping refugee children and the victims of trafficking; its guardians have a statutory role under the 2015 Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act, which puts a duty on public bodies to refer to the service – see <https://www.aberlour.org.uk/services/scottish-guardianship-service/>.) We hoped that they could help with advocacy and interpreter services but have no information about what their involvement has been.

Although we are unlikely to ever meet these people in person, we feel it is important that we offer kindness and friendship from their local community. We are encouraged to hear from Friends in Area Meeting that they feel this could be a campaigning issue, as Scottish Government policy is not to imprison people who have been trafficked.

Mariot Dallas
Clerk, Polmont Meeting

Prison Visiting, Prussia, 1824

Thomas Shillitoe (1754-1836) became a shoemaker, having left a position in a bank which involved trading in lottery tickets. The note in the old (1960) Book of Discipline, in which this extract from his Journal appears, says of him: "Although extremely timid by nature, he travelled widely in Great Britain and on the continent as far as Russia, and laboured to bring the Gospel to the poor, the vicious and the neglected. He spoke also with great ones, and with kings on several occasions, and George IV remembered the simple and piercing message of 'that Quaker' till his dying day."

In 1824, Thomas Shillitoe spent some time in Berlin. Having visited the prison at Spandau (then in the old Citadel – not the purpose-built prison erected in 1876, eventually used to incarcerate Nazi war criminals), he discovered that the most violent convicts had been kept from him, and so resolved to return and see them.

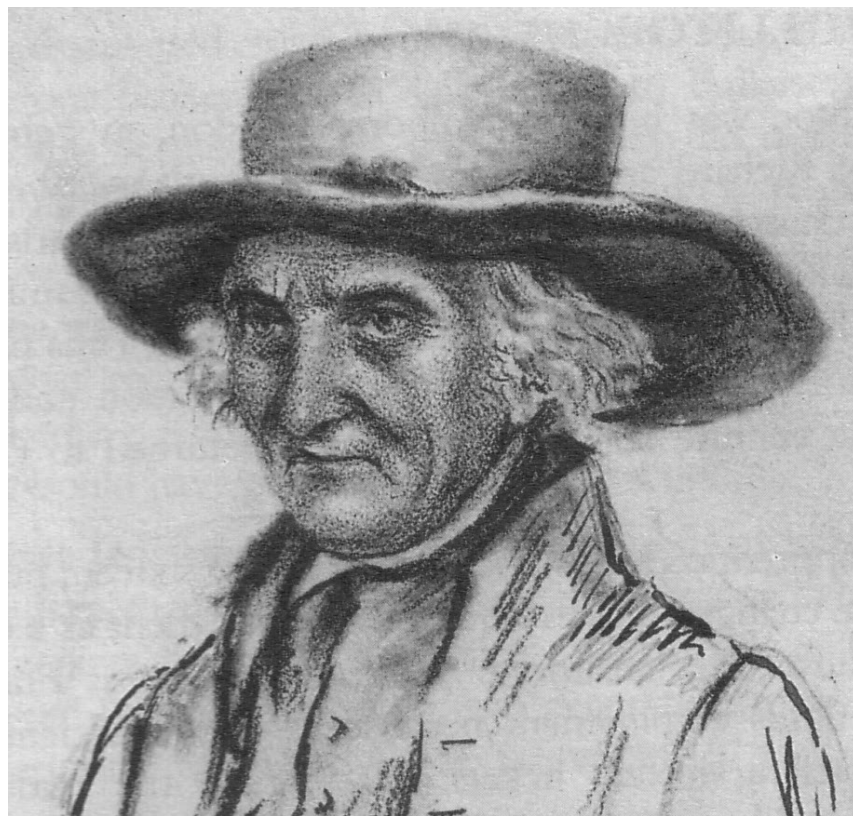
WHILST WALKING ALONG, I was accosted by my friend the chief magistrate of the city, saying, 'So you are about to make another visit to Spandau. I would wish you not to go again. Are you not afraid? – Don't you know some of the prisoners murdered the last governor?' Although I received his counsel as a mark of his kindness towards me, I found it safest to say as little as possible in reply, having heard of this circumstance since our last visit, and that a bowl of scalding liquor had been thrown by one of the prisoners into the present governor's face; nevertheless this caution of the chief magistrate caused me, for a time, to feel keenly on the occasion, and to consider there was not only my own life, but that of my interpreter, the governor, and perhaps other attendants, at stake ... these considerations, I found, without great watchfulness, were in danger of producing such agitation of mind as would be very unprofitable for me.

I had concluded, in the course of the night previous to our proceeding to Spandau, to empty my pockets of my money, watch, pocketbook, and my penknife more particularly; for, by having my penknife about me, I might be the cause of furnishing them with the means of my own destruction: this I accordingly did. But on mature deliberation on the step I had thus taken, I was mercifully led to see the effect of that departure from a full and entire reliance on God's arm of power, which the enemy was endeavouring to bring about in my mind. I sensibly felt the performance of this

very act had produced weakness, causing the hands that had been made strong through the power of the mighty God of Jacob, rather to fall again. I, therefore, returned to my chamber, and replaced each of these articles as they were before, taking particular care that my penknife was not left behind ...

On entering the yard where they were assembled, I observed that the number assembled far exceeded what I had met with in the chapel at my first visit, there now appearing from three to four hundred prisoners: many forbidding countenances I could not recollect to have seen before, whose legs were loaded with irons, but not their hands. Had they been disposed to have injured us, I thought, as I viewed those who were placed in front, we should only be like so many grasshoppers amongst them ...

After a pause had taken place, the governor addressed the prisoners; although I could not understand a word which he expressed, yet I had a clear evidence that his manner was appropriate to the occasion, and that he was assisted by best help in doing it: his observations produced such a remarkable quiet over the whole assembly, that not the motion of a foot or the clink of a fetter was to be heard ... Having been favoured with ability fully to relieve my mind towards them, I found I must propose to give each of the prisoners my hand of love before I left them: the governor then arranged them for that purpose; in this state I was led to believe the prisoners generally sympathised, for although they were not able to express themselves on the occasion in my own language, their countenances and the manner of their pressing my hand I thought fully indicated this disposition of mind.



*Thomas Shillitoe,
a drawing of 1830*

Working with Refugees

General Meeting for Scotland is a member organisation of SFAR [Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees], and at a Zoom event on 12 April, the Co-ordinator, Sabine Chalmers, spoke to Friends about how meetings and individuals can support its practical work and campaigning, as reported by Hilary Patrick in Sesame 235. Sabine may be contacted by email at Schalmers@churchofscotland.org.uk or phone 07388 376784 for further information, support or signposting.

20 June 2021 has been designated **Sanctuary Sunday**; the culmination of the week-long **Refugee Festival Scotland** (14-20 June), organised by the Scottish Refugee Council; this year's festival is taking place only online. (See <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/refugee-festival-scotland-is-back/>)

Sanctuary Sunday events promote the **Church of Sanctuary** programme of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland, "building cultures of welcome, hospitality and safety in our churches".

(See <https://churchofsanctuary.org/resources/>.)

Re-Act [Refugee Action] Scotland, launched in Edinburgh in 2015, now also works in Fife and Falkirk, assisting the resettlement and integration of refugees (New Scots) in Scotland; see <https://www.re-act-scotland.org/> for information on volunteering (e.g. with its Friday play group in Edinburgh.)

Community sponsorship can facilitate the settlement of refugee families; for details, see <https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/> or, for Edinburgh specifically, <https://www.refugeesponsorshipcircle.org/> (also on Facebook). Lynne Barty writes further on this in the article immediately following [opposite].

The **Scottish Government Refugee Integration Fund** (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-delivery-fund-guidance/>) can provide financial backing for work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Campaigns supported by SFAR include **Lift the Ban**, challenging the UK Government ban on asylum seekers' right to work (a restriction opposed, polls suggest, by 71 % of the UK population); **Freedom from Torture**, which since 2004 has run a centre in Glasgow offering therapy and support to survivors – adults, children, young people and families – as well as medico-legal reports and training to practitioners across Scotland – see <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/UK-centres/our-Scotland-centre-in-Glasgow/>; and, above all, the struggle for reform of the United Kingdom's arcane and inhumane asylum system: see <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/> for a guide to how it currently operates.

Initiatives in Edinburgh mentioned by Sabine included the Edinburgh City Mission's **Salaam project** "to support refugees and asylum seekers from Syria and other parts of the world and to support the churches who are involved in welcoming them" (see <https://www.edinburghcitymission.org.uk/>); SFAR's own **Weekend Club**, "a multi-faith programme of events for refu-

gees, asylum seekers and new migrants to Scotland's capital", and its **Christmas Hamper initiative** (contact Sabine for details of both); and **The Welcoming**, which works "to welcome New Scots to Edinburgh, supporting them to learn English, find jobs and access local services, offering opportunities for friendship, sustainable living, creativity, health and well-being" – see <https://www.thewelcoming.org/>.

[Based on notes by Alastair Cameron. See also: 'Forced Migration: What are we doing? and what more could we do?' in Sesame 208, and 'Being a Sanctuary Meeting: Questions & Answers' in Sesame 213. Both were written by Tim Gee, and although he has now left QPSW, the Sanctuary Meetings project continues; see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-justice/migration> – Ed.]

Community Sponsorship

gives local groups the opportunity to resettle a refugee family into their area and to support their building a new life in the UK. Refugees accepted through this programme are *additional* to government quotas for resettlement. Over 150 groups have already taken part since it began in 2015.

COVID restrictions have impacted this programme but it is currently open.

Building a resilient core group is one of the first steps in the Community Sponsorship scheme. The core group may comprise members of a faith organisation, a group of friends/neighbours, work colleagues or a mixture. Sponsoring is a considerable commitment and it needs to involve a number of dedicated people with the time, resources and skills to support a refugee family successfully.

What is involved:

Preparing an application for the local council and the Home Office and securing a Lead Sponsor. (*Guidelines and a lot of help are available with these.*)

Fundraising: £9,000 minimum.

Writing safeguarding guidelines. (*Again, help is available.*)

Securing and equipping a flat. The landlord must be willing to accept Local Housing Allowance rates and to offer a tenancy of two years' minimum.

Welcoming the family at the airport and bringing them to their new home.

Showing them around the neighbourhood – familiarising the family with their new home and identifying all relevant amenities. Helping them sign up for services in the first weeks and months, such as Universal Credit, a GP and dentist, and with opening bank accounts. Ensuring the children are in school – before the family's arrival the group must have found a school and secured a place or places.

Help with settling them in.

Assisting with English classes and conversation practice. All adults in the family must attend eight hours of ESOL [*English for Speakers of Other Lan-*

guages] classes a week, whether with a volunteer or at a local college. An additional twenty hours a week informal conversation is also required.

After twelve months of resettlement support, the group will officially have reached the end of the sponsorship agreement.

Advantages:

- It is a practical way for local people to respond to the global refugee crisis.
- It provides a safe and legal route for refugees to come to the UK.
- It makes use of the capacity of citizens to help refugees.
- It improves the chances of refugees to settle in, learn English and find work.
- It strengthens community bonds.
- It sends a strong message that refugees are welcome in the UK.

IS THERE SUFFICIENT INTEREST WITHIN SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AM TO FORM OUR OWN GROUP?

If you would like to get involved, please contact

Lynne Barty

or **Esther Shreeve** – [*contact details for both in the Book of Members*]

Sponsoring is a considerable commitment – but it is deeply rewarding.

Lynne Barty

Accommodating visitors to COP26

The *COP26 Homestay Network* is an environmentally-friendly and affordable accommodation project for the UN Climate Conference, 1-12 November 2021 in Glasgow. It matches hosts across the central belt of Scotland with guests coming to COP26 from all over the world.

People across the central belt (*i.e.* within easy travelling distance of the venue, the Scottish Event Campus, G3 8YW) are asked to sign up as hosts on the Homestay Network to help the accommodate the climate movement in November.

To become a host, sign up at climate.humanhotel.org and list your space.

There is more information at <https://www.humanhotel.com/COP26/>

For Friends in particular who are considering taking part in the scheme, Janey Andrews of Glasgow Meeting has drafted a *Guide for Quakers to Human Hotel*, based on her own experience. It is at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hSBRMCL93jumSKxCjGtCUxLXXmphZjL0/view?usp=sharing>

The Anti-Slavery Alphabet

IN December 1846, for its annual Anti-Slavery Fair, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society produced a 32-page booklet, *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet*, to encourage small children to think about the effects of slavery and to talk about the issues concerned, both to others of their own age and to adults. Published anonymously, it was the work of two Quaker sisters: **Hannah Townsend** (1812-51) and **Mary Townsend** (1814-51) who together wrote the verses and designed the woodcut capital letters that illustrate it.

As poetry it is negligible; and the inclusion of at least two of the subjects is contrived. (Edward Lear, also writing in the 1840s, has *Eagle and Xerxes* in one of his *Nonsense Alphabets* too, which might indicate their common occurrence in the didactic form he was parodying and the Townsends putting to a new purpose.)

It would be interesting to know whether explicitly urging the very young to take part in agitation and product boycotts provoked any reaction, as surely it would do today: terms such as 'brain-washing' had not been coined, of course (although indoctrination, in its modern pejorative sense, was in use by that time). Also noteworthy is that 'British' and 'free' are treated as synonymous! (see **U**) – Editor.

TO OUR LITTLE READERS.

LISTEN, little children, all,
 Listen to our earnest call:
 You are very young, 'tis true,
 But there's much that you can do.
 Even you can plead with men
 That they buy not slaves again,
 And that those they have may be
 Quickly set at liberty.
 They may hearken what *you* say,
 Though from *us* they turn away.
 Sometimes, when from school you
 walk,
 You can with your playmates talk,
 Tell them of the slave child's fate
 Motherless and desolate.
 And you can refuse to take
 Candy, sweetmeat, pie or cake,
 Saying "no" – unless 'tis free –
 "The slave shall not work for me."
 Thus, dear little children, each
 May some useful lesson teach;
 Thus each one may help set free
 This fair land from slavery.

A

A is an Abolitionist—
 A man who wants to free
 The wretched slave—and give to all
 An equal liberty.

B

B is a Brother with a skin
 Of somewhat darker hue,
 But in our Heavenly Father's sight
 He is as dear as you.

C

C is the Cotton-field, to which
 This injured brother's driven,
 When, as the white man's *slave*, he toils
 From early morn till even.

D

D is the Driver, cold and stern,
 Who follows, whip in hand,
 To punish those who dare to rest,
 Or disobey command.

E

E is the Eagle, soaring high;
 An emblem of the free:
 But while we chain our brother man,
 Our type he cannot be.

F

F is the heart-sick Fugitive,
The slave who runs away,
And travels through the dreary night,
But hides himself by day.

G

G is the Gong, whose rolling sound,
Before the morning light
Calls up the little sleeping slave,
To labor until night.

H

H is the Hound his master trained,
And called to scent the track
Of the unhappy fugitive,
And bring him trembling back.

I

I is the Infant, from the arms
Of its fond mother torn,
And, at a public auction, sold
With horses, cows, and corn.

J

J is the Jail, upon whose floor
That wretched mother lay,
Until her cruel master came,
And carried her away.

K

K is the Kidnapper, who stole
That little child and mother –
Shrieking, it clung around her, but
He tore them from each other.

L

L is the Lash, that brutally
He swung around its head,
Threatening that "if it cried again,
He'd whip it till 'twas dead."

M

M is the Merchant of the north,
Who buys what slaves produce –
So they are stolen, whipped and
worked,
For his, and for our use.

N

N is the Negro, rambling free
In his far distant home,
Delighting 'neath the palm trees' shade
And cocoa-nut to roam.

O

O is the Orange tree, that bloomed
Beside his cabin door,
When white men stole him from his
home
To see it never more.

P

P is the Parent, sorrowing,
And weeping all alone –
The child he loved to lean upon,
His only son, is gone!

Q

Q is the Quarter, where the slave
On coarsest food is fed,
And where, with toil and sorrow worn,
He seeks his wretched bed.

R

R is the "Rice-swamp, dank and lone,"
Where, weary, day by day,
He labors till the fever wastes
His strength and life away.

S

S is the Sugar, that the slave
Is toiling hard to make,
To put into your pie, and tea,
Your candy, and your cake.

T

T is the rank Tobacco plant,
Raised by slave labor too:
A poisonous and nasty thing,
For gentlemen to chew.

U

U is for Upper Canada,
Where the poor slave has found
Rest after all his wanderings
For it is British ground!

V

V is the Vessel, in whose dark,
 Noisome, and stifling hold,
 Hundreds of Africans are packed,
 Brought o'er the seas, and sold.

W

W is the Whipping post,
 To which the slave is bound,
 While on his naked back, the lash
 Makes many a bleeding wound.

X

X is for Xerxes, famed of yore;
 A warrior stern was he
 He fought with swords; let truth and
 love
 Our only weapons be.

Y

Y is for Youth – the time for all
 Bravely to war with sin;
 And think not ever it can be
 Too early to begin.

Z

Z is a Zealous man, sincere,
 Faithful, and just and true;
 An earnest pleader for the slave –
 Will you not be so too?

*This Alphabet is included in the new Penguin Classics anthology *Unsung: Unheralded Narratives of American Slavery & Abolition* ed. Michelle D. Commander (paperback: ISBN 978-0-14-313608-8), and can also be read online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The_Anti-Slavery_Alphabet in its original format and in colour.*

By far the greater part of any 'Inner Light' that we know is, ultimately, whether we recognise the fact or not, due to Jesus of Nazareth and to the Scripture; and our spiritual life is hurt by a confused thinking that leads to any neglect of these, setting the Light over against them as if they were their rival and superior.

A. Neave Brayshaw (1861-1940)

THE BOOK OF MEMBERS

The Book of Members and Attenders 2021 is published by General Meeting for Scotland and lists the names, addresses, and other contact details of members of the four constituent Area Meetings, together with the same information about known attenders, arranged by the Local Meeting which they usually attend. It also includes the names of office-holders for GM and the AMs, and the addresses of meeting places. Copies are available (at £3.99) to anyone listed in it; however it is a **confidential document** only to be used for the purposes of the Religious Society of Friends.

It assumed that readers of *Sesame* have access to it.

***Toivon Voimaa* – “The Power of Hope”**

Finland Yearly Meeting, 23-25 April 2021

I was first appointed to visit Finland Yearly Meeting in 2019, and was delighted to be asked to attend again this year. I'd been hoping to go in 2020, but lockdown stopped that...

When the pandemic began, I was invited to join Finnish Quakers who had arranged to be together in spirit each evening at 9 pm (7 pm UK time). Then they started meeting for worship on Zoom, once then twice a month, and I joined them when I could. I also began the Duolingo Finnish course, and was pleased to discover that, while unable to say much, I could recognise an increasing number of words in ministry and conversation.

It had been hoped that this year's YM would be in person, at the Ilkko Lutheran centre near Tampere, but a worsening COVID situation made it impossible. At their autumn gathering last year, the Finns had experimented with having Friends join them by Zoom. This was so successful that a whole Zoom weekend was planned for April, and I was warmly invited to attend all the bilingual sessions. Their business meeting, and a discussion about money, were going to be solely in Finnish.

Finland's YM Clerk, Aino Vesänen, wrote:

The theme of our weekend event is “The Power of Hope” (The Finnish title “Toivon voimaa” has another meaning, too: “I wish for strength”) because we are currently living in a situation where our minds can easily be overwhelmed with hopelessness. The pandemic affects everything, prevents communities and individuals from living together and creates loneliness. That is why we need the power of hope – the silent faith that carries us to the future. During this annual meeting weekend, we get to see each other through Zoom, and also share our thoughts on how we can, as a community, strengthen the power and hope that carries us towards easier times. You can participate in all or just part of the program, as you like.

It was a great joy to log into the Friday evening session and see familiar faces as well as others new to me – including Abigail who was joining us from Uppsala in Sweden. We began with worship-sharing about things that gave us hope, comfort, or strength. Friends read poems, shared words and pictures, or spoke from their own experience, weaving a blanket of love and comfort to wrap around ourselves in the dark times. After a break for food and/or conversation, Lari Junkkari gave his bilingual talk *Know what you don't know – mysticism at the heart of religion*, demonstrating how much Quakers have in common with mystics from all times and religions.

Saturday began with silent worship followed by an opportunity for conversation. The business meeting which followed dealt with the usual matters – including, delightfully, a membership application. I had said I would stay for as long as I could cope with non-stop Finnish, fully expecting to

give up after half an hour or so, but to my surprise and pleasure made it to the end of the four-hour session, having recognised a lot of words and learned a number of new ones. The agenda was in Finnish and English, which helped, and I was deeply touched when some of the speakers put in a sentence or two of English, just for me.

I was interested to hear about the Finns' first experience of communal fund-raising, in which they pledged to contribute 50 cents from central funds for every euro they raised to help homeless/poor people in Helsinki; also pleased to learn that they have almost completed the production of the very first Quaker pamphlets in Finnish, and that the work on the Finnish Quaker archives, which was initiated at the YM in 2019, was progressing and proving extremely interesting. At the end of the session I was congratulated and pronounced "a woman with *sisu*" – a word denoting stubborn endurance and determination (and incidentally one of the very first Finnish words I learned). I feel honoured to be seen as an honorary Finn!

Saturday evening's session was entitled "Ecstatic Dance Meeting for Worship" – a session with silent worship bookending an hour's music to which everyone was invited to listen and react in their own way. Having gone to be polite, I surprised myself by entering deeply into the music and finding myself at the end of the session in a state of very deep peace. This is definitely something I'd like to experience again.

Sunday began with worship and conversation, and then moved into a discussion only in Finnish. I should have liked to stay: the subject was money, and the conflict between wanting to offer financial support to disadvantaged people and believing it is the state's responsibility to look after them – "do we need alms or should we focus on social influencing?" I gather it was an extremely deep and helpful discussion, enabling participants to be clearer about how they as a Yearly Meeting should approach such matters.

The final session was presented by our Friend Ann Kerr of Glasgow Meeting, with the proposal that Finland YM might like to share in some degree with Glasgow's study circles, which this year, in preparation for COP 26 in November, are considering the climate emergency by looking at three relevant Swarthmore lectures.

The idea itself was fascinating – that links be established between Glasgow Meeting and Friends in other countries – the USA, South Africa, and Finland, all places with which Friends in, or known to, the Meeting have connections. Ann had frequently to pause to allow her words to be translated for those whose English was not fluent, and for questions and remarks to be translated for her. It seemed clear to me that, although the idea of joint sessions was enticing, the practicalities were against it: not simply because of the need for translation of discussions, but also because of the time and effort the Finns would have to put in to understanding and digesting the lectures, whether in recorded or written form.

Finnish Friends seemed interested in the idea and were going to discuss ways in which they could take forward the desire to engage with the subject in their own group(s) and explore the possibility of international discussions and sharing of ideas, practice, and experience.

The next Finnish gathering will be at Ilkko in the autumn; I really hope to be able to join it in person. Meanwhile I shall continue joining in Finnish worship (and one of the Glasgow study groups), working on my Finnish, and telling anyone who might want to listen about the joy I have found with my Finnish Quaker family.

Mary Woodward

Quaker Life Representative Council, 16-17 April 2021

This was my first attendance as a South East Scotland Area Meeting rep at Quaker Life Representative Council. As I am relatively new to Quakers I appreciate being put forward for this role and see it as an opportunity to get to know more about Quaker life in the UK and beyond.

This Council had two main themes – Race and Gender – which required deep engagement “for Our Comfort and Discomfort” so that we might discern what love requires of us on this particular journey.

Race

Edwina Peart, Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator for Britain Yearly Meeting, spoke of institutionalised racism in the UK: a legacy of colonisation and the British Empire which still very much in evidence today. The tension it causes is simmering just under the surface; it has recently erupted with the murder of George Floyd in the USA, the catalyst for the Black Lives Matter movement.

The history of institutionalised racism belongs to all of us. Edwina identified its traces embedded in our institutions and many individuals’ attitudes. Filaments of this history are woven into the fabric of our lives, in the pattern of wealth in these islands, in institutions, and in the privilege of white people. An example: compensation payments made to British slave owners in response to the Abolition of Slavery in 1833 were so huge that funds continued to be paid out to the descendants of slave owners, by the UK government with our taxes, right up until 2015. So ironically, those taxpayers in the UK whose great-great-grandparents were slaves have contributed to payment of this compensation!

We were asked to investigate our own attitudes with the case of Shemima Begum. How would we respond to and manage her situation? Within our Home Groups there was an almost unanimous response, completely the reverse of the UK government judgement, that she should be allowed to return to the UK, have her citizenship restored and more investment be made into the causes of the radicalisation of young people.

Gender

Yvonne Estop Wood shared the unseen lonely journey she has had to travel as a trans woman.

Her courage and wisdom are wonderful, but her experience of insecurity, rejection and fear on this journey is appalling. So many trans people suffer the same. She asked us to share some of it by exploring our own feelings and experience of security; do we feel safe? And if so, or if not, what is that safety about and where do we feel it? This work was uncomfortable too.

Edwina and Yvonne shared deeply their experience of living in an unequal society; which required us, the listeners, also to delve uncomfortably deep into our own life experience.

One of the feedback questions was: *Did I feel welcome, included, supported?*

My own answer is Yes, but that is partly because I can assume it. Having grown up white middle-class in a stable (if unconventional) family in a relatively stable country I feel privileged, and I am aware of this. Being led to a deeper empathy with people who cannot assume inclusion, welcome and support has been troubling, sad and really uncomfortable. But it has also been a privilege to share some of these journeys as together we can do something about the injustice and inequality.

So thank you to Edwina and Yvonne for bringing us closer to your realities.

Reflecting on the weekend, we recognised that we need to be better informed and the issues could be raised in Meetings for Sufferings. We expressed sadness that money seems more important than goodwill. Afro-Caribbeans have the highest chronic ill health in the world (!?) and they do not have the resources to manage the COVID crisis.

Two resolutions:

- Quakers should support the CARICOM 10-point plan for reparatory justice [see below].
- There are 500 Quakers in Jamaica; could we, Quakers in UK, contact them and start a conversation; find out if there are ways we might be able to support them?

All was well done except for being online and not in the same place together, but, as Zoom goes, the Council worked well for me. Thank you to those who managed all that so smoothly!

Su Nuttgens

See <https://caricom.org/caricom-ten-point-plan-for-reparatory-justice/> The ten points are: 1. Full formal apology; 2. Repatriation; 3. Indigenous people development program; 4. Cultural institutions; 5. Public health crisis; 6. Illiteracy eradication; 7. African knowledge program; 8. Psychological rehabilitation; 9. Technology transfer; 10. Debt cancellation. CARICOM (the Caribbean Community) was established in 1973; it has 15 member states and is an official UN Observer. This Plan was adopted in 2014.

Living Wage Project Assistant (LWPA)

The Poverty Alliance are recruiting a Living Wage Project Assistant to support delivery of our highly successful national programme: Living Wage Scotland.

Living Wage Scotland was launched in 2014 by the Poverty Alliance to increase the number of employers that are recognised for paying their staff the real Living Wage. It is a partnership with the Living Wage Foundation, funded by the Scottish Government. The Living Wage employer movement has grown to now over 1900 employers in Scotland, and over 7000 across the UK.

At a time of expansion in our work, we are seeking a Living Wage Project Assistant to support our employer engagement, marketing and communications activities that contribute to the growth of the Living Wage employer movement in Scotland, namely promotion of Living Wage employer accreditation, Living Wage Places and Living Hours.

Living Wage Project Assistant (LWPA)

- £23,248 (pro rata) per annum plus 6% pension
- Fixed Term until 31 March 2022 with likely extension
- 28 hours per week

The post will suit a creative individual who has experience in creating written copy and social media content in a professional setting, excellent verbal and written communication skills and outstanding organisation and prioritisation abilities but also a strong commitment to achieving social justice and a desire to tackle in-work poverty.

Responsibilities will include supporting internal and external communications activities, maintaining our website and social media platforms, contributing to the development of digital and print assets and materials relevant to the project aims (case studies, web materials, articles, promotional resources), supporting events (virtual and in-person), and supporting the delivery of Living Wage Scotland's communications strategy.

The role will involve close collaborative work within a small team, and direct engagement with our growing network of accredited Living Wage employers.

Closing date for applications: Monday 21 June, 12 noon

Interviews (virtual): Tuesday 29 June

For informal enquiries regarding this post please contact Lynn Anderson at lynn.anderson@povertyalliance.org; to apply, return completed application & equal opportunities forms to sinead.howell@povertyalliance.org

CVs will not be accepted.

Job Description:

<https://www.povertyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LWPA-Job-Description.pdf>

Application Form:

https://www.povertyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PA_Application_form_LWPA.docx

Equal Opportunities Form:

https://www.povertyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PA_EqualOpsForm_LWPA.docx

Book of Discipline Revision Committee: June Update

Having been appointed to attend Finland Yearly Meeting [see page 14], I was unable to be at the most recent BDRC meeting, which clashed with it; but our practice of appointing ‘buddies’ for those unable to be present meant I was able to get a good understanding of how things had gone.

I was delighted that Juliette Chandler, another younger Friend, was appointed to the committee at April’s Meeting for Sufferings. She will join Pearl and Marcie in their ‘committee buddy bubble’ with Jess and Anya, who will ensure that she very soon feels part of us.

The main business was the consideration of two papers presented for comment and questions: one from the Nominations task group, the other from the Discernment task group, which includes me. I was sorry to miss seeing how papers that small groups have worked on are dealt with by the full committee, but will have many more opportunities at future meetings.

Here is part of the minute on our paper:

We are profoundly grateful for the text that the Discernment group have brought us which provides an insightful and clear introduction to Quaker discernment. We are clear that there should be a substantive piece on discernment in the Book of Discipline, as part of providing the core knowledge that we must have to ‘do Quaker’ in Britain. Discernment is at the core of our Quaker way and this should be reflected in the content of this section and the way that it is presented.

We ask the group to take on the comments from Friends during our meeting to update their draft and provide us with a version we could consider final for now.

It’s good to know it was well-received! We’ve already begun combining into one text the two papers we presented, and thinking how to take on board the comments, which included that “there needs to be more about waiting”. We have another Zoom session at the beginning of June.

We had a committee ‘check in’ meeting in May, at which representatives of the task groups reported how the work was going and on problems and questions arising. One was: *to what degree can we assume that the reader has read all or any of the preceding material in the Book?* Given that many will prefer to dip into it rather than reading consecutively, how much do we repeat a thing (e.g. explaining discernment) in however many sections it appears; or do we say everything once, and hope people can find it when they need it? The answer will materially affect what and how we write! One Friend coined a lovely phrase – the encyclopædic merry-go-round – to describe the cross-referencing confusion that could result from trying to link everything to everything else: not too difficult in an electronic version of the Book, but a nightmare to create in hard copy.

We need continually to consider where to go next, and in small groups we talked about whether we should work on more topics or start considering our key questions. It was good to be in a group with at least one committee

member I didn't know well, and interesting that we were divided – some for topics, some for questions, and some for a mixture of both. Fortunately we didn't have to decide, just feed back to the clerks for their deliberations.

The Communicating with Friends group (of which I'm also a member) has a meeting in early June, to discuss, among other things, how to make our willingness to speak about our work as widely known as possible. We've visited large and small Meetings in England, Scotland, and Wales, but many Friends aren't aware of the work and the part they can play in it. I recently wrote a report on these 'gigs' for our next committee meeting – nine visits so far in 2021, and six booked for later in the year.

Two of our future gigs are (COVID permitting) to be 'in person' rather than by Zoom. This raises questions about time, cost, and personnel: it's expensive if I offer to do a gig in Cornwall, but what if no-one living nearer is available? What if we have six gigs booked for the same area in a short period? – we can't expect the same people to do them all. How many gigs can we reasonably expect to be able to do in, say, a month? This will be for the committee as a whole to consider as we move towards being able to travel more widely – doing gigs in person is good, but it's also great to Zoom in with a group of committee members who have widely-differing personal and Quaker experience to contribute to the sessions.

The BDRC's involvement in Yearly Meeting Gathering is – thankfully – not part of my brief! More information will be available soon, but I can reveal we will be doing three sessions: a 'basic introduction to the Book and our work'; a 'next steps' one; and one for Welsh speakers, on what Welsh-language material might be included in the new Book.

Our next full committee meeting is half a day in mid-June and there's a social get-together at the end of the month. We have a full committee weekend in early July – and of course the small group work continues...

The key messages from our April committee meeting are:

We have been considering Quaker discernment and nominations in detail, producing draft text and exploring the issues raised. Work on these topics is helping us to understand different ways to split up our core and supplementary material. We are asking questions like: what does every British Quaker need to know to join in with our community processes?

We continue to develop the core principles of our work. This includes questions about the sources we use for quotations, the vocabulary we use, and how we make the final version as accessible as possible.

We appreciate the support and upholding we are receiving. The size of the task and the need to work remotely can be daunting! We welcome more suggestions of things to include, especially images, diagrams, or videos on discernment, nominations, and other topics. We are also pleased to receive invitations to speak to local or area meetings and other Quaker groups, and will be running sessions at Britain Yearly Meeting – details to follow.

Please do continue to uphold us and the work we're doing on your behalf. Please also note the invitation to contribute made in the last part of the key messages. Send your contributions to bdrc@quaker.org.uk. Thank you in advance, Friends!

Mary Woodward

Pilgrimage for COP26

Launches at Dunbar, Monday 18 October

Departs Dunbar, Tuesday 19 October

Weekend events in Edinburgh, 23 & 24 October

Arrives at Glasgow, Friday 29 October

Weekend events in Glasgow, 30 & 31 October

Following a meeting on 13 June a pilgrimage steering group has been set up, with Quakers likely to form a working group to support events (including hospitality and worship sharing) in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

If you would like to join the Quaker working group please contact

Jonathan Baxter: [*contact details in the Book of Members*]

Jonathan may also be contacted for more information, or with offers of specific forms of support – organisational, financial or inspirational!

Six actions you can take for Palestine & Israel



The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) suggest some simple actions to take in solidarity with people in Palestine and Israel and to help ensure a lasting peace.

Despite the welcome end of the bombing of Gaza and the firing of rockets into Israel, and the ousting of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli Prime Minister, the violence and structural oppression of the military occupation of Palestine continue. Here are six quick actions you can take to stand in solidarity with people in Palestine and Israel:

1. Ask your elected representative or faith leader to act now

Write to your elected representative or faith leader, asking them to engage, speak out, and take action.

- *57 church leaders have written to the UN Security Council urging it to address the underlying causes of injustice including the “occupation, land dispossession, displacement, and the withholding of basic human rights we take for granted”. The text of the letter is at <https://embraceme.org/news-1/un-security-council>. [Despite Friends' involvement with EAPPI, no Quaker office-holder has yet signed it.]*

- 251 legal scholars and advocates have written to the International Criminal Court asking that it urgently investigate potential war crimes taking place in occupied Palestine. Can you send their letter to your elected representative and ask them to speak out in support of an ICC investigation? This is especially important in the UK where Boris Johnson recently refused to support ICC investigations into possible war crimes in occupied Palestine. [See <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/18402.html>.]
- Ireland has become the first EU country to call Israel's settlement policy "de facto annexation". Write to your MP asking them to support this step and to call on British ministers to join their Irish counterparts in recognising the reality on the ground.

Writing to our leaders like this really does help to shift perceptions and encourage them to speak out and change policy. Even if you think they do not support your view, they still have a duty to respond and act on constituents' concerns.

2. Learn about the history of the conflict

Watch and share the six minute video from Jewish Voice for Peace explaining the history of the conflict and what has led to this latest round of violence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y58njT2oXfE>

3. Watch, listen and learn from Palestinians and Israelis

It's important not just to listen to international voices and news organisations. Actively seek out and share social media accounts, news articles, blogs and films by Palestinians and Israelis, so you can hear directly from them about the experience of Palestinians living under occupation and Israelis working to end the occupation. Here are some to start you off:

Films: The Present (on Netflix) is a moving 20-minute Oscar-nominated short film about the everyday humiliations and struggles faced by Palestinians living under occupation. Watch this film with others, and share your thoughts.

News media: Try reading the Israeli online newspaper Haaretz and the Palestinian online news website the Palestine News Network.

Social media: Follow these hashtags to hear from Palestinian and Israeli peace groups, members of the public, authors, poets, activists, journalists and more: #SaveSheikhJarrah, #FreePalestine, #PalestineUnderAttack.

4. Donate to support medical aid

The violence has led to a desperate health and humanitarian crisis in Gaza, already suffering because of the coronavirus pandemic. If you can donate, Medical Aid for Palestinians and Trócaire are two organisations working with Palestinian partners to make sure medical aid is getting to those who need it.

5. Help us to talk to the next generation

Many schools find it difficult to know how to talk to students about the situation in Israel and Palestine. The Peace Education team at Friends House, together with EAPPI UK & Ireland, has produced Razor Wire and Olive Branches to help. Containing over 80 curriculum-spanning activities and resources, this teaching pack explores conflict, human rights and peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine.

The pack is available from the Quaker Bookshop; download free samples from the TES Resource Hub.

6. Stay connected with EAPPI UK & Ireland

We will continue to share updates, statements, news, and amplify the voices of Palestinians and Israelis online, in-person, and on our social media accounts.

Stay up-to-date by signing up to our mailing list and following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

EAPPI is a project of the World Council of Churches. In the UK and Ireland it is administered by Quakers in Britain. See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/international-work/eappi> and <https://eappi.org/en>.

BOOK REVIEW

Essentials of Basic Income by Annie Miller

Luath Press, 2020: ISBN 978-1-913025-58-8 – £4.99

With social and welfare reform having been matters of intense discussion over many years, this book attempts to give an introduction to the subject of a Basic Income system, so that activists, campaigners and interested parties can have an understanding of the fundamentals relating to changing the way the state support all citizens. The term *basic income* has been variously defined, but here means ‘a periodic, uniform (except by age), unconditional cash payment, delivered to all on an individual basis without means test or behavioural requirement’.

Written by Annie Miller, a long-time advocate and campaigner for a Basic Income system, the book is set out clearly and concisely with easy-to-follow chapters. The methodical presentation enables readers to understand and absorb the fundamentals. More than that: they will come from it persuaded, and equipped to make the arguments themselves for a Basic Income system.

At the end of the book there is a bibliography and a page of suggestions of ‘What You Can Do’, but sadly no glossary, which I would have welcomed; although terms are clearly defined when they are introduced, acronyms are used thereafter throughout the book, and it would be handy to have a reminder of their meanings in one place.

I recommend the book as a good starting point for readers interested in Basic Income and in trying to understand its positive aspects. Luath Press has two other titles by Annie Miller on the subject, both delving deeper into it and at greater length: the *Basic Income Handbook* (2017) and the *Basic Income Pocketbook*, published simultaneously with this one last year.

Katrina McCrea

(The Basic Income Pocketbook *will be reviewed in a future* Sesame. *Editor*)

Northern Friends Peace Board: activities in 2020

With representatives from Area Meetings across the North of Britain, Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) supports Quakers and others in taking action for peace. With several meetings a year, our members become a community and network of support, linking us with Friends through the northern part of Britain. We organise events, produce resources, facilitate the sharing of information and ideas and work with and alongside Quakers and other parts of the peace movement.

This has been a time of great uncertainty but also for reflection and for finding new ways of being a loving and dispersed community committed to peace.

Our first meeting of 2020 – at the end of February – was a very positive one; our members gathered at the Quaker Meeting House in Derby, with a warm welcome and good attendance from local Friends as well as our members travelling from far afield. We had stimulating discussions, heard about planned performances by Quaker actor Michael Mears to mark the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and shared news and ideas for our future priorities and strategy. Just a short while later, all that seemed like a very different world, pandemic restrictions completely transforming how we worked through the rest of the year.

Two further full Board meetings took place in June and October, these being online. Most Area Meetings were represented at them, and members contributed to and agreed a new strategic vision for our work. At these, and at our informal monthly meetings (from August), Friends had shared time in reflection, passing on news of peace witness during times of restriction and discussing concerns and action opportunities.

We were pleased to welcome a number of additional Friends to these events, from beyond our membership.

We kept in touch with the wider community of Friends through our mailings of the *NFPB Update* and the *Peace Round-up*, the latter being a monthly information sharing resource, and by continuous development and updating of our website and social media.

We made contributions to online events organised by Woodbrooke and by Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and participated in the annual Peace and Service Consultation of Friends World Committee for Consultation. These were among many such online openings in which staff and NFPB members played a valuable role.

The ways in which we have worked with the wider peace movement also changed. Since we have not had to travel, many groups and networks have met more frequently and taken work forward in new ways. For instance, the UK group promoting the Global Campaign on Military Spending developed a new focus that led to the engagement of a paid worker to strengthen this project in the UK. We were pleased to be able to contribute

to the fundraising and recruitment process to that end and to supporting this new initiative. We also continued our involvement with a network of groups promoting Arms Conversion and Defence Diversification.

The Rethinking Security initiative, of which NFPB and Quaker Peace & Social Witness are both part, launched a blog shortly before the pandemic, and this has proved to be a rich source of material that has highlighted many aspects of security in the current context. We were pleased to support this blog and other outreach initiatives.

A conference of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations had been due to take place in April 2020. The network met online throughout the year and began planning a possible online event to take place in Spring 2021. Members of the network shared resources and developed joint activities in relation to the 75th anniversaries of the end of the second world war and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and also spent time responding and reflecting on issues of racial justice in the light of the killing in the United States of George Floyd.

As the year ended, Friends and others were preparing to mark the entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty that has its roots in humanitarian concern and that has been enabled by countries that are not tied into security strategies with weapons of mass destruction at their core. Our Nuclear Abolition working group was actively involved throughout the year with the wider network of UK groups involved in the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

Philip Austin, NFPB Coordinator

From 'Our Activities in 2020': see <https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/updates-and-reports/>

The Wellbeing Toolkit for Doctors

This new book by Lesley Morrison of Tweeddale Meeting offers tools to help doctors prevent burnout, and enjoy their work again. The publishers write: "During stressful times, the practice of self-care becomes vital. The coronavirus pandemic has required new levels of dedication, resilience and hard work, and the mental health impact on health professionals working through it has been immense. Each chapter is a tool, either conceptual, such as Self-compassion, Peer Support, Anti-Racism, or practical, such as how you can positively influence your workplace environment, or enhance your compassion skills through music and the arts. This timely and thoughtful book offers a balanced overview of the issues currently faced by doctors, alongside stories from patients and other professionals throughout medicine. Doctors can thrive in their jobs, with the right support in place. This toolkit shows those working in healthcare how to gather the necessary support for their own wellbeing, in order to fully serve those in their care."

Watkins: ISBN: 978-1-78678-521-3 (pbk) ISBN: 978-1-78678-518-3 (e-book)

(We hope to have a review of this book in a future *Sesame*. Editor)

After the Election

Scotland has voted in a parliament with a majority in favour of Scottish independence. More than that, we voted in two parties all of whose candidates had undertaken, if elected, to sign the ICAN Parliamentary Pledge to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), plus a number of Labour candidates who did the same. This means that the majority in the parliament opposed to nuclear weapons is even greater than that for independence.

This is a consolidation of recent progress that has resulted from continual pressure to expand the parliament's agenda and the autonomy of the government. From a two-decades perspective, the difference is astonishing.

The fact that the Scottish National Party (SNP) does not have an overall majority means the increased number of Green MSPs (mirroring Green progress elsewhere) can have a progressive effect. The new parliament also has an improved percentage of women MSPs. And all this in the face of untraceable political funding and dirty tricks on the part of unionists and far right groups. We are acutely aware that the dirty war will continue and intensify.

As we relate to the new parliament, the TPNW will be key to a vision of what a new Scotland can be like, and not just for nuclear weapons. A new Scotland that accedes to the treaty as an early step will have the backing of international law and support from across the world to rid itself (and probably the UK) of nuclear weapons. It will also be setting a fundamental marker for how it connects to the rest of the world, with a bias towards relating to peace systems and institutions rather than sectional alliances such as NATO.

There is talk here of ties with the Nordic nations and a return to the EU fold, and so there is a job to do in alerting public and parliament to the realities of the NATO tie-ins and arms-trade dependency in the former and the increasing military ambitions of the latter. This will be a tough one, given the views of some senior SNP parliamentarians at both Westminster and Holyrood.

We must also work at continuing to expand the parliament's agenda on the basis that autonomy is increased by imaginative initiatives. An example of how this can be done was the parliamentary debate early in 2020 on the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, following a civil society prompt and support from the emerging project Secure Scotland*, with a view to Scotland developing its own aspirational UNSC Resolution 1325 National Plan.

A key element was in moving beyond party politics to a non-adversarial approach, in uniting a culturally-appropriate response to (in this case) how women are included in the debate.** Secure Scotland found a champion

for this approach in SNP MSP Emma Harper, who skilfully introduced a motion that found favour with all parties, including the Conservatives.

So the current mainstream media message of a divided Scotland has another element that gains less attention despite representing and modelling a glimmer of hope.

* Secure Scotland aims to start a new conversation about what keeps us safe. The COVID-19 crisis has itself exposed the limited nature of the exclusive state violence approach to security. Positively, people have again seen their security as utterly dependent on their social bonds, on their basic needs for food, shelter and medical care, and on the workers who provide these services. It is also striking that the popular compliance with COVID-19 rules is largely rooted in an autonomous sense of personal and social responsibility, rather than on external enforcement. www.securescotland.scot

** See the discussion on 'Women, Peace and Security' in the Scottish parliament on 8 January 2020: www.tinyurl.com/peacenews3607

*Taken from 'Disarmament is key to a new Scotland' by David Mackenzie
Peace News, 1/6/2021*

See <https://www.peacenews.info/node/9915/disarmament-key-new-scotland>

Reprinted with permission. Peace News, "the newspaper for the UK grassroots peace and justice movement, [seeks] to oppose all forms of violence, and to create positive change based on co-operation and responsibility."

Postcards to Holyrood

Andrew Tomlinson, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer, writes:

Following last month's elections, MSPs will be beginning the task of charting Scotland's path through the next five years. We are encouraging Friends across Scotland to send postcards to their MSPs congratulating them on their election, wishing them well in their endeavours and highlighting our hopes for the future as Quakers.

Roughly a third of this crop of MSPs are new to the Parliament, so this is a perfect opportunity to make a connection. Below is some information on how to go about this and some guidance on what you could include in your message. You don't need to follow this too closely. Remember the important thing is to make a connection with your MSPs.

Practicalities

Who is my MSP?

You will have one constituency MSP and seven regional list MSPs representing you at Holyrood. You can find out their names and details by going to <https://www.parliament.scot/msps> and entering your postcode.

What address should I send the postcard to?

The Scottish Parliament address is:

[Name of MSP]
 The Scottish Parliament
 Edinburgh
 EH99 1SP

What postcard should I use?

You can use any postcard you like. You may want to make your own or choose one from your local area; one that conveys good wishes, or one that expresses your hopes for the next parliament. It is entirely up to you.

What should I write?

The purpose of writing is not to provide a to-do list for the new MSPs, but to reach out a hand in friendship. By making a connection at this early point in the parliament, it will be easier to engage with MSPs as issues arise later. Below are a few examples to get you started (but **please do not copy any of them word-for-word** – a message that appears to have been taken from someone else’s wording will have less impact and might be ignored altogether):

Example 1

Dear [insert name of MSP]

I am writing to congratulate you on your successful election to the parliament. As a Quaker I would like to share my hope with you that this parliament can work towards a Scotland characterised by peace, equality, truth, simplicity and sustainability (these are Quaker values). I recognise that the role of elected representatives is not an easy one, but wanted to encourage you as you begin the task.

*In friendship,
 [insert your name]*

Example 2

Dear [insert name of MSP]

I wanted to write to you to congratulate you on your election and encourage you as you begin this new session of parliament. As a Quaker I am concerned about [insert issue], and I will be holding you, and your colleagues in the parliament, in the Light as you discern Scotland’s path these next five years.

*In friendship,
 [insert your name]*

Example 3

Dear [insert name of MSP]

As a Quaker, I wanted to write to you to congratulate you on your successful election to the parliament and to encourage you as you begin the task ahead of you. I recognise that now is probably quite a busy time for you, but I would value

the opportunity to meet with you to hear more about you and your hopes for Scotland over the next five years.

*In friendship,
[insert your name]*

AND

Don't forget to include your contact details if you would like a reply!

Andrew has also written an interesting blog on what to expect may come up in the new parliamentary session, including action on the climate crisis, moves to incorporate human rights in Scots law, and reforms to land ownership and tax.

See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/3-things-to-expect-from-scottish-politics-that-aren-t-an-independence-referendum>

QCCIR webinar: *What it means to be a non-credal church*

Marigold Bentley, shortly to retire as Secretary of the Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations, introduces a brief (58-minute) webinar with Rex Ambler, Ben Wood and Janet Scott, which took place on 29 April. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hrPo0QNbc0&t=1s> The speakers explore the difficulty other churches find in Friends' refusal to encapsulate our faith in a set form of words beginning "I believe ..."; how it is that Quakers are a non-credal church, and what the implications of that are.

From A Standard lifted up and an Ensign held forth to all Nations, 1657

This is true religion – to be kept pure and clean from all evil, and from all that which would defile in the sight of the Lord, and to walk in his fear in all things. This is religion – to do good, and to do no evil; to speak the truth, and to do the truth in all things; to do unto all men [sic] as a man would be done unto; and to love God with all the heart, and the neighbour as himself, and not to love the world, and ways and pleasures of it, nor to use deceit in words or actions. This is true religion, and the true worship of God – to be led with his Spirit in all things, and to be guided in the truth at all times, and on all occasions. This is acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, above all words and outward conformity, and set times, and days, and observances; for the worship of God is not in these things, but is without respect of days, places, or things. This religion and worship stands in Christ Jesus the second Adam, who hath lighted every man that comes into the world, that all men through him might believe, and by him have their consciences purely exercised toward God, and toward man in all things; and this is our religion and worship of the true God: he that can receive it, let him.

Edward Burrough (1634-1662)

Exploring the Quaker Life – 24 April 2021

Enquirers Day this year was a morning online event, with participants from across Scotland. The planning group (Jenny Copsey, Jessica Paterson, Denise Marshall, John Philips and Mariot Dallas) decided to focus on sharing personal experiences of being a Quaker, through small group conversation and discussion. Zoom is ideal for this, and the participants moved through three 'Meet a Quaker' sessions, where they were met by two Quakers, ready to facilitate discussion and take questions. Conversation in these groups flowed freely, possibly because Zoom can be a safe place if we are feeling self-conscious or a little shy. We spoke about what brought us to Quakers, what our experience of Meeting for Worship and about what we meant by living a Quaker life. There were questions about membership, about Quaker business meetings, ministry and discernment and many other topics.

The background of the participants ranged from people very new to Quakers through to those already embarking on the membership process. Many came from other faith backgrounds and some from peace and environmental campaigning experience. People listened attentively to each other and it felt like a safe space to share experience and ask questions.

We finished the morning with a plenary session and each of the planning team spoke briefly about a favourite book or other Quaker resource. We also took questions at this point and again the conversation and sharing of experience was lively and interesting.

Feedback from the participants was positive; and we hope to hold a follow up event, where we would organise the morning based on topics and suggestions from those planning to attend.

The planning group would like to thank Alastair Cameron for joining us on the day to take part in the 'Meet a Quaker' activity, and to Martin Burnell for making Zoom run smoothly for us.

There were 21 Enquirers from East Scotland AM, South East Scotland AM, and West Scotland AM. There were some cancellations from North Scotland AM but they have expressed an interest in a follow-up session.

Mariot Dallas

On Eldership

The offices of elder and overseer amongst us are ... when rightly filled of great value ... We encourage [those appointed] to cherish an interest in the spiritual welfare of all their fellow members, to exercise a watchful care and affectionate oversight, and more especially to show sympathy with younger members, that they be drawn to a living experimental faith ...

London Yearly Meeting, 1851

The Pilgrimage of Life

Spiritual Retreat on Zoom: 27 June, 2.00 - 5.15 pm

Alastair McIntosh will offer again his successful retreat, *The Pilgrimage of Life*, similar to what was delivered to French Quakers at Congénies in April. Donations from this will raise funds for the Glasgow Meeting House Development Fund.

The retreat is a three-part spiritual journey on Zoom, a pilgrimage looking back and going forward, looking at our lives through the stages of departure, initiation and return: *"The return represents the stage in life where a person who has made their life a pilgrimage, or is discovering it to have been so as their spiritual life awakens, moves to a stage where they can perhaps help feed the flow of life back into their communities."*

To register, follow the link <http://bit.ly/GOpilgrimage>

Meeting for Learning on Zoom

Friends in South Edinburgh are planning an event around the Woodbrooke workshop *Diversity and Inclusion: Continuing the Journey*, to follow on from their meeting for learning in March last year on trans and non-binary identities (see Jo Swanson's report in Sesame 228) and on the discussions on racism prompted by BLM (see Ian Robertson's article in Sesame 235). Go to <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/diversity-and-inclusion-continuing-the-journey/> for more details of the content. The date and time are yet to be arranged; others in the Area Meeting are warmly invited. Please let **Rici Marshall Cross** know if you would like to attend, preferably by emailing RiciMC.Quaker@gmail.com

A Letter of George Fox

My dear children,

Grow in the increase of God, and know all your assurance in the Lord, and the Seed in every one of you, which the promise of God is to. And be obedient to the just, and in the truth of God walk, and the love of it. And my dear hearts, in the Seed dwell, which gives the victory over the world, and that in the wisdom ye may be preserved, which bruises the contrary under foot; whereby ye may reign in the life of God, to be as nursers and waterers of the plants, that in the eternal power of God ye may be kept, which gives dominion over all, and condemneth the contrary. In which power the Lord God Almighty preserve you to his glory. Amen.

Live in the life of God and feel it.

And, Friends, take heed of being hurried with many thoughts; but live in that which goes over them all.

G.F. 1655

Minute on Funeral Plans

We have spoken about funerals and our South East Scotland Area Meeting funeral forms. We have heard from personal experience that planning ahead for funerals can be very helpful for bereaved family and friends. We recognise that not everyone will want a Quaker funeral, but it is still important that Friends have the opportunity to discuss and make known their funeral wishes.

Many of us feel that this is a difficult time to have sensitive conversations with Friends when we are not meeting face to face. However, we know that it is important to be ready for these conversations when the time is right.

It may be helpful to regularly remind Friends about this issue through regular reminders in our Meeting notices, newsletters, and round robins. For others it may be helpful to raise this in discussions with Friends when it is safe to meet again.

Elders and Pastoral Friends are encouraged to explore their own feelings and emotions about their funeral. This is a process and not a simple completion of a form.

**South East Scotland AM Elders and Pastoral Care Teams
8 March 2021**

Quaker Benches

Jane Kelly of Penicuik LM has a number of benches, believed to have come originally from the Pleasance meeting house, where Friends worshipped from 1791 to 1944; she wishes to find a home for three of them. They were in use at the Stafford Street meeting house, but when the move to Victoria Terrace took place in the late '80s, it was decided to keep only the shorter ones, so the Kellys 'rescued' the others. Jane says: "*These old wooden benches have been kept dry and their condition is adequate. There doesn't seem to be any woodworm. Stripped of the old paint, I think they could be beautiful. I believe they are really old and may date from the 18th century. Each bench/pew is approximately 11 feet long [3.35 m] and heavy*".

If you are interested, or know of a possible new home for the benches, please contact Jane [*details in the Book of Members*]; she would like them to be used by Friends if possible.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Tuesday 11 May 2021
by remote videoconferencing**

2021/05/01 Worship and introductions

During worship, we have heard read *Quaker Faith & Practice* 10.01, "Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness..."

[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]

2021/05/10 Closing minute

We note that four items on the original agenda were not taken at this meeting, due to shortage of time, and ask the clerking team to take appropriate action in relation to them.

57 Friends (51 members, five attenders and one visitor) have been at all or part of this meeting. Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 25	Central Fife 3	East Lothian 6	Kelso 2	Penicuik 1
Polmont 2	Portobello & Musselburgh 7	South Edinburgh 9	Tweeddale 1	Visitor 1

We next meet on Saturday 19 June 2021 by Zoom, at 10.00 am, hosted by South Edinburgh Local Meeting.

(Signed)
Alastair Cameron
Clerk
Cath Dyer
Assistant Clerk

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

On the 1st and 3rd Sundays in the month at 11.00 am; places are limited and must be booked by 5 pm on the preceding Wednesday on Eventbrite. 1st Sundays are All-Age worship. Contact the office, centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk or 0131 225 4825, for information.

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

On the 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am; no limit on attendance; no pre-booking required. Meetings on 1st Sundays in Dunfermline will resume when a venue is available.

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

Meetings to recommence in July, on 2nd and last Sundays of the month: 10.50 for 11.00 am start. Maximum attendance 12, so please contact **Di Simcock** to book a place.

Kelso – QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

Contact **Marianne Butler** for dates, times and details; it is not yet known when meetings will resume, but it is hoped once building work at the Meeting House is finished (i.e. soon).

North Edinburgh worship group – St Mary's Church, 12 Bellevue Cres., EH3 6NE

4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm. – contact **Tony Gross**. (Out of doors in fine weather.)

Penicuik – Valleyfield House (off 17 High Street), Penicuik EH26 8HS

1st Sundays at 11.00 am – when it happens; no date has been set for resuming meetings yet.

Polmont – No plans for meetings in person yet; contact **Marriot Dallas** for updates.

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

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 11.00 am; out of doors in fine weather; children's meeting. 1st Sundays: Evening meeting at 7.30; indoors; no arrangements for children.

Please contact **Mary Jane Elton** if you plan to attend either morning or evening meeting.

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

Sundays at 10.30 am: at the Open Door, and, weather permitting, out of doors in a garden. Contact **Esther Shreeve** for more information, and to book a place at either.

For information on **Tweeddale Local Meeting**, contact **Anna Lawrence**.

MEETING BY ZOOM

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

Sundays at 11.00 am – blended with the meetings in person on the Sundays they occur.

2nd and 4th Sundays at 9.30 am – Meeting for Worship (45 mins)

2nd and 4th Thursdays – 'Epilogue' at 9.00 pm

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

On the 1st 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with the meeting in person.

East Lothian – for login details contact **Di Simcock** or **Phil Lucas**

Wednesdays meetings at 7.30 pm are to continue for the moment.

Kelso – for login details contact **Marianne Butler**

1st and 3rd Sundays at 10.30 am. To be blended with meetings in person when they resume.

Penicuik – for login details contact **Mark Hutcheson**

1st Sundays – likely to be discontinued once meetings in person have resumed.

Polmont – for login details contact **Mariot Dallas**

Sundays at 10.45 am; also Children's Meeting, of which Mariot Dallas can provide details. Wednesdays at 8.00 pm.

South Edinburgh – for login details contact **Rici Marshall Cross**

Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with the meeting in person, as above.