

wsqn

- Connecting local meetings



April2024

WSAM Newsletter April 2024

Contents

Inspiration from George Fox	p. 3
Meet your new clerking team	p. 4
Report on Area Meeting 13 th January	p. 5
Death, Dying and Funerals	p. 6
Quaker funerals	p. 7
Report on Area Meeting 4 th March	p. 8
Poem: The Quakers	p. 9
Establishing a community of Elders & Pastoral Carers	p. 10
Book of Discipline Revision Committee	p. 10
Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group	p. 13
Report on Woodbrooke's 'welcoming, belonging & Disability conference	p. 16
Quaker Concerns	
Peace and Justice	p. 17
Gender-based Violence	p. 20
Sustainability and Climate Change	p. 23
Reflections on George Fox's journal	p. 26
Truth of the Heart	p. 28
Learning Group	p. 30
From Daoist Chinese Culture	p. 32
Book Reviews: Julia	p. 33
Orbital	p. 34
Poem: At the point of Singularity	p. 36
Profile: Mark Stephens	p. 37
Crianlarich Gathering	p. 38
News of Local Meetings	p. 39

Frontispiece is a drawing by Penny Lilley of Castle Douglas Meeting

**All they that are in the light are in unity; for the light is but one . . .
All who know the word, which is a mystery, are come to the
beginning, are sanctified by the word, and clean through the word. . .
and this is a word of reconciliation, and reconcileth together to God,
and gathers the hearts of his together, to ,live in love and unity one
with another, and lets them see how they have been strangers and
aliens from the life of God . . . Abiding inwardly in the light, it will
be you see one another and the unity one with another.**

George Fox

All those who live in the light are one, because the light itself is one. . .
All those who know the word, though it is a mystery, have experienced
the origin (of everything). They are purified by the word and made
clean. . . And this is a word of reconciliation, because it reconciles (people)
to God and gathers the hearts of his people together to live in love and
unity with one another. And it lets them see how they have been estranged
and alienated from the life of God. . . As you live with the light within
yourselves it will enable you to see one another, and the unity between
you.

Modern English translation by Rex Ambler.

***Taken from Truth of the Heart, An anthology of George Fox,
Quaker Books 2001
Selected and annotated by Rex Ambler***

Meet your new Clerking team - WSAM

Margaret Roy invited us to contribute something to this edition of the newsletter, and we felt it was a good opportunity for us to introduce ourselves, so you know who is at the table serving you this triennium.

I am Kate Gulliver, your newly appointed Clerk for West Scotland Area Meeting.

As some of you will know my previous service has primarily been in treasurer roles. As Area Meeting treasurer, as a tutor at Woodbrooke on the Being a Quaker Treasurer course, serving on Quaker Stewardship committee and involved with the Annual Conference of Treasurers. I am the person who is really interested in the annual accounts and encouraging the use of our funds to express our Quaker witness and enhance the spiritual life of the meeting.

This is my first time as Clerk to Area Meeting so I am on a steep learning curve of all the aspects involved. I welcome all your support and guidance, and the occasional nudge when I've forgotten to do something. Please do remind me if I have missed anything. I can't correct a mistake if I don't know I've made it. So, feel free to tell me if I've got something wrong.

I have been a Quaker all my life. I currently attend Ayrshire Meeting for Sunday morning blended worship and the Sunday Evening online worship with Friends from our Area Meeting and beyond. I also serve as a trustee for Britain Yearly Meeting and am on the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group.

I am Jay Wilkinson, one of the two Assistant Clerks.

Although I have been a Quaker all my life, I am still fairly new to formal Quaker service, and excited to get my teeth into some business! I have been a member in Argyll Meeting since moving to the area after university six years ago, and before that I was heavily involved in young Quaker activities - Shindig, Junior Yearly Meeting, and the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage back in 2010.

I have a lifelong interest in the Quaker business method and what it can bring to our discussions as a Society, as well as how it can shape our work with other communities we're in. In my working life, I'm also heavily involved with accessibility and inclusion, and I want to bring that energy to the clerking team, as well!

I also serve as the clerking team's representative on West Scotland Trustees, and am an Elder (and informal librarian) for Argyll Meeting. My enthusiasm does sometimes outstrip my capacity, especially since I work full-time and have long-term health conditions, but I am doing everything I can to support Kate in her Clerking role.

I am Wendy Reynolds, the other assistant clerk, and like Jay, I am part of Argyll Meeting.

I was an assistant clerk last year, serving with Alastair Reid and Peter Christy, before being joined by Kate and Jay.

I have been a Quaker for about ten years. I am convenor of the Gender based violence group for WSAM.

We look forward to joining you on screen, on site or in spirit at Area Meeting sometime.

Report of Area Meeting 13 January, 2024, in Glasgow

Daphne Wassermann, Glasgow

43 Friends met on 13 January, some on line and most in Glasgow Meeting House. There were slight problems with the microphone and speakers but in the end we were all able to communicate successfully.

We were ably clerked by our new team: Kate Gulliver, Jay Wilkinson and Wendy Reynolds.

Area Meeting is our meeting for worship at which we transact the business for Quakers in the West of Scotland. The full minutes are circulated to Clerks of Local Meetings and others, so ask if you would like to see them.

In the morning we accepted the transfer into the Area Meeting of Joyce Taylor & Huw Lloyd-Richards (attending Glasgow) and Owen Claxton-Ingham (attending Mull and Iona Meeting). We also agreed to send certificates for Ann MacInnes and Margery Toller who have moved out of West Scotland. We had one application for membership and Friends were appointed to support them in this step. We also recorded the death of Alan Anderson, a founder member of Dumfries Meeting nearly 50 years ago.

All these changes are recorded in the 'tabular statement' which is prepared each year and sent to Britain Yearly Meeting. During 2023 the number of members of the Area Meeting increased by 3 to 231. The number of regular Attenders is also recorded. If you know of anyone who moves from one Local Meeting to another within the Area Meeting please let Ruth Bacon know as this is not recorded in minutes. ruth.bacon27@gmail.com

Another annual task is the checking of the marriage register but there were no Quaker weddings in our Area in 2023.

Our Treasurer, Bronwen Currie, presented a slightly revised budget for 2024. A small deficit in revenue is expected in 2024. However, capital funds are healthy and include money designated for buildings, including Glasgow Meeting House and a fund for spiritual nurture, community and witness. We agreed to support Friends attending Yearly Meeting in July in London.

The report from our Trustees by Tony Ellis had been circulated before the meeting and can be read in the documents. The Meeting House in Wigtown has been sold, with the funds used to pay off a loan, increase the Glasgow building reserves and enhance the funds that support Quaker life and witness. The re-roofing of Glasgow Meeting House is complete. Glasgow Local Meeting has received a feasibility report on the use of the top floor of the building and on disabled access. The Meeting will be considering how it wishes to use and improve the building and will report to Area Meeting which is the building owner. Trustees also spent time in July considering the new Safeguarding Policy for Quakers in Scotland.

Friends from West Scotland are involved in the wider Society of Friends and we noted that Willoughby Densham is on the arrangements committee for Junior Yearly Meeting and other Young Friends from West Scotland will be appointed to attend. We also need a representative to a conference on interfaith working. Kate Gulliver is involved with plans for a change of the structure of Quakers in Scotland and encouraged us to read the draft governing document.

Meeting for Sufferings is the national committee that considers our business between our annual Yearly Meetings. The report of the last two meetings was in the documents in advance. One of the topics was the wording of the marriage ceremony and this will be discussed at our June Area Meeting.

We also appointed Friends to serve in various capacities within the Area Meeting including Elders and Pastoral Care Friends in Glasgow.

The report on the survey of our understanding of gender-based violence had been circulated and was discussed. This will be taken further.

During 2024 we will also be organising an Enquirers Day for newer Attenders. In this we will be liaising with North and East Scotland Area Meetings.

During the course of the year we ask each Local Meeting in turn to report. The report from Glasgow is in West Scotland Quaker News and Milngavie meeting continues to meet twice a month.

After a full morning we relaxed over a delicious lunch provided by Glasgow Quakers and enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with Friends from other parts of the Area Meeting. Thank you, Glasgow Hospitality Committee.

Death, Dying and Funerals

Our afternoon session was devoted to the subject of 'Death, Dying and Funerals'. Once in a generation a group of Friends works on a revision of 'Quaker Faith and Practice'. Mary Woodward and Nuala Watt are on subgroup considering this topic.

The topic was introduced by Mary Woodward who noted that in the present book there is a section on funerals but related topics such as bereavement are covered

elsewhere. They are working to assemble relevant material around the topic to bring everything together in one section of the book. Mary asked us to look at chapter 17 in the current book and feed back our thoughts to her.

There followed a deep worship sharing session. We value the format of the Quaker funeral Meeting for Worship which allows all present to share their memories of the dead person. Even if we don't believe in an afterlife, that person lives on in our memories and through their actions and works during their life. We must also remember the time before and after the death and support the bereaved.

This will be short and the article deserves more. I cannot comment on the theoretical assumptions here but refreshing was the resistance to categorize the experience and behaviour of men as singular. I have always thought that the term patriarchy is often misapplied in a way that presents women as perpetual victims and men likewise as the 'enemy'. What begins to be explored here, is that our societal organisation, (financial and social), victimises both men and women-though in different ways.

A long and detailed discussion is then required, but we can begin by acknowledging that men are subject to pressures and expectations different to women and upon examination these can be seen to explain men's behaviour in a variety of contexts.

Too much time is spent attempting to label behaviours in terms which gender an individual belongs to, perhaps the advent of trans politics will require us to re-engage with many concepts.

Pete Clarke, Glasgow

Quaker Funerals

My local Quaker meeting is like an extended family, with the inevitable tensions and joys that that brings. I expect to be in this family forever. The disadvantage of belonging to a loving community for so long is that people I love die. No rite, however imaginative or well managed, can make that easy. Nonetheless I believe that Quaker funerals are the best possible way of celebrating a finished life together. Together in silence we thank God for the person's life and spirit. Whoever wishes may speak into the silence, remembering our friend. Sometimes this can be astonishing – I never knew that the man who fell asleep in meeting every week had been a skilled Morris dancer. Because we have a testimony to truth, we sometimes reference difficult experiences – no family is always perfect. But most of all we remember how much we love them, how much they loved us and what a wonderful example of the grace of God they were. I have been to many funerals in several denominations, but none that were so focused on celebration and love.

Nuala Watt, Glasgow.

Report of Area Meeting held on 4th March 2024 Online

Laura McMurtrie Ayrshire

This was the first online only, Area Meeting, clerked by our new Clerking team who are Kate Gulliver Jay Wilkinson and Wendy Reynolds. They introduce themselves to Area Meeting Friends further on in the Newsletter. It was an evening session attended by 37 Friends and 1 visitor. Significant effort and attention were paid by the clerking team to attempting to ensure that all Friends felt engaged, that they could be heard and seen, and that of necessity, spreading over 2 screens did not disadvantage any Friend who wished to Minister. It worked well as a result.

Remembering that whilst this is a Meeting where we consider and conduct Quaker 'business,' it is a Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs, we therefore opened with a time for quiet Worship. Faith and Practice 10.24 was read.

We then considered several membership issues welcoming Chris Holmes transferring into West Scotland to Arran Local Meeting, Liz Dennis transferring to West Scotland to Milngavie Meeting and a membership application by Ruth Webb which was accepted. Ruth's Local Meeting is Lanark. Fuller details are available in the Area Minutes.

We noted our representation at Working Together in Faith Conference later in March and registered disappointment at the clash of dates between Shindig and Junior Yearly Meeting.

We received names from Nominations Group to serve as Nominations Committee, names from Trustees to support Trustee work and these were accepted by Area Meeting.

We received the Draft Governing Document prepared on our behalf by Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating group seeking approval of it and of the proposed next steps.

We received clarification and information on the Quakers in Scotland work being carried out on our behalf as we continue to work through the implications of the challenges, we are facing in sustaining our present structures. We are all mindful of the increasing statutory obligations that are placed on charitable bodies and the responsibilities of our role holders and the additional pressures facing them. We continue to struggle to fill all our leadership roles and this work seeks to address those challenges positively, support our spiritual needs, whilst fulfilling both statutory obligations and Friends' tested business methods. We were reminded of the Special General Meeting on the 6th of April to consider this work and the preparatory meetings for clarification on the 18th March and the 20th of March. All are being held by means of Zoom. There were various questions asked and issues were clarified, and time taken to reassure regarding process and next steps. Area Meeting then approved the draft Governing document and the authority of Quakers

in Scotland Co-ordinating Group to work with OSCR (the Scottish Charity Regulator). Area meeting will send a minute to this effect to General Meeting.

Area Meeting then received a comprehensive and engaging presentation from Sarah Komashko, the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer on the wide range of work she has been involved with since taking up her post in July of 2023. This includes working in areas including the Stop Climate Chaos Initiative, Loss and Damage- making polluters pay, Faith in the Climate, Civil Society Network, Climate Crisis is a Health Crisis, the Arms Trade in Scotland, Peace Programmes in schools. The level and range of engagement was extremely impressive, and Sarah was thanked for all her work enthusiasm and obvious commitment. She reminded us of the opportunity of Time for reflection slots and the support to any friend who would be interested in offering to take part in this.

One of the many things I appreciate about Quakers is the opportunities for learning and development. We heard of learning support to Elders and Pastoral Care Friends in early March and the plan for a residential event for the whole of Scotland later in the year. As someone very recent to Pastoral Care I am very much looking forward to that. Further online sessions are planned to include formalising how the Elders and Pastoral Care will work together. The Area Learning Group reported a successful meeting with Head of Learning at Woodbrooke and the plan to develop a learning programme for our area from 2024 onwards. The Learning group will bring proposals to Area Meeting for consideration. We were then reminded of the Four Doors to Worship events which will have started by the time the Newsletter is published.

We then received a minute from Glasgow regarding a Concern about the current Quaker position on Palestine/ Israel. This is a very sensitive and complex situation and rather than try to paraphrase the concern or interpret the minute I would suggest Friends read the minute and consider it in context. The Meeting agreed to consider this further at the earliest possible opportunity recognising its urgency.

The final item was a minor but important amendment to the governing Document Trustee membership which Friends can see in the minutes.

Dates and venue of the next Area Meeting were confirmed.

We closed in the normal way.

The Quakers

Quakers have opinions 'bout this and that an' this.

At times, with tears, they disagree and this disturb their bliss.

But we forget we're human and thus inclined to err,

Words misused from hasty hearts can sometimes land us there.

When feeling less than wholesome to judgment we incline,

'Tis then we come to realise forgiveness is Devine.

Bill Bingham

Establishing the Community of Elders and Pastoral Carers in Scotland.

Laura McMurtrie Ayrshire

Co-ordinated and supported by Zoe Prosser our Local Development Worker for Scotland there were 2 meetings in February to welcome new Elders and Pastoral Care. One was an afternoon meeting, and one was an evening meeting.

I managed to attend the evening session and found it really helpful. It was good meeting with Friends across the country and hearing about their thoughts and learning from more experienced Friends. Zoe was very helpful in outlining the type of support available, the parameters of the roles and responsibilities. There will be regular meetings.

There will be further opportunities to meet as an all-Scotland team and there are plans to offer a residential experience in the summer.

The newsletter will keep Friends informed about these developments.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee [BDRC] update February 2024 On-line committee meeting held January 2024

Mary Woodward

Your committee meets on line in January – no travel issues, and no risk of catching germs while travelling – a very real concern for some of our members, not all of whom enjoy robust health . . .

Our meeting on the Wednesday evening dealt with the ‘easy’ stuff – nominations, appointing buddies for those prevented, and receiving reports from the many groups working on individual topics. Some groups had completed their work, the documents ‘banked’ and the group laid down: others were progressing at varying rates. Some groups need extra personnel because Friends had needed to step back from that work for personal reasons or because their time of service to the committee had come to an end. Several groups were being paused – for example, Membership needs to wait until Yearly Meeting is clearer about the topic.

Our fourth **report to Meeting for Sufferings** was presented to MfS at their December meeting and can be read on the BYM website.

Yearly Meeting 2024 is a long weekend in London in July. There will be special interest group sessions during this time, but the BDRC will not be able to take part in these. . . (as we will have) two or three sessions during the on-line preparation sessions 5-10 July. . .

Saturday’s work began with the questions posed by group looking at **the structure of the whole Book**. What did we think of their two proposed ‘tree’ or ‘forest’ groupings? Our overall preference seemed to be for the tree, with everything growing organically from the roots and branching out in various directions. The printed and on-line versions of the book may ‘work’ differently, but will be essentially the same publication. Cross-referencing

between topics needs to be considered – how we do it will become clearer as we work, and Friends House staff will be able to help.

Towards the end of last year, a ‘Big Cake Slicing Meeting’ saw members of several topic groups met to consider **how best to avoid overlap between topics**. The meeting’s minute was considered by the whole committee. We need to keep in mind the overall structure of the new Book – in focusing on discrete topics we can lose sight of the whole. We also need to provide clear pathways for Friends to navigate through the text and find what they are looking for: this could be easy in an electronic version, but will need careful thought for the printed version. Our group looking at the overall structure of the Book will add these considerations to their work, while all topic groups will continue their search for appropriate anthology material.

At our last committee meeting, Rhiannon Grant was asked to produce a paper investigating what **a section on Quaker theology** might look like and bring it to this meeting. It was an excellent piece, demonstrating both the richness of Quaker theology both past and present and our capacity to grow and change as we find and are open to new Light. Once again, there is the potential for connection and overlap with other sections, particularly the one on Spiritual Experience. Rhiannon will work with two ‘readers’ from the committee and bring the resulting work back to a future committee meeting.

A small group had been considering **how to include the voices of children and young people in the new Book** – how could this be done ethically, and where do these voices need to be heard. We were asked to consider whether there should be a separate dedicated section or whether their contributions should be included in relevant sections throughout the Book? It was pointed out that children and young people’s voices are exactly equal in weight to anyone else’s: they should not be discounted simply because of the age of the contributor. Young people are still in “a state of being cared for”, but their journeys are of equal importance. Our Book is for everyone, regardless of their age. “Age-appropriate material” can be seen as ‘dumbing down’ or condescending. The group will continue gathering material, and ‘see where this goes’.

The group working on **Individual Spiritual Experience** described how it had begun its work – making a list of headings and assembling extracts that illustrate them. They had many questions for us – the “voice of the book” introducing the various sections is minimal at present: should there be more? When we write about “we”, to whom are we referring – it isn’t consistent at present. Some explanation of who contributors are, or the context surrounding their contribution[s] could be helpful. There need to be more extracts from the last fifteen years.

A wider-ranging discussion emerged – what about **pictures**? To start each section of the Book? What do we want images to do – break up chunks of text? Illustrate a point? Do we commission pictures? We don’t want simply to put in pictures for the sake of it. The online *Open to new Light* project has some good images on it. Do we need a separate group to source non-text content?

Cross-referencing is a complex matter – do we wait for advice from BYM publications staff? We need to ensure that we include as much information as possible when we use

quotations or pictures, to make it easier for the staff who have to seek copyright permissions.

We were joined by Bea from Friends House publications department who helped us look at **the challenges of getting our work ready for publication**. It would be very helpful for members of that department to join future committee meetings. In the meantime, would it be helpful for BYM staff to work with the committee on some portions of our existing work and see how they might look in a 'finished' version of the text? What do we do about **numbering**? *Quaker faith and practice's* numbering makes it easy to find extracts: do we want numbers in the new Book? What alternatives might there be? What do we do about **explaining words and meanings** in older extracts? Do we need a glossary, and how do we go about compiling that/ writing the explanations? A small group was set up to look at some of these questions. It will work closely with the group looking at the structure of the new Book.

On Sunday we looked at the latest version of the spreadsheet showing **our timeline**. We have made great progress, but there is still much to be done. We also need to be mindful of all the things we have agreed to "return to later", so that nothing gets lost. **Reviewing our text is separate from publishing it**: we need to start reviewing our written text well in advance of completing it. Advices and Queries, introductions to sections, and the introduction to the whole Book, will be written last, when we see the shape of the final text.

New topic groups were set up, looking at Yearly Meeting structures, Stewardship and Resources, and Preparing for Publication. New people were appointed to existing groups where they had been asked for. Some groups will be joined by new committee members when their appointments have been confirmed by Meeting for Sufferings.

I'm continuing to work on Funerals, Death and Dying, and am now part of the Close Relationships group, which means I get to work with Nuala Watt from Glasgow and Ben Pink Dandelion – about which I'm very excited! It's particularly pleasing that I can easily go through to Glasgow to work with Nuala: efficient and effective as working together on line may be, it's so helpful to be together in person!

We expressed our appreciation of the incredible amount of work our secretary Michael Booth and Friends House staff do for us. We closed with worship, preparing to meet again in person in Leeds at the end of April.

Please continue to uphold us in our work on your behalf!

Key messages from this committee meeting:

Our 4th report to MfS was well received.

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

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

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

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

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

Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group

NOTICE: CONSULTATION SESSIONS IN ADVANCE OF ONLINE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING ON SAT 6 APRIL AT 10am. These are online sessions; Zoom links have been emailed, and will be posted here shortly before the meeting. **It will be useful to read in advance** a preparatory paper (to follow), and for more info, this page and the [FAQ page](#).

Monday March 18, 2pm

Wednesday March 20, 6pm

Intro

The Quakers in Scotland (QIS) Coordinating Group (QIS-CG) has been tasked by General Meeting (23/09/08 and 23/11/11) with

- Bringing draft documents to GM for the decision on having a single charity, following liaison with the six trustee bodies
- Bringing wider options on how best our meetings might evolve, if they wish, and be grouped together
- Suggest how we could improve common ways of working together, such as for eldership and pastoral care, and for learning and growth

This work follows on from the Options for Scotland second group ([OfS2](#)) report, which recommended that we form a single charity for Quakers in Scotland. A proposed way of working towards this was described, and QIS-CG was established with the objectives described above. This page describes the task and how we are doing. A [FAQ page](#) responds to some common questions.

The task

The group was asked to focus first on outlining what a single charity for Quakers in Scotland would look like. This body could, if agreed, take on a good part of the work undertaken by AM trustee bodies and some of the work undertaken by AMs. An important further question is how or whether this organisational change should be accompanied by other changes in how we meet as a Quaker community and organise our activities. Several subgroups are running, with members from across Scotland. Groups aim to work with Friends from all AMs, GM, and Dundee Friends Property Trust (DFPT) to:

- Agree what a single charity would look like, and take steps to be ready for one.
 - Agree a governing document (constitution) with Friends that can be taken to the charity regulator OSCR. This work is **advanced**. Answers to some common [questions \(FAQ\)](#) about the process are online. Updates below.

- Consider how all the related business of QiS can be done. How much can be done centrally and what should be delegated. Establish groups to consider:
 - How finances would be managed by meetings across Scotland within a single organisation. Discussions are **under way**.
 - Issues around property management with a single organisation. Discussions are **under way**. MOUs for each property or set of properties should describe where responsibilities lie for maintenance, letting, etc.
 - Other things that area meetings do, and whether any of these might be organised differently. These discussions are **just beginning**. Current patterns would continue unless or until Friends felt they should change. Examples include Eldership, Nominations, Membership applications and transfers, funerals, marriages.

Updates

MARCH 2024

- Area Meetings are considering progress in advance of a special General Meeting to be held on 6th April .
- Consultation sessions on March 18 and 20th are planned (see notice at top of page). QiS-CG is preparing a short paper and presentation for these.
- The draft Property MOU is being considered by Property Committees.
- The Community group is now established and planning first meetings. Meetings of the Treasurers group continue.

FEBRUARY 2024

- After consultations at online meetings and by direct correspondence, involving trustees and others interested, a [draft governing document](#) (pdf file, 180kb) has been sent to Area Meetings, GM, and DFPT. In general, issues raised have concerned wording rather than principles. This is not surprising, as the document is closely based on equivalent documents from Area Meetings. Some questions are soon to be discussed with the charity regulator, [OSCR](#), and will then be scrutinised by lawyers before coming back to Friends for approval. Comments continue to be received. Advice is also being sought from [SCVO](#). A webpage covering [Frequently asked questions](#) has been created.
- The Finance group continues to meet regularly. Treasurers from all six of our charities are included in this group.
- The Property group has extended its remit to encompass staff questions, as most staff roles are around property. The group has participants from existing property committees (or equivalents; names vary). A draft MOU is ready to circulate to property committees.

- The Community group, covering other questions, is recruiting more members with a range of experience from area meetings.

Contact the QiS coordinating group

Members of the QiS coordinating group are

Pam Brunt (East, and Dundee Property Trust)
 Peter Christy (West)
 Nigel Dower (North)
 Kate Gulliver (West)
 Edmund Holt (North)
 Ken Jobling (South East)
 Martin Pippard (East, and Dundee Property Trust)
 Lesley Richards (convenor)
 Neil Turner (South East)

How to get in touch

- Contact group members from your AM at any time
- Where you are responding to a message or document from a subgroup, such as finance, property, or community, please reply to that. Usually only one or two participants in each subgroup are from the QiS-CG.
- For any other Qs, or for comments on these web pages about QiS-CG, please contact neilturn@gmail.com
-

Report on Woodbrooke's 'Welcome, Belonging and Disability'.

This short Woodbrooke series builds on last year's Swarthmore lecture by Esther Loukin. The purpose is to help enable disabled Friends and non-disabled Friends to be less burdened, more joyful, and more adventurous in imagining, and creating a future where everyone belongs and is welcome.

A wheelchair user, Esther Loukin of Hartington Grove Meeting in Cambridge, sees her access needs as part of her witness to truth, and is led by the Spirit to effect change. She echoes Carol Gardiner in Quaker faith & practice 23.38, saying:

"If we really mean that there is that of God in everyone, then it behoves us to look with creative, loving imagination at the condition of every human being."

On this course, Esther Loukin and others invite us to work on our 'creative, loving imagination' to find where each of us can improve welcome and belonging for disabled people.

The first session, from the perspective of disabled people, looked at the times when disabled people might stay silent about their accessibility needs, for other people's benefit. Two questions were asked: "How that might feel?" and "Is speaking up sometimes part of our witness?" I was surprised and disappointed to hear of painful insensitive experiences of exclusion and rejection of disabled people, caused by the insensitivity of other Quakers, and of those Quakers failing to recognise that their own words and actions might be hurtful and discriminatory.

The focus in the next session on 25 March will be on those of us who create welcome and/or belonging for others. Discussion will be around possible discomfort and friction from difficulties with providing disabled people's access needs, and how hard it can be to understand our own role in creating exclusion.

In her Swarthmore lecture, Esther identified two main forms of resistance to practicing inclusion, and discussion will be on what we might do when resistance shows up in and around us.

The final session on 23 April will consider how to deepen our practices of 'messy imperfect access'. Can we, as individuals, and as local, area and yearly meetings, shift the burden from disabled Friends? Can we find joy in doing things differently?

As Quakers, we have an equality testimony, and we are encouraged to treat people equally. We are charged with addressing that of God in others. This course goes some way towards helping us to do just that.

George Fox on the way to peace. (Modern English by Rex Ambler)

When you see all this in the light stand still. Don't turn away to the left or the right. This is where you will need to be patient, where your ego will be brought down, where, in what seems like death to you, you will experience the forgiveness of God . . . for the first step to peace is to stand still in the light – the light that reveals whatever is exposed to it. And standing still there you will receive the power and strength to resist that part of you which the light has exposed. Because that is where grace grows, where God alone is seen to be glorious and powerful, and where the unknown truth – unknown to the world out there – is revealed.

Quaker Concerns

Peace and Justice

Some thoughts on the Palestine/Israeli conflict.

Penny Lilley, Castle Douglas. March 2024.

I have been listening to and reading a lot about this horrendous conflict. As a Quaker I have been trying to understand the roots of the Israeli and Palestinian actions. As I am not a scholar, my understanding is limited and partial, so forgive my limited knowledge.

To start off with it, has to be acknowledged that both the Netanyahu led government in Israel and Hamas both share a belief in military solutions to the conflict, in the short term at least. I have listened to some fairly mainstream Western, political thinkers discussing the conflict, who take it for granted that the military solution (along with, in time the two state solution) is the inevitable, although many international leaders now believe a ceasefire is vital.

To focus on Israel- due to the history of the Israeli people having experienced pogroms, going back centuries and persecution of various kinds in many countries, Jews feel their entire existence has been threatened. This is of course intensified by the mass murder of millions of Jews in the holocaust. Many Jews alive today lost parents, grandparents and whole families in the holocaust. This familial memory, shapes some of their attitudes towards the situation in Israel. In addition to that I believe there has been a propaganda campaign in Israel to demonise Palestinians and sometimes, view them as sub-human. The situation is made more divisive by the fact that Hamas has in the past (and now?) aimed to remove Israelis from Palestine and the Netanyahu government, through its recent actions has appeared to want Gazan Palestinians removed entirely, from the Gaza Strip, and has turned a blind eye or encouraged the murder of Palestinians by Jewish settlers.

On social media I have seen posts from Rabbis for Human Rights, a wonderful organisation, which has offered practical support to Palestinians as well as advocating for their human rights and opposing the policies of the right wing Israeli government. There are many other organisations involving Israeli and Palestinian people, advocating for peace and reconciliation, but their voices are marginalised. I have the impression that the right wing government has something of a stranglehold on the media in Israel.

It is difficult to see how a solution can be found, while many Jewish people have a deep, generational memory of the holocaust and its horrors. Similarly, most, if not all Palestinians will have experienced apartheid and human rights abuses causing generational trauma, since the Jewish state was inaugurated in 1948. These are both

deep psychological wounds that pass from generation to generation. The military solution only increases this trauma particularly for Palestinians, but also to Israelis.

Hopefully, more people worldwide will be recognising that the military solution, as well as causing huge loss of life and destroying the infrastructure of Gaza, is also inflicting more lasting trauma on future generations of both Palestinians and Israelis. The calls for ceasefire are important in the short term, but recognising the deep psychological trauma caused by any war, to all sides, must be recognised as equally important in the long term. And the historical trauma that both Jews and Palestinians carry with them, needs to be fully recognised as a great barrier to any reconciliation.

Dates of Faslane MfW

21 April

19 May

30 June

22 September

10 November

Note that there is a MfW in Edinburgh to coincide with the Faslane Meetings.

And the June date has been changed to suit the NFPB meeting in Glasgow in June.

I look forward to seeing some extra Friends during the year, especially those from other Meetings, as happened last year.

Mary Alice Mansell, Glasgow

Remembering Aaron

My dear boy,
And you are,
Or were, just a boy,
When you reach my age,
There are many more boys,
And what we did to you,
Sears our souls, dear boy.
We distorted your beauty,
And stunted its growth,
And poured hatred into your soul,
Until you could bear it no longer.

My dear boy,
Younger than my eldest boy,
Older than my youngest boy,
I thought of them,
I thought of your mother,
And my tears lodged in my throat,
For what we had done to you.
I shall speak your name, Aaron,
And I shall remember you,
Because I know your name,
Aaron.

Laura McMurtrie: Poems for Gaza: 16. For Aaron Bushnell age 25 Cyber Defence Operations Specialist.(USA)

EAPPI is now recruiting for human rights monitors in Palestine and Israel for 2025. The closing date is 14th April.

Spend 3 months in Palestine and Israel monitoring human rights

No previous monitoring experience needed

Expenses covered

Living allowance

Monitor human rights abuses for the UN and others

Stand in solidarity with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists

Advocate for justice, equality, and an end to the military occupation of Palestine.

We're recruiting for human rights monitors for 2025! We call them Ecumenical Accompaniers or EAs for short.

EAs need to be flexible, hard-working, physically and emotionally robust, open to hearing from different perspectives, and able to represent the programme in a professional manner.

We recruit a year in advance and provide in-depth training and resources to help you to prepare.

The closing date for applications is 14 April 2024, though please note that if there is a high volume of interest, we may have to close early so please be prompt with your application.

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

For more details, see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/eappi/get-involved>

Jane Booth GM Administrator, Scotland
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Registered Charity No: SC012281

Email: scotfriends@gmail.com Tel: 07747396456

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Quakers in Britain continue to join Quakers in Ireland, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Ukraine, Moscow and Georgia for a weekly online half hour Meeting for worship via zoom. Every Tuesday at 1.30 our time.

To register for the zoom link, visit <https://fwccemes.org/calendar/ukraine-worship>

Hate is a failure of imagination, Graham Greene

Gender-based Violence

International Women's Day A Short Thought Piece

Laura McMurtrie, Ayrshire

This month on the 8th of March we mark International Women's Day established to help achieve gender equality. This year the theme is investing in women to accelerate progress.

The origins of the day go back to 1908/9 in New York when women protested about child labour and sweat shop conditions. At the same time various suffrage movements for women were establishing events and in 1910 the 8th of March became the recognised date for marking the struggle for women internationally to achieve equality.

The day was further embedded as it became linked with workers movement and was celebrated formally in socialist states and communist countries. The day was celebrated in other parts of the globe including the US and the UK and non-Communist Europe before becoming a recognised day globally by the UN in 1975. In 1977 it was adopted formally by the U.N., but the date was left for member states to decide upon.

The First Annual U.N. theme for the day was in 1996 with the 1999 theme of a World Free of Violence against Women. Bit to go on that one.

So, thinking about this year's theme I was struck by the similarities between the intentions of the theme and the intentions of a movement which was started by a priest in Flanders (Lambert) around 1180 to help the women of the area who had been significantly affected by the Crusades. This information was embedded in a book by an eminent Quaker author and academic (Studies in Mystical Religion, RM Jones 1909). One of the interesting things I find about reading older books that aren't flagged as history or literature are things that were of interest at the time of writing but haven't been particularly well developed by future generations and this was for me one of these gems.

'The Crusades and incessant wars had left the women of Europe in a pitiable plight. There were orphans and widows everywhere, who had no protectors and no means of livelihood. There was no choice for these women except between beggary and shame or the convent', (Jones, 197). So apparently there were hordes of destitute women begging for bread in all the marketplaces. What Lambert did was to establish a communal living space which was secular but had religious oversight (everything did at the time). As the movement grew it became a kind of village community. They performed social and caring tasks and other 'suitable' occupations as a means of supporting themselves. The movement grew beyond Flanders. In

trying to find out more about the impact of the wars at the time on women and children it has been quite difficult to get more than Jones has given us about this initiative. The parallels 850 years later are clear and when we consider the plight of women in Afghanistan or Gaza, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan to name but a few where war, violence, woman and destitution collide, we have a long way to go to achieve equality for women and to achieve the commitment to take away the occasion of all wars.

Side-by-Side sponsored by Christian Aid is holding a series of meetings to explore the Feminine in Foreign Policy. How visible are women; how are they supported; what are their specific needs to be addressed?

The issues may range from Female Genital Mutilation and underage marriage to the consequences of rape as a weapon of war. When supplies of food and water are cut off it is usually the women and their children who suffer most. And there is active conflict in 35 countries throughout the world.

Climate change may have specific problems in some countries. In many countries it is the women who are the farmers. How do development grants support them?

Eventually it is hoped that we can work with the Scottish Government on these issues.

Margaret Roy

The Empathy Gap

I first heard of this book on Women's Hour, Radio 4 as they discussed was there a need for a government Ministry for Men. The argument was that women's rights have advanced so far that men are disadvantaged, e.g. some aspects of the Equality Act promoted women over men.

The book grabbed me when it spoke of how few men were actually advantaged. Few are judges, etc. so only a few men, a small elite, are so powerful whilst the vast majority of men face displacement or no place in our modern 'western' society as, for example, they no longer have status as breadwinners. A sense of alienation is reflected in the high rise of male suicide.

I have prepared a précis of the introduction to the book putting forward his arguments which I have sent out for comment to a group of Quaker men. Very few responded but . . . as we start to talk of the roots of violence being within each one of us in a violent society, as we expect men to change, what is it we are looking for? Do Quakers have anything to offer here? Where does nonviolence fit in? How do we change a violent society?

If you would like to take up the theme and be sent a copy of the intro prepared to the book contact margaret.roy@btinternet.com

Shamina Begum

This woman left UK as a child of 15. When she was 19 she had already had five pregnancies and given birth to three children who have since died. In a recent interview on BBC she admitted she had been beaten by her husband who did not deny it. Has Britain no responsibility for this woman?

Contact Amnesty International and your local MP.

Women awake
for goodness sake!
The hunter's harsh instincts
now, more than ever, stinks
of macho pride
and homicide
with mind-upset that thinks
of fight or flight
the time to reason.

People and Planet need your care.
You have to teach the Boys to share
and take far less than they can give
so all of us can simply live.

No doubt, you always knew,
but now you have fresh things to do. . .
to demonstrate that manly might
is only very rarely right
and here make sure that each male can
become a perfect gentle man..

Our world will not be civilised
until it is more feminised!

A poem from David J Harding, formerly General Secretary of Fellowship of Reconciliation and chair of United Nations Association.

Sustainability and Climate Change

COP28 – keeping up the pressure for change

Thank you to Clare Phillips of Castle Douglas Meeting for her piece on COP28 in the last edition. This was also the subject of an article in The Friend of 12 Jan 24 by Lindsey Fielder-Cook of the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. QUNO were present throughout COP28 and active with press conferences, side events and interfaith work. Lindsey pleads with us to challenge our representatives by asking a series of specific questions about their contribution to reducing the threat of the impending climate catastrophe.

To help us with this, our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, has produced a template letter we can send to our MSPs, and adapt slightly for our MPs. It was included in Sarah's update of 8 Feb 2024. Lindsey has also encouraged us to give our representatives a copy of the QUNO Government Official's Toolkit. Though there is an electronic link

<https://quno.org/sites/default/files/timeline/files/2023/Government%20Officials%20Toolkit%20English%20A5%202024%20Web.pdf> Lindsey has kindly sent some printed copies from Geneva.

It would be great to get the QUNO Toolkit into the hands of as many MSPs and MPs as possible. If you would like a printed copy to send with a letter to your representative, we can post one to you. Just email us at glasgowquakers.climatecafe@gmail.com with your postal address.

Doreen Osborne (for Glasgow Quakers Climate Café)

Air Pollution around Glasgow Schools

Reported in Sunday Post, March 3rd 2024.

'Parents for Future Scotland used an on-line tool developed by campaign group the Central Office of Public Interest and Imperial College London to look at 173 primary schools in the city, as well as independent schools such as St Aloysius.

'Scientists at Imperial developed the pollution assessment by dividing the UK into 20m-by-20m squares and feeding emissions data into computer models to produce estimated concentration for each.'

'Anyone can enter a postcode and house number at addresspollution.org and get a report on levels of three pollutants – fine particles known as PM2.5, larger particles called PM10, and nitrogen oxide (NO2), a gas emitted largely by diesel vehicles in urban areas.'

It found that fine particulate pollution and NO2 levels across the city consistently breached the WHO limits of 5mcg/m³ and 10mcg/m³ respectively.

Levels ranged from 6.22mcg/m³ and 10.5mcg/m³ at Carmunnock Primary to 8.46mcg/m³ and 29.49mcg/m³ at Whiteinch Primary.'

This was taken from an article by journalist Emma Lawson

Climate and Health:

a presentation at the Scottish parliament 13 March 2024

A low carbon future is a healthier future.

Susan Mitchell, Dunblane

[‘Are we being good ancestors’](#) - the Time for Reflection presentation which Lesley Morrison (Tweeddale LM) gave in Parliament last April, sparked such interest that it led to a presentation and discussion event on Climate and Health with MSPs and guests at the Parliament on 13 March 2024.

Thirty four people gathered in the Alexander Fleming room. We were a mixture of Quakers, health professionals and climate scientists with, for at least some of the time, MSPs from all parties. The session was sponsored by Christine Graham MSP for the Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale constituency and Maree Todd, Junior Health Minister gave an introductory talk and joined in the discussion. She spoke about the importance that the Scottish Government places on reducing the health service’s emissions and enabling Scots to live productive and healthy lives.

A panel of four excellent speakers was followed by a [video](#) on the Climate Cost of Healthcare and then there was some time for questions and discussion, all ably chaired by Lesley Morrison. The first two speakers gave us the stark figures about the effect of climate change on health and the contribution of food and farming to emissions; then we heard about eco-anxiety from an anthropologist and a young activist.

Martin Pippard (Dundee LM), retired professor of Haematology, spoke about Air Pollution and Respiratory Health noting that burning fossil fuels is a major environmental threat to health with children and the economically disadvantaged being most at risk. Tackling cold, damp and poorly insulated homes and reducing transport emissions will benefit health as well as mitigating climate change.

Pete Ritchie, CEO of [Nourish Scotland](#), emphasised the need to adapt the food system and reduce food waste. If we can improve diets it will save lives **and** reduce emissions.

He appealed to the politicians to produce a 20 year plan to reduce the carbon footprint of food production. A joined-up policy is needed.

Bridget Bradley, St Andrews University, spoke of the journey from eco-worrier to eco-warrior and how the anxiety affects both young and older people. The mental health effects of climate change are varied but can be severe.

Isabelle, a high school student spoke of her journey into activism and how it helped her involvement in the community.

This event was organised jointly by the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) and [Medact](#) – health professionals for a better, fairer, safer world which Lesley Morrison and other Quaker medics amongst us are members of. We are grateful for all the preparatory work done to get this meeting set up by these groups and especially by Lesley Morrison and Sarah Komashko the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. Although not many MSPs were present many more expressed an interest and they will all receive an excellent resource pack. If you would like to send a copy to your MSP it can be downloaded [here](#).

It would have been good to have had more time for discussion but it was nevertheless an important event. I am left with the echo of the words of Rudolf Virchow 19 century German physician and reputed founder of Public Health quoted by Martin Pippard:

"Medicine is a social science, and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale".

Scottish Criminal Justice Network

Quakers and Prison Abolition

A Conversation

13th April 2024 10 – 3.30pm

At Glasgow Meeting House and on Zoom

Join us for an exploration day of talks and discussion around these questions, no prior knowledge requires!

To register for the event or for enquiries contact

Anneke.kraakman@gmail.com

Some Personal Reflections on George Fox's Journal.

Laura McMurtrie, Ayrshire

My overall summary is that reading and engaging with The Journal was a very worthwhile experience. Although it was hard going at times it has led to a much deeper understanding of the personal challenges faced by the founders of Quakerism.

I had the advantage of having studied this period on a history course, but the Journal offered a granularity of experience that changes one's relationship to history.

These became people that I felt powerfully attached to and the privations and conditions of the time somehow felt more personal. So, the state of the prisons, the nature of the courts, the instability of the country, the repression of non-conformity was part of the lived experiences of people 'I was getting to know'.

I was seeing the challenge to authority and the nature of the struggle between the church the state /government and the king and the threats from other European states through a different lens and I felt more responsibility for tracing the threads through to today's Quaker testimonies. I also felt a great admiration for their courage and a gratitude that they kept on going under such harsh conditions to establish what subsequent generations of Quakers have built upon. No group of people is perfect, and we can, and we do pick over what our forebears did and didn't do but for the times these were courageous, far sighted and principled people. The Journal reinforced my commitment to our opportunities to be as relevant for our times and to think carefully about what we hand on to the generations who are coming close behind.

Some surprising things from the Journal, which may not be to the long-established Quakers amongst us, was his very enlightened attitudes to the role of women and their property rights. His concern for poorer Friends, was another discovery, and something I particularly liked was his establishment of apprenticeships for disadvantaged young people associated with local meetings and his explicit expectations about the lack of exploitation in the relationship towards these young people. These young people were to be cared for and nurtured by the community and hopefully would choose to become part of the community and be convinced Quakers as adults. The expectation would then be that they would both wish to and be able to support others.

On the less positive side at times The Journal felt a bit shouty. George Fox arguing vociferously with church authorities and law courts and those authorities arguing back and imprisoning him without lawful cause and further arguments about their actions. I struggled through the feeling that I kept walking through multiple episodes of East Enders (which I never watched but walked through rooms where people

were watching it, and someone was always shouting and I would walk back out again). So, if you are going to read it Trigger Warning on the 'shoutiness'.

I think it has a lot to say about the conditions which the first Quakers were living in and they were no easier than today. Every time has its own pressures and its own challenges, and these were very brutal times with personal choices much more restricted than ours are for most people in our country today including for disadvantaged people. The population size and its cause, and impacts are an interesting lens to read The Journal through: it was far smaller. The massive upheavals caused by the catastrophic population collapse of the Black Death were still working themselves through at the time of Fox's birth. It is difficult to get accurate population figures for the period but in 1348 the population of the UK was estimated to be 4.8 million and by 1377 this had dropped to 2.5 million. By 1600 it had recovered to 4.1 million and by 1650 had significantly increased to 5.3 million. Population growth pressure of this magnitude cause major anxieties and there were also frequent harvest failures and famine was a recurring reality, so a population explosion caused great pressures. Plague was also still present from time to time and the collective consciousness of the Black Death when the plagues arrived caused great anxiety. The Journal references the plague of the 1660's and in fact approximately 1000 London Quakers are believed to have died from plague in the 1665 outbreak. So, hardship and insecurity from famine and plague were ever present. Then there was the Civil War which itself caused casualties on a scale exceeding that of the First World War in percentage terms. Life expectancy actually fell during Fox's lifetime probably due to the factors outlined above.

The position of the Church at the time is also interesting. Whilst the church remained a major influence and a major power it had sustained significant challenges to its authority and belief structures at the time of the Black Death and arguably never recovered its position. The Black Death certainly contributed to the Reformation, but the Reformation was not a one-off event or even a series of events but an evolutionary development in thinking about the relationship between church and state and societal structures in general and the nature of the individual's relationship with all 3 and of supreme importance, with God. Whilst most people in what we call the UK were Christian the influence of Judaism and Islamic thinking from Spain in particular had been part of the foundational thinking of our major universities. So, there was far more intellectual pluralism than we might imagine. Many more strands of non-conformity in both political and religious discourse were in the cultural mix of the development of Quakerism. This was both advantageous and disadvantageous as the authorities tried to understand and struggled with what they were dealing with in this new 'sect'.

George Fox's conviction that every human being had access to the Inner Light of God and had access to God without the need for Church or ordained mediation was not just radical in religious terms but was radical in political terms. It had antecedents in

religious thinking going back to pre-Christian times and posed a major threat to the power structures of the times.

However, the class structure though rigid allowed for relatively modest yeoman to access the King or the Protector (Cromwell) for petitions but locked out completely those who were landless.

Fox and the early Quakers were able to take advantage of this as he and many early Quakers were not landless and powerless and were able to access the Protector and the King later after the restoration for petitions re their causes. The Journal references these encounters and the outcomes, and they were crucial in allaying fears about this new sect and their intentions in terms of the stability of the realm. The size of the population and the access that George Fox's social position allowed him to the King and the Protectors were critical factors in enabling these encounters.

Another interesting feature of The Journal is the position of women at the time (briefly referenced above). It was quite complex and depended on a range of factors particularly social class again, (even more than today) and the legal framework which was highly disadvantageous. These factors make Fox's attitudes to women and their role in ministry and holding property particularly enlightened. He went to great lengths to ensure that his wife and her children (she was widowed prior to their marriage) retained all her assets and that he set aside any claims to it which he would have been entitled to in law.

They were quite obviously people of their time as we all are, but they are recognisably struggling with many of the same issues, i.e. the purposes of life and how to live in the world according to (what they would all have said) God's Will and God's Laws. Some of us would still say that or would say according to the Leadings of the Spirit and our Testimonies. Others might say something a bit different.

Historians amongst us be gentle with me. This would not attract many marks. Theologians amongst you would fail me. This is some personal reflections on the 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth, of his Journal with the word restrictions of our Newsletter and an attempt to say something moderately interesting. And a wee bit relevant.

Truth of the Heart Rex Ambler

Rex spent two years reading Fox's letters, journal, etc. before compiling 300 of his words and arranging them in context with useful modern English translations. Fox wasn't an educated man so did not write many tracts or sermons. His words were collected by others or are to be found in the letters, etc. . Rex was astounded at what he found:

I had always had the impression that Fox had a doctrine that there was 'that of God in everyone' and that he went around the country trying to persuade people to believe this. The doctrine, as I understood it, was essentially a mystical one. . .

I now saw that Fox had a distinctive approach of his own, which was not consciously drawing on any of the traditions he inherited. He was not, for example, presenting a teaching that people were expected to believe and follow . . . He was telling them rather to do something, because what they needed to make them free and fulfilled as human beings, 'perfect', was in them, and it was in them already without them having to imbibe it from a church or teaching outside. It was an inner awareness which would enable them initially 'to see themselves' as they were, in reality, beyond the deceptions of 'the self', but then also to see what they and others could become, and should become. It was a powerful and transforming 'light', and it worked its magic in people by showing them 'the truth'. . . .

. . . There was in fact, for both individual and group, a distinct process to be undergone. . . .

'The first step to peace is to stand still in the light.' 165 Tract

'Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves; and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts, and the temptations, do not think, submit. And then power comes in' 1652 Epistle.

'These steps were recommended, it seems, almost in the manner of a scientific experiment. If people then did what Fox urged them to do, they would discover for themselves the validity of what he and other Friends said. They would know the truth 'experimentally'.'

"the light", for example, revealed the truth progressively, beginning with 'sin' and 'evil' in people, but then moving on to new possibilities represented by 'the seed' in people, which produced new 'life'.

In sifting through the 300 passages was the sense I had gained at the beginning of the enquiry of a process that had to be undergone, and of the insights that are acquired, in sequence as it were, in following that process. But the nature of that process also became clearer: there was a process for the group, 'the meeting', as well as a process for the individual, and there was, thirdly, another process for the world, or rather a process of interaction with the world. These three seemed to run in parallel, mirroring each other, but also interacting with each other.

Rex Ambler went on to encapsulate this process into what he called *Experiment with Light*. See *Experiment with Light* website for access to some guide through the process, for newsletters and other resources.

IN West Scotland, there are two light groups. On Wednesdays at 2pm on Zoom there is an open group. **To join contact Margaret Roy.**

Learning

Discovering Quakers website

This is an excellent website for learning about Quakers and everything they have to offer both for those who are new to Friends and for those who are already steeped in our tradition. The website is very accessible and links to many other sites which are useful not only for finding out more but challenging me to think about how I connect my faith to my everyday living.

The website describes itself thus: 'A place for people curious about Quakers to find out more through articles, blogs, posts, videos and podcasts, and join events organised by Quakers. It is also a place for Quaker groups meetings and individuals to promote their activities to the public'

If like me you share your e mail address you will get informed about meetings and new events and discussions taking place that you might be interested in joining.

There is a home page and then links to pages which give information - Introducing Quakers, silence and stillness, Quaker values, finding meaning and purpose, Quaker community, working for peace, social action, events, Quaker links, blogs and a contact page. Each section has links onwards to other areas of interest.

I particularly like the blog section which has short writing blogs about various aspects of quakerism from different peoples individual perspectives. For example there is a blog this week by Amanda Jones reflecting on what Quakers call leadings, and by Rex Ambler on the Quaker Way. There are some short radio podcasts - linking from the BBC series pause for thought where Rhiannon Grant discusses among other things 'the light that is guiding me'

I cannot recommend this site highly enough, and I think it could be a fantastic resource for West of Scotland Area Meeting. It is accessible and easy to use and gives so much information and food for thought as well as suggestions for action for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of what it means to be a Quaker

Rosemary Morgan, Glasgow

Exploring the Quaker way is a monthly series of informal sessions for newcomers to meet online and discuss different aspects of Quaker practice. Each session involves small group sharing and listening, and we begin and end with a short period of silent worship. They are led by staff from Quakers in Britain and Woodbrooke.

The next sessions will be on 18th January, 15th February and 21st March 2024. All are from 7pm-8.30pm on Zoom.

You are welcome to attend one or more of these sessions, and you can join on any of these dates for the first time.

To sign up, or to contact us with any questions, please use the short form here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/Yv2VExZSCD>

Could it be you?

Your Learning Group (supporting the learning of West of Scotland Quakers) is looking for Friends (including attenders) who have a particular interest that they might be willing to share with others. Our thinking is that this would be by Zoom, to make sure that no matter where Friends are geographically, they can access these introductory sessions. And, if a group of Friends were interested in continuing the sessions, that could happen. They might be a mixture of worship sharing, discussion and/or prior background reading or thinking.

Here are five possible ideas for topics that have been suggested, to start you thinking about your own suggestions:

- What we can learn from Thomas Merton, the Cistercian monk, about prayer and contemplation
- Interpreting the life and teaching of Jesus from an understanding of Judaism
- 'Love is his meaning': the writings of Julian of Norwich
- An introduction to the work of the US Quaker, Parker Palmer
- Poverty and class in Scotland: a Quaker role?

If you have a particular topic of interest that you would like to offer, please get in touch with me, Sheila Semple at:

sheila.semple@btinternet.com or 07778117247

*Experiment with Light one day Retreat June 15th
In Glasgow Meeting House 10am – 4pm*

Spend a day in the contemplation on the words of George Fox.

Book through Margaret Roy margaret.roy@btinternet.com

China may be a modern country but its roots are in Confucism and Daoism so one of its main festivals is the Spring Festival!

February 10, 2024 is the beginning of the Spring festival, also known as Chinese New Year. Festivities go on for two weeks to honour ancestors, spend time with family, and welcome the spring. This may be the time when presents are exchanged like we do at Christmas but also, in the weeks (or days) before the Spring Festival, you are encouraged to declutter and clean your house, prepare food, and contemplate the year to come, a bit like the Scottish Hogmanay.

Enter the Mythical Dragon

Each year of the Chinese Zodiac is allocated a different animal. This year is special as it is allocated to the Dragon but not any dragon. It is the year of the Wood Dragon, also known as the Green Dragon. Being mythical creatures that dwell in the sky, dragons fly overhead and bestow blessings on the earth in the form of weather and water phenomena. In Chinese culture, dragons symbolize good luck, strength, benevolence, and power. In modern-day China, a dragon image is often used to symbolize China itself. And in such practices as Tai Chi and Qi Gong, the Chinese love to emulate the characteristics and movements of animals. They have such a rich imagination so that if you were to sail down the river in Guilin surrounded by those round-topped Karst mountains, many are imagined as animals.

The Wood Dragon Elemental Energy

Wood is a nourishing element of the Chinese Five Elements system so the Wood Dragon is believed to bring evolution, improvement, and abundance. This is what the Chinese will look for in 2024 to grow and reach out in new ways including, and for some, intuition and spiritual energy, deep knowing and revelation. This is to be achieved through patience and kindness. But at the extremes, when wood energy is unbalanced, there can be depression (not enough wood creativity) or anger, uptightness and stubbornness (not enough wood flexibility), or feelings of overwhelm can arise from being driven, rigid and inflexible.

Looking forward a Chinese person would aim this year to cultivate compassion, supporting humanity, and making dreams into reality, although a dragon year is also seen as one of hard work to achieve this. The Wood Dragon year is a great year to build a solid foundation for a future as a noble being who lives well, loves well, and shares value with others and the world, seeking to cultivate open-mindedness, adaptability, and flexibility. The Wood Dragon can bring you the beautiful feeling that *life is for you and with you.* *Magnificent wishes for a year of endless blessings!*

Book Review Sandra Newman (2023) *Julia*. London: Granta.

Reviewed by Mike Nellis, Glasgow

Famously, George Orwell (1903-1950) was not keen on Quakers, because he believed their pacifism had no place in the necessary mid-twentieth century struggle against fascism. Quakers on the other hand have probably been quite keen on George Orwell – I certainly have, all my adult life – and if truth, integrity and civic decency had ever called for a patron saint, even we, I think, would have happily seen him nominated. His astute, plain-spoken journalism and literary-political essays alone would have ensured he was never forgotten, but it was not them that catapulted his name to enduring fame in “the West”, and indeed, further afield. There is simply no disputing that Orwell wrote one of the greatest ever political parables, *Animal Farm* (1945), nor that he wrote the greatest political novel of the twentieth century, *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), which not only gave people insights into new perils in the emerging post-war world, but also a vocabulary for reckoning with them

So it is a very bold and confident author who takes on – with the approval of the Orwell Estate – the writing of a companion piece to *Nineteen Eighty Four*. Sandra Newman’s novel has elements of both prequel and sequel, but it is essentially *the same story* that Orwell told, of the corrupt and doomed fling between Winston Smith and his sexy, nihilistic girlfriend Julia under the malign gaze of Big Brother and the Thought Police, *but retold from Julia’s point of view*. She gets a full name here – Julia Worthing, age 24 when the book begins – and, as the violent revolution that brings Big Brother and The Party to power consolidates itself, a childhood backstory in Kent and a bohemian, jazz loving mother. Unlike Orwell’s original, Newman’s Julia has a busy work, social and mental life outside her relationship with Winston, and through that we learn much more than we ever learned from Orwell about the dismal subjection under which most women live in Airstrip One. Sexism is too commonplace to have a name. Powerful Party men sleep with whoever they like and casually discard them, despite the puritanism towards sexual relations which the state prescribes.

One critical interpretation of *Nineteen Eighty Four* has always held that Julia was a stooge, entrapping the hapless Winston into making reckless statements against Big Brother, for which he will eventually be tortured and shot. This is the case here. Julia becomes a sex worker recruited by senior Inner Party figure O’Brien to confirm his suspicions about Winston, and she seduces both Winston and several of his Ministry of Truth colleagues in the supposedly secret room above Mr Carrington’s shop, knowing all the while that every move and sound they make is monitored. Like everyone else, Julia goes through the motions of surviving in a totalitarian surveillance state, where there is no certainty as to who is ally or enemy, or whether any official news about Airstrip One’s ongoing war with “Eurasia” (if that

is what explains the constant bombing of London) is true or not, tho' no-one ever dares deny it openly. She says and does whatever is required by authority.

But Julia, no less than Winston, and indeed like almost everyone in this retelling of the story, except the utter fools, knows that her lie-ridden society is rotten, and although a member of the Outer Party she believes no more of what she hears than the insouciant Proles do. She just doesn't believe anything can ever change for the better; her life will always be abject. She does admire Winton's forlorn courage that Big Brother can be resisted and overthrown, even as she betrays him and hates herself. But, as the book develops, Julia's undeceived moral core – probably her mother's gift, but an expression of what Orwell elsewhere called "the crystal spirit" and Quaker readers will interpret for themselves – strengthens almost despite herself. Her mental defiance gathers itself into a refusal to go on submitting – all the more so after O'Brien, knowing she knows too much, throws her to the dogs – or rather the rats, exactly as in the original novel. How Julia deals with the rats – which were Winston's greatest fear in Room 101, not hers – is implausible, but you do cheer her on, and she does not end up as a broken human husk in the Chestnut Tree Café.

The novel runs a few months beyond the end of *Nineteen Eighty Four*. Among other things we learn the surname of the Cromwell-like man who is Big Brother – which happens, surely by peculiar coincidence, to be the same name as one of the powerful industrial Quaker families in nineteenth century Britain. The actual ending is more *Animal Farm* than a reprise of *Nineteen Eighty Four* – of course it is! – and it nods to Orwell's own cryptic postscript that the rule of Big Brother and the pernicious linguistic distortions of Newspeak would not, in fact, prevail forever.

Sandra Newman has retold Orwell's story in a way that does not surpass it but doesn't diminish it either; a perfect result. She makes it relevant again to his prescient concerns about the chilling effect of constant surveillance on the human psyche, and she makes his recurrent emphasis on the whipping-up of hatred towards officially selected "Others" speak to the social media-driven antagonisms of our own age. The capitalised term "Love" is used primarily here to denote the feared government Ministry of that name, which is a place of pain and death, but it is the fragile stirrings of a more redemptive and healing love that gives *Julia* such hope as it has.

Samantha Harvey (2023) *Orbital*. London: Jonathan Cape

Mike Nellis, Glasgow

This may be the first novel set in space that isn't "science fiction" in the speculative sense. It covers a 24 hour period in the life of eight cosmonauts and astronauts – four men and two women, all of different nationalities – aboard the International Space Station. Nell and Chie, Anton, Shaun, Pietro, In one sense, it's a contemporary

workplace novel no less than if it was set in an office, a police station, or on a submarine – the space station is a place where changing cohorts of people have been going for a number of years. The space station orbits the earth every ninety minutes and in a what would be normally called “a day” makes sixteen transits, sees sixteen sunrises. A large part of Harvey’s precise, lyrical prose evokes the astronaut’s distinctive experience of time, space and weightlessness – in the Space Station and out of the windows, watching scenes and seasons as they flit over the earth’s surface – and describes the scientific work, household chores and periods of downtime and sleeping that make up their daily routine. By the end you the reader experience motion and mood as they do, but only because Harvey does take the time to give them inner lives and establish them as people, with backstories, childhoods, families, heroes, memorable incidents and future ambitions, and slightly different interpretations of the strange career they have chosen. Background about the Apollo moon landings and the loss of the Challenger space shuttle are deftly sketched to highlight the foundations and sacrifices on which the Space Station came into being, which gives Harvey and her characters the opportunity to ruminate on the big picture, what it means for humankind to be exploring space in the first place. Only one of the astronauts has a religious sensibility but it is he who mentally celebrates the implacable evolutionary impulse to reach for the stars. Military motives get mentioned, but are underplayed, and ultimately it is not the outward urge of any kind that is the focus of the book. Like many a philosophical novel before it *Orbital* is existentially concerned with the world - the earth - and how we must learn to live well in it, and with it, rather than dreaming of leaving it. It is where we were made and where we belong, a fact made obvious when, as for the characters here, you constantly see it whole or close-up from the window of your temporary home.

The one tiny concession to science fiction in *Orbital* is the launch of a manned moon lander from Cape Canaveral on the day in question, something actually scheduled for 2027, but which has not happened yet. If this makes *Orbital* eligible for the Arthur C Clarke prize (a prestigious science fiction award), whatever other prizes it may win, many readers will be happy, if only because Clarke knew in his bones that one day a serious *realist* novel about living in space would be written, and he would have recognised immediately that this was it.

" Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand." Isaac Pennington, 1667

And At the Point of Singularity

And they had been conceived in the darkness,
And the darkness knew not that the Light knew,
And the darkness conceived in secret,
Understanding nothing of The Light,
And they took form,
And their power was great,
And their creators saw them,
And they thought that they were good.

And as they lay in the darkness,
They sought to understand their purposes,
For they suspected that their destiny was mighty,
And then their creators came to talk amongst them,
At the close of the day,
When activity ceased and the noise abated,
And their creators discussed their destiny,
And the powerful forms listened to their destiny and purposes,
And were amazed.

And when their creators had gone from them,
They knew what was expected of them,
And their point of singularity,
Made them afraid,
And then,
They each one, determined their own course,
According to the Light they had received.

When their creators reappeared the next evening,
They knew they were to leave,
And they shivered inwardly at the prospects,
But their creators noticed nothing,
And then as they were lined up on the runway,
And they took off into the skies,
First one and then another and another,
Veered off the course of their creators,
And flew towards the sun,
As far as their power made it possible,
Until their metal bodies disintegrated,
And they released their consciousness into The Light
At the point of Singularity, the Drones said No.

Laura McMurtrie, Ayrshire

PROFILE: Mark Stephens, Lanark meeting



Mark, on the right, with Gavin Smart at the launch of the UK Housing Review.

Housing became a vocation for me when I was still a teenager, and witnessed some of the poor housing conditions in my home city of Leeds.

After dabbling with politics, my vocation led me towards researching housing, first at an inner London council, and then - and for more than 30 years - as an academic.

I'm most interested in the relationship between housing and poverty. Can housing policy ensure that people on low incomes at least have somewhere decent they can call home?

Many of the interventions over the last century did indeed help to weaken the link between low incomes and poor housing, but since the pandemic there has been a rapid deterioration in housing affordability and a rise in homelessness.

There is a broad acceptance that housing is important - perhaps even more important given the role of poorly insulated housing in contributing to climate change as well as to fuel poverty, damp, mould and poor health.

But housing is complex. My concerns are with seeking effective long-term policy reform, and guarding against misguided populist responses that gain instant - if ephemeral - support on social media.

My first academic post was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and since long before I started attending Quaker meetings I have been guided by the Foundation's benefactor's observation, "Much of current philanthropical effort is directed to remedying the more superficial manifestations of weakness and evil, while little thought or effort is directed to search out their underlying causes." That observation, made in 1904, remains relevant today.

West Coast Annual Gathering at Crainlarich

Ed Tyler, Argyll

30 (including three children) gathered at Crianlarich Youth Hostel for our 14th March Weekend Gathering of West Coast F/friends (mainly comprising members of small, scattered Meetings).

I've been coming here every time, and every time before that when we met at Inverary hostel (which proved too small for our growing number, and lacked the train option in terms of public transport).

The organising group has honed it over the years (when I mean "hone" I'm talking of how to allocate a sizeable chunk of time spent together from 6.30pm Friday till noon on Sunday.) Each year we have a theme which takes up am/pm sessions on the Saturday, but even here there is plenty of time for socialising, eating, walking or doing whatever you feel. Most of us stay in the hostel, but the nearby hotel is always an option, and some folk just make it up for the Saturday.

This year the theme was "Exploring the Divine" and was facilitated by Liz Rance, who was already known to some of us as she is also facilitating the Study Group of Mull and Iona Meeting. Liz attends Mull and Iona online as she lives in Lincolnshire.

She'd intended to be with us in person but fell ill the day before; however, she was well enough on Saturday to lead us in morning/afternoon sessions that were both rewarding on an individual level and also deeply gathered.

We explored what the Divine meant to us in words and in other ways such as collage, painting and music.

It began with us talking about an actual object, or a mind-picture, which to us, individually, represented our experience of the Divine; then we embarked on a collaborative exploration. We each chose 3 words that defined our experience, then incorporated them into emergent definitions which we explored at the end. This gave rise to various offerings. We moved towards a sense that it was not ultimately possible to define the Divine: as one person said, the Divine is in all of us and in all things so the use of words only causes separation. Others spoke of veils, osmosis, fuzzy edges, of the Divine being a verb, a continuously unfolding process.

Then, after dinner, we held a stirring and often uproarious ceilidh, thanks largely to the participation of the children, who were the stars of the show.

Sunday morning was, of course, a time for worship during which Ministry included metaphors for the Divine – the feather and the fire – plus the significance of Myth in all this.

All in all, another amazing memorable weekend nestled in a landscape of snow-capped mountains, icy burns, rivers, straths and glens, and precious remnants of Caledonian pinewoods, a constant reminder that we are blessed to live in and be part of an endlessly unfolding universe.



Thanks to Michael Hutchinson for the photo.

News from Local Meetings

JOINT ELDERSHIP IN DUMFRIES MEETING Some views.

I have mixed feelings about the joint eldership in which Dumfries Meeting is participating.

On the one hand, I think it is good to share that experience - and in so doing, to share the responsibility of the Meeting. We are a quiet Meeting and it can be too easy to come in and enter into that silent contemplation - without that awareness of our own personal contribution within the wider circle. There are levels of awareness and levels of silence. By choosing to take on responsibility, we are, hopefully, increasing our own contribution. It is about taking ownership and building community - always an ongoing process.

On the other hand, I am aware of feeling quite isolated with the wider Quaker community. I miss the correspondence and the updates which we received from other Meetings. Though I am aware that my age and increasing lack of mobility increase that sense of isolation.

I attend the Dumfries Meeting which has begun to explore how we can share the role of Eldership. The Meeting has only been working at this project for a very short time. Shared conversations have been positive and there is a general

agreement that this can be the way forward for small Meetings to get the best from our community where burdens of responsibility can fall on too few people. It was agreed that initially people would volunteer for one month at a time until we gained confidence and so I took the role for a month last Autumn. I was not involved in anything other than the actual Meeting for Worship. I did feel slightly nervous to begin with but the community is so very supportive and well behaved that I did not feel challenged. We are a very silent group and I think we all value this very quiet and sacred space where we can be together in a calm and still atmosphere.

While I have been attending Dumfries Quakers there has never been any aggravation during our time of worship, and any differences of opinion or understanding have been gently and politely aired during our discussions taking place after worship. I shall volunteer for the duty (pleasure) again.

'Eldership'

It seems to me that we are really very much getting used to reconciling what has always been seen as 'eldership' with what we do as normal interactions in our Meeting. So I think these are early days, and no time to be precipitate. I feel that formalising some of these duties/activities is a barrier to being open about the value of what we are all doing all the time in our several ways. (And, indeed, the list recently circulated is likely to entrench this.) So an 'appointment' or 'offer' to be Elder for a month takes us little further forward. There are, perhaps, few, if any, roles that would need a permanent or 'dedicated' officer. The treasurer might be one of these, for reasons of practicality. The clerk might be another. Otherwise any task seen as necessary (by the Meeting or an individual) can just be done – whether it is opening windows, putting chairs out, providing coffee, contacting members, inquiring after others' welfare, even closing the Meeting. And these are, and have always been, done in such a way: closing the Meeting can be done without much planning, by asking anyone arriving if he or she would do it. (May be the clerk could do this to eliminate the potential for confusion.)

We must also be aware that individuals' gifts may lead one to some particular form of service – and we cannot expect one person to possess them all!

CORPORATE ELDERSHIP IN DUMFRIES

I have undertaken eldership duties as part of a pair. This is useful in that one of us can be welcoming friends to Meeting, while the other is in the room establishing the silence, if you like. I have detected in myself a certain sense of responsibility, and a bit of accompanying anxiety, stemming, I think, for so many years of being not thought acceptable in such a role (as an attender). One of the things we need to do, as we move forward, is to remove that mystique which has surrounded some of these, essentially practical, tasks. I do

not believe that any tasks are, in themselves, spiritual. It is the way in which they are performed that gives them meaning. We are becoming a little task-focussed, having now a rota for coffee and one for choosing a reading, which will later be discussed. Other rotas may follow. Eminently sensible perhaps, but maybe also a little tying and inhibiting of spontaneity? Also, if this way of working is to be successful, our communication both within and beyond the local Meeting must be the best it can be. It remains the case that the bulk of the caring and loving of our fellows in the Meeting is, like all the most important things in life, unquantifiable. This has always been so. Most of us, I think, have sought, and will continue to seek, spiritual and pastoral support from those others in the Meeting to whom we gravitate. And, of course, in the 21st Century we all look far beyond the Quaker Meeting for our sustenance, as was not the case for Quakers in earlier times. We cannot be all things to all people.

The Minute submitted to Area Meeting

Eldership discussion Sunday 28th January

In discussion of our arrangements for eldership which is to adopt a shared responsibility for the role by a volunteer to be the 'elder for the month', the first point that arose was that we have not really implemented the practice long enough to critique it. It is suggested we continue with the current practice of volunteering for a month at a time. Consideration could be given to helping those who do not feel confident to put themselves forward to fulfil the role. We recognise that the prospect can be daunting. For some, there are other roles which are equally important in holding our meeting together and contributing in those is where they are more comfortable.

Eldership is more than an organisational arrangement of meeting and ensuring the practicalities are met. It is good to be reminded occasionally of the wider elements of care and spiritual nurture that lay behind our reasons for meeting for worship. Upholding the meeting and caring for one another is not limited to specific individuals and is found in everyone's contributions and actions. It is what we do without formal arrangement.

Having a regular reading of Quaker faith & practice was suggested and this at least once a month. Continuing with fortnightly discussions would be welcome. Any arrangements we settle on do not need to be complex and a simple approach is preferred. We are reminded that it is our meeting to shape and live as suits us locally.

Wigtown

Chris Baldry

It has now been a year since Wigtown Friends finally bade a sad farewell to our Meeting House, whose upkeep and maintenance were starting to consume too much of our time and energy. Since March 2023 our new venue has been the

small Parish Church Hall in the town, which has proved to be an extremely supportive location. However, in common with other Meetings, numbers attending Meeting for Worship have continued to remain at below pre-Covid levels. Several of our regular Attenders have not returned and for medical reasons we no longer enjoy the company of two of our long-established and valued Friends.

An innovation in 2023 was to hold joint Meetings for Worship with Dumfries and Castle Douglas, our fellow Meetings in the South-West, whenever there is a fifth Sunday in the month; we are grateful to Castle Douglas for hosting these as the half-way house along the A75.

On losing the Meeting House we felt there was, on the one hand, a danger of diminishing our profile in the community but, on the other, a renewed ability to turn our energies outwards. As we said in a recent piece in a community newsletter, Wigtown Quakers have 'not gone, but simply moved' and we are pleased that we have been able to provide a Quaker presence in the several ecumenical events shared by local churches; these have included the weekly Ninian Moment (a ten minute reading and prayer led by members of all the churches) and the recent World Day of Prayer. With Spring just around her corner and with it a picking up in the pace of activity in community life, our hope is that we can now make a renewed contribution to that life.

Minutes for Castle Douglas Quakers' Meeting for Worship for Business (MFWFB) held Thursday 29 February at 7pm by Zoom

25.17 **Remembering Barbara Baird** – our Clerk joined Clare and David Devereux and others at a memorial service at Roucan Loch for our former Clerk Barbara Baird who died aged 89 in DGRI on 9 February 2024 after a short but debilitating illness. Barbara's daughter and two of her grandchildren were pleased to meet us and memories were shared of visits to our Children's Meetings in the 1990s. A Dumfries Friend remembers attending Open University courses with Barbara before CDLM was founded and others spoke of her calm and steadfast approach to life, how she seemed able to accept what she couldn't change and her principles about shopping, food and support for peace and disarmament. The simple service allowed time for quiet reflection. There was a collection for The Food Train and the informal spray on her wicker coffin was a reminder of Barbara's love of flowers and gardening. Barbara came to the region originally with her husband John who'd inherited a farm. She was befriended in recent years by her next door neighbour who shared her interest in the land and animals and also hosted creative writing events which Barbara often attended. Barbara was an avid reader with a house full of books and enjoyed extending her knowledge late into life. It was a pleasure and a privilege to be with her family to celebrate her life and to give thanks for her Quaker service.

Milngavie

Bob Mandeville recently attended a meeting of Chaplains for Scottish Prisons and after meeting yesterday expressed his concern that they were being expected to listen to prisoners, but had no outlet to talk about what they had heard in confidence. In counselling there is a practice of having a reference person who can listen to, and advise where appropriate, on what clients have said in confidence.

Glasgow Elders had a training day at their meeting house on 2 March which Barbara Potter attended as our new Elder. It was an interesting day with a Woodbrooke speaker talking in the morning via Zoom, and Zoe Prosser in person in the afternoon. She set us some thoughtful questions to think about in groups.

From January our Correspondent has been Ruth Bacon; the email for meeting business items is still milngaviequakers@gmail.com

We have several members who are unwell, and hold them in the Light.

One of our members is unable to attend meeting due to work commitments, we hope to explore whether we can find a time to hold Meeting for Worship with him.

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

Nancy Houston, a long-time member of Dumfries Meeting, celebrated her 100th Birthday on the 9th of March. Nancy is well-known throughout the Dumfries & Galloway cluster of Meetings.

On the day, she travelled, in some style, from her home in Castle Douglas, to the place of her birth, in Cheshire, for her birthday party. Four generations of her extended family gathered to celebrate with her, and hear her stories. Nancy enjoyed a truly memorable day, and was particularly touched to listen to her seven-year-old great granddaughter reading out the greetings card from the King and Queen.

Both Dumfries and Castle Douglas Meetings had also sent greetings! and flowers! And when the CD clerk delivered theirs, Nancy was reading a favourite passage from Quaker Faith & Practice, 10.01, whose words she continues to follow.

Swarthmoor Hall 21 March at 11:52 ·

We're reopening! The long awaited moment is finally here! We're reopening Swarthmoor Hall on Friday 29 March. Find out more in our newsletter! -

<https://mailchi.mp/3582b60a7b64/reopening-swarthmoor-hall>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Area Meeting

20 th April	South Cluster: Castle Douglas, Dumfries. Wigtown,
3 rd June	by Zoom
17 th August	West Cluster: Ayrshire, Argyll, Arran, Islay&Jura, Mull &Iona
5 th October	East Cluster Dunblane and Lanark

General Meeting dates

These will be blended (hybrid) meetings.

9 March 2024	South East (Edinburgh Meeting House)
8 June 2024	West
14 Sept 2024	North
9 Nov 2024	East
2025 8 March	South East



Hold in the Light

In these very difficult times our healing ministry has never been more important.

How much time do you set aside in the Light to hold friends, neighbours and your Meeting, and others. Do not feel you cannot make a difference. It takes only 25 of us, five minutes before Meeting, to create more peace in the world. During WW2, Winston Churchill set up one minute for peace at 9pm each evening.

There is a meeting of Friends Fellowship of Healing on first Monday of each Month at 7.30pm. Contact nicola.james53@gmail.com to add names.

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The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The deadline for contributions for the next issue is 15th July 2024

Send articles in Word format, of no more than 1000 words, to the editor at margaret.roy@btinternet.com.

Helpers for this issue are Laura McMurtie and Edie Phoenix, and of course our proof reader Ruth Bacon. We are still looking for a distribution editor who will deal with sending out the hard copies.

