

# West Scotland

# Quaker Newsletter

February 2018

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## Clerk's Letter

### Diversity, inclusion and privilege.

*I've always thought that the Quaker approach is a valuable tool for the world to use, amongst others, as it reflects ways of living and connecting to others and God that can help ground us and heal us. Those of us who take part in our Meetings become guardians of that Quakerism – there is no-one else. We also reflect Quakerism to the world by how we are and do things. But do we put off some joining with us and only attract a limited selection of people who are like us? We've been asked as Quaker Meetings in West Scotland to think about some questions about our diversity – see the article on page 12.*

*When we start to look at ourselves we can become tired with the guilt laid on us all the time. Looking inwards we have been faced with or told about our own failings—selfishness, insensitivity, prejudice and unwillingness to learn from one another. We are all too often from a certain class base, education and age, and so on. Yet we should not sink into gloom about failure, or beat ourselves up, as we have led the way in some aspects of encompassing difference in our meetings. Women are leaders in running the show compared to many other groups, and we include the lesbian and gay naturally – and are working on other aspects of gender diversity. Those with 'disabilities' are teaching us, albeit slowly some times, of the importance of acceptance and involvement. So we can do it. This is exciting as we can use our successes to help us look at where we are less successful.*

*But there do remain very real questions. Is our age balance right? Do we have enough from ethnic groups and races to begin to learn how to be a 'rainbow' church? We don't reflect wider society in class and educational background. There is some way to go and these questions we are being asked to look at are meant to make us think. What barriers do we put in place, often totally unconsciously? Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre is looking to see how they can help us (and themselves) on all this. One thing that has come up there is how privilege can mask us to how others are. We might even make others uncomfortable though the way we dress, speak and have assumptions about how to behave.*

*Simon Best gave us a talk at Woodbrooke recently on how the tutor team there were beginning to look at our own prejudice as part of the way of delving into the questions we have on diversity. He said there are three factors here that we need to appreciate. Firstly, privilege is about the power, influence and access to resources and life choices that we have; influenced by what we are born with and what we achieve. Individuals may be privileged in certain aspects but not in others. Typically, in our society (not Society?) the educated white male is the most powerful and others are not always let in. Secondly, limits in age, class and race diversity in*

*the Quaker community relate particularly to our present situation. Thirdly, unconscious bias, arising from the degree of social exposure we have had, is an important factor that can determine how we react to issues of privilege and diversity. Our background, experiences, societal stereotypes and the cultural and religious context we are in can make an important impact on our decisions and actions of which we may be unaware. It is usually easier to be aware of our 'disprivilege' than how we are privileged. When we do realise this context we may feel guilty about the privilege and power we have and the disprivilege others may be experiencing. This guilt in itself can become a barrier to progress. The very language I am deliberately using here is a good example of how this works – have you switched off yet?*

*Woodbrooke hope to be able to help Friends' explorations on these issues. What will be important is the need to hear other voices ('giving up the microphone' was a way of describing this), including those who may be on the margins. I hope explorations in your own local meetings can help us, but recording what diversity we do have and what that diversity feels like – what do we need to learn?*

**Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting**

## Report of Area Meeting by telephone, 4<sup>th</sup> December

I was rather sad that Area Meeting by telephone conference on 4<sup>th</sup> December attracted only eleven or so Friends. These telephone meetings are such a wonderful opportunity for some of us to attend AM without taking a three-day weekend over it. Perhaps some were deterred by the apparently widespread power cut which meant that the Islay contingent took part by candle-light using a distinctly substandard plug-in phone. In spite of the resulting noisy interruptions that caused, we managed, thanks to Michael's usual expert clerking, to get through quite a long and thought-provoking agenda by the promised finish-time of 9.00pm.

After a period of worship, during which the first two paragraphs of the Testimony to the Grace of God as seen in the life of Helen Steven, produced by North Scotland AM with assistance from Friends in West Scotland, were read, Area Meeting began with a veritable flood of membership matters. The first one was interesting and required some reflection. Milngavie Meeting have discerned the ideal person to take over the role of Elder is a long-standing attender not in membership. We were reminded of the flexibility now offered by Britain Yearly Meeting to consider means of entry to membership other than the traditional visit and report, and having heard of Bob Mandeville's commitment to Milngavie Meeting over many years and his willingness to become a member, it felt right to welcome him into membership "by recognition". There followed three reports of the more traditional variety, as a result of which we also welcomed Gwen Johnstone of Glasgow Meeting, Angela Stather

of Islay & Jura Meeting and Peter Morton of Dumfries Meeting into membership. And finally we accepted a transfer of membership from Central Yorkshire AM for Jenny Brook, also of Dumfries Meeting. Five new West Scotland Friends in one AM. Is that a record?!

We then turned to the budget for 2018 and heard that the budgeted expenditure for 2018 still stands at around £25,000, which works out at £115 per member. In the current year there has been an underspend of the budgeted figure by around £4000, so that in spite of income having been lower than hoped we will still end the year without going into deficit. We also heard of the very generous bequest of almost £25,000 that has been received from the estate of Jenny Auld (Britain Yearly Meeting and General Meeting for Scotland have received similar sums). Local Meetings are to be asked to suggest uses for this bequest and Trustees will consider it, and will also approve the budget.

Local Meetings are also to be asked to consider diversity in their Meetings, following Meeting for Sufferings' report on diversity and inclusion. And we are also going to receive information about Sanctuary Meetings, about which Tim Gee spoke at General Meeting recently. Dunblane Meeting has become the first registered Sanctuary Meeting in Scotland, and Glasgow Meeting are going through the process of applying.

Our other main item of business was Nominations. Two further Elders and one Overseer were appointed, and we asked Nominations Committee to seek a name to take over responsibility for editing the AM page of the GM website, and also to find a name to attend a training session for Sanctuary Meetings to be held at the Swanwick Conference Centre in Derbyshire in March. It was concerning to hear that it has not yet been possible to fill the roles of convenor of Nominations Committee for the next triennium, nor to find a new Convenor of Trustees to replace Robin Davis who comes to the end of his period of service at the end of December. Robin has agreed to continue until March to allow more time, but would then like to be released for other things!

After a reminder that Local Meetings should send their annual reports to Trustees by the end of January, and a brief outline from our clerk of business that awaits us in 2018, we closed just moments after 9.00, with restored lights in Islay and the ability to make a welcome cup of tea! We look forward to meeting face to face in Glasgow on 13 January.

**Bronwen Currie, Islay & Jura**

## Report of Area Meeting, Glasgow, 13<sup>th</sup> January

A somewhat dull day but decidedly above freezing, so quite warm for this time of year. Three of us from Dunblane shared a car journey and two others arrived by train. Up the steps, past the demolished adjoining building that has caused so much

disruption, ring the bell by the front door of Glasgow Meeting House, and drink a welcome coffee.

One of the first items of business was to record the death of Jim Anderton of Glasgow Meeting. This evoked a lot of warm appreciation from Friends present: he knew he was near his end; he always had a care for the children in the meeting; a lovely man, he gave great service: in the Quaker disability group, he recorded *The Friend* for visually impaired Friends; he was a regular at Glasgow's Wednesday meeting and the day before he died he sent his love to everyone; in the study group he demonstrated foresight and open-mindedness in the way he comprehended God.

Another item of business was the report from Nominations, and their difficulty in finding someone to take over as clerk of WSAM trustees. Anyone who is not a trustee will be reluctant to be clerk. One can easily imagine that a Friend who has never been a trustee would feel rash to offer to be clerk of trustees; similarly with finding a new clerk of nominations committee. We discussed possibilities such as finding someone to give secretarial support to these posts, but Friends considered that there was not enough work to warrant a secretary. The search continues. For anyone asked if they might fill a role and who is perhaps daunted by the prospect, there are AM funds available for training such Friends if they want it.

It is always cheering when a friend applies for membership and we appointed visitors to support Susan Mitchell from Dunblane Meeting in doing so. Likewise we were happy to initiate the necessary processes to enable Carole Ross to transfer from Gloucestershire Area Meeting.

Despite the fact that Junior Yearly Meeting clashes with Scottish exams and often also with Shindig, we were able to forward to Quaker Life one young Friend's name to attend. Being the first WSAM after the year end, it was Tabular Statement time, and our net membership has increased by 8 to 220, with attenders increasing by 6 to 243.

We much appreciated the wholesome lunch provided by Glasgow Friends: two kinds of soup, bread and cheese, and at the beginning and end of the day, coffee and tea with accompaniments.

The afternoon was devoted to a talk from Rhiannon Grant, Woodbrooke Tutor for Quaker Roles and Deputy Programmes Leader for the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies. Jenny Meade reports on this separately. You can find more details on all that happened on this day in the clerk's comprehensive minutes, which should be available to all Friends in WSAM.

**Tim Denvir, Dunblane**

[True spirituality, though, being the practice of love, can never be sustained as an elite exercise.](#)

## **Minute 12/18 (Re)Naming the Mystery: Trying to Tell the Truth about God**

Rhiannon Grant, Woodbrooke Tutor for Quaker Roles and Deputy Programmes Leader for the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies, has addressed the topic *(Re)Naming the Mystery: Trying to Tell the Truth about God* with us this afternoon. This follows a year when we have been thinking about how we express our understanding of the concept of 'God' by seeking to find a common language to describe the experience we call 'God'.

In the spring of 2017, Gretchen Castle came to talk to General Meeting for Scotland in Edinburgh. The intent was for her to use her knowledge of how Friends 'see God' in different parts of the world as a way of encouraging spiritual exploration by Friends and meetings in a safe way. We have the usual variety of belief here, but have not found it easy to talk with each other about belief and how that affects the whole religious concept of the Society. Since then we have sent out the minutes and questions from Gretchen to Friends and local meetings to use as discussion points. Today Rhiannon has rounded off this exploration for us.

As a teenager Rhiannon was often frustrated about Quakers' reluctance to consider theology and to describe their concept of God. Since then she has spent much of her life researching these attitudes and the usage of associated words. In her talk she examined four topics: saying some things about language, religious language and where languages come from; what Quakers in particular think about this theological language; what I personally can say about God; and what we as a community may be able to do to improve conversations we are having.

Language is about people, community and communicating with one another; but there are things it can't do – it is not possible for one word to encapsulate the huge range of understandings and experience. Rhiannon explored in her research the list of words we use in describing religious experience – 'God'. This list reveals our varying and ever-expanding names for the unknown mystery. Yet, generally, Rhiannon has found we are all engaging with a monotheistic view but also saying something about that which we don't fully understand. Words reflect our desire for unity but also our pleasure in diversity. When we use a word, we speak out of our personal story of the use of the word, within the context of the broader cultural meaning of the word in our society.

God, or whatever we call it (Rex Ambler).

The Quaker use of silence reflects one important thing: that we don't have a full picture and wait to feel experience and connection. Silence also means that we don't use words that don't reflect our experience.

How can we understand one another better? Rhiannon suggested there are three stages:

Got to try,

Got to cry,

Got to clarify.

We have to keep trying to connect with others, even if seeds fall on stony ground. If so we try again. We need to explore what God is, what happens in meeting for worship and what underpins our business method.



Riches often come through process; often messy, challenging or difficult. We can cry. We may have to cry to break through. But we need spaces where we can be vulnerable and have deep, honest conversations. We need to get over the blocks where we can't use our language or let other use theirs. If we can't be explicit in front of others in our meeting, we can't get meaning between us.

Theology is part of our spiritual life. It will never be 'done that, tick', as we will always be revealing new understandings and what we think is happening in our spiritual experiences. This needs to be more in the open, part of our community life together. Our great strength is our use of silence. But silence can be deadening if we aren't faithful – when used to prevent engagement.

Rhiannon's message to us is to learn each other's personal stories, being ready for new meaning, patterns and experience.

Give it enough time.

Be there.

Be honest and have these conversations.

### **Jenny Mead speaks after hearing Rhiannon Grant, (Re)Naming the Mystery: Trying to tell the truth about God.**

I became a member of Quakers in 2011 after attending Arran meeting for several years. I always feel welcome to join Friends at Glasgow meeting, and I'd like to thank them for the lovely refreshments.

I was particularly interested in the topic for the afternoon;

**Rhiannon Grant, of Woodbrooke, on (Re)Naming the Mystery: Trying to Tell the Truth about God**

I have personal experiences, as we all do individually, from attending different forms of worship as we move around over the years.

*I only have 500 words so forgive me for using myself as just one example*

As a child I just believed that God was God, and Jesus was his only son, born of the virgin Mary.

I was confirmed at Lichfield Cathedral, and sang in the choir of a small rural church nearby.

**When Rhiannon spoke**, she reminded us of the absolute individuality of everyone.

We will always have differing opinions along our life's journey, as we learn.

When changing locations I have attended Catholic, Church of Scotland, Baptist, and I have spent time with Buddhists, and studied Dru Yoga and healing from an Indian perspective.

Many people who don't attend churches say that they just can't believe that God is singular, masculine, and sits up in the clouds somewhere. They don't believe in the virgin birth, and many don't believe in reincarnation of Jesus.

I believe in reincarnation of all souls as a learning process towards eternal ethereal Peace.

Many of the words in books of the church I can't understand. For example in the Episcopal service; "We believe in one holy and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins"

I do however nearly always like the words in "Anglican Hymns Old and New".

I just opened the book randomly; Hymn 710, verse 5; "He came as saviour to his own, the way of love he trod; he came to win us by good will, for force is not of God"

A friend in Scotland invited me to go to the Baptist Church. I went there many times as they met near where I worked.

One day I forwarded what I considered to be an interesting Quaker email. She was horrified, and in no uncertain terms said I was never to send her such a thing again, from some non-christian cult. She never spoke to me again. Her husband was a lay reader at the Baptist Church, and couldn't understand why she was upset. Her mind was absolutely fixed. She left the Baptists due to another disagreement and became quite isolated.

I went to a Quaker study day on Arran at the invitation Jeny Faulkner. A couple of members there had very different ideas about how to conduct meetings but we eventually found peace.

**I feel that Peace can be found by us all in the Quaker period of silent worship, no matter how our thoughts may differ.**

I visualize a circle of white light coming down upon us, bringing us humility, and the strength to carry on doing what we can, to spread the spirit of God or good, to everyone on Earth, and help to heal the inequalities and injustice which challenge us.

**So back to Rhiannons teaching. She illustrates how we can learn to recognize, understand, and work through differences in Grace, for the benefit of all.**

We are all on a totally unique journey. Acceptance is a virtue.  
I would happily recommend the workshop to all meetings.

**Jenny Meade, Glasgow**

[Like meditation, prayer is bringing awareness to the ingredients of life.](#)



## **Your Financial Contribution in 2018**

Please take some time to think about the financial needs of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and how you can make a contribution. Through donating to West Scotland Area Meeting, you can support your local Meeting for Worship and the administration that supports it both locally and nationally. You can help to maintain our spiritual and social witness in your local community and the wider world.

We realise that everyone's circumstances are different and we are grateful for all donations, regardless of their size or frequency. In the past we have been asked to give figures for guidance purposes. Some Friends will be able to contribute the suggested amounts, while for others that it will not be possible. We hope that Friends will contribute what they can and that those who are able to give more will do so.

You can choose to allocate your donation in three ways:

### **Your Local Meeting**

Consider first what it costs to maintain your Local Meeting for Worship: the cost of accommodation and your local Quaker activities. There are twelve local meetings in West Scotland and their needs will vary considerably: Argyll, Arran, Ayrshire, Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Dunblane, Glasgow, Islay & Jura, Lanark, Milngavie, Mull & Iona and Wigtown.

Your Local Meeting Treasurer will be able to advise you about running costs and expenses or your local Quaker Meeting.

### **West Scotland Area Meeting**

Your Local Meeting is part of West Scotland Area Meeting, the registered charity that undertakes administration on behalf of Local Meetings. All its work is done by volunteers. It looks after membership matters; produces this newsletter; supports attendance at conferences and training events; and provides insurance cover for all Local Meetings. Over half of Area Meeting's expenditure goes to supporting other Quaker bodies, with a membership quota system in operation for General Meeting for Scotland, Northern Friends Peace Board and Northern Friends Youth Events Trust (which runs an annual residential Summer Shindig for the children and young people in our Meetings).

West Scotland Area Meeting needs about **£120** for every member to meet its budget obligations in 2018. Our Area Meeting sets its budget annually and all Friends can be involved in decisions about spending through attendance at Area Meeting.

## Britain Yearly Meeting

You are also asked to bear in mind the central work of the Society which is the responsibility of Britain Yearly Meeting. As well as providing essential support, networking, co-ordination and publicity, it promotes Quaker concerns and values throughout our country and in the wider world. You will find more details about what it does at the website *Quakers in Britain* and in the free quarterly magazine *Quaker News*.

Britain Yearly Meeting has advised us that it needs about **£225** for every member to carry out its work in 2018. However, West Scotland Area Meeting makes an annual donation to Britain Yearly Meeting on behalf of its members, amounting to almost £25 per member (included in the £120 mentioned above). Local Meetings throughout West Scotland may also decide to make a direct donation from their own funds.

### How can I contribute?

It is possible to make separate donations directly to your Local Meeting, to West Scotland Area Meeting and to Britain Yearly Meeting.

However, you may find it more convenient to contribute to all these bodies through West Scotland Area Meeting, using the following Contribution Schedule. This allows you to specify how your donation should be assigned and we will pass on the money in accordance with your wishes. If you do not specify how you wish your money allocated, the whole amount will go to West Scotland Area Meeting.

If you wish to set up a Standing Order, please tick the appropriate box on the form overleaf and we will send you a Standing Order mandate form. If you already have a Standing Order and wish to change it, you must contact your bank in order to make the arrangements. We would be grateful if you could let us know of any changes by contacting the Assistant Treasurer whose details are overleaf.

If you wish to set up a bank transfer in order to make a one-off payment, please contact the Treasurer or Asst. Treasurer (contact details below) for our bank details.

If you are a taxpayer, you can increase your donation by allowing us to claim back relevant tax from HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) through the Gift Aid Scheme. This will add 20% to the value of your donation. **However, be warned.** You must have paid enough tax to cover your Gift Aid, otherwise you will be liable to pay back HMRC for the amount falsely claimed.

**Margaret Morton**

**Treasurer, Religious Society of Friends West Scotland Area Meeting**  
(email: [margmor@btopenworld.com](mailto:margmor@btopenworld.com))

## Contribution Schedule 2018

Name .....

My contribution in 2018 will be £ ..... per month/quarter/year

To ..... Local Meeting                      £.....

To West Scotland Area Meeting                      £.....

To Britain Yearly Meeting                      £.....

I shall make my payment by:

*(Please indicate)*

☐ Cheque

☐ Standing Order/Bacs payment

☐ CAF Voucher/Standing Order

**Please indicate:**

If you wish to receive a receipt or acknowledgement                      ☐

If you would like a Standing Order mandate form                      ☐

If you would like bank details for bacs payment                      ☐

If you would like a Gift Aid declaration form                      ☐

Cheques and CAF vouchers must be made payable to:

**Religious Society of Friends West Scotland Area Meeting**

Please return this form and any donations to:

**Helen McLean**

Assistant Treasurer of West Scotland Area Meeting  
12A Sheean Drive, Brodick, Isle of Arran KA27 8DH

Email: hm920346@gmail.com

## Diversity Amongst Friends

**We've been challenged to look at ourselves as Quaker Meetings.**

**We've been asked to examine together, in local meetings and area meeting these questions:**

- 1) In what ways is our Meeting (Area and Local) already diverse?
- 2) In what ways could it be more diverse?
- 3) What would help it become more diverse? What are the opportunities and barriers?

Is Quakerism something for some types of people and not others? Do we put off some because we unconsciously portray a type of community that doesn't reflect how others live? Do we as Quaker meetings make it easy for young people, people of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds and so on to join with us so we meet their needs? So, how are we diverse in our meetings in terms of age range, gender, race, education and class? What image do we give to others when they come in to meetings? Do they come back?

If Quakerism has something of value to the world, do we let the world see it?

The following article comes from Juliet Prager, the secretary of our representative body for Quaker in Britain, Meeting for Sufferings.

### **Quaker communities – loving, inclusive and all-age?**

After hearing the call to examine diversity amongst Quakers in Britain, Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, explores the next steps.

In August, Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering of British Quakers, gave all Quakers in Britain an exciting challenge – for our meetings to be more diverse. Now I'm looking for suggestions on just how we can do that.

Following a three-year arc of living out our faith in the world, Yearly Meeting issued the following minute on diversity:

"We have heard the call to examine our own diversity, particularly in our committee and organisational structure, locally and nationally. Diversity has several key dimensions and more may emerge in the future. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings, paying particular attention to race and age diversity and to keep Yearly Meeting informed in their annual report."

### **Minute 38: Living out our faith in the world: working with others to make a difference**

Meeting for Sufferings, the national representative decision-making body of British Quakers, will begin working on this in early October. As its secretary, I'll be helping Sufferings to plan what happens next.

## **Our faith in the future**

We already know that this is a live issue. Inevitably, Quaker meetings are responding to changes in the world around us, as we experience economic inequality, changing demographics and new patterns of work.

Quaker meetings – and their local communities – are all different. We'll need to find ways to explore what 'diversity' means, and we'll probably find different types of diversity!

Some Friends have already been considering inclusion, and doing practical things. One meeting has a 'sliding scale' for its annual weekend away, so that those who are better-off pay more than students or those on low incomes. Another is experimenting with new ways of worship. Young Quaker groups organise meetings for worship at times that suit them.

## **An ongoing journey**

We're not at the start of this journey. In 1986, the Quaker Women's Group gave the Swarthmore Lecture. The experiences that some Quaker feminists shared in *Bringing the invisible into the Light* were not always comfortable but helped to shift perceptions and practice.

In the 1990s there was a 'Joint Working Group on Racism in the life of BYM'. It helped Quakers in Britain to explore racism and published useful materials.

In 1998, Young Friends General Meeting reflected on commitment and belonging in another Swarthmore Lecture.

In 2009, Britain Yearly Meeting committed to recognising and celebrating the equality of same-sex relationships in marriage.

Drawing on contributions from Quakers around Britain in 2015, *Our faith in the future* tells us that we want our meetings to be loving, inclusive and all-age.

BYM has offered programmes for children and young people for decades, as well as financial and practical support to Young Friends General Meeting. Recently, we've started to focus on young adults, particularly through Quaker Life's Engaging Young Adult Quakers project.

## **The road ahead**

All of this continues to be a challenge and the road ahead will probably have unexpected turns. But many of us are excited about new possibilities to recognise God in each person, make the Quaker way open to more people, and even grow our Quaker meetings.

I invite you to share your ideas about how Quakers can explore these issues, and encourage others to do so. We'll need to learn from others, find allies and discover new tools. Do you know other organisations that have been through similar changes? What tools can we use? Whose skills and experience can we draw on? You can send suggestions and ideas to Meeting for Sufferings at: [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk).

But also send them to Michael Hutchinson, clerk of West Scotland Area Meeting, so we can think about them at a coming Area Meeting. ([mjhriddrie@btinternet.com](mailto:mjhriddrie@btinternet.com))

## Quaker Life Representative Council, 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017

I attended the Quaker Life Representative Council on behalf of West Scotland Area Meeting. The Council considered two questions:

1. What changes to our models of worship might enable our local meetings and area meetings to flourish as lively and faithful communities?
2. Have you visited Quaker meetings in other parts of our Yearly Meeting or abroad in other Yearly Meetings?

I would like to thank those who responded to the two questions in advance of the Council. Your comments were very helpful. Thank you.

Following a short Welcoming Meeting and a welcome evening meal the Council met in plenary session to hear news from Quaker Life Staff. We were treated to a series of brief talks by staff members who each outlined their staff role. The areas covered were: Quaker Witness and Worship, Library and Archives, Ministry and Outreach, Children, and Young People. We were reminded that Quaker Life Staff offer support to Local Meetings and Area Meetings. I was particularly heartened to hear from Chris Venables that in his work with young people, 18 to 35 year-olds, he has found a yearning amongst them for spiritual development.

Saturday morning saw an introduction to the theme of the weekend. We listened to three speakers; Deborah Rowlands ( Clerk to BYM), Paul Parker (Recording Clerk ,BYM), Julia Ryberg( Ministry and Outreach Coordinator )

Paul and Deborah worked in smooth tandem to present an examination of three issues; Inward life of worship and discernment, Functioning of the church community, Social testimonies. These they maintained are the three legs that support the Quaker stool. They had two wooden three legged stools to illustrate.

Paul and Deborah had recently spent time in the USA “to see what they do there”. In connection with Inward Life of Worship and Discernment they encouraged us to think of ‘Spiritual Formation’. In the U.S. Clearance Committees were set up to consider spiritual development, to test leadership, to consider if we ‘let go enough’. Paul and Deborah encountered a variety of worship models; extended meetings, more worship sharing where Friends focussed on a topic, use of communal singing, programmed meeting, ‘long’ ministry.

In connection with the functioning of the church community they asked us to consider if we might have too many committees. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has reduced theirs to two. In connection with Area Meetings we were asked to consider the frequency, who decides the venue, how is the agenda set. We were also asked to think about how often we are in touch with those who cannot come to meetings. How might we make Area Meetings more lively.



Concerning social testimonies, we were informed of Quaker Voluntary Services. This is a group of young Quakers in the US who share a house and work with voluntary organisations for four days a week, the fifth day being given to spiritual formation. Others form Advocacy Groups in political lobbying for specific issues. They are retained for a year on a small stipend.

Julia Ryberg gave us an entertaining and very informative talk on her experiences with new Quaker groups in eastern Europe particularly Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. She mentioned the difficulties encountered by a small group of Friends in Czechoslovakia in finding a clerk and a treasurer.

**Howard Bartlett, Ayr**

## **Woodbrooke on the Road: What can we do with what we've got? 9<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

When volunteers to write this report were requested, I held back, feeling that I couldn't possibly fit in a single thing more before Christmas. But in the afternoon, when it transpired that no one else had volunteered, and anyway it wasn't required before Christmas, I gave in. The folly here of course, is that when something is no longer fresh in the mind .....

However, from my perspective, it was an excellent day, so well structured and gently led by Simon Best (Woodbrooke's Head of Learning). He employed a variety of approaches for group work—one-to-one, small group, large group, with those we knew, with those we didn't. And such clever timing, especially in that period after lunch, when eyelids begin to droop. Almost all of us then had to get up out of our chairs and move around the room to choose a topic group for a brainstorming session.

Before that though, we had worked our way through a series of questions, starting with the present situations within our Meetings, the things we do well, the challenges we face, and what we value about the Meeting. This approach was applied both to Local and Area Meetings. It shouldn't come as a surprise to learn that the challenges of one meeting, overload of ministry for example, represent the desires of another, which is largely silent. It is also important to be aware of how a meeting appears to a visitor. Meetings, especially small ones, can be like families where the familiarity breeds, not contempt exactly, but a lack of appreciation of the value of its characteristics. One Friend had experienced, when visiting Dumfries, the most



gathered meeting in 40 years of Quaker worship! I wasn't there that day, but I hope that isn't significant!!

Knowing where we are as Meetings then enabled us to dream of where we could and should be, what we needed to do to get there, and how we could do this. Easier said than done, but so much food for thought emerged. Much of this material can be accessed via the screen-shots thoughtfully and speedily provided by Alastair Reid, and sent out to all Meetings. You may well have seen these already, or at any rate been made aware of them by those of your Meeting who were at the event.

Universally among the groups everyone wanted more people at Meetings, especially younger folk and children. (It was noted that many of us might well be dead in ten years time!) A more prominent place in our local communities was sought, or at least our presence known about. Going back to basics to see what was really needed was a recommended approach, especially with regard to all the roles which may or may not be essential, and the administration of our meetings. What matters most is the people within our Meetings, that's us! If we feel valued, and our gifts recognised, then we should be attractive to those who come to us, and able to grow as a group.

Interestingly, one of the highlights of the day for me, and I know for others from Dumfries & Galloway, was the discussion time spent with those from our own Local Meeting, or in our case cluster group, talking about where we wanted to be in ten years time, and how might we get there. Now of course we could have met up locally to discuss this, but we didn't, and probably wouldn't have done without the catalyst of this special day. (It's like the phenomenon of going out on a date with one's spouse. You could talk about things round the kitchen table, but somehow the change of scene and atmosphere stimulates and liberates.)

At the end of the day we each made resolutions, achievable aims to enrich our local and/or Area Meetings. If we wished we could share these resolutions, which of course means we are not the only ones who will know if these resolutions are not kept! It wouldn't be proper for me to share anyone else's plans, but my own concerns our Local Meeting's newsletter, for which I currently bear responsibility. So watch this space!

**Jan Lethbridge , Dumfries**

## **Publicity for Quaker Meetings – Daphne Wassermann**

At the recent Woodbrooke on the Road in Glasgow various Friends mentioned the difficulty of publicising Quaker meetings - libraries and colleges being unwilling to put up notices of religious meetings. On contacting Gill Sewell and Jon Martin at Friends House about this and they responded as follows.

**From Jon Martin, Ministry and Outreach officer.**

This is a problem. Most places have a policy of rejecting religious material as standard. A lot of universities will, however, have a Chaplaincy centre or some form of interfaith religious provision which you can engage with. I know my own experience from Lancaster University was that the Quakers were fine as they were formally part of the chaplaincy

centre but the Jehovah's witnesses who regularly flied campus and tried to put up posters were not welcomed by the university hierarchy. Some universities will allow things through student led societies, these could be formal Quaker societies (like Durham) or through other societies more broad societies like the Christian Fellowship etc. My colleague Gill might have some good advice and I've copied in Chris and Marleen who are working on Universities Chaplaincy at the moment. Many places just flat out reject religious advertising - I've fallen foul of that a lot, it's just part of the landscape we operate in.

### **From Gill Sewell.**

Personal contact is usually the best route in, but if any institution has a blanket policy of no political or religious materials it may not be possible to use printed materials. Sometimes the soft approach like an invitation to shared lunch makes the initial steps easier.

In case anyone wishes to follow this up further, the e mails addres are:

Marleen Schepers <[marleens@quaker.org.uk](mailto:marleens@quaker.org.uk)>

Chris Venables <[ChrisV@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ChrisV@quaker.org.uk)>

### **Report back from Engaging with families, an event for elders, overseers and other interested Friends, 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Lancaster Meeting House**

Mary Troup (also of Glasgow Meeting) and I attended this event on behalf of West of Scotland Area Meeting. It was itself engaging, well-attended and well-structured, with lots of interesting ideas shared in varied ways.

The programme included an introduction which framed the day, with a video message from Paul Parker, the recording clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting. He highlighted the need to think about how we engage with children's spirituality as they are now, not just from the perspective of preparing them for the future. He asked us to think how we'd organise our meetings if we were putting children first.

In small groups we began to think through a series of questions around three themes:

- How we do and can **reach out** to families in our communities
- How we do and can **connect** with families
- How we are and can be **enriched** by families

We shared ideas of activities that have worked well – an afternoon together of 'Quaker Maker' bringing creative activities to do in company (a bit like Messy Church), toddler groups, Give and Take Days, gardening together, joining up with children's groups from other faiths or thinking of "what we would do if being adventurous". For one meeting being adventurous had led to a winter picnic.

Helen Chalmers spoke about her Woodbrooke scholarship which led to the development of a new spiral-bound set of advices and queries called "All are welcome, growing our all-age community". She noted that Methodist Church

research has found children need to feel they know 3-5 people in their church community to feel they have a sense of spiritual identity.

In the afternoon we compared notes on a range of topics, emphasising the importance of the following:

- Being ready for children and the importance of a family's first experience: "meetings that get found are those that are ready to be found", i.e., those that nourish community life. Being ready to communicate the arrangements for children. Could being ready mean adults on the rota for children's meeting running through activities and holding a prayerful space when there are no children?
- Making and creating the space for children to feel comfortable rather than contained including where they meet as children and in the meeting room itself, with cushions and quiet toys or books to look at. In one meeting, provision was made for children to be able to move in and out of the meeting room during all-age worship.
- Being willing to tailor the approach to meet children's specific needs. Being ready to be enriched means being willing to be changed by families, not expecting them to fit with the ways things are.
- Parents' need of the opportunity to pray and join meetings for worship.
- How to manage situations where members of the meeting do not want to welcome families into meeting – enabling an all-age meeting for worship and usual meeting for worship to take place in different rooms?

Some of the side conversations confirmed the view that events beyond Sunday mornings are very important to children and young people. Weekends away and Shindig are often highlights of their year, and this kind of participation should be valued.

**Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries**

## **The Demise of the Children's Meeting**

The card I received from the children when I resigned my post as Depute Children's Worker was amazing. It said "Deer Alastair" – spelling intentional – and featured a caricature of my head on a deer's body. The card also featured Captain Squiggles, a character created by the children under my guidance, when they were challenged to create an alien from a world where money is banned. Laughter is currency on the Captain's homeworld. That was more than two years ago, and I was very touched that the session had such a lasting impact.

I also received cards and gifts from Children's Meeting, and from Glasgow Meeting at large, for which I was very grateful. It was with a very heavy heart, however, that I left this job. I did this a month prior to the Children's Workers' contracts being

terminated, so that I might express my views on the matter free of any hint of a financial interest on my part.

I have some proposals for how we might better welcome children in our Meeting, in accordance with our testimony of equality.

1. **Reinstate at least one paid children's worker immediately** – This is my preferred option. It will cost less than £30 a week (not counting overheads, which would be paid anyway to run CM with volunteers). I would, obviously, not apply for this position. For more than a decade, Glasgow Meeting has been a leading light, by offering a Children's Meeting parallel to Meeting for Worship. This is a precious commodity to give up so cheaply. Offering this service not only values our children, but makes Quaker Meeting more attractive to people with childcare needs who are thinking of attending for the first time. The fact that fewer children are attending of late than have done in the past is not relevant.
2. **Make all-age worship standard** – this option best respects the equality of children. Quiet activities will be made available, and children will be welcomed into the Meeting. This will require an acceptance of the imperfection of their silence. An extra Meeting for Worship may be organised once a month without children, for those who prefer it that way.
3. **Apply for funding to run a weekly interfaith children's workshop** – we can work in partnership with Interfaith Scotland to design this programme, and it would be a good way of working with other faith communities.

I would like these to be considered as an alternative to the present arrangement, which is that Children's Meeting is entirely run by volunteers. I am troubled by this, as I feel we may not have adequately reflected on the morality of directly replacing paid with unpaid workers.

## **Report on Violence Against Women Concern**

We set out to raise awareness of these 16 days, 25<sup>th</sup> Nov to 19<sup>th</sup> December, with three talks, two vigils and a workshop on AVP. The idea of the talks was to be informative, the workshop was to give Quakers in particular an opportunity to experience the Alternatives to Violence workshops that they have supported for some time but may not have participated in.

The first of our talks was on **FGM, Female Genital Mutilation**. We were addressed by Hilary Burrage, author of two books on the subject (one in Glasgow Meeting library) and one of the co-founders of the Global Media Association to End FGM, and Wura Ogunotimi of KWISA, Kenyan Women in Scotland Association.

Hilary spoke of four Es: Engagement, Enforcement, Economy and Eradication. It is not an easy subject and there are different aspects to it. In many countries women are dependent on marriage for economic security. If uncut they may not get married, but the health implications of cutting are horrific and life-lasting. If they survive



trauma and infection, other problems include difficult childbirth. Internal damage may cause incontinence so a woman is unclean or smells so becomes an outcast with no means or supporting herself or her children – except perhaps prostitution. We were told that many women do not realise they have been cut! The shock on the face of medics can drive women into a humiliated silence. Interestingly the western Christian approach is to expose the practice to protect the daughters but another approach is to support the woman and empower her to deal with it within her own community. When something is imposed from outside, it goes underground in secret.

We spoke of the issue as child abuse, as HGB, the need for more 'black nurses', for nurses in schools, and the need to train and prepare medical staff in this country in how to deal with it sensitively.

One eye-opener for me was episiotomies – the common practice of cutting women in childbirth. I had not realised the long-term consequences of this for the health of mothers here in Scotland.

Wura Ogunrotimi was able to enlighten the participants on KWISA's approach in the campaign to ending and preventing FGM, HTPs and all forms of violence against women and girls the organisation approach discussed are: Bottom- Up which works at grassroots level; "Do No Harm approach" whereby the project does not denigrate, stigmatise, racial profile and humiliate the survivors and their communities since this makes them defensive and likely to withdraw from the campaign; using Social change communication and behaviour approach through the project to communicate and speak on the motivations behind FGM and HTPs practice, while identifying and establishing the actual personal and social barriers that hinder abandonment of FGM and HTPs.

Our second talk on **Women & Power** was addressed by Clare Phillips of Castle Douglas Meeting and Helen Minnis of Glasgow Meeting. Clare was politically active in the Green Party; Helen is a Consultant Paediatric Psychiatrist.

We learned of the history of women Dundee jute workers, of the effects of lower pay for women and economic dependency. We looked at the key obstacles of gender based roles – care, putting others first, and prepared to kill or be killed. The positive aspects of each gender stereotype could be put together to form a new human. We spoke of the power that nurtures. Clare introduced us to different power structures: hierarchy, magical, and personal power. She recommended Ann Dickson's *A women in your own right*. Personal power starts with dealing with your own fear. Our empowered human has qualities that include thoughtful, respect, soft fuzzy (strong but ability to flip between velvet and iron fist), decisive, listener, kind, generous, and on . . . .

Helen spoke of the human need to 'cluster', to keep close to the herd. It is an angle of attachment theory. Research showed that violence was not necessarily an attribute of humanness. A positive side of affiliation is to co-operate and work **for** each other.



How do we work together? Good leadership works collaboratively asking for advice and including others but . . . should an emergency arise, the expert can 'take over and give the orders needed to save the child or the heart attack patient'.

We spoke of assertiveness training as women (and men) learning to take up space. In summary, the quality of process allows the spirit to be heard!

Our final talk on **underage marriage** was lead by Julia Wasige of KWISA. She started by asking us to consider, what is a child? In Niger 75% of women are married under 18 years of age, 50% under 15. In Scotland, the age of marriage without parental consent is 16. Cultures differ. Is there a difference between a child and a teenager? Is marriage the same as underage sex?

There is a stereotype of an old man marrying a young girl whose body is still developing and to whom pregnancy brings great risks, if not the sexual act itself when perpetuated on a child of 8, 9, 10 years old. Incest is a problem, as is polygamy and in some countries Sharia Law closes the issue. Who makes the rules? The male may make decisions and how can the female complain when she has to address those complaints to another male and in the process has to be accompanied by a male relative, possibly the perpetrator. How do we interfere in other cultures?

There is the UN Declaration of Rights of the Child. How can this be supported? The married child bride is often shut out from education. Future life choices are limited. But education is more than this. It is learning who you are, of developing values.

We spoke of the quality of relationships. In our own country the effect of pornography is hidden on the whole because the measures are 'soft' in the realms of the feminine markers. There is a pressure on young girls to have sex at an early age. We looked at the hypersexualisation of our society and the increasing objectification of young women. How do you buck fashion?

**Overall**, the project was indeed informative. Sadly, our numbers were poor, even for the AVP workshop we had directly targeted at Quakers. However, it was good to get the project off the ground and we are grateful to all those who participated. We have a long list of fellow-travellers with who we networked: Miriam Weibye and Marion Watson at the Episcopal Church for Thursdays in Black, Matthew Ross at ACTS, Maryhill Interfaith Group, the Glasgow Women's Library, the Sikh Temple, AVP, KWISA, Jane Mace at Northumbria AM. We learned a few lessons that we will apply to next year! Many Quaker women responded to our call for support, too many to mention but especial thanks should go to Alison Burnley who came through from Edinburgh in the early days and kept us on track with Quakers.

### **Where do we go from here?**

We are not rushing into things. We need to be careful of our aims. We are not campaigning about any one thing but to change society's values re women, big target, and we need a lot of Light, but we have some thoughts for supporting projects:

- ❖ More vigils, **Thursdays in Black** but we need to network more and get better support;
- ❖ Outside football matches giving out **white ribbons** – we are looking for 10 non-threatening grey haired women! And it would be good to nationally co-ordinate it;
- ❖ **AVP or similar in schools** – we need money for training, and volunteers; AVP themed Pop-up Top-ups were suggested - Short taster sessions attracting new people to full workshops and helping people already involved in AVP keep themselves on track between full workshops. This idea will be run by the AVP Scotland Core Group.
- ❖ Interdenominational (Women's) Group to send **a letter to the Scottish government** raising concern of current levels of violence against women.
- ❖ **A talk/discussion group** every 1-2 months possibly with the Glasgow Women's Library to keep the topic alive and develop it, and co-ordinate the many small groups working on the issues.

If we can pull even some of this off, we might progress the concern.

**Funding** We have none.

We must be grateful to Glasgow Quaker Meeting, Maryhill Community Centre and Robertson House for providing premises free for talks, workshop and planning meetings.

Most involved paid their own transport and accommodation. We provided soup, mince pies, fruit, bread and cheese. We have had costs involving travel and advertising.

We urgently need to look at how we finance our activities.

**And now we have a name – *womenspeak*.**

**The organising team – Kate Arnot, Mary Kennedy, Herjinder Malik, Margaret Roy, and Wura Ogunotimi.**

## Kenosis Mini-Conference

On 25 November 2017 a number of us gathered at Glasgow meeting house for a 'Mini-Conference' on Kenosis. What, you may say is 'Kenosis'? The term is Greek, it comes from Philippians 2:7 and is about self-emptying.

The way the morning was structured led to sharing at a deep level. The discussion kept returning to losing the influence of the self - the ego. Personally, this was just what was needed!

The highlight of the morning was seeing Alastair McIntosh speaking on the subject on video, interviewed by Margaret Roy and Bob Mandeville . We then went on to look with Bob at the Aramaic language version of the Lord's Prayer, where we discover that 'our Father' should be recast as "Ah-Bwoon" closer to the ultimate source of energy in the universe. And if names are added, they would be 'Father-Mother'. *Copies of the video are available to local meetings.*

Another of our sources was a 2008 book by Cynthia Bourgeault: 'The Jesus teaching in a nutshell.' She shows the harmony between the above Phillipians passage and certain teachings from the Gospel of Thomas."

These 'mini-conferences' started through the remnants/remaining members of the Quaker Thomas Group and the remnants of the Glasgow Bible Study group. Biannually, they are an opportunity to bring members from different local meetings together for deeper study and worship. The next should be in April, possibly on prayer as a psychological/experiential process.

**Patrick Bealey, Castle Douglas**

A praying mind is a discerning mind. Without true prayer, there can be no true discernment. **Alan James, Castle Douglas.**

The first aspect of spiritual discernment that came to mind is in the old Quaker phrase 'I have a stop in my mind'. Sometimes, even although I think I have considered some course of action thoroughly and it seems the logical thing to do, I have this sense that I am not to do it, even though there is no obvious reason not to. I have learned from (sometimes bitter) experience to trust this sense and to at least wait for more clarity on it. And, in fact, waiting itself is another aspect of spiritual discernment, I think. If the course of action is a true leading, it will increase in power over time; if it is not 'in the Life' or 'of God' then it will fade away. It might perhaps come back at a different time, I've found. A third aspect is that sense of being 'comfortable' or 'uncomfortable' about a course of action, and that sense growing as I hold it in the silence. And I try to ask myself 'is this course of action likely to build others up and be loving? Or to be destructive and hurtful...?' Of course, it is sometimes necessary to be direct and challenging, but it is particularly important to be clear before acting. I've been helped a lot in learning about spiritual discernment by a Pendle Hill Pamphlet called 'Spiritual Discernment: the context and goal of clearness committees' by Patricia Loring. It's in the library. I've been wondering what the difference is between spiritual discernment and any other weighing up of a decision. I think it's that there is an added dimension, something beyond the common sense and the workings of the mind and the emotions, some kind of intuitive rather than a strictly rational response, somewhere that the Spirit in us says 'Yes, but *nevertheless* this is the right (or wrong) thing to do.'

**Sheila Semple, Glasgow**

Spiritual discernment - to slow down and engage in an inner dialogue (either in writing, in silent contemplation or with the help of others), where thoughts and reflections, emotional feelings, physical sensations and Mystery guide me to sense what's important in a particular situation, and what options are available to respond in a life affirming way.

Some  
thoughts  
on  
spiritual  
discern  
ment

## Seeds of a New Quakerism from The Young Quaker Oct 2017

**Lawrence Hall** traces the emergence of a new Quakerism from contemporary social movements.

**British Quakerism** has historically been at its most spiritual and socially powerful when two factors come together. That Young Adult Friends (YAFs) were the leading light within Quakerism and that those YAFs embodied a wide movement for a new egalitarian culture that challenged the hierarchies within both Quakerism and wider society. The weightiest Friends of the founding generation, the progressive Quaker revival of the 1890s and the WW1 conscientious objector movement were nearly all YAFs. They were able to revive the Society as part of a mass movement for wider social revival that demanded Quaker testimonies were no longer abstractions but social realities.

The contemporary sees of this have emerged in the last few years saw YAFs have created new communities throughout the UK defined by an egalitarian culture which subconsciously mirrors the practices of the new social movements that YAFs are actively involved in. New social movements throughout the world are fundamentally changing the socio-political outlook of so many countries. In essence the emerging New Quakerism is deeply aligned with movements that are now reshaping the world around us.

The movements and New Quakerism are united by their focus on process before belief. The movements organise within a spirit of plurality, not forcing everyone to sign up to the same program. Against hierarchical forms with predetermined programs, they are creating radical egalitarian paths for a multiplicity of people to create together. The equality of the process is the only end. The same is true of New Quakerism in which YAFs express widely pluralistic beliefs but unite in the radical equality of the new Quaker practices they have created.

Horizontality is the central value underlying the movements. Decision processes are defined by radical equality with everyone having a direct input into all decisions without anyone in hierarchical roles speaking for you. Even when roles are created they are time limited, very limited in power and totally controlled by the community. The same anti-hierarchical desire for equality permeates deeply into New Quakerism. This can be seen most clearly in their replacement of the top heavy structures of elders, clerks, overseers, etc. appointed to roles for years with only very few roles which are only appointed for a few months.. Furthermore, consensus decision making dominates the movements as everyone has direct input on all decisions with no one being excluded. So far so Quaker business meeting. But more than this, the movements have a deep participatory ethos in which everyone actively builds the egalitarian community themselves. New Quakerism's participatory ethos

is seen in the plurality of different YAFs that facilitate the multitude of activities that are all based on actively engaging everyone.

The movements are not only attempting to create horizontal and directly democratic spaces, but are also new subjectivities. The culture is one based on trust and a growing feeling of care and mutual responsibility for all. Similarly, New Quaker communities are fundamentally held together by the great trust and close friendships that emerge within them and go well beyond the meeting house. This social glue means that communities become safe spaces for participants to openly express themselves.

New Quakerism has so far only unconsciously mirrored the new movements, it must now become consciously part of them both within Quakerism and beyond it. New Quakerism must bring the new radical culture into their local, area and national meetings. It is not enough for it to be the internal expression of the new movements among Friends. It must also be the new radical projection of Quakerism into the movements. New Quakerism must share the ambitions of the movements in becoming a spiritual foundation for the new egalitarian culture now being constructed. This can only be done if YAFs collectively become active members and accomplices in the struggle of these movements to create a new society in which the Quaker testimonies will be fully lived.

### **Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1963**

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

Whilst confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities “unwise and untimely”. . . . I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century BC left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so I am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. . . . So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime – the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.



## Faslane

## Activities

A Meeting for Worship is held six times a year at Faslane Nuclear Submarine base. Friends gather from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Argyll and even further afield at 11.00 at the North Gate, equipped with camping chairs, midge repellent, warm and waterproof clothing and suitable banners. Cars can be parked nearby outside Faslane Cemetery. The dates are as follows:

Sunday 25 March,  
Sunday 22 April  
Sunday 27 May  
Sunday 24 June  
(with Northern Friends Peace Board)  
Sunday 7 October  
Sunday 11 November

For further information or requests for transport contact Mary Alice Mansell or Daphne Wassermann.



## Peace Vigil

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January – 5 to 6pm**

A vigil is held from 5 to 6 pm on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Donald Dewar Statue at top of Buchanan Street. All Welcome.

## Thursdays in Black

Wearing black on Thursdays is a statement against gender violence. Regular vigils are being planned.

For badges and bookmarks contact Margaret Roy or Mary Kennedy.  
[margaret.roy@btinternet.com](mailto:margaret.roy@btinternet.com) or [marykennedyfacilitatmon@gmail.com](mailto:marykennedyfacilitatmon@gmail.com)  
See also the White Ribbon Campaign – Men against gender violence.

**Towards a Just Scotland** on Universal Basic Income At Edinburgh Meeting House 7, Victoria Terrace, 1-4pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

Speakers: Ann Miller author of *A Basic Income Handbook* and Peter Dean, Public Finance Economist and MSP for the Green Party.



## **Book Review: Spiritual Activism, leadership as service, Alastair McIntosh & Matt Carmichael, Green Books, 2016**

The first of these authors is well known to Quakers, especially in Glasgow, for his profound and spiritual ministry. He has been deeply involved in activism supporting community involvement and climate change. The second is a founder board member of Schumacher North and is the creator of the Delta course in spirituality.

The book is a good read although I had to ask who is it aimed at, and why not better known? Each chapter ends with a study of one individual's work in direct nonviolent action. Those featured range from Desmond Tutu and Gandhi to Gerald Winstanley, Mama Efua, and Ann Hope & Sally Timmel – some better known than others.

It presents clearly thought out theory that allows the reader to contemplate his/her own stand point re activism and spirituality. And this is where I wonder to whom it is addressed as it takes the activist away from the action to look at the *raison d'être*. It is a sound academic study that gives a different insight into the western psychology of Freud, Jung, etc. It encompasses the approach to activism of different religions and it goes into the psychodynamics of campaigning. That chapter has sub-headings such as "Ego inflation versus karma yoga", "madness versus craziness" and "love and anger". When we look at our Quakerism as a transformative version of Christianity, this should cause self-exploration re motives.

The next chapter, "Tools for discernment", puts us on more familiar Quaker ground although more poignant and directly applicable to our 'service'. It includes information on circles of trust, meetings for clearness, and working under concern.

When I picked up this book, my concern was for spirit-led discernment driving activism. I have an aversion to Christian guilt fuelling 'concern' for the poor and underprivileged. What has the Christian idea of the 'Kingdom' come to in our secular world? Ah, the last chapter, Into the Deeper Magic! This one is about the how, summed up by the old pedlar, God come into my heart. And I could add, to guide me. This is a truly inspiring chapter that talks of the 'rehumanising' and prayer as 'the heart's seeing – the exercise of the heart as an organ of intuitive perception – a *screying* or inner discernment.'

*We who see ourselves as being in the business of trying to make a better world might be among the few who can reach out to those who made it worse. Again, if spirituality is for real, who is to say where stop the limits of our activism?*

**Margaret Roy, Lanark**



This article is reprinted from the Beshara Magazine which you can subscribe to free at [besharamagazine.org](http://besharamagazine.org).

Another article of interest to Friends is on Andreas Weber's book *A Biology of Wonder* giving a whole different view of the natural world.

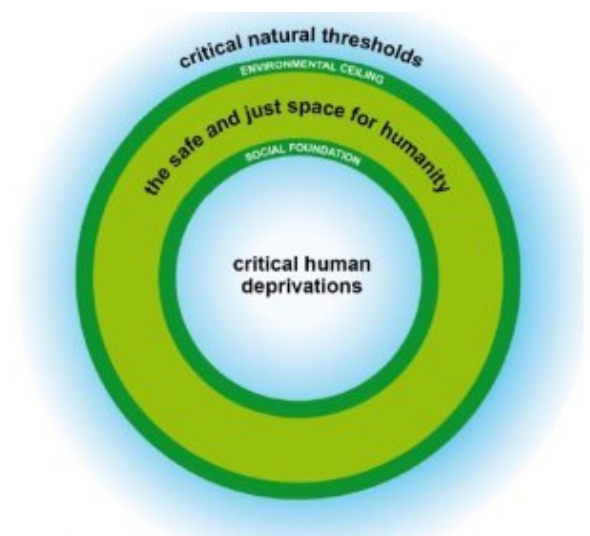
*Richard Twinch contemplates the message of an important new book by economist Kate Raworth*

*Doughnut Economics* may not be everybody's idea of a good holiday read. But it accompanied me on several journeys around the Mediterranean in the six months since it was published in the UK last spring, and kept me enthralled through heat waves and sandstorms. Its author, [Dr Kate Raworth](#), is an economist, ecologist, social activist and – above all – a humanitarian, who has a vision that encompasses all these disciplines. Her impressive CV includes academic posts in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as stints 'in the field' in Zanzibar. She has also been a senior researcher at Oxfam and a co-author of the [United Nations Human Development Report](#). Her basic question, which she succinctly posits in a [talk](#) given in 2014 at the Royal Society of Arts is:

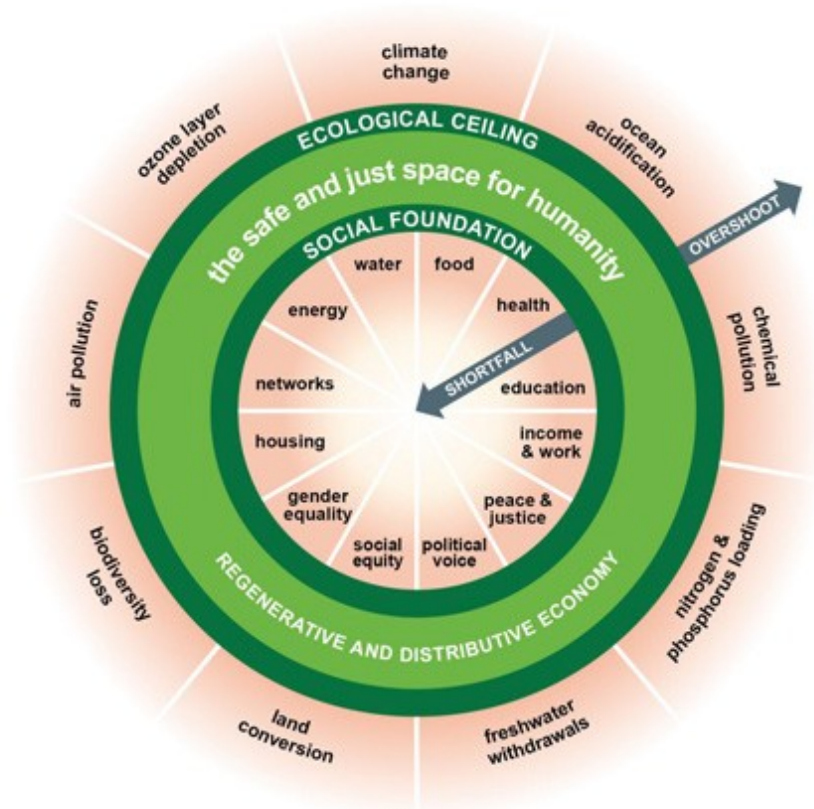
*How can we ensure that every human being has the resources they need to meet their human rights – but that collectively we do it within the means of this planet?*

Her attempt at an answer is encapsulated in a diagram that looks just like a doughnut (hence the name), which brilliantly brings together developmental and environmental issues – often seen as being in opposition to each other – into a single, accessible picture. As George Monbiot, reviewing the book in [The Guardian](#), has remarked: *Like all the best ideas, her doughnut model seems so simple and obvious that you wonder why you didn't think of it yourself. But achieving this clarity and concision requires years of thought: a great decluttering of the myths and misrepresentations in which we have been schooled.*

## The Essence of the Doughnut



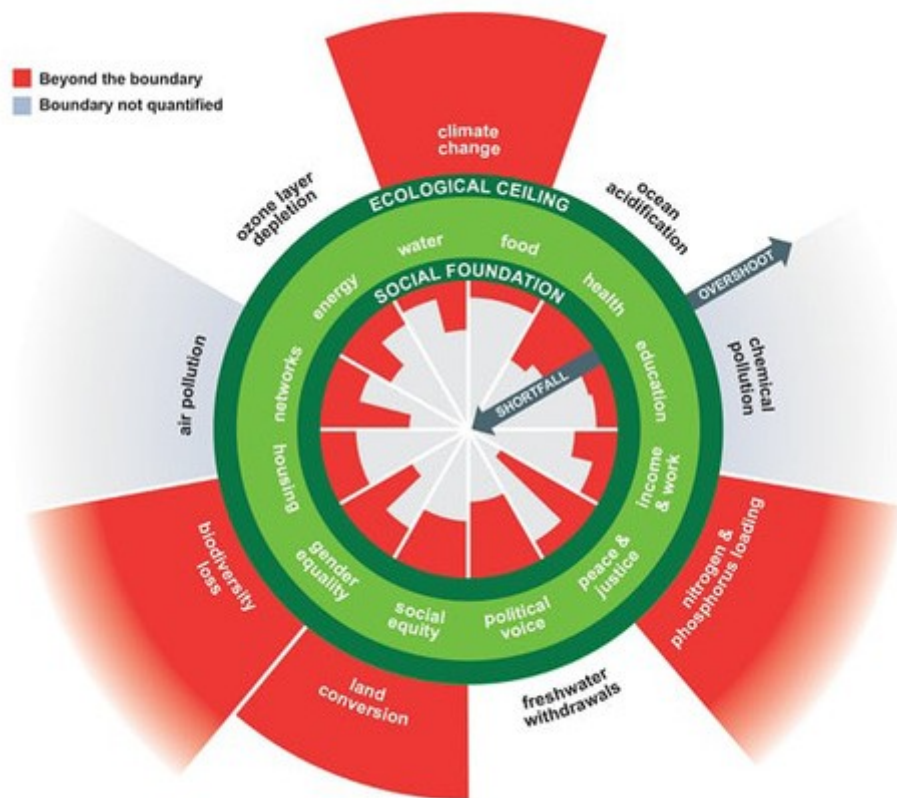
The doughnut consists of three rings. The outer ring represents the ecological ceiling beyond which we cannot venture without damaging the very earth upon which we all depend. The inner ring shows what Raworth calls the ‘Social Foundation’ which encapsulates the kind of human society that we wish to create. Between them there is a ‘safe and just space for humanity’ where we can live in harmony with our environment whilst also fulfilling our physical and social needs. The empty central space indicates human deprivation; it represents the situation of those people whose quality of life is so far below basic levels that their human rights are effectively removed.



In terms of our 21st-century situation, Raworth has broken down the rings into different elements, based upon current research. For the outer ring, she has taken the ‘[planetary boundaries](#)’ identified in 2009 by a group of 26 earth system and environmental scientists led by Johan Rockström ([Stockholm Resilience Centre](#)) and Will Steffen (Australian National University). They propose that there are nine ‘planetary life support systems’ in terms of climate change, ozone depletion, water pollution, loss of species etc., which are essential for human survival. For the inner ring, she has drawn upon the [United Nation’s sustainable development goals](#) to identify twelve essential aims (food, clean water, housing, sanitation etc.) which are generally agreed to be the foundations of a satisfactory human life.

Using research from the same two sources, it is possible to go further and produce a picture of exactly where we are in 2017 in relation to all these factors. The result is stark. It shows that we are already exceeding four of our environmental boundaries, even though, in terms of deprivation, we are not fulfilling our aims in one single area. What is more, although we are not currently overstepping our global limits in the remaining five aspects of environmental safety, Raworth points out that we are often doing so locally, and are dangerously close to the upper limit.





## The Woodwide Web

Rudolf Steiner claimed that trees were the Earth rising up to the sun, i.e. the very organic substance. Credence to that view is loaned by the many plants and other living things that grow on trees. And you may have heard that trees seem to communicate with each other in that they release pheromones (chemicals) when attacked by certain insects warning other trees that then produce a toxin to discourage the insects. However, reading an article by John Naish about trees is really challenging. In it he talks of the Woodwide Web, a term coined in the journal *Nature*.

Overland, down in the deep dark wood, we know of the importance of fungi in returning dead leaves, etc. back into soil. We know that each spoonful of soil contains millions of microbes but what else is going on down there?

John Naish writes: *'trees are not just individuals but active members of a vigorously chattering, mutually supportive society, not only sharing valuable resources with others of their own species but forming networks with all comers to ensure their shared survival. Communicating through that subterranean wood-wide web. . . they are wired together by billions of gossamer-fine, microscopically small tubes called hyphae, like fibre-optic cables that penetrate the earth, weaving through it to connect a whole woodland or forest. The hyphae are created by specialised fungi*

*that grow around the trees' roots and enable individual trees up to 60 feet apart to network and collaborate with each other, via chemical and electrical impulses, in dazzlingly complex ways.'*

We know that some plants like orchids will not grow if transplanted without their fungi and that we have to be careful in digging the garden as we can destroy the microbial network that sustains soil health, but this ??? It reminds you of the Ents, the tree shepherds in Lord of the Rings.

The article goes on when he speaks of the work of Professor Suzanne Simard, an ecologist at the University of British Columbia, who studied these interactions in detail. She looked at the relationship between a birch tree and a fir growing side by side. *'In summer when the birch was in full leaf, shading the young fir, it directed food in the form of carbon, nitrogen and water via the hyphae network to the fir. In spring and autumn, the fir returned the favour when the birch had no leaves. As* awed Professor Simard said: *'It might remind you of a sort of intelligence.'* When the birch was removed, the fir started to fail. And then there are *'trees acting as 'mothers' to saplings that are struggling to grow in the shade beneath high canopies. The mother trees have been found to feed the saplings of all species – yet nepotism is at work in Nature because they give a little more food to saplings of the same species, and most food to saplings that are close relations. Without these mother trees, attempts to regenerate forests often fail. When a mother tree is felled, the survival rate of seedlings tends to be much reduced.'*

And when you have absorbed that, think of the trees that *'will' their nutrients to 'neighbours of different species, feeding them and helping to ensure that the forest community stays diverse and strong. In the same way, 'sick' trees are supported by the trees around them.'*

Then there are trees such as walnuts that do *'the equivalent of cyber-attacks (or allelopathy, as biologists call it) by releasing a chemical, juglone, which stunts the growth of rival plants near by to promote their own survival'*. And there are other trees that hijack *'the carbon they need to make food by leaching it from the wood-wide web rather than producing their won through photosynthesis'*.

And you thought human life was complicated. It might appear that we need to widen our understanding of the term 'consciousness'.

**Margaret Roy, Lanark**

**EARTH HOUR - SAVE THE DATE  
SATURDAY 24 MARCH  
2018 8.30PM**

## The Auld Farmer's New Year Salutation to his Auld Mare, on Giving her the Accustomed Ripp of Corn to Hansel in the New Year – Robert Burns

A guid New year I wish you Maggie!  
Hae, there's a rip to thy auld baggie:  
Tho' thou's howe-backit, now, an' knaggie,  
    I've seen the day,  
Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie  
    Out owre the lay.

Tho, now thou's dowie, stiff an' crazy,  
An' thy auld hide as white's a daisie,  
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek an' glaizie,  
    A bonie gray:  
He should been tight that daur't to *raize*  
thee,  
    Ance in a day.

Thou ance was I' the foremost rank,  
A *silly* buirdly, steeve and swank,  
An' set weel down a shapely shank,  
    Like onie bird.

It's now some nine-an'-ytwenty-year,  
Ain' thou was my *Guidfather;s Meere*;  
He gie dme thee, o' tocher clear,  
    An' fifty mark;  
Tho' it was sma', 'twas *weel-won* gear,  
    An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my *Jenny*,  
Ye then was trottan wi' your Minnie:  
Tho' ye was trickie, slee an' sunnie,  
    Ye ne'er was donsie:  
But hamely, tawie, quiet an' cannie,  
    An' unco sonsie.

That *day*, ye pranced wi' muckle pride,  
When ye brune hame my bonie *Bride*:  
An' sweet and gracefu' she did ride  
    Wi' maiden air!  
KYLE-STEWART I could bragged wide,  
    For sic a *pair*.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hobble,  
An' wintle like a saumont coble,  
*That day* ye wis a jinker noble,  
    For heels an' win'!  
An' ran them till they a' did wauble,  
    Far, far behin'!

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh,  
An' *Stable-meals* at Fairs were driegh,  
How thou wad prance, an' snore, and  
scriegh,  
    An' tak the road!  
*Town-bodies* ran, an' stood abiegh,  
    An' ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,  
We took the road ay like a Swallow:  
At *Brooses* thou had ne'er a fellow,  
    For pith an' speed;  
But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,  
    Whare'er thou gaed.

The sma', droot-rumpl't, hunter cattle,  
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;  
But *sax Scotch mile*, thou try't their mettle,  
    An gart them whaizle:  
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle  
    O' faugh or hazle.

Thou was a noble *Fittie-lan'*  
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!  
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,  
    On guid March weather,  
Hae turn'd *sax rood* beside our han',  
    For days thegither.

*And more, I'll spare you – Ed.*  
*All punctuation and spelling form the*  
*Kilmarnock edition*



## News from Local Meetings

**Alastair McIntosh visit to Mull** November 2017 (Bridgid Hess, Lorne and Lochaber)

Mike Shilson (West Scotland Quakers) invited us to participate in Alastair's participative talk on the Be-attitudes on Mull. A number of us went over on the ferry from Oban. There were Quakers from from Lorne and Lochaber and people from other groups that we belong to. It was a wonderful way to share faith together and for others to find out more about Quakers.

Going to a meeting in North (and West) Scotland is a pilgrimage. The journey is a great metaphor and the journey began on the ship. It was like a clan of like-minded people venturing over the water. Alastair was on board with us and so the be-attitudes began in wonderful conversations around belonging and identity as a faith group.

Being profoundly deaf was not an obstacle for him; he had tiny amplifiers connected to his smart phone that he put on pencils attached with an elastic band – an ingenious hand-held microphone! I am reminded of some of my own obstacles and how easy it is to give in!!!!

Alastair handed us all two business cards onto which the be-attitudes were written. One was to keep and the other to give away and share. So I thought I would go one step further and share something of the experience of this meeting in the Northern Quaker. He is a person whose whole presence is one of inclusivity and simply a loving non-threatening person to be around.

He foregrounded the Be-attitudes as holding the most central of messages in the Gospels. They are texts that linger like a mantra and turn the unfolding mystery of the Gospels into action. They also turn the actions of our hard slog (karma) into Dharma (that which flows freely to us)... In other words they seem so complex but are so simple and freeing. Blessed are the meek, the ones who demonstrate power with gentle loving strength. Here are words that explode with power and move like an arrow into our inner beings. Here is a golden thread that we can connect with, going back to the first Quakers.

He emphasized that Quakers are in danger of losing the heart of their identity as primarily a FAITH group that flows into ACTION. Hold onto the golden threads of the past and do not be ashamed of our roots of faith was a central message in his talk. We are, after all, The RELIGIOUS Society of Friends, not just the Society of Friends.

He talked about bringing Calvin out from the corner of 'discreditation'. Calvin after all was a man of his time, a lawyer and a black and white thinker at the beginning of the romance with rationalism. , He too had a message of love and light that we can engage with. Alastair recognized that religion has sometimes been used in the past as a tool of oppression and that there is a move within some Meetings to 'de-godify' and slip towards humanism. As one who has railed against the church and felt its

oppressiveness to my Being I know I too can be reactive and Alistair reminded me that ‘the damaged can be very damaging’. It is therefore important to not be ashamed of the roots of the Gospel as a life-giving Faith, thus ‘creating spaces that are hospitable to the soul’ (quoting Parker Palmer). He gave an amazing illustration of this – for he teaches at the Military school at Sandhurst on pacifism! I haven’t read it yet but imagine that his new book ‘Poachers Pilgrimage’ will elaborate on some of these points and say a whole lot more.

### **Islay & Jura – Bronwen Currie**

I know there are LMs in North Scotland that cover several islands (Orkney & Shetland LMs), but we have only two in West Scotland - Mull & Iona, and ourselves. Our two regular published Meetings for Worship take place in Islay - on the second Monday morning in the month (which particularly suits Friends and attenders who have commitments to other churches - we are a very ecumenical Meeting!) and on the final Sunday afternoon. But in addition we try to hold Meeting for Worship in Jura once a month or so, depending on weather and other variables.

Organising Meeting for Worship across two islands has its challenges. Two of our Jura Friends live in the care centre there, which is a perfect place for Meeting for Worship. However, it is really only quiet enough on a Sunday. And of course ferries on a Sunday are few and far between, especially in the winter. In order to have time for worship and a bit of fellowship afterwards and still catch the last ferry in winter, it is really necessary to make a day of it. Not many Friends can manage this for all sorts of reasons. So in practice, this year anyway, there have been only two of us from Islay getting to Jura, and Jura Friends never get to Islay. I think of us as a sort of Friendly Venn diagram!

But a longer journey to Meeting also has its joys. There's time to talk in the car, and over lunch. And then there is the journey home and across the ferry by twilight. The photos are of the road on Jura down to the ferry to Port Askaig, and of one of the several hinds who ambled down to investigate as I sat waiting at the ferry terminal last Sunday.

Where is the gathering?

The road to the isles.



## **Glasgow Learning group notes on *Quaker renewal* by Craig Barnett**

In 2012- 2013 The Visioning process started in Glasgow Meeting. One of the strong things that came out of it was 'knowing and being known'. This was concerned as much with 'knowing people and being known by people in the Meeting' as with 'knowing about the Meeting and the spiritual journey Quakers are on both in Glasgow and more generally.

Where do we want to go physically, in terms of the Meeting House and Spiritually? Five years later we are still on this journey. Quakers are always on a journey seeking answers. We believe that we are creative beings and each one of us can have direct experience of the divine. Is it a necessity that we throw away common sense when we adopt a spiritual approach to life? The example of biblical non-alcoholic wine was given.

The part of Fox's ministry about healing was censored by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Quakers. Professor Paul Anderson and others found these writings and published them. In the introduction to his book he suggests that as formal structures develop, Member's energy can be increasingly directed into perpetuating the organisation rather than serving the original spiritual mission of the community.

Owning a building takes a vast amount of energy. Sometimes the tasks suck away the energy. The examples of difficulties with Meeting Houses in Liverpool and Birkenhead were cited.

The 'great business rather than great busy ness?'

George Fox and Barclay, who wrote the *Apology* said everybody will have a visitation. It was suggested by one of the participants that everybody would be coming from the same place, seeking an encounter or more encounters with the Divine and with people who had experienced this themselves. Encounters with the divine don't seem to be discussed any more. Ministry can appear to be more personally inspired than inspired by the spirit.

The formation of this group and others like it was very much welcomed as a way of sharing the spiritual dimension of Quaker worship which it was felt should not be learnt by osmosis or kept for discussion in closed groups. The Quaker ways need to be passed on. If you can stand cool and collected to minister you've got to wonder where this is coming from.

There is the risk too of people being hurt by what happens in Meeting and not returning.

Quakerism is like a second language. It needs to be transmitted to new attenders. There is a difference between plain speaking which is part of Quakerism and insulting somebody. There is a danger too in being very nice and 'drowning' in diplomacy.

There was a discussion about the structure of the meetings. It was agreed that the structure worked.

## **WEST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING DATES AND VENUES 2017-18 2018**

13 January (Saturday) Glasgow  
12 March (Monday) by telephone conference  
14 April (Saturday) Castle Douglas  
11 June (Monday) by telephone conference  
25 August (Saturday) Tarbert, Argyll  
13 October (Saturday) Ayr  
3 December (Monday) by telephone conference

## **2019**

12 January (Saturday) Glasgow

## **GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND DATES**

10th March 2018 South East - Edinburgh  
16th June 2018 North CORRECTION – not 9th  
15th September 2018 West – Glasgow  
17th November 2018 East  
9th March 2019 West – Glasgow

## **BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING**

4-7 May 2018 Friends House, London



### **Hold in the Light**

Muriel Robertson, Milngavie Meeting – home now but been in hospital.

Marion Fairweather, Glasgow Meeting - home now but been in hospital.

Jean Oliver, Lanark Meeting – Jean has lost her Father, Mother and big sister all in the last 18 months.

Jim Anderton, Glasgow Meeting, has died at home. Thoughts of love and peace go out to Liz his wife. *Lead kindly Light.* Funeral 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1.30, Clydebank

John David Bell some of you may know as a past editor of this newsletter who moved to Edinburgh. David is now in St Margaret's Care Home, EH16 5PH

West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Street, Glasgow G2 4PS.  
Telephone 0141 248 84 93

*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 of WSQN is 30<sup>th</sup> April**

**Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair Mclver or Margaret Roy**

