

wsqn

- connecting local meetings



Sunflowers – the national flower of Ukraine

March 2022

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Frontpiece is a painting of sunflowers by Ursula Edge

Back page sunflowers of Ukraine – cut/print out and put in your window.

The Ten Virgins and Ukraine

This is a time for which we have been preparing. When the Quakers received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for works of relief and reconciliation, the laudation quoted a Norwegian poet. It said: "The unarmed only / can draw on sources eternal. / The spirit alone gives victory."



Now, there is a parable in Matthew's gospel. Ten virgins waited with their lamps at night for the bridegroom, who had been delayed. Five were foolish and had brought no extra oil. Five were wise, and had come equipped with flasks. All fell asleep. And when the bridegroom came as midnight struck, they rose and rushed to rekindle their lamps.

Alas, the foolish had run out of oil. They begged a top-up from the wise. But the wise said: "Away, and buy your own." By the time the foolish got back from the market, it was too late. Too late! The wedding banquet doors were shut.

Sitting in our Glasgow Quaker Meeting on the day that Putin rattled the nuclear sabre – and just an hour after I'd had a message from a former student to say that he was in Kyiv to fight in the resistance - the parable opened to me. The virgins are the soul, the primal wellspring in us all. The bridegroom is the divine, beyond all male and female. The banquet is the community of heaven. The oil is how we hold things "in the light".

It's in our daily lives that we do our spiritual work. No one else can do it for us. We cannot beg, borrow or buy the true stairway to heaven. And spiritual work is demanding. Spiritual seed that grows to reap and press and yield its spiritual oil is not a gift to sow on fallow ground. Even Jesus wearied, and healing people cost him strength. No wonder we too weary! And yet, "keep watch, keep watch", the parable concludes.

War in Ukraine: what might it ask of us? Violence in its rigid logic works upon a short temporal wavelength. Nonviolence, works upon the long wave. Have we prepared? How might we apply our Peace Testimony? Are we, this day, preparing oil to keep our lamps alight?

Alastair McIntosh, Glasgow

Report of West Scotland Area Meeting online

15.01.22

Jane Mitchell,

Argyll

Around 38 Friends were present. Our reading (*Quaker faith & practice* 19.03) from George Fox's Journal reminded us that we need to be aware of all kinds of people in order to communicate with them. He saw also "an infinite ocean of light and love".

We were delighted to receive a report on Leila Rabemananjara, who has already done sterling work for Glasgow Meeting and established a regular on-line meeting for younger Friends. We welcomed her as a new Friend.

We heard that there may be three persons attending Junior Yearly Meeting which is to be held in May, though they haven't all been appointed yet.

There were annual reports from several AM groups, including the Gender-based Violence Group. We agreed to continue the Group during 2022.

In the afternoon we used break-out rooms for worship sharing on Being A Quaker Today. We were given three questions to address. I found the worship sharing in my breakout room good, but the plenary session afterwards seemed to me to be somehow unfocused. You will find a long list of points that were made attached to the minutes. What I do here is give you most of Dumfries Meeting's submitted document, and I have highlighted ideas from it that I heard in the worship-sharing.

"Observations concerning the busy-ness of Quakers were made and included that there are too many committees which feels as if the basic voice of our community is lost. Inevitably financial constraint has an impact on the work of the Society but that constraint has led to big issues or projects dominating and being prioritised over smaller concerns. A broad concern was expressed about being a political body. ***While collective action can bind a meeting together and being active is to be political the core tenet is silent worship. It is the worship group that provides the bedrock for outward matters.*** Being busy with the challenges and issues that concern us do we miss an opportunity to celebrate what has been done? Possibly having charity status is an inhibitor to being active.

"Resignations present a challenge and perhaps the Overseeing of the process can be interpreted as paternalistic. Do we really learn why someone has resigned or even just drifted away and stopped attending? ***There is a need to know each other more deeply and to understand more fully those we worship with. One impact of Zoom is a loss of personal nuance and interaction that comes from face-to-face meetings. Zoom is not conducive to 'being present'.*** Are we perhaps not as open and inclusive as we like to think we are? Especially when Friends are experiencing doubts and the lack of spiritual direction is potentially deeper than we care to acknowledge. Our spiritual selves have a need to be expressed and the practical and spiritual life should not be separated.

It was suggested that perhaps Quakers have completed their task in terms of being a representative body and there is a need to re-invent ourselves? The world is changing, and identity is a complex issue particularly in identifying with Quakerism. Such labels are constructions of our own making and it was asked, 'Do we have a unique identity, something we are?' A common sentiment of being overwhelmed with an overload of news and concerns was mentioned. Friend asked against this scale of issues, 'what can I do?', 'what voice do I have?' It was concluded with the observation that ***by finding or re-establishing our core we can remind ourselves how to be Quakers.*** "

Subject: What does it mean to [be] a Quaker?

Can't speak for others, so I'm speaking strictly for myself, two Friends speak:

Patrick Bealey

"To be a Quaker, to me is to follow the way. To believe and to act accordingly, and the best model I have found to follow is George Fox.

I'd so love to know what GF would make of the tricky times we live in!"

Mike Shilson

It is a practice, and not a dogma.

Be Still, and Know (gnosis), "I Am", God. (Psalm 46:10).

Of being led by the Spirit in adopting George Fox's insight:

"The Light of God is in everyone"; knowing we are equal, beloved and of worth.

It's a sacred privilege of connecting to "The Divine" via the universal consciousness (Noosphere), and of upholding each other in Worship; in freedom from authority and rituals of control: how, when and where to Worship.

Theists through the centuries

John Woolman 1762

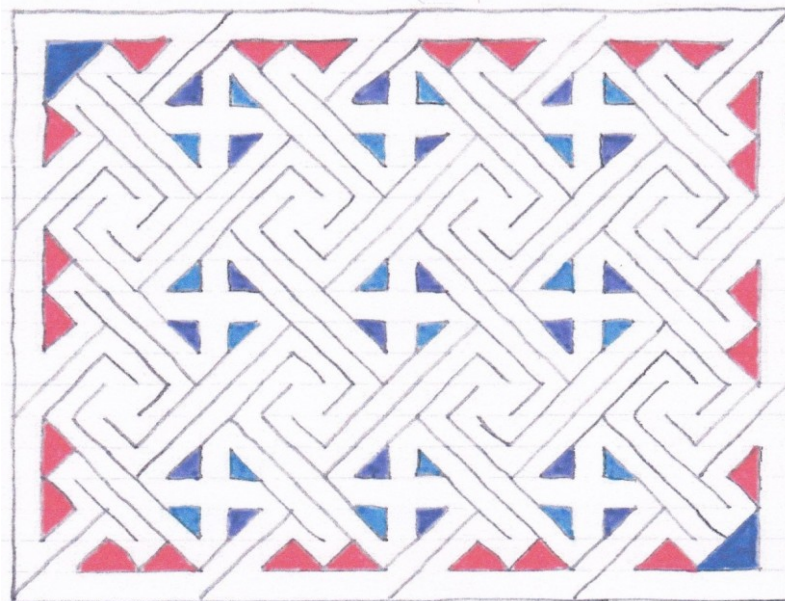
There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath different names; it is however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation whatever, they become brethren.

London Yearly Meeting 1879

The light that shines in man's heart is not of man, and must ever be distinguished both from the conscience which it enlightens and from the natural faculty of reason which, when unsubjected to its holy influences, is, in the things of God, very foolishness. As the ye is to the body, so is conscience to our inner nature, the organs by which we see; and as both light and life are essential to sight in the material eye, do conscience as the inner eye cannot see aright without the quickening and illumination of the Spirit of God.

Ellen S. Bosanquet 1927

The Inner Light does not lead men to do that which is right in their own eyes, but that which is right in God's eyes. As the Light is One, so its teaching is ultimately (though not superficially) harmonious. In actual experience, it is not found that souls truly looking to the Inner Light as their authority will break away from each other in anarchy.



The work of Barbara Potter, Milngavie.

Nontheist Friends Network (NFN), is a Quaker recognized body of Britain Yearly Meeting within the Religious Society of Friends

The Network's aim is to provide a forum and supportive framework for Friends and attenders who regard religion as a human creation. We want to ensure that our Religious Society of Friends is an inclusive rather than exclusive Society. We seek to explore theological and spiritual diversity and their practical implications, in respectful acceptance of different views, experiences and journeys.

David Boulton has explained that “*Nontheist interpretations of religious tradition began to make an appearance in Quaker discourse in the 1980s . The 1990 British Quaker Survey found just 3.4% of Quakers identifying as what it labelled ‘atheists’, rising to 7% in the 2003 survey and 14.5% in 2013 – roughly a doubling proportion each decade. A Nontheist Friends Network was formed in 2011, it was granted immediate status as a listed informal group of BYM. In the debate or dialogue that followed, Quaker gentleness wasn’t always to the fore. But a way forward was found. The minority who identified as nontheists, and the majority who did not, came to agree that it was unhelpful to picture theism and nontheism as binary opposites. (see “God, words and us” Quaker publication 2017)*

Quaker history is a story of change and adaptation in response to change in the wider world in which Quakerism is embedded. The world of the 21st century is a very different place from the world of the 17th, and the Society of Friends is a very different place too. We may be no wiser, but our pool of knowledge is vastly greater. And let’s be clear: we are here because we have learnt to change in tune with a changing world.

This process is open to the charge, the fear, that the religious Society is becoming more secular. But the root meaning of the word ‘secular’ is ‘of this world and this age’. A secular Quakerism in this sense is not a Quakerism that has turned its back on religious expression or spiritual experience, but a Quakerism of this world (the only world of which we have direct knowledge) and this age (the only age of which we have direct experience). Secularism in this sense is not the binary opposite of religion, William Penn said it all: ‘True religion does not draw men out of the world but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it’. Was there ever a better mission statement for Quakers in every age?”

PS For current information on NFN activity and many interesting resources consult the website: <https://nontheist-quakers.org.uk> , specially recommended are the monthly **creative conversations** where we shake the Quaker “kaleidoscope” by offering a variety of topics, and perhaps shining a light on different ways of looking at our (more) traditional ideas.

Non Theist Friends Seminar on *On the Edge with Quakers*

Friends comment on the seminar:

Tamasine Spaeth

My first experience of the Non-theist Friends Network involved participating in a Creative Conversation presented by John Richter from Wells-next-the-Sea Meeting in North Norfolk. A recording of his talk is now available on the NTFN website. John's presentation was very carefully constructed to convey precise meaning so it's best to listen to his words. He explained that his Meeting's membership is diminishing and becoming quite elderly, which led him to ask if the Meeting can maintain itself in its present form. We were asked to consider two questions:

What is the purpose of Quakers?

In order to flourish, is it necessary for Quakers to adapt?

Having previously imagined the Theist/Non-theist debate to be quite polarised, I was surprised to hear a wide range of views expressed by different voices from different places. There was an energy and openness which made it easier for a newcomer to participate, even with such a large number of people present. I enjoyed this contact and sharing of ideas with Quakers from different parts of the UK and further afield.

Long after the Zoom meeting finished, I was thinking about what had been said and therefore look forward to joining the group again.

Other Friends shared:

Seeing the meaning of life together . . .

Quakers are about listening.

Not silence but stillness. What I bring as well as what I take away. Best kept secret in the world.

Dislikes spirituality because a bit self-absorbed. To have our answer questioned.

For Quakers to flourish we must be more relevant. Nonviolent protest in a pacifist way – we need to be less humble and more proud re how we address inequality.

Ecology not theology primarily explains where Christians are today. How would he react to the world today. After Jesus before Christianity

God is a verb, not a proper noun. We find what we mean by God in relationships so MfW important as it brings us together, but not necessarily in silence.

Leave doors open to the street throughout the meeting.

Experiment with Light

Margaret Roy

When Rex Ambler brought together the Experiment with Light, he was looking back at what so inspired the Early Quakers. What were they doing in the silence?

In their words, they were waiting on Christ himself teaching them. William Tabor in speaking of business meetings said they were opening to the mind of Christ leading them. Frequently, more recently, we talk of waiting for the Spirit moving, opening to leadings of the Spirit.

Early Christians and many of today's Christian meditators would talk of Kenosis – emptying the mind to open to Divine presence.

As Quakers, we talk of going into Meeting for Worship with heart and mind prepared but we do not always say what this means, or how to do it.

Experiment with Light is often described as 'meditation' but it is much more than that. It is also more than contemplation - which could be described as a process of engaging the thinking mind on a subject, a wee bit different from Walter de la Mare's just standing and staring although such a waiting with a *still* mind can describe a process many undertake during Meeting for Worship.

We could get heavily involved in definitions here. There is no easy way to explain what is beyond words.

However, I think it would be true to describe Quaker worship – even in the days of the non-theist – as an attempt to go beyond the individual. A 'gathered' meeting is more than just people of like mind sitting in silence. Ministry is more than a valuable sharing of individual experience.

And we are so strangled by words and how the same words can have different meaning according to individual experience. That is the point really – Quakerism is an experiential religion. We used to speak of 'getting it' by osmosis from sitting with experienced Friends. To me there are two golden rules of Experiment with Light that explain the process and enable the worship to 'deepen'.

The first is to listen without judgement to another's experience. For the individual the key may be to articulate/to catch/to express/to tune in to their own experience. That is not as simple as it sounds. Working with patients, they will usually give you the tonal quality of pain – awful, terrible, very sore – but they cannot describe it – burning, shooting, pressing. One is intensity and the other is sensation. Try it. Describe your own headache! Where exactly, what sensation, to what does it respond, i.e. heat or cold, bending down, etc. The Homoeopath has 100 pages describing headaches precisely. The reality of what

I am saying is that we are not in touch with our bodies, never mind our wholeness which is even more subtle. We facilitate that for another by listening.

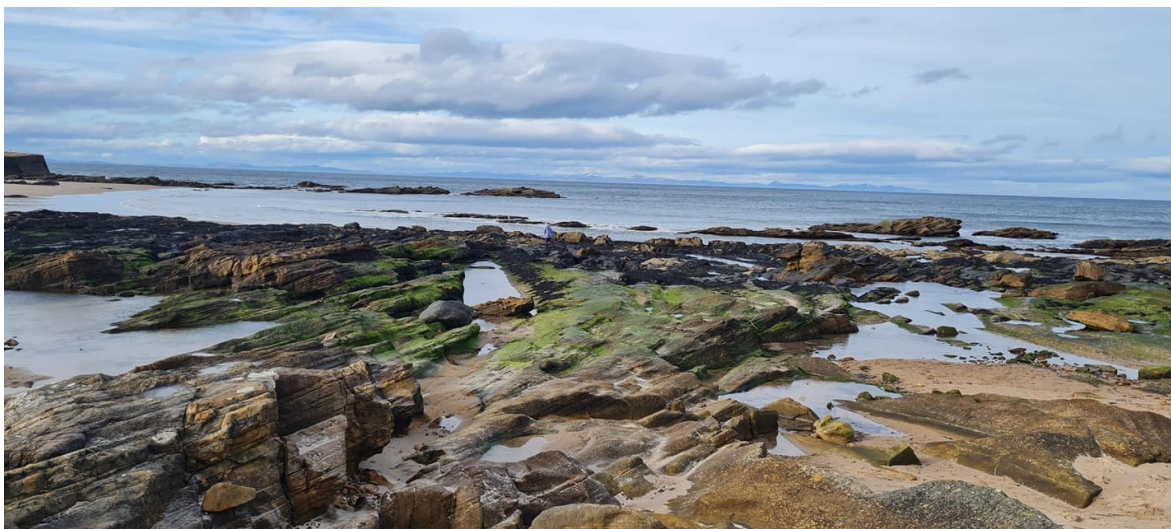
My second rule is not to engage with another sharing their experience during the experiment. Not to interpret, explain or seek to offer advice. It is *their* experience. The brain grasps at patterns but what use is it if it is not *their* brain patterning. The Buddhist will tell you the world is full of illusion. What is real and meaningful to each individual?

The process of Experiment with Light is to go 'deeper', in the first instance to connect with self. In recognising distractions and disturbances of the thinking mind of the Ego to allow an experience of reality and presence beyond the individual. This will bring us up against another perspective that some express as the Divine.

I would go further and say that this is Heart consciousness much more than the intellectual process of separation, identifying, labelling and patterning that we use to meet the outside world and that also leads to polarity and dualism. My experience of the Heart consciousness is unity with all from which immediately springs LOVE, deeper understanding and acceptance of self and others.

Those of you on the ball might recognise that Jung spoke of the 'mind' as having four modes – sensing, thinking, feeling and intuition, and beyond each individual was collective consciousness, the single mind of All.

If you want to experience the Experiment with Light, there is an open group meeting on Wednesdays at 2pm. Other groups may be closed or we can help you set up your own group. Contact Margaret Roy or Sheila Semple.



Volunteering for Quakers in West Scotland

Can you bring your skills, insights and gifts showing our commitment to ensure a better world? Friends may find themselves surprised about where the Spirit leads them.

You can help your **West of Scotland Area Meeting Nominations Committee** by letting them know what skills, gifts and time you have.

In our Area Meeting we need people

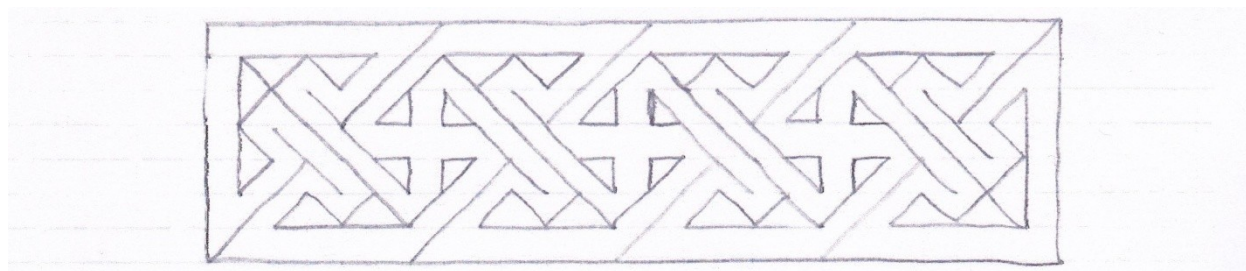
- To care for the spiritual and pastoral welfare of the Meetings
- To help run our organisation e.g., Trustees, Treasurers, Information specialists
- To represent us at National level on Meeting for Sufferings at conferences
- To support the work of our Parliamentary Engagement Officer in the Scottish Parliament
- Help write newsletters
- Get involved with children's work
- Help run Enquirer's days

Some of these posts need more time commitment than others. It could be just a one-off day, few hours a month or perhaps one or two days a month.

Even if you don't think you have all the skills required at the moment, we are always happy to send people on courses to upgrade their skills.

Complete this short form to let us know which service interests you and what courses you might be interested in.

The information in this form will be used in confidence by Area Meeting Nominations Committee to begin their discernment. Filling in the form does not mean you will be appointed but it does mean we know what you are interested in.



Name

Local Meeting

Telephone

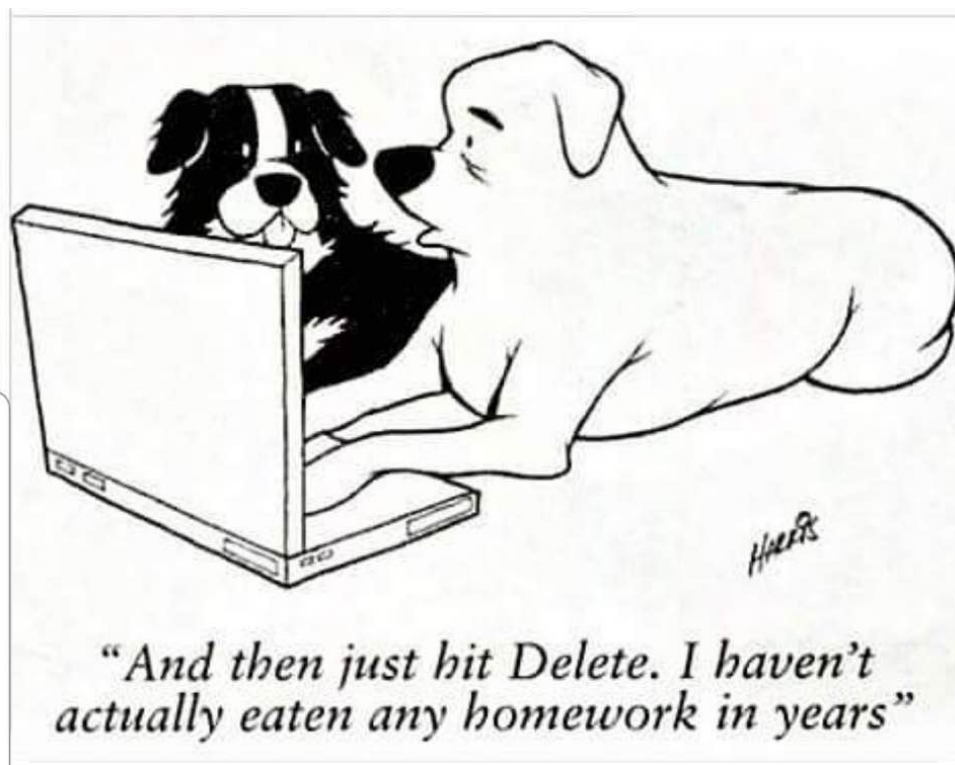
Email

Address

What are your interests and skills?

What would you like to find out more about?

Return to Gill Reid at gillreid3@btinternet.com



Quaker Concerns

Quaker Community Justice Network

Trauma, Crime and the Criminal Justice System - By Anneke Kraakman

and Pete Clarke

As Quakers we have a long and honourable 'record' for campaigning on behalf of penal reform and delivering ministry in prisons in a number of forms. Perhaps though we need to examine more closely 'cause and effect' and in so doing involve ourselves in a more comprehensive effort to reform the CJS and especially the role of 'prison'. Our experiences inform us that the existence of prisons and their use to punish individuals who have experienced traumatic backgrounds and/or events is not effective and is in fact counterproductive in any sense beyond mere societal revenge.

As Quakers we realise that we are not alone in this view as Minute 93 approved by the Canadian Yearly Meeting in 1981, demonstrates. It encapsulates for us why we as Quakers should be opposed to imprisonment as punishment for all but the most dangerous individuals:

'The prison system is both a cause and a result of violence and social injustice. Throughout history, the majority of prisoners have been the powerless and the oppressed. We are increasingly clear that the imprisonment of human beings, like their enslavement, is inherently immoral and is as destructive to the cagers as the caged.'

The challenge before us is to use alternatives based on economic and social justice and on the fulfilment of human needs. Some alternatives to prisons have already been developed and more are needed to bring about reconciliation and healing within the community. Friends need to seek out, develop and support such programs. At the same time, we need to foster awareness in ourselves and others of the roots of crime and violence in society to ensure that our lives do not unintentionally reinforce these evils.'

Evidence shows us that a massively disproportionate number of the poorest in our society are being arrested, dealt with by the CJS, and imprisoned. Often these 'offenders' come from traumatic and chaotic backgrounds where daily trauma has been suffered, often alongside specific traumatic experiences such as mental/physical/sexual abuse. The question for society, (but especially for Quakers), is 'how we can continue to support the imprisonment of those who have suffered trauma in their lives in a prison system which is itself the most traumatic experience imaginable'? The independent charity INQUEST recorded that over 5,600 deaths occurred in prison and police custody in 2016. Many of these deaths were of those imprisoned or held in custody whilst

suffering from mental health issues, for minor offences and as previously described, made up of the poorest and most traumatised in society.

For Quakers, asking questions that extend or challenge the technical definitions of crime can be a first step towards CJS and penal reform as well as 'speaking truth to power'. Such challenge from groups such as ours can therefore be part of a process which not only reduces prison populations but has as an aim the 'abolition' of prisons for all but the most 'dangerous individuals'.

The Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network, (SQCJN) have been discussing Trauma and the effect this has on criminality and the misunderstanding about what trauma is and what role it can play in diagnosis and rehabilitation in the justice system. Trauma, in its many guises - mental, physical, and emotional is an important concept to understand when we discuss and try to understand the circumstances which lead to crime. whilst searching for a balance in life is never easy for any of us, the trauma of adverse childhood experiences, (ACEs) can have a profound effect. An attitude of open mindedness, to people's actions, empathy, and listening and learning, are at the heart of having a trauma informed approach to many things including crime and the CJS.

Some members of the SQCJS have begun to understand trauma through the work of Gábor Máte.

Born in Hungary he started his medical practice in Vancouver, Canada. Particularly his work in drop-in centers projects for drug-users in Downtown East side Vancouver has informed him about how people disconnect from their pain of past and present trauma to be able to keep on living.

Often trauma starts in childhood where there is a fear of what you feel - This fear must be respected. It is a child's defense, it is about their survival. Automatic repression of painful emotion is a child's defense mechanism. Often there is an up and down in a child suffering trauma, not always allowing the child to feel and fear the feelings and reactions to their behaviours.

Trauma is a wound which can and does carry through life and is one of the main contributors to criminality. When it is touched, it hurts – it is a wound that needs to be healed, through treatment, care, and love. However, the CJS often ignores trauma, instead using 'punishment' as a response to a particular criminal or disorderly act.

It is essential that the CJS becomes more trauma informed, otherwise individuals can become even more confused, scared defensive, disconnected and 'criminal'. Understanding trauma is important to us all, but especially as Quakers. The core intention is to accept people for what they are, and a process of compassionate enquiry and treatment is a way in, remembering

that the pressures of society can lead to certain misguided life choices - particularly by those emotionally drained people who have suffered ACEs and later trauma. These people lack the physical and mental energy we most often take for granted as we lead our lives.

As part of our journey, the SQCJN also heard from James Docherty in March 2021. He had been in the system of criminal justice because of his involvement with gang crime. He now gives talks about rehabilitation, trauma and the CJS.

He argues his trauma and criminality came through bad choices and unreliable relationships, including parental harming led him to recount, 'you come from a place of woundedness, but I had to take responsibility'.

He says his involvement in gangs filled some needs in an unhealthy way, drawing on his level of dysfunction. In such circumstances there is a disconnect between you and your authentic self. Rehabilitation is much harder than prison. And the trauma goes on as in his case he explains there is a big stress on the women and children in the family. He argues, the CJS is deficit based as it does not look at past traumatic experience - it does not work. The prison system is a continuation of a highly traumatic and stressful environment.

Trauma is the most misunderstood factor of rehabilitation. A proper diagnosis was liberating for James and can be part of a healing therapy that helps you not return to prison. All life has an emphasis on change, but young people suffering from ACEs do not know how to 'change' behaviours without help, and that help begins with a society which is 'caring' and 'not punishing'.

Whilst we accept that not all victims of trauma or chaotic upbringing become criminals, or the perpetrators of other 'harms' to society, so many do. We need as Quakers to support and campaign for systems which, whilst delivering censure and expressing criticism/judgement of their behaviour, do not harm them further or compound their trauma.

Trauma, Justice and Imprisonment

One day seminar on 26th March at Glasgow Meeting House, 10am – 3pm

A day of talks, panels, and discussion around trauma-informed practice, criminal justice and why Quakers in Scotland should care.

Organised by the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network.

To book, contact anneke.kraakman@gmail.com

Peace and Justice

‘Peace in our time’? Now we have Ukraine.

Man’s inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn. *Robert Burns.*

The global refugee crisis

Violence and persecution continued to force people from their homes in 2021, according to the UNHCR

Mid-2021

84 million
people displaced by
violence and conflict
worldwide

Nearly **51 million**
people are internally
displaced

26.6 million
are refugees under
UN mandates

4.4 million people
are seeking asylum,
with applications
pending

Where the refugees are

As of 2020

Including people
in refugee-like
situations



Pink circles show
data for displaced
Venezuelans

85% of refugees
and displaced are
hosted in
developing
countries



73% of refugees
and displaced are
hosted in
neighbouring
countries



42% -- around
35 million -- of
displaced persons
are children



Where they come from?

Country of origin

Syria	6.7 million
Venezuela	4.1 m
Afgh.	2.6 m
S.Sudan	2.3 m
Myanmar	1.1 m

Who hosts the most?

Refugees by total numbers

Turkey	3.7 m
Colombia	1.7 m
Uganda	1.5 m
Pakistan	1.4 m
Germany	1.2 m

Who takes the highest proportion?

Refugees per 1,000 local population

Aruba	167
Lebanon	125
Curacao	100
Jordan	71
Turkey	43

Source: UNHCR Mid-year trends 2021

AFP

"We invade their countries and justify it by saying that our way of life is better, then boggle at the idea they might think living here is great. We pay no attention to how our actions in other countries have precipitated the situation. There has to be something wrong with a world where the best employment option for a farmer in sub-Saharan Africa isn't being a farmer in sub-Saharan Africa, but crossing the Mediterranean on a punctured lilo, only to spend days dangling under a lorry so that he can end up selling lollipops in a nightclub toilet. Our indifference is staggering. For a lot of these people, their best chance of survival is to dress up as a Leopard and hope to get Twitter onside.

Of course, the true existential threat to us might come from ourselves. If we can look at another human being and categorise them as "illegal", or that chilling American word "alien", then what has become of our own humanity? To support policies that dehumanise others is to dehumanise yourself. I think most people resist that, but are pressed toward it by an increasingly sadistic elite. If you're worried about threats to your way of life, look at the people that are selling the public services from under you. The people who will destroy this society are already here: printing their own money, printing their own newspapers and responding to undesirables at the gates by releasing the hounds." - Frankie Boyle

From Disrespect to Respect

David John Harding.

World-wide and widespread thanks and admiration have been expressed deservedly honouring Thich Nhat Hanh at the time of his recent death at the age of 95. It was not always so, especially at the time I knew him best.



In the late 1960s, 'The United Kingdom' was not concerned about Vietnam or its People. The country had not been in the British Empire and Harold Wilson wisely ensured that we were not involved in 'The Vietnam War'. The frail peace movement was more active about The Nuclear Threat and Decolonisation. In the early 70s, a visit by the Buddhist monk to London was scarcely noticed.

The pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation worked hard to arrange this opportunity for him, and his female colleague Cao Ngai Phong, to present their ideas and policies for peace in a couple of days . . . under the title 'Cry for Vietnam'.

Only a minority of pacifists welcomed them and just a few 'People of Influence' listened to them. The main event was concert attended by about 200 people where he spoke and recited his poetry and she sang. Amongst others taking part were sympathetic celebrities such as Donald Swan and Donald Soper. The

next day a meeting in the Houses of Parliament where they both spoke attracted 7 MPs . . . the room next door was packed with MPs coming to see Jane Fonda.

Nhat Hanh was enabled to meditate alone alongside the statue of Gandhi in Tavistock Square. Cao Phong's interview with a Guardian journalist received two paragraphs in a general article about Women Campaigners. There was no interest from the churches or the Society of Friends. Much of the Peace Movement appeared averse to anything religious.

At that time these two splendid Ambassadors of Peace appeared too political for the Religious and too religious for the Political.

Exiled from his country Thich Nhat Hahn settled in a community, Plum Village, in France from where his peace work continued through his Buddhist teachings of mindfulness. Later, Woodbrooke hosted sessions relating this to Quakerism through the Community of Interbeing.

Meg Bereford :

Thich Nhat Hahn.....a wonderful life.....

Thich Nhat Hanh Buddhist monk and founder of the Community of Interbeing came to the end of his life..... aged some 95.... he will be much missed by the Community of Interbeing and many, many more.

Thinking of my first sight and experience , of him was back a number of years. . . we were sitting in a big hall in Edinburgh, and saw this person in his monastic robes sitting silently with his back to us; then he stood up, turned round, smiled, and then gave the most wonderful, compelling talk about mindfulness practice. This was a compelling moment for all of us and inspired me to go to Nottingham and take my Five Mindfulness Trainings. . . and then later that summer went to Woodbrooke and took part in a retreat led by Sister Annabel from Plum Village together with leading Quakers. . . Then the same summer off to Plum Village in France with an old Friend who had also been at Woodbrooke. Attending Dharma talks, and hearing Thay, who was clearly writing Love Letter to the Earth, call for us to “‘heal ourselves and heal the earth’. Following the dharma talk, we went on a mindful walk through a woodland with hundreds of people, coming out at the end of the track and seeing Thay sitting facing a southern landscape surrounded by retreatants and round 50 Buddha statues sitting on the hillside. . .

The Dalai Lama said “he lived a truly meaningful life.....I have no doubt the best way we can play tribute to him is to continue to promote peace in the world”.

Miles Fielding:

Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay) was definitely a great inspiration to many in the peace movement during the Vietnam War and as a Buddhist monk was someone who delivered an understandable dharma to many people who would never have otherwise had the opportunity to learn from it.

Since those days of my involvement with the Community of Interbeing (Thay's sangha in the UK) I have become a Quaker and have seen that the Quaker tradition contains all the elements necessary for a spiritual and peace promoting life.

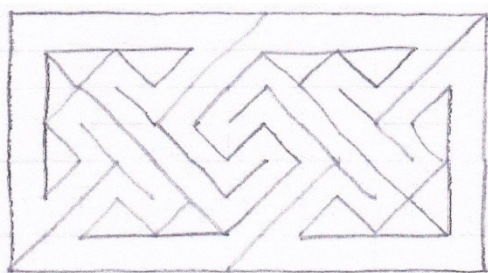
What Thay did was give us some useful ways of living in the present moment (mindfulness). Something that is a key element in most religious and mystical traditions and which is necessary if we are to develop compassion and rid ourselves of anger and other negative states.

However, as a Quaker I feel very strongly about the fact that many modern day Friends seem keen to water down Quakerism by adopting practices and philosophies of other religious traditions and seem to want Quakers to be all things to everyone. We have our own methods and traditions of delivering 'Peace' and I think we should look at and study those in the context of Meeting For Worship and the Quaker family.

Thay himself was quick to tell people to follow their own traditions (as does the Dalai Lama).

Thay was a very special person and I will remember him as an example of engaged religion. . . . just as we Quakers do with George Fox and other notable Quakers throughout history.

Seeing 'that of God in everyone' is, when all said and done, a form of mindfulness.



As we approach International Women's Day, 8th March, the main interface would appear to be TRANS. Are you 'woke'?

This is putting a lot of pressure on the definition of 'woman' – interestingly **not** on what is a 'man'. Many 'women' feel very threatened in real terms too as the number of cases of domestic violence rise dramatically during lockdown.

Where are you on this issue? Can you still talk about vaginas, breasts, menstruation, etc.? Many of us are confused – there is no other word for it.

Our group will hold some open conversations over lunch – no agendas, just space to find some guidance in the Light – look out for invitations or contact Wendy Reynolds to state an interest.

Meanwhile, for International Women's Day we are hosting a talk by Rev. Elizabeth MacKay who works in Govanhill, South Glasgow. The United Free Church started work there in a very deprived area. However, as time elapsed, the need changed to serve new residents originating from the Indian subcontinent. Setting up the centre, The Well (Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well), they were able to help new immigrants negotiate a strange country. Some work is amongst Asian women in particular who are isolated for different reasons – chat and chai. But . . . it is also one area of Glasgow where 'trafficking' is rife and Elizabeth will talk on that. **Tuesday 8th March at 7.30.**

Register on genderbasedviolencegroup@gmail.com

So back to women and one of the great difficulties of our work is not just 'fixing' inequalities and injustices but looking deeply at the ethos that upholds them.

Two thoughts challenge complacency:

So much of women's world is hidden and unmentionable – *is that not actually one of the terms used to describe her underwear?* And how many words camouflage her monthlies, the curse, . . . etc? So much we don't talk about. Even recently, men never accompanied their partner into the birthroom. And as for as male midwives???

What is a woman? Ant and Dec really got it in the neck for *Womanface*. Yup, that's a new word. What are the elements of cross –dressing but big wigs, heavy make-up and big boobies. And how we laugh. Who do you know that fits that image? I came across a poignant piece on Facebook:

The human body can only endure 45 units of pain, but at birth a woman can endure up to 57 units of pain, equivalent to 20 fractures at a time.

Never tell a woman she can't. Remember that only she could dance with two hearts and breathe with four lungs.

Only she could carry the weight of two worlds in her belly and give birth to life.

Don't tell her she's not capable, she's capable of everything!
I'm missing out the shocking image of a crumpled new-born baby – you can watch *Call the Midwife*. No wonder they fear us.

Looking for correspondents from each Local Meeting to help us carry forward the work Contact Wendy Reynolds.

Looking for help to gather and present work on women in war/conflict.

Contact Margaret Roy

Trying to create a Thursdays in Black network. Margaret again.

International Women's Day 8th March

Rev Elizabeth MacKay of United Free Church will talk about her work in South Glasgow, Govanhill. There are many issues including trafficking.

Sign up for the meeting and get the Zoom link from
violenceagainstwomenconcern@btinternet.com

1911. A million women and men rallied in support of women's rights on that first International Women's Day.



Today's event is organized by the WSAM concern for Gender-based Violence.

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone. *George Fox, 1656*

Climate Change Emergency

Climate Cafes are a grassroot response.

Anne MacArthur, Castle Douglas, writes:

The Climate Kitchen is an invitation for people who are concerned about climate change to get together to share ideas. It will be a space for learning, sharing, contributing and working together to do something positive for the climate. There is a Repair Table - bring something that needs up cycled and learn how to sew and skill share with others

Eco news discussion corner - what's being said about climate change in the news? Let's discuss!

Open table - a cuppa and a chat or take part in letter writing , crafts or another activity - the open table will be open to your suggestions!

The Climate Kitchen will also host short films, open mic and other contributions from the community.

The Stove cafe will be open for food and drinks where we'll be serving up some sustainable food options.

Another climate café is planned for Glasgow. Contact Mary Troup, Glasgow

Ending the fossil fuel era: 5 things the UK government can do in 2022

It's time to end the fossil fuel era. Olivia Hanks suggests five actions the UK government can take to meet the UK's climate targets. See Quake 24th February for more detail.

Taking Action for Climate Justice

New on line course. What is climate justice and what action can we take to serve it.

Well presented 14 page booklet full of ideas . Many you can work on individually and lots of ideas for groups or your Local Meeting.

You can download it at Quakers in Britain website. If you have difficulties contact publications@quaker.org.uk 0207 663 1162

Where we see crisis, we also see opportunity to remake society as a communion of people living sustainably as part of the natural world. By leading the simpler lives of a low-carbon society, we draw nearer to the abundance of peace, freedom and true community.

Meeting for Sufferings 2009

Book Review

***Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: a Celtic guide to listening to our souls and saving the world.* (2021) London: William Collins**

Mike Nellis, Glasgow

John Phillip Newell is a Canadian born, Edinburgh-based theologian/preacher and a former warden of Iona Abbey. He is a well-known interpreter of the Celtic Christian tradition, and I commend his new book to you – as a friend commended it to me - whether you are already familiar with Celtic Christian spirituality or – like me - have had only an intermittent acquaintance with it. Shorn of its perhaps pretentious subtitle – its insights are necessary but not sufficient to save the world - *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul* invites us to become “aware of the sacred essence of all things” and to be stewards, protectors and defenders the earth’s resources, not exploiters of them. This sensibility, and the devotional practices associated with it, have been central to the Celtic Christian tradition from its earliest days in 4th century Ireland – but the insights are to found in all the great religions, however much they may have been suppressed or lost.

The book consists mostly of biographical chapters on key Celtic Christian figures from ancient times – e.g. Pelagius and St Bridget – through to modern times - e.g. George McLeod, the twentieth century prophet who first rebuilt Iona Abbey and led the community there, and the still living poet Kenneth White, who reminds of the constant need to find new words to refresh and express old truths. The chapter on John Scotus Eriugena, a wandering monk, describes the Synod of Whitby in 664 in which protracted disputes between the Roman and Celtic traditions in Britain were settled in Rome’s favour, leading to the eclipsing of Celtic spirituality from the western Christian tradition for several centuries, without ever eradicating it. The disputes were ostensibly over the date of Easter and (no kidding) the right style of tonsure for monks, but Rome’s animosity towards the Celtic church’s repudiation of original sin and its tradition of male *and female* leadership played a substantial part. There is also an exposition of ancient Celtic poetry and songs, collected in the *Carmina Gadelica* by Alexander Carmichael in the 19th century, as well as on two (on-the-face-of-it unlikely) spiritual fellow travellers, the environmentalist John Muir, and the theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. All told, the book gives a clear sense of the Celtic Christian tradition’s roots, development and spiritual character, including its often bruising entanglements with the imperial Christianity of Rome and, later, the heresy-hunting Calvinists of the Church of Scotland.

Sewell’s detour to include the lives of John Muir, a Scot who emigrated to the US and became a pioneer environmentalist and – even more originally -

the Catholic priest and paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin, is illuminating. The latter's research and reflection on evolution and human pre-history led him to reject the idea of division between spirituality and the manifest materiality of the natural (and human) worlds, and to see the Light of God, translucent, in matter itself. These views were rejected by the Catholic authorities, and never published in Teilhard's lifetime: even more so than the revival of interest in the Celtic tradition they have played their part for many in redefining what a morally and scientifically tenable Christian faith needs to be. While I have been intrigued and persuaded by many of Teilhard's insights for a long while, I had not previously thought of his theological affinities with the Celtic tradition, although it is obvious in retrospect.

The book is quite short, very readable, and often moving. Each chapter ends with a prayer/meditation on the theme derived from the person addressed in it, inviting the reader to consider what that particular person's life and work has made them aware of. Quakers, I think, will find it very relatable, because as Sewell says, the Celtic Christian tradition "cannot be reduced to a set of doctrines and beliefs; instead, at its core is the conviction that we essentially need to keep listening to what our soul already knows, either in the particular circumstances of our lives or in matters more universal".

Book Review:

Missing: One Hundred and Fifty Miracles - The story of George Fox's 'Book of Miracles' ed Henry J. Cadbury.

Nicola Maharg

I have begun this piece several times and retracted. Why? Because I am aware, as early Friends always were, of misgivings about the word 'miracle'. Although it suggests physical healing, the one great miracle of all is in the peace that comes with understanding that we are loved beyond measure. That unveiling of the Truth can happen anywhere - in a gathered meeting for worship or, as it did for me, on a walk in 1979 when I was cured of the terror induced by a physical attack several months before.

Miracles don't normally enter the room shouting, but more often tread lightly, privately, profoundly and without fuss. And over the course of Quaker history, possibly due to apprehension about how we are seen, Friends have buried this treasure of our ministry, one that could well be considered part, if not the pearl, of our peace testimony and an integral part of our Quaker culture. So 'for the comfort and discomfort of Friends' as the Elders of Balby put it in 1656, here is a brief healing history – one that seems to need cultivating amongst Friends.

George Fox's Book of Miracles

When George Fox died in 1691 he left money and instructions in his will for the publication of both his journal (which we have) and a hand-written collation of notes on physical and mental healings called a 'Book of Miracles' (which we don't have). Fox's journal was subsequently published in many editions, but the original notes for the Book of Miracles were never found. Most of the healing miracles were edited out of Fox's journal. Proof of this lies in Friends House Library in London where an early journal has all mentions of healing miracles heavily scored over in black ink or simply cut away.

Why? For reasons probably both simple and complex. Friends suffered in the early years of the movement from ridicule, exclusion from commerce and banking, and torture and imprisonment – Fox himself spent around seven years in gaol. Living and speaking the Truth resulted in penalties unfamiliar to Quakers today. Originating from the radical secular and religious movements (including Diggers, Ranters and Seekers) Quakers were noted for their 'eccentricities' (plain clothes for simplicity, use of pronouns 'thee' and 'thou' for equality, and not bearing arms for the Peace testimony amongst others). They were wary of being further criticised and discredited beyond that which they had already endured. Furthermore, they bore the shame of and then adopted the name 'Quaker' as their own in recognition of the Spirit that physically moved them to minister in meeting for worship. In a post-Reformation Protestant country any witness to the quaking or fainting that was sometimes also described by Fox during healing would surely move Friends dangerously nearer the charisma of their similarly persecuted brothers and sisters in the Catholic church.

In the eighteenth century, more obstacles to miracles followed. The Enlightenment leant heavily on the concepts of 'a priori' (the rational and provable) and 'experiential'. It ushered in much that was valuable in advancement of Quaker testimony, including the rights and eventual equality of individuals, but some philosophers such as David Hume eschewed that which was not provable by rationale or experience, including what was scientifically inexplicable and, in his case specifically, miracles.

Perhaps one other reason for 'ghosting' Fox's miracles, was that Quakers necessarily became an institution over time. As such, protection of its individual members in their persecution and suffering grew into a natural concern for the movement's preservation as a whole. Most movements that become institutions grow slightly more rigid in thinking about what or who is acceptable, who or what is in or out. Spoken and unspoken rules thus develop. Such conformity (for example not marrying out of membership) was part of the reason Quakers had lost members to a worrying degree by the late nineteenth century and why its more liberal codes saw an increase in membership.

To this day the ministry of healing has never entered the official structure of Britain Yearly Meeting. It is considered a 'group'. Yet Friends Fellowship of Healing is a UK-wide healing network that meets for worship, workshops and conferences. It has a committee and offers training under the auspices of its sub-group Quaker Spiritual Healers. It publishes a quarterly magazine, 'Towards Wholeness', as well as booklets including the well-known and loved 'What Kind of God What Kind of Healing' by Jim Pym. And most of all FFH members hold people around the world in the Light through distant healing groups such as Immediate Prayer, the Mother and the Unborn Child and more.

In Glasgow Quaker Meeting, Friends Fellowship of Healing has met for worship almost continuously for at least the last forty years. We have learned a great deal from our Quaker tutors George and Judith Baines on Arran. Many of us have been on the FFH training and the Glasgow group has had regular refresher weekends at Quaker guesthouses including Lattendales, Glenthorne and Claridge House where we practise both hands on and distant healing.

From 7th March the Glasgow Quaker Healing Group will resume regular meetings on the first Monday of each month. This time we'll meet on Zoom as below from 7.30pm – 8.30pm. From 7.30 – 7.45 we have a catch up and from 7.45 – 8.15 hold a meeting for worship for healing. Normally one person facilitates a short focussing visualisation and then names only are placed gently into the silence as members are moved to speak. After about half an hour we close the meeting and have fifteen minutes before ending at 8.30. Names are shared and can also be sent to anyone who attends and they will be included in the meeting.

We hope you will come. What all of us have noticed is that the peace and profundity of stillness does as much for the healers as it does for those to whom we send healing.

Bibliography and links

Books

'George Fox's "Book of Miracles"' Henry J Cadbury ed
Friends General Conference, and Quaker Home Service, 2000
(original edition 1948)
'What kind of GOD, what kind of healing?' Jim Pym
Friends Fellowship of Healing, 1990
Journal of George Fox. John L Nickalls ed London Yearly Meeting, 1952

Video

George Fox's Book of Miracles Professor Michele Lisa Tartere
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbCs9sMwNiU>

Web Link

Friends Fellowship of Healing <http://www.quaker-healing.org.uk/>

Meetings and requests

West Scotland Quaker Healing Group (Friends Fellowship of Healing)

Meeting for Worship for Healing

7.30 – 8.30 Monday 7 March.

Thereafter, 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month.

Contact Nicola James Maharg for Zoom link

Nicola.james53@gmail.com Mob: 07595 370 376

All welcome



Following a post meeting discussion group at WSAM on-line Sunday evening meeting for worship, WSAM members of FFH have been prompted to resume their regular meetings. This time on-line. An Elder will be present

Shape of the hour

7.30 – 7.45 Settling in and brief visualisation.

7.45 – 8.15 Silent meeting for healing during which Friends say names of those they wish to hold in the Light.

8.15 – 8.30 Wee chat and 'home'

FFH website
quaker-healing.org.uk

Request for help from attenders.

Group to review the appointment of attenders to central committees: eg. QPSW central committee.

This small group of five has been convened at the behest of BYM Central Nominations Committee.

As a long-time attender (at Dumfries Local Meeting) I find myself on this group, mainly to give an attender's perspective to this issue. Obviously, I am only one attender, with one perspective, so am seeking the views of others.

There will be an opportunity for everyone to contribute their opinions to the review group via the online magazine Quake, hopefully the 3 March edition. Area Meeting and Local Meeting clerks will also shortly receive questionnaires to disseminate.

I can also collect contributions directly, so that is another option. Please feel free to email me at lenthbridgejb@yahoo.co.uk and I can send you details of the present position, and the questions we are asking.

Many thanks

Jan Lethbridge

How to help Ukrainians from the United Kingdom



Options include giving to charities on the ground, bringing clothes, or writing to your MP



[DONATE](#)



[HUMANITARIAN HELP](#)



[JOIN A PROTEST IN YOUR CITY](#)



[HOST UKRAINIANS](#)



[INFLUENCE AUTHORITIES](#)

INFLUENCE AUTHORITIES

Write to your local MP

This can be a way to lobby the British government to place further sanctions on the Russian government and its associates. You can get in touch with your local MP via email or post to their constituency address. Instructions on how to get in touch can be found on [parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk).

What to ask?

- Provide Ukrainians a refugee status in the UK
- Provide humanitarian and financial help
- Provide additional sanctions and ban all the relationships with Russian authorities

Ukraine

A global virtual Meeting for Worship to hold in the Light the situation in Ukraine, the decision makers, the soldiers, the citizens - all the people whose lives are in danger and already disrupted by fear.

Organised by Friends House Moscow supporters in the USA, it is running every day for one hour at 5:00 pm UK time. With thanks to Julie Harlow (a member of Davis Friends Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting) for organising this initiative

Here is the Zoom link for the Meeting for Worship:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4165005614?pwd=NUTieEtqbDBYbjBrcGdMMzBKQ3drQT09>

Meeting ID: 416 500 5614

Passcode: 182805

(This is a recurring meeting. If you want to add it to your calendar, here is a link to a calendar file: <https://bit.ly/35vcZ8a>)

In other news:

We are trying to contact our friends in Ukraine who (in happier times) have been running the Alternatives to Violence Project, a cause that we support. The AVP group are based in Odessa and Kharkiv but have also worked in other locations. You can read about their work here: [Alternatives to Violence Project – Friends House Moscow](#)

Please also hold in the Light our Friends in Moscow, and everyone in Russia who is speaking out for peace.

Contact us

Email: info@friendshousemoscow.org

Website: www.friendshousemoscow.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/FriendsHouseMoscow

UNBOXED IN PAISLEY AT THE ABBEY

Life show and multimedia presentation celebrating our connection to everything around us – past, present and future. Take a thrilling ride through 13.8 billion years of life, the universe and everything in it.

About Us is the opening event for UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of creativity taking place across the UK this year. The FREE, unticketed outdoor event will be at Paisley Abbey from Tuesday 1 – Sunday 6 March (with a public preview on Monday 28 February). Find out more at this link. <https://unboxed2022.uk/about-us>.

Our Friend Iain MacGinley, of Glasgow Meeting, will be singing at this with his choir.

Meeting for Worship at Faslane

We are resuming our meetings outside the north gate of Faslane naval base. Meetings will be at 11am on the following dates:
10 March, 24 April, 22 May, 26 June.

For further information contact Mary Alice Mansell mamansell54@gmail.com
or Daphne Wassermann
daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com

Woodbrooke courses

Woodbrooke, the Quaker Centre in Birmingham, has an increasingly wide range of courses on offer: some are entirely online; some are a mixture (for example, several online sessions with a one day face to face meeting with the tutor in a local meeting area); and a small, but growing number based at Woodbrooke. Some are 'pay as led', in other words, the cost is only what you can afford and want to pay; others are a fixed fee. But nobody should be put off as there are bursaries to cover the cost - as the Woodbrooke correspondent for Glasgow meeting I will be getting details of how this works.

Meantime, here are a small, random selection of upcoming courses:

2 March 18.30 - 20.00 online. Working collaboratively: how do Friends work with movements, partners, ecumenical and interfaith groups?

16 March 18.00 - 20.00 online. Finding resilience in a time of climate emergency.

7 March - 17 April online Quaker roots in Advices and Queries. £60

15 March - 12 April online. A non-violent apocalypse: The Book of Revelation for Quakers. £54

More information on Woodbrooke course website.

Poems please

A Gaelic Prayer

"As the rain hides the stars,
As the mist hides the hills,
as the clouds veil the blue of the sky,
So the dark happenings of my lot hide
The shining of Thy face from me.

Yet if I may hold Thy hand in the darkness
It is enough . . .
Since I know, that though I may stumble
In my going
Thou dost not fall".

The Clear Bead at the Center
changes everything
There are no edges to my loving now.
I've heard it said, there's a window
that opens from one mind to another.
But if there is no wall
there is no window,
And if there is no window,
there is no need for a latch
There are no edges to my loving now.
The clear bead at the center
changes everything. –
Rumi, translation by Bly & Coleman

Breathing in, I calm my body.
Breathing out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment [1]

Be Still Now ♦ Amanda Jones

Be still now, Friend.
Just sit quietly.
Let thoughts end,
Acknowledge politely.
Deep beyond the eyes,
Centred in the mind,
Is pure, white, mystifies,
Releases to unwind
An energy of unity
Where we all do meet
Our God of simplicity
Waits there to greet
Our hearts in purest form.
Bathed in still light
Acceptance in love's born
And reflected beyond sight.
So be still now, peace,
Is there waiting for you.
Things will happen, cease
In looking from your view.
You already know, see?
As light is your true being.
I'll meet you there and be
Lovingly peaceful in seeing.

Copied from EwL journal.

Paintings by Ursula Edge, Milngavie

Ursula is an 'amateur' who enjoys, shapes, movement and being out in nature.

Please be respectful of Ursula's copyright and do not reproduce paintings without Ursula's permission.







DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

7 th March	Area Meeting	by video/telephone (7-9 pm).
9 th April	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm
6 th June	Area Meeting	by video/telephone (7-9 pm).
20 th August	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm
8 th October	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm
5 th December	Area Meeting	by video/telephone (7-9 pm).

We confirm the dates for the holding of Area Meeting in 2022 and January 2023, subject to the necessity of holding the meetings by Zoom rather than at these venues. Further to minute 66/10, an incorrect date was given for the August meeting, which is corrected here. Some venues will be announced later.

12 th March	GENERAL MEETING	10.30 am	<i>You need to register beforehand</i>
11 th June	GENERAL MEETING	10.30 am	
10 th September	GENERAL MEETING	10.30 am	
12 th November	GENERAL MEETING	10.30 am	



Hold in the Light

Gretchen Ellis one of our Friends from Paris who is awaiting a hip operation.

All Friends feeling the stress and loneliness of these times.

People of Ukraine and all those involved in this conflict.

West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Crescent, 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 or the next issue of WSQN is 31st May 2022. And, good to see the enthusiasm, but please do not sent in articles over 1000 words
Copy should be send in Word format only to the editor Margaret Roy.**

