

# *West Scotland Quaker Newsletter*

**November 2019**

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## Clerk's Letter, November 2019

*On the 29 July 1667 Samuel Pepys wrote in his diary that "...a man, a Quaker, came naked through the [Westminster] Hall, only very civilly tied about the privates to avoid scandal, and with a chafing-dish of fire and brimstone burning upon his head... crying, "Repent! repent!"*

*This was Solomon Eccles (or Eagle). The fire on his head was to fumigate the air against the plague. He is better known to us for burning his musical instruments and compositions – he and his sons were notable composers, but Quakers considered music vanity and likely to lead to over-worldly attitudes.*

*I attended the conference at Woodbrooke 8-10 November, on 'Why have a Book of Discipline?' (That is the red book or Quaker faith & practice.) The description included: 'How does a shared discipline enable and empower us as Quakers? How does it challenge us? Britain Yearly Meeting is at the beginning of the once-in-a-generation process of revising our Book of Discipline and a committee has been appointed to undertake the task. This is an opportunity for representatives from Area Meetings and other interested Friends to join with members of the Revision Committee to explore the continuing importance of having a Book of Discipline and consider what we want it to do for us in the future.' Nuala Watt (Glasgow) and Mary Woodward (Portobello & Musselburgh) were with us as members of the committee, along with some 60 other Friends. The committee is only just getting to know each other and focus on its mammoth task. We had opportunity to consider the purpose and use of the Book, and our relationship to it. We heard how many of us come to the Book in the way we come to friends, gradually, becoming involved and taking on roles. A conclusion from the conference was that the Book is only meaningful if we are meaningful ourselves in our faith and practice. It reflects where we are, rather than being a Book that tells us what to be.*

*Nuala led a useful workshop on the use of poetry in the Book. There were only a few of us, but I was struck by how marginalised those valuing the creative arts felt about their reception with Quakers. This was exemplified by poor Solomon Eccles burning his violin in public, stricken at having to destroy his whole personality and creativity in this way in order to be part of the Quaker movement. The Friends present felt that God's spirit was shown through the arts and we should reflect this more in our Book. It made me think that there is a fine line about reflecting our experience and findings in the Book and wanting to determine what should be in it. The committee will need to grapple with that. It is difficult for us in current times to know what will be tested through time as valid. We decry Solomon Eccles'*

*act of burning a violin now, but he may have seen it as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good, so people were 'saved from sin'. It reminded me of Extinction Rebellion also calling us all to repent. What is valid to give up or change in our lives and others, in order to save the world? We have a task to discern.*

*The Revision Committee would welcome written comments and texts for their work on the next Book. The link online is at <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/> Otherwise you can ring Friends House for a paper version.*

**Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting**

## Report on Area Meeting , October 2019, Dunblane

During the opening worship we were reminded with the reading of QF&P 23.48 by Parker J Palmer, that God comes to us in the midst of human need and that the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response. In community we learn ,are taken to account, share power and we are supported to be ourselves. Our clerk then set the scene for today's meeting by suggesting 3 underlying major themes.

**1 we need to be open to the opportunities that are being created by changes proposed to the structures of BYM**

**2 we need to find answers about our roles as Individuals and as members of the wider Quaker community**

**3 we need to make space to take care of each other and of our responsibilities.**

One of the best aspects of AM is the opportunity to meet with new and old Friends and seeing and listening to each other. Only 19 of us gathered in the shadow of the lovely cathedral in Dunblane. We were especially pleased that Friends from as far away as Islay, Wigtown, Castle Douglas and Ayrshire had made the long journeys. But we missed representatives from at least 5 of our local meetings and wondered whether overall communications could be at risk? How do we stay connected?

We were touched by the reading of the testimony to the grace of God shown in the life of our young Friend Marion Fairweather, who sadly died 18 months ago. It was good to hear about Friends, who recently had moved into our Area Meeting, Rachael and Paul Milling to Ayrshire from Wandsworth and Doreen Osborne to Glasgow from the Reading area. Welcome! We thought about our Friend, Janet Fenton, who had been arrested twice in the last few weeks, for taking part in the demonstrations against the Arms Fair in London as well as for actions at Faslane. And of course we had lively conversations with each other over delicious soup , lovely cheese from Comrie and fruit from Friends' gardens!

Both the all-important agenda topics of nominations and the finance report made us think with considerable depth about the underlying themes mentioned above, as not for the first time we learned how hard it is to find enough people to take on responsibility for the functioning and the reality of financing our community. To make WSAM function presently we need to fill 95 roles to look after our affairs, enable learning, care for each other and reach out to our neighbours and the world. And just to make ends meet and fulfill our commitments, we need to raise at least a further £2,000 per year!

How do we assure that all members of our community understand?

Could we make it all simpler?

Might the joint initiative by BYM and Woodbrooke be able to help? This suggests placing paid “local development workers” into local areas to support local and area meetings. We have an opportunity to express interest by December, so look out for lively discussion about these possibilities in your local meeting. ( see also: [www.quaker.org.uk/mcs](http://www.quaker.org.uk/mcs) for more detail).

Regretfully there was hardly time to consider in much depth all the other important topics:

**ZOOM technology** will be introduced to replace our usual telephone conferencing at alternative AMs, which will enable friends to take part using their smart phones or computers for free.

**Glasgow Meeting House** development, decisions still need to be made.

**The violence against women concern**, with the 16 days of action planned by United Nations, 25 November – 10<sup>th</sup> December.

**COP26, 7-17 November 2020 in Glasgow**. This is the world conference for the United Nations climate talks. BYM will be working with local Friends, GM and the Parliamentary Engagement Group and other organisations to make an impact at this event. It will be the main topic for our AM in January 2020.

For further details please consult the AM minutes which have been widely circulated.

**Gisela Creed, Glasgow**

## Annual report of the trustees for 2018-19

One of our chief roles as Area Meeting Trustees is to steward the resources of Area Meeting, prudently, with care and according to the law, and in partnership with Area Meeting in session. Looking back through our minutes and the reports we have received over the past year, the majority of our time and attention seems

to have been given to our budgeting, our accounts and to Glasgow Meeting House, in both its fabric and its staffing and lettings. On the material side, this indeed reflects where our resources lie.

We are very fortunate in our committed and experienced AM Treasurer. All the financial planning, monitoring and reporting is done by the Treasurer, Margaret Morton. This is a very responsible job, and in past times, before the establishment of Trustees, it could also be a very lonely job. These days, budgets, proposals and problems are all brought to Trustees for discussion and support. Ultimately, Area Meeting will make or approve any major decisions, but in the meantime the Treasurer always knows that she has the support of Trustees to turn to. Trustees in turn are supported by Quaker Stewardship Committee in Friends House, and information and expertise come from a variety of sources, such as the annual conference for Trustees and Treasurers, which Margaret Morton attended on our behalf this year.

During the year we also approved some minor amendments to the Area Meeting's Safeguarding Policy, with help from our Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Safeguarding is a core area for which we are ultimately responsible, and we are working with General Meeting for Scotland to ensure we have the best and most efficient way of securing PVG registration and updates for those in our meetings who work with children or vulnerable people. The Simpler Meetings Project at Friends House is also developing a set of model policies and templates which can be adapted by AMs, which we will continue to monitor in order to fill any gaps we may have.

We are fortunate that we currently have five members of Glasgow LM (including the AM Treasurer, who is an ex officio Trustee) amongst our number. This is a considerable increase on last year, and will hopefully spread the workload that is associated with the staffing, lettings and development of Glasgow Meeting House. We anticipate a lot of decision-making with regard to the Meeting House in the coming months, and look forward to working with and supporting Glasgow LM and the Area Meeting as a whole through this challenging period.

Working with Area Meeting as a whole, and upholding the needs, both spiritual and material, of all Friends and attenders in its 12 constituent LMs, is the core of our work as Trustees. We take care to ensure that Trustees are represented at all Area Meetings in session. It has been particularly useful on two occasions in the past two years for the clerks to have met with the AM clerks and the convenors of Elders, Overseers and Nominations to take time to reflect more broadly on the condition of the Society as a whole and on the health and future development of our Area Meeting.

Who are we?:

**Liz Anderton, Peter Christy, Bronwen Currie (clerk), Tim Denvir, Martha Hatch, Mary Alice Mansell, Margaret Morton (ex officio as Area Meeting Treasurer), Kate Philbrick, Clare Phillips (assistant clerk), Wendy Reynolds, Margaret Roy (ex officio as Area Meeting Assistant Clerk) and Charlotte Wright.**

## Book of Discipline Revision Committee update October committee meeting in Edinburgh

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

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

These are the key messages from our weekend:

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

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

Many of your committee will be taking part in the Woodbrooke weekend *Why Have a Book of Discipline?* [8-10 November] and we hope that those attending will themselves feel a part of the revision process and help to engage those who



aren't able to be there. Our next committee meeting will also be at Woodbrooke [6-8 December]: please uphold us as we take the next steps on our journey.

**Mary Woodward**

## Young Friends General Meeting

"After much preparation, this General Meeting saw large changes to our roles and constitution finally beginning to be put in place. When we set the agenda at planning weekend, the metaphor that seemed natural was of a long process of growth now finally bearing fruit.

Now, after a weekend of business, the change seems more like something hatching – dishevelled, still with bits of eggshell on it, still struggling to completely emerge: but already bright-eyed with new life.

Even as our business has dealt with the largest and most formal of our community's structures, spirituality sessions and conversations have explored the meaning of community to each and all of us, drawing our attention to the hundreds of little acts of love and service that weave the continuous fabric of our life with one another.

We have looked outward to the wider Quaker world: our impact at Meeting for Sufferings, the opportunities of the coming Yearly Meeting Gathering, new chances for links with central work, and the work of visiting friends as close as Scotland and as far as Zimbabwe.

It's been a great pleasure to be in Edinburgh, and we've ventured out this weekend into a city of bright Northern skies and slanting Autumn sunshine. We're appreciative of a lovely meeting-house, kindness from Edinburgh meeting, and that Scottish essential, a proper ceilidh.

This weekend reminds us again of a lesson learned every time we meet, but every time still striking in its depth: how small acts of love and work unseen and unacknowledged create more love, and the grounds for love to act in the wide world. So, as the Biblical Spirit is sometimes translated Advocate, sometimes Comforter, we find that in giving one another comfort, we give one another strength.

More information about YFGM can be found on [yfgm.quaker.org.uk](http://yfgm.quaker.org.uk) and by contacting [yfgm@quaker.org.uk](mailto:yfgm@quaker.org.uk) Anna Goulding

## General Meeting for Scotland , November 2019

The full report of this can be found in the Scottish Friend. The minutes are also circulated by the Administrator. Below are some thoughts that arose from the consultation on our meetings process brought originally by North Scotland AM. What thoughts do you have on this that you might want to share? The paper as follows:

### Summary of thoughts so far.

How can we focus on our core purpose, our spirit-led community, based on 'Our Faith in the Future' – can we make communications work better to allow the spirit to flow through us? Communicating – e.g. using 'Zoom' to cut down on travel; how we use our web sites and social media; and our use of print media?

How can we develop ideas such as 'buddies' to support role holders and thinking creatively of different ways of eldering and oversight? What can we do jointly with other AMs? – e.g. sharing certain roles, sharing training?

How can we develop practical ways to improve workings, for example a standardized accounting system, this could be done initially across Scotland?

How can we give support for training in video conferencing, such as 'Zoom' and Woodbrooke courses for role holders?

How can we make the nominations process more transparent?

How we build community and bring in, and bring on, newcomers – e.g. through social events, learning opportunities, and equipping ourselves through skills development?

Developing our meetings – what can we do to stabilize fragile meetings, to seed new meetings? And should we be reviewing all our meeting places, owned or rented to see if they are in the right location, with the right facilities?

Should we encourage each Meeting to carry out a Spiritual Review?

We broke into small groups then proceeded to a lengthy feedback in the afternoon.

**My thoughts arising** (Isn't it good being an editor, you can put in your own stuff!!!)

INSTITUTE OR COMMUNITY

Is there a difference? Yes indeed, and a big one.



An institute is organized with rules and some authority structure that regulates the implementation of those rules. Usually it is hierarchical. Even so, if not, it is a 'society' body usually organised around a task.

A community is more difficult to define because, like words such as 'love', it means different things to different people but I think all would agree it is organized **for** individuals. I am reminded of hard and soft justice: one is punitive to control individual adherence to social norms, the other is more interested in allowing change so integrating and supporting the individual in the community. There is that word again.

### **WHY HAS THIS SUBJECT RISEN?**

At GM on 17<sup>th</sup> November we looked at change in the meetings to facilitate the carrying out of roles, even of trustees, and with an eye to vibrancy in our meetings – we even used words like 'experiment with faith'. I left deeply disturbed!

There was much discussion in small groups but the plenary seemed to concentrate on institutional processes even though the word 'community' seemed to be on so many minds. Do we know the difference? The phrases above contain both, so why am I unhappy?

The proportion of people who go to 'business meetings' is very small. At the last WSAM we had 17 out of a population of c.240 members and around 240 attenders. Yet, this is where decisions are discerned that affect us all.

Twice I have heard comments lately that we need less business, and Monthly Meeting used to be a social gathering.

When we talk of involving people these days, what is it that we want them to be involved in?

Besides this, I am now finding more people who do not go to Meeting for Worship and may even be considering leaving Quakers because it no longer meets their spiritual needs. Is that just the individual or is it a symptom of change when most of these individuals dither because they are still committed to Quakers and their values?

**Margaret Roy, Glasgow**

### **Some thoughts by Craig Barnett from the Transition Quaker website.**

As part of the work of the new Book of Discipline Revision Committee, we have been exploring the nature of a Quaker community, and what distinguishes it from a social club, political movement or meditation group.

The crucial insight for me is that a purely secular association is based on members' preferences. People may come together on the basis of shared purposes or interests, but it is their individual choices that are primary, and that define the basis of their membership.

There are many organisations, such as sports clubs, charities, political parties and trades unions, where members make generous commitments, and sometimes substantial sacrifices, for the causes that motivate them. The implicit understanding though, is that individuals opt in to these organisations on the basis of their pre-existing interests or values, and remain involved only to the extent that the group continues to serve or promote these preferences. In practice, of course, long-term involvement in any group also tends to form ties of loyalty and belonging which may go beyond the original motivations of their members. According to a purely secular understanding, however, these bonds are quite incidental to the explicit aims of the organisation.

By contrast, a Quaker community is (at least potentially) not just a collection of individuals with overlapping interests, but a 'people'. It is not grounded solely in the preferences of its members, just as the minute of a Quaker business meeting is not just the sum of individual opinions. Instead, people are led to participate in a Quaker community by the action of the Spirit, which may guide them in ways that remain quite obscure to their conscious intentions. A Friend in our Meeting once described to me how she had felt drawn to start attending a Quaker Meeting despite knowing very little about the Quaker way. This was not a matter of looking for a group through which she could pursue her existing interests, but being led by an inner dynamic that was drawing her towards new motives and a deeper encounter with life.

In reality, this Seed of Life is at work in many places in the world where it is not explicitly acknowledged. The Inward Guide is present to everyone, gently nudging them in directions that will enable their flourishing, or wrestling with their resistances and refusal of the Light. Many people are drawn into secular social movements, charities, political action or community groups by the action of this Spirit, drawing them towards opportunities for a more abundant and generous life.

The difference for a community that recognises the activity and guidance of God within each person, is that we can acknowledge this as the basis of our life together. Members of a Quaker community are not just individuals with similar social backgrounds, interests or values. A meeting community is formed by our common response to the same Spirit and Guide that is at work within each of us, however variously it is understood and described. It is our mutual recognition of

this shared response that draws us together into community, even with people we might not otherwise choose and with whom we may have little else in common.

It is because we are responding to the same Inward Guide that we come to belong to each other, and to recognise our mutual responsibility and interdependence. We need each other to help us to be faithful to the Seed of Life within, and to practise the disciplines of worship, discernment and testimony that enable that Life to flourish in us and through us.

A community that is grounded in this mutual recognition and shared practice does not have to rely on being socially similar, or having the same opinions or attitudes. Becoming a Quaker does not depend on having the 'right' views or fitting in with a socially homogeneous group. We can find ourselves drawn to a Quaker meeting despite broad differences of background, experience and perspective, and expect both to enrich the discernment of the community through our differences, and also to be continually challenged and transformed ourselves.

Instead of expecting a Quaker community simply to serve or reflect whatever intentions we bring to it, we come in response to an inward call to go beyond our current motivations. Through the practice of the Quaker way together, we can expect our views to be enlarged, our resistances dissolved, our inward wounds healed, and even our desires transformed, so that we grow into "new thoughts, new desires, new affections, new love, new friendship, new society, new kindred, new faith; and new hope, even that living hope that is founded upon true experience..." (William Penn, 1677, *Christian faith & practice* 37).

What is your experience of Quaker community?

### **We Need to Talk About Trident - Report by Daphne Wassermann**

This event was held on 14 November in St Andrew's church hall in Bearsden – an ecumenical event organised by various local Peace and Justice groups.

#### **Politicians**

Five speakers spoke for five minutes each on Trident and its possible replacement: Amy Callaghan (SNP); Ross Greer (Green); Maurice Corry (Conservative), Callum McNulty (Labour); and Susan Murray (Liberal Democrat).

Amy Callaghan was totally against nuclear weapons. They are of no use in combating our real threats for example cyber security and terrorism. It is strategically, morally and financially wrong. She recognises the need for conventional military action as a last resort.

Ross Greer echoed these views and the Green Party has always been against nuclear weapons. As a Christian he regards them as an evil abomination. They don't make us safer and indeed there have been near misses such as an aircraft carrying weapons that crashed and early warning systems failing suggesting that weapons should be launched (only prevented by humans refusing to obey these orders). Our main threats are terrorism, climate change (including the US denial), Russian interference in elections etc. None of these can be prevented by nuclear weapons. Later during questions he mentioned that the tension between the nuclear states of India, Pakistan and India is due to water shortages which the weapons cannot address.

Maurice Corry has a long career in the military and was extremely knowledgeable. In his opinion the weapons are necessary as a deterrent and the base supports thousands of jobs locally. He worked with NATO and East Europeans in a partnership for peace after the Balkan conflict. A Russian professor said to him that the regime could change in Russia and that the West should not lower its guard and should keep its deterrent.

Callum McNulty agreed that Trident was needed for national security and the Labour party supports its renewal. However, they would pursue multilateral disarmament. Jobs at Faslane are important and there would need to be new green employment for the workers. His personal view was that the weapons were wrong.

Susan Murray emphasised the need to support the UN and NATO as well as other international organisations. She would encourage peaceful dialogue but sometimes military intervention is necessary. While supporting multilateral disarmament the Liberal Democrats see the need to renew Trident.

In subsequent discussion some additional points were made.

We are committed to spending 2% of GDP for NATO so if we don't spend the £205bn on Trident it will be spent on other military uses. The Green Party disagrees with this, pointing out that only 0.7% of GDP is spent on overseas aid. In the opinion of Ross Greer, we would be much more secure if the proportions were reversed.

At Rosyth there are old Dreadnought nuclear powered submarines whose reactors are encased in concrete and which have been mothballed for 20 to 30 years. The nuclear fuel has a half life of over 2000 years. The steel will corrode well before that. One of the speakers suggested that the nuclear waste should be put back into the mines from which the fuel originally came. Maurice Corry has seen these submarines. They are in a well-guarded, high security area. A programme is

underway to develop new technology for dealing with the waste. There are also 37 Russian submarines in a similar situation in Murmansk.

Maurice Corry also commented on threats from cyber security, stating that there was a joint effort by the 77<sup>th</sup> brigade, scientists, IT specialists and GCHQ to address this.

### **Church leaders**

Views on Trident were also put forward by two church leaders, Father John Gannon from the Catholic Church and Dr Alan D McDonald, former moderator of the Church of Scotland.

John Gannon noted that the Catholic Church had very gradually come round to the view of total nuclear disarmament. Use of the weapons would be a catastrophic failure and immoral because of the lack of proportionality and the indiscriminate effect. Originally the view was that they were useful as a deterrent but the door on possession is gradually closing. The church is still wrestling with the issue. His view is that there is no point in having them if you never intend to use them, so they should be scrapped.

Alan McDonald described how the position of the Church of Scotland had changed. Each year at the general assembly George McLeod of the Iona Community put the view for disarmament, Col. Warnock from Fife put the reverse view and won the vote. In McLeod's final year at the same event (1986) he expressed the same views but this time, to everyone's surprise Warnock agreed with him and disarmament became church policy. Apparently the change of heart had come after Chernobyl.

This policy was reaffirmed in 2018 when the Government was urged to engage with the ICAN process and disarm. Ecumenical groups have been formed and Cardinal Mario Conti was persuaded to join the peace march from Faslane to Holyrood.

(This report was written from my notes and I apologise if I have spelt names wrong or made other errors.)

### **Reconciliation Walt Whitman**

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly, wash again  
and ever again this soiled world;  
For my enemy is dead, a man as divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin - I draw near,  
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

## Seeking to know one another in the things which are eternal – the Quaker Way

This is the eighth in the series of interviews with Friends in the West of Scotland. If you have missed any of the series of interviews, there are two booklets still available which pull the interviews together – contact me if you want a copy. You will see that the prompt questions used as a basis of these interviews are also included, to encourage you, or your meeting, to consider experiences, thoughts and feelings about the Quaker Way. The next topic is Peace followed by Forgiveness. As I've said before, I hope you will consider whether you are a Friend who would wish to contribute to this. And I am also open to suggestions on topics – Sustainability and Equality are two obvious ones, and the Bible and Death are two other current suggestions.

Thanks to these five Friends who've shared their experiences so openly.

**Sheila Semple, Glasgow**

### **Prompts for The Quaker Way**

- What does the phrase The Quaker Way mean to you? What are the key aspects for you?
- Has your understanding of it changed over time?
- How does it impact on your life?
- How does a concept or experience of The Quaker Way relate to what you do in worship, in the community of Friends, in your service in the world?
- What are the most challenging aspects of The Quaker Way?
- What are the easiest aspects?
- How well understood is The Quaker Way?
- How do you explain to others, within and outwith the Religious Society of Friends, what The Quaker Way is, as you perceive it?
- How, in your experience, can Friends be helped to learn about it and follow it?
- What have you observed of how Friends live The Quaker Way?
- Do you have an image or phrase that encapsulates The Quaker Way?
- Anything else?

### **The Quaker Way by Hervey Gibson**

I was born Quaker – well, almost. My dad had mixed with Friends as a conscientious objector in the Second World War. He had married mum and moved to a blitzed London to take up a job in advertising with his old employer, W H Smith. They were engaged in London Meetings, I think mainly Westminster



but also Stoke Newington and Friends House. They moved to the Essex seaside and I grew up in suburban Leigh-on-Sea Meeting, amidst vegetarians, sandals, short trousers and a couple of local politicians.

So I feel I have always been in the Quaker Way, which is by no means to say I have always been Quakerly!

I became a political animal at a very early age, and memories include hearing of the Sharpeville massacre by South African police in 1960, and a parliamentary by-election. Our sitting member, the socialite 'Chips' Channon, who hardly ever spoke in Parliament, died and his son Paul broke off studies at Oxford to take up the family seat. So I became sceptical of heredity and privilege.

The political witness of early Friends, the rejection of compulsion and of subjection to the hierarchy of priests speaks strongly to me.

Three strands ran through my personal interpretation of the Quaker way.

First: 'Walk cheerfully over the world'. The importance of being cheerful and seeing and seeking out all aspects of the world in all its wonderful variety really matters. Craving for variety, new experience, and new acquaintances may in some deep psychology be a justification for hedonism and self-indulgence. But on balance I believe they have helped to make me a better and more contributory person.

Second: Seek (and answer) that of God in everyone – and don't trouble too much whether it is God in capitals or good in lower case. I find this maxim just never lets me down. On Boris's first day in office I wrote on Facebook asking what good we could find in him, and I was shocked at how little people volunteered. I have little doubt he is a very bad influence on the world, but we can only change that if we can find things that he can and would like to build on. We need to recognise them and be able to speak sincerely of them.

Third: 'Friends, keep your meetings' wrote George Fox frequently in his letters, urging people from Gdansk to Scarborough to turn up every Sunday. This, too, has been important for me. In life generally if you abstain or abdicate you're unlikely to sway people one way or another. And with regard to Quakers, I guess I also accept the corollary that if you don't keep your meetings, if you don't turn up and join in, you can't complain and must accept what happens.

The other strands are less individual. In my late 20s and early 30s I became quite deeply immersed in Quaker bureaucracy. I helped in a tiny way to establish the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels. As Clerk I tried to herd the elephantine Jesus Lane meeting in Cambridge, made up of very friendly, but extremely weighty, Friends. And then as Clerk in Glasgow, sandwiched between

John Creed and Mike Parker, I learned to love Newton Terrace and the foibles of a good few Friends whose fellowship we still celebrate nearly forty years later.

As well as reading the notices, and, oh, joy, the Epistle from Yearly Meeting, I grew much attached to the Quaker way of doing business. I realised that my work life in Scandinavia and the Swedish way of making decisions had relied on many similar precepts and conventions, some supposedly traceable back to the Vikings.

The most powerful of these I would describe as seeking unanimity, preferably in the spirit. Through careful (care-full) inner contemplation we can find what may take us forward as a body. We can describe that in whatever religious or non-religious words we choose.

This leads to the last of my six aspects of the Quaker way: Wait on God and welcome when you find silence. I have found it enormously strength-giving not to be afraid of silence, but sometimes to allow thoughts and emotions to force their way through it.

So asking me about the 'Quaker Way' feels like being asked as a fish what I think of the water. I can't see. What is the stuff that I am swimming through?

### **The Quaker Way by Nicola James Maharg**

The Quaker Way is to live in the Truth and the Life. Meeting for Worship returns me to the centre more than solitary prayer. It's a circular process: of life lived in the world and considered honestly in the stillness and Light of the gathered meeting. It changes you. When I take my lived experience to the gathered meeting it is illuminated and clarified: seemingly important matters of ego give way to an all encompassing experience of forgiveness and love which *is* the eternal Truth. You can be, to paraphrase C. S. Lewis, surprised by the joy of it. Over time you trust it more. For the Quaker Way to flourish in meeting you need to give the Spirit a chance to breathe through you, and for that breath to join with others there. It is community in action.

It is possible to confuse a temporary enthusiasm with the Spirit stirring. Discernment with other Friends is important - through meetings for clearness, threshing meetings or in our business meetings for worship. Where two or more are gathered you come to know whether your strength of feeling is hot air or the Spirit exercising you. Often a third solution occurs and 'way becomes clear'. Usually it involves a change in you, but because there is a feeling now of peace, you are ready, receptive. This is a gift from Spirit telling you about your particular gift, your possible response. You have experienced the original meaning of the word *enthuse* from Greek *entheos* (God within).

Quakers sometimes have an awkward relationship with Quaker discipline, wrongly and simplistically associating it with intolerance and external authority unjustly exerted over others less powerful. Internal authority (*autoritas*) however is born of conviction. It gives you the motivation, courage and self-discipline to stand in the Light where-ever it might lead – and without which we're lost at sea. The discipline of the Inner Light is to speak Truth to power and sometimes to be very much in The Way.

I was born in the flat above Oxford Meeting house where my mother was resident warden. On door duty with my father I learned to shake hands and say 'welcome'. I could wander where I wanted in complete safety: I could call my mother's name and she would be found. Friends would take you home. My parents resigned from Quakers when I was eight years old. Without the depth of that loss I may never have had the strength or desire to return when I was twenty-five. Hearing Quaker words and silence after so long was the most extraordinary and blessed experience. My adult understanding of Local, Area, General and Yearly Meeting were laid upon the warm childhood experience of Quaker gatherings. The local world of the inner child met with the wider adult horizon of the Quaker Community. I was able to read now, of course, and here was the community's own text of Quaker experience: *Church Government* and *Christian Faith and Practice* (now *Quaker Faith and Practice*). How I treasured Quaker writing. Words did not make the Spiritual life real, but they testified to the reality of its Way.

Now I'm 'passing on' the Quaker Way to facilitate University student support teams in looking after themselves and their students. Creative Listening helps people to listen to themselves and others, to be still in their own mind and speak simply rather than simply speaking. Participants 'catch' (rather than are taught) how the Quaker business method works and write their own Quaker minute. Since everyone is involved, all are on board. The Quaker Business method often works more efficiently with University staff than with Friends: they are happy working within the discipline of Quaker 'ground rules' permitting me to 'micro-clerk' them. They are also surprised by the joy of the process and its paradoxical time efficiency (slow is fast). Are Quakers as happy to be so disciplined?

In living the Quaker Way, I'm being called to be more forthright to and about Quakers, and also to take this Way outside of the Religious Society of Friends, because meeting for worship belongs to everybody: the Light that is shining, is shining for us all.

### **The Quaker Way by Meg Beresford**

I was in my 40s when I went to University of Warwick as a mature student to do Comparative American Studies. Through my studies, I became aware of Quakers

and Shakers in Colonial New England and this had a huge effect on my later understanding of modern Quakers.

Later, back in Oxford, reading *Hiroshima* by Ralph Nader I was horrified at the use of atomic weapons in 1945. What *am* I going to do about this? How can I cope? And my memories from studies of Quakers took me to Oxford Quaker meeting.

It was life-changing, sitting silently with all these people. It was full of Friends who were part of Oxfam and some of whom became part of the witness at Greenham Common Peace Camp. Since then, I've attended many different sizes and locations of Friends Meetings, and found the same Spirit; and again, in our small meeting of Lanark everyone is an activist.

**The testimonies – Peace, Simplicity, Truth and Integrity, Equality, Sustainability - are the essence of the Quaker Faith, the Quaker Way.** I subscribe to that sense of the Spirit leading me, into a way of life to live out the testimonies. There is a clearly religious dimension, but for me it doesn't need to be Christian.

As a conscientious objector at the start of WWII, my father was sacked from his job at the BBC and joined with others forming a community. There were 7 children, partly home schooled and then sent to local schools where we were mocked for being the children of COs. It was a spiritual community and there were regular periods of worship but as young children we did not attend. My father was a mystical person and he and my upbringing obviously had an influence on me.

I can see how I have been led to live the Quaker Way. I spent 10 years, working first for European Nuclear Disarmament and then CND. During this time attending Quaker Meetings was very important. Around 1989, I and other peace movement people were invited to Iona by Helen Steven and Ellen Moxley, both Quakers and Iona Community Members, to take part in a week long conference with military people who were opposed to nuclear weapons. One day while there I was sitting outside the Abbey, and I *heard* the noise of the sheep eating the grass – and I thought, what am I doing living in a city? A week later, I heard of a job on Iona and became a job-share gardener in the Iona Community.

Three years later in 1994, the YMCA, which owned Wiston Lodge near Lanark, advertised for a group to run it. Along with four others – one Church of Scotland Minister and his family, myself and another Quaker, came to run Wiston Lodge and I have been here ever since...Then later YMCA sold Wiston Lodge to a group

of us and we have developed it as “A Place to Grow” hoping to help children and young people develop, to get out into nature and find ways of changing their lives. There’s a Quaker phrase ‘the Way will open’ – and it did.

The damage we are doing to the environment concerns me greatly. A few years back I, some friends and my Border Collie dog made a Bee Line, walking from the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens back to Wiston, taking 8 days. We hardly saw any pollinator insects until we were walking along a disused railway line between Broughton and Biggar. And I joined the Bumblebee Conservation Trust for the future for our children and grandchildren.

Having studied history, I find the beginnings of Quakerism compelling. How did George Fox get all those people to come to Firbank Fell in the depths of the countryside? How did he do it? What caused it to happen? Thinking back to the Quaker Way in Fox’s times, is living now in our times more difficult than they were in his?

For me, a difficult thing in the Quaker Way is hearing Quakers talking in ways that I disagree with; I have to go out for a mindful walk in the woods with the dog. Each Lanark Meeting Sunday I get up quietly, meditate, then spend time getting the Meeting room ready – and at the same time, my heart and mind prepared. It’s important to be in agreement in heart and mind, and to be fully aware.

If I had to sum up the Quaker way, it would be in George Fox’s words – ‘Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every man.’

### **The Quaker Way by Neil McKechnie**

The first thing that came to mind was of other ‘ways’, the West Highland Way, for example! I suppose the ‘Quaker Way’ may be like routes and journeys, with clarity, uncertainties, obstacles and the joy of being in the moment, in the light, whether in beautiful Scottish scenery or gathered in Meeting for Worship.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Perhaps for Quakers, it begins when a seed lodged deep in ourselves grows and blossoms. For me, that seed was lodged by my teacher of English, Jenny Auld, late of Glasgow and East Kilbride Meetings. Around 1965, we were studying the First World War poets, Owen, Sassoon etc, for O Grade. Jenny’s great talent was reciting poetry and sharing its essence, its deeper feeling. Those of you who remember her recitation of Tam O’Shanter will know what I mean as she painted the picture of Tam in Auld Alloway Kirkyard in our minds. Jenny did the same with the monstrous slaughter of the First World War trenches. In that context, she briefly mentioned she was a Quaker and what that meant for her, and for Quakers generally and more

specifically in WW1. Did my engagement with the Quaker Way begin then? Perhaps so.

Jump forward 7 years or so and I had an unexpected and surprising experience of absolute connectedness to... something! Reflecting on this the words of Jenny Auld in her classroom sprang to mind and I was 'convinced' to follow this up. Jenny introduced me to Glasgow Meeting – and I've been part of that meeting since the mid 1970s. So another stage in my Quaker Way began as part of Glasgow Meeting through worshipping, social action and stories of the lived examples of Friends, becoming part of a wonderful and nurturing community.

Those who know me are aware of how things unfolded and the ups and downs of life with its challenges and joys. Behind it all, though, there's a sense of that connectedness that first drew me to Friends. I'm open as to whether that can be expressed and identified as Christian or 'universalist'. To me it doesn't matter as the Quaker way is broad enough to hold us all, although the starting point in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the expression of the Quaker way in Christian terms. Within Glasgow we're now delivering our vision for the Meeting, a living expression of the Quaker way through worship, learning from each other, action and our physical presence with a Meeting House.

The spiritual life of the Meeting is rooted in the Quaker way – but how do those who seek refreshment and those new to the Meeting learn, experience and follow it? This isn't something new for the Society of Friends. I prepared notes for the Learning Groups (that run for Friends in and around Glasgow) on John Wilhelm Rowntree's life, his quest and challenge for an opening up of the living growth of the Society of Friends, questioning what might be seen as creeds and misplaced energy. His message is relevant today – within the Society how can we further connect to what early Friends meant when they talked of 'what canst thou say?' (full quote Quaker Faith and Practice 19.07) and 'letting your lives speak'.

An example of the unique aspects of the Quaker way is decision-making through a Meeting for Worship for Business, by 'discernment', by 'right ordering'. We try to reach out to that which is eternal in our business meetings, with responsibility on all present, not just the Clerk, to decide what to do. This can be challenging, firstly I think, for those new to the Meeting to understand how we work, and also for those steeped in the process, to create space, to wait and reflect on where the Meeting is being led when contributing. As the previous LM clerk, I felt the responsibility of managing this and also the tug from history of those Friends who preceded me in clerking meetings 'in the light'.



While the Quaker Way is an individual journey not led or directed by another human being, Advices and Queries and Quaker Faith and Practice set the broad context within which we follow our individual approach, based on being in the Light and touching that connectness together.

I think the Quaker way is what we make it, within the Society through worship and spiritual growth and in our presence in the world. I see this in Friends' involvement in climate protest, in direct action through challenging arms fairs and our witness in Glasgow supporting groups that help those dealing with addictions. The recent social witness fair held by Glasgow Meeting was a tremendous experience for getting to know Friends who lived the Quaker way through what they do. I've chosen jobs and voluntary work that reflect Quaker values but also feel the personal challenge of living with inequality. There's more to come both for Friends and for me personally on the Quaker way.

### **The Quaker Way by V  r  ne Nicolas**

Put simply, the Quaker Way is the key practices and principles that guide us: how to put our faith into practice – the building blocks of what makes me a Quaker on a daily basis and in all life contexts. It's demanding: it requires my focus, intention and a certain discipline.

It impacts on my life a lot: cultivating silence and stillness on a daily basis and seeing God in everyone which is particularly demanding as like many, I am quick to judge behaviour I don't like and see the person as "other". Putting community at the centre of the Way as it is others who help us come to encounter the inner Light, to discern the prompting of the Spirit. For me the practice of discernment is key because it brings us into close connection to Truth as long as we are prepared to wait patiently, open to Spirit-led questions of trusted friends or Friends, and ready to embrace our vulnerability. The Quaker Way helps us to discover our "True Self", our talents, gifts and limitations and to what is ours to do in the world – where is the Spirit leading us to put faith into action?

Only community can help us walk the Way, respecting our dignity, humanity and reality. The spiritual teacher Ram Dass has this wonderful expression 'to help one another walk Home'. For me this is the essence of community. I don't think we are there yet as modern Quakers, but I am sure that the longing to find Home is in every one of us in our Meeting.

In saying all this, I feel slightly like an imposter: my journey with Quakerism has been full of ambiguities and inner conflict – I speak as a less than committed Quaker and find it even hard to say I am a Quaker when I meet or work with people of faith. Instead, I say I belong to the Quaker community. That's because

of the gap I experience between what our tradition is about (at least what I see in it) and my actual experience of how it finds expression today.

It was different for early Friends, not necessarily because they had thought deeply about how to go about things, they were naturally much more community inclined. We are paying now for our individualism. They also developed a deep understanding and commitment to key aspects of the Quaker Way: the practice of nonviolence; living simply; speaking truth (if possible with care that's the hardest part). I would add to this reverence for the earth and the practice of leaning towards vulnerability. Modern Quakerism, for me, has adopted the easiest part: doing as distinct to being. To be engaged in the pressing issues of our time (through various forms of activism) and get engaged in the community are obviously important parts of the Quaker Way. But what we are not doing enough of is to support one another into the place of deep surrendering and nurturing our Quaker spirituality.

I am clear that the Quaker Way needs to be learned, it won't be learnt by osmosis. We need to use the practices that emerge from our tradition to bring us back on track and revive the tradition.

One of the practices that I find particularly powerful is the Meeting for Clearness, a fundamental tool for discernment. In groups of non-Quaker friends and of Quakers in Glasgow meeting I've helped to explore the work of Parker Palmer, the US Quaker who encapsulated some of the core principles and practices of the Quaker Way in his writing. A key intention of his work is 'to join soul and role'.

I want to be part of a community that's clearly committed to the Quaker Way, and is prepared to do the hard work of learning what it takes to walk our talk. I am convinced this would rekindle many of our meetings in Britain, dramatically help us clarify our purpose and therefore simplify the structures that burden us today.

#### **New Books in Glasgow Meeting House Library**

Haines, Pamela. Money and soul: Quaker faith and practice and the economy. Christian Alternative, 2018. S/HAI

Lane, Andrew. Race and privilege in Europe. QCEA, 2019. S/LAN

Seven titles in the "Twelve Quakers and ..." series from Quaker Quest (Simplicity, Equality, Pacificism, Worship, Faith, God, Evil)

## Pilgrimage to Swarthmoor Hall and the 1660s country

In October, 10 of us set off on a pilgrimage to the sites of the early Quakers. We were based in Swarthmoor Hall, the first centre of Quakers in the home of Margaret Fell – she who said that when the Spirit moves it rips you apart. The first day we set off for Settle Meeting House where Ben Pink Dandelion gave a talk on the early history. Pilgrimage is all about renewal and taking another step on the spiritual mountain so no surprise to find *some* of us up Pendle Hill where George Fox had his vision of a great people to be gathered.

On another day we all climbed Firbank Fell, aided by a minibus on very narrow roads this time. His sermon there was three hours - staunch souls, was it a good day?

It was truly inspirational to sit in some of the old meeting houses, feeling the spirit and energy of those early Friends as well as meeting current friends and sharing ideas mostly about worship and witness. I suspect Brigflatts was the favourite of most of us. Another day found us at Kendal to view the tapestry. And yet another found us at Lancaster where we went up to the castle where there is still an active court. Our guide told us much of the early times when other Quakers visited the court! He rung the bell (just once) which was sounded throughout when a hanging took place. A bit gruesome, we learned the difference between the short fall and the long one. We also learned that early prisons were only holding places until sentence could be carried out.

Each day we started with Meeting for Worship before breakfast. In the evening, before the epilogue in the great hall, we gathered to share our thoughts of the day. Below is a summary:

### Communion

We came to know one another in the things which are eternal

What delighted me was the deep, deep silences which were so physical you could feel the silence

The courage, light, determination and passion that was theirs (the folks we have been living with) is revealed to me in the stillness of our gathered meeting

Time together in deep worship, fellowship laughter and fun

Great to have time together at Swarthmoor Hall and absorb the atmosphere

The warmth and care William Caton received from Margaret Fell continues still at Swarthmoor –embodied in our Eastern Scottish resident friends, Phil and Pat.

The joy of meeting here with old friends, welcoming new friends and those returning.

Learning and becoming closer to George Fox  
 Looking for faith and facing Margaret Fell's "the war within".  
 Looking to the colours of the hills  
 The privilege of epilogue where Margaret Fell and George Fox lived and  
 worshiped.  
 George Fox climbed Pendle Hill "with much ado".  
 Do they walk among us? Is it possible? What is time? Are we interconnected?  
 "We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love  
 and unity"<sup>1</sup>

*Created collectively in the evening towards the end of West of Scotland AM  
 Pilgrimage to Swarthmoor Hall 16.10.2019*



*The group in Brigflatts Meeting House, the oldest still standing.*

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<sup>1</sup> See QFP 19.46: *in June 1660 Margaret Fell delivered to Charles II a paper directed to the king and both houses of parliament making clear the corporate testimony of Friends 'against all strife and wars':*  
 We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife, and wars, and contentions that come from the lusts that war in the members, that war in the soul, which we wait for, and watch for in all people, and love and desire the good of all... Treason, treachery, and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising, or plotting against any creature upon the face of the earth, and speak the truth in plainness, and singleness of heart.

**Malcolm Kennedy** on Tue, 24 Sep 2019,  
In the central square of La Plata

*From two travelling  
Friends*

Yesterday I walked around the main square in La Plata, in front of the impressive cathedral. There were pairs of people repainting lines and curves of black paint around a block marking the centre of the square. I chatted to one of them and the markings were to do with the astronomical alignment of their city. I also asked about the names and some other words painted in black on some of the square paving stones. They were the names of women killed by men and how they died. I had also seen a concrete bench on the pavement on Avenue 1 painted red with words in white that were in memory of these women. In the parks and often on walls there are stencils in white of women's head scarves. These were about the many women who keep alive the memory of their sons and husbands who were disappeared during the military time in Argentina. But also those who are still trying to trace the babies that were taken from people during those times, or were the children of couples who were disappeared, and their babies given to members of the regime or their friends. As many as one thousand people, now in their fifties, have discovered that the people that they thought were their parents were not, and DNA screening has allowed many of them to be reunited with their grandmothers.

Perhaps we should paint the names of women who have suffered horribly at the hands of men in George Square. How important it is to raise good sons.

### **Penny Lilley, September 2019**

I recently visited relatives and friends in the USA- my first trip across the pond. I had an amazing time. I wrote the account below while I was there.

#### **Two Meetings for Worship in the USA**

I have attended two Quaker Meetings since I have been in the USA. The first was in Worcester, Massachusetts (a city about the size of Glasgow), which is near where my uncle lives. It has its own clap board, wooden Meeting House and a big rainbow flag flapping outside. When I went in there was a Meeting for Business in progress. There was no-one to greet people at the door.

After the MfB finished the chairs were rearranged and Meeting for Worship started. There were about 15 people, mostly older but several younger people. Unfortunately my uncle had arranged to go for lunch with my cousin immediately after MfW so I didn't get much chance to talk with people. When I had previously looked on the website of this Meeting- they seemed to have similar concerns to WSAM- supporting refugees, and concerns and actions around environmental

issues. They were also concerned and active on issues around race- which is a bigger thing in Trump's America than in the West of Scotland.

I was surprised that there was no table in the middle of the circle of chairs- so no flowers, bible, Quaker Faith and Practice, Advices and Queries or money collecting boxes, as we have at Castle Douglas Meeting and I have seen in Meetings in Scotland and England. There was no ministry. There were brief notices and we went round and introduced ourselves which was nice. I was made welcome but apologised that I could not stay for refreshments.

The second Meeting for Worship I went to was in Morningside Meeting in New York City. It was the closest Meeting to the place I was staying in Harlem. It had previously met in a Columbia University building, but the university put the rent up hugely so the Meeting had moved to a large church called the Riverside church. My friends I was staying with in Harlem had told me the church building was large, but I had not anticipated what a HUGE church it was. It was as big or bigger than many UK cathedrals. Apparently, John D Rockefeller, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist and Baptist, approached a local Baptist church offering to build a multi-faith church with the help of the Baptists- but they only wanted a Baptist church- so he paid independently for this enormous church to be built in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Quaker Meeting was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor! The Meeting room was lovely- large and light with a nearby toilet, small library room and a storage space, and wonderful views across New York City. Unfortunately for me it was the weekend of their annual retreat, so many people were at the retreat. The Meeting was normally the size of Glasgow Meeting, but on this Sunday there were about 15 people. Again, predominantly older, but with a good scattering of younger people. There were only 2 men, and one woman of colour. There was- like the Worcester Meeting, no table in the centre. When I asked about the lack of Quaker Faith and Practice etc, they said I could look at literature in the library. One woman ministered, wanting a relative held in the Light. I was told afterwards that people rarely ministered.

There were brief notices followed by a quick go-round when people introduced themselves and then juice and biscuits and cakes- **but no tea or coffee!** As I am an avid tea drinker- this was terrible! I mentioned in the go-round that I was from Scotland and was made welcome. Many people had either relatives or friends in Scotland, had visited, or wanted to visit. I think if the retreat had not been on there would have been a more noticeable presence of an elder or overseer. (Although they don't call them elders or overseers- they have a "Committee on Ministry and Council".) No-one was particularly curious about Quakers in Scotland, which I found disappointing. After refreshments, people tidied up and two people were



going to a nearby green market, and I went along with them, which was nice. This Meeting had a before Meeting breakfast get-together once a month- but no shared lunches after Meeting. They normally had a children's Meeting but not on this occasion because so many people were away. I'd liked to have talked to people longer but they were keen to get going.

With hindsight maybe I should have told people in advance by email, that I was coming to Meeting and would have liked to talk with one or two people afterwards about their Meeting and Quakers in the USA generally.

Do others have experience of going to Meeting in other countries? How did you find it? It's the 1<sup>st</sup> time I have been to Quaker Meeting outside of the UK.

## INTERFAITH WEEK

The event at the South Glasgow Gurdwara was not strictly an Interfaith Week event. It celebrated the 550<sup>th</sup> birthday of Guru Nanak. So important is this event that Pakistan has opened its borders so pilgrims can cross from India to visit the Sikh temples on the other side of the border, and the Counsellor Generals from India and from Pakistan attended the event in Glasgow on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

Central to the celebrations was an amazing tapestry that highlighted three core beliefs of Sikhism:

### **Naam Japo** – Meditate

*Focus on the positive strength of the divine. Meditation de-clutters the mind, gets rid of negative feelings and fills with gratitude and positivity to face the ups and downs in life. Meditation brings equilibrium to our mind so we can be in a state of bliss at all times.*

### **Kirat Karo** – Honest work

*Work hard and honestly to enjoy a happy life by practising truthfulness in all your actions. Use your God given talents, skills and abilities for the benefit and improvement of not just yourself but society at large.*

### **Vand Chako** – Share

*Share whatever you have with those who don't have as much as you. The more you give, the more you receive. This is the law of the Universe. Share food, clothing and essential needs of daily life as well as happy and sad times with everyone. That will make you a content and fulfilled individual radiating God's love.*

Indeed love was very much in evidence in the gathering of people from many faiths and of course, in Sikh tradition, the food was nutritious and very tasty. Gurdwaras all over the world open their doors daily to all who want to eat!

## Guru Nanak's Universal Message

There is one sacred energy that enables and sustains existence.

When we recognise this ONENESS, we view all things in creation as interconnected and interdependent.

Giving up Ego, we will see ourselves connected to each other regardless of race, religion or gender.

God is an energy that resonates in everything and sustains all, seen and unseen, in the past. Present and future realms of existence.



## Book Review: A CALL FOR REVOLUTION The Dalai Lama, Rider 2017

These 84 pages have such titles as *I believe in you*, *Rebels for peace*, *Bring on the revolution of compassion*, *What can you do for the world*, *The world of compassion exists*, and *The charter of universal responsibility*. The little book is addressed to the youth of the world: *I have enormous faith in your generation*.

The Dalai Lama has lived through so much bloodshed 'caused by human ingenuity turned to destruction'. Among the climatic catastrophes the melting of 46,000 glaciers in the Himalayas will affect the sources of life for 1½ billion people. Despite such as this, he urges that we should not give in to a 'mean world

syndrome' because 'a global momentum for peace is gaining ground'. He further urges us to consider how we can become involved in increasing 'a spirit of union' worldwide.

*From my perspective of having spent my life observing the world, I beg you to pay heed when I say that if your generation sinks into violence, you will see the death throes of humanity. The twenty-first century will be the century of peace, or humanity will cease to be.*

He is very much influenced by the French Revolution's themes of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity – to this he adds Justice - and happily calls himself a Marxist believing in the redistribution of wealth. Such revolution have failed because of basic human emotions such as greed and selfishness! How can 67 Billionaires grab as much wealth as half the world's population? He sees religion as fostering division. Indeed – *I am not speaking to you in the name of an ideology. I do not believe in ideologies- those systems of preconceived ideas that are applied to reality and the means by which political parties in power impose authority. Ideology is all the more dangerous because it permeates all sections of society. Not only can you no longer discern it, your world view is unconsciously shaped by it.* (And this writer notes that that is one of the banes of the feminist movement – it is so difficult to recognise patriarchy. It is so subtle.) The Dalai Lama calls himself a Feminist as he recognises that it is from the Mother that we first encounter compassion. He talks of the Mothers of the Revolution of Compassion. He has a dream that *'the 200 nations of the world will be governed one day by women. There will be less violence, and economic and social injustice. And whatever you do, you must not assume that in order to reach high office, and stay there, you need to adopt the most shameful masculine behaviours. Genuine strength is rooted in love and compassion. The more you exercise power in this way, the more violence will decrease. Young women of the millennium: I am calling on you to take your place at the vanguard of the mother of all revolutions.*

He calls his revolution one of compassion. He is a wise man who has studied science and psychology with the best practitioners on the planet. Daniel Goldman was inspired by him in his work on Emotional Intelligence. Hence it is no surprise to hear him speak of the effect of compassion on the brain and the destructive effect of negativity on neurons. The way forward starts with YOU ARE FIRST AND FOREMOST A HUMAN BEING. He tackles the obstacles, *pathological individualism* and states EGOTISM IS AGAINST NATURE. *We need to rethink the way we live on earth in order to preserve life.* One of our greatest tools is awareness. He advocates *collective vigilance* for every act of consumption, evaluating its energy impact. Not only into sustainability and linking it directly to

spiritual practice/living but doesn't that ring a few bells as to our Quaker Way of the individual testing the concern in the worshipping community of spiritual seekers? Maybe that is not entirely what he means. He talks of *emotional hygiene*. Is this Margaret Fell's the war within?

In calling the young to revolution, the Dalai Lama insists that 'training in compassion must be based on neuroscientific research that is validated by experience and common sense. First because science is universalist in spirit, whereas religion is divisive. Second, because young people today have a scientific mindset. Third, because in order to change their way of thinking, they must know how the mind works, and have the tools of neuroscience at their disposal to rally all their knowledge and understanding. *If you shift your consciousness towards greater benevolence and responsibility, you will find real solutions. . . . Learn to love it (the earth) through sharing it, rather than striving to possess it, and thereby destroying it.*

TO EXIST IS TO COEXIST.

YOU ARE PART OF THE WORLD AS MUCH AS THE WORLD IS PART OF YOU.

WHEN YOU CHANGE AS AN INDIVIDUAL, YOU CHANGE THE WORLD.

## Knickers and Bras

- A Man's Perspective, being a man within the Quaker family these days is a rather uncomfortable experience. It seems that the male of our species is responsible for a lot of the suffering endured by women, and this is a very difficult place to be, because it just happens to be true.\* The saddest part about it is that men are now really not sure what their place in the scheme of things is. Women are also not so keen to get 'hitched' and often prefer to share their lives with 'one of their own'. Gay partnerships are not something that is frowned upon amongst contemporary Friends, thank God. The problem really goes beyond 'bras and knickers' as far as I am concerned, and so I would urge our female members and attenders to pay a visit to Dunfermline Abbey. There they will find the grave of Robert the Bruce. They will also observe that the figure of Robert is engraved with the legs of the king uncrossed. Had the legs been crossed this would have signified that Bruce had taken part in the violent and ill-fated Crusades, which he did not. The legacy of The Crusades is still with us today, and the madness continues. We now fly aeroplanes into office buildings. Many more interesting relics of the past

can be found a little to the side of Robert's grave, and amongst these is a necklace once owned by Anne of Denmark who became the wife of James VI of Scotland who (as all good Quakers know) became King James I of the United Kingdom and who personally 'authorised' the Bible. James, unfortunately, was a man of his times and was limited in his ability to assess the true circumstances of the world he lived in. This fact had some very unfortunate results for the female members of his kingdom, which resulted in 50,000 of them being judicially murdered as 'witches'. The reason? James's Bible (Book of Isaiah) told him, "You shall not suffer a witch to live!" History records that, on a return journey from Denmark to visit Anne, James's ship was caught in a violent storm which the king wrongly concluded was caused by the activities of 'witches'. This natural phenomenon inspired James to write his definitive book on 'Witchcraft' and this piece of royal fantasy heralded the deaths of many innocent females in Britain, including the women of Pendle. Lessons perhaps for all Quakers to take heed of here? I believe so. It's not all about 'bras and knickers' I'm afraid. Even when trying their best men (within and without Quakerism) are struggling with the deluge of thoughts generated by that elusive thing we have come to call the human mind. Even St. Paul himself recognised this problem. When we say "There is that of God in everyman." then perhaps it is also true to say that "There is that of the Devil in everyman" also. However if I visited my G.P. and he told me that I was 'possessed by an evil spirit' then I would find myself compelled to seek out the services of another G.P. and report the first one to the British Medical Council! The language we use today is surely much more accurate than it was in the past? Sadly, knickers and bras won't guard against rape as was proved in two world wars. Only when men fully understand the human condition, and learn to respect other people as Children of the Creation, will there be a change in the hearts and minds of collective humanity. Being a man today is no easier than it was in the past, but most of us have realised that 'leaving someone holding the baby' is not the thing to do, and neither is the burning of 'witches'.

### **Bill Bingham, Glasgow**

*Ed. Bill's meditation comes from one of the actions of UN 16days action on Violence against Women when our group chose as one action to collect bras and knickers to go to Smalls for All, a charity that sends them to Africa where it is said women are less likely to be raped as the underwear shows they are being cared for by someone – we did check this out with someone from KWIS, Kenyan Women in Scotland.*

<p><i>The Legacy of Patriarchy with Véréne Nicolas 30<sup>th</sup> Nov, 10am for 10.30 in Glasgow Meeting House followed by lunch then women sharing their poetry.</i></p>
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## CHRISTMAS IS COMING

I had thought as editor to encourage some pierces on a sustainable Christmas but when I thought of it, and why so many today do not celebrate Christmas, including me, maybe we could be better employed looking at the emotional garbage that it represents. It is the most difficult time of year for many yet when I worked for a Christian charity they closed down over Christmas.

Why is it so difficult?

So much unresolved emotional pain comes up either as we are forced to spent time with old relationships, i.e. family, or for many because they are alone. Increasingly it is the pressure to consume which we cannot afford. And more recently there may be the guilt of over-consuming.

I stopped celebrating Christmas (apart from immediate family who needed the company, and the presents) when I spent one Christmas in Barts hospital in London with a friend dying after she was run over on her bike by a lorry. Anyway, I hate the superficiality and false jollity. I can live with this but what I can't live with is the damage I see being done by 'rescuers', people who feel a need to 'fix it'. They wade into delicate situations and proceed to warp them further.

In the therapy game we have a model for this called rescuer/victim/persecutor. The rescued victim feels persecuted. The persecutor becomes victimised. Round and round it whirls with each exchanging roles. The way out is to listen and empower.

I can remember someone trying, at two Quaker meetings on two different occasions, to tell *me* how *I* felt. If you watch, you will see that this is not a rare occasion – the rescuer phenomenon is common amongst Quakers. And it disempowers people. How can we relate to people as equals? That of God . . .

Oxfam used to do things for people then it changed its policy to provide them with the resources to create change, empowering them within their own situation, preserving their choice. How can we apply this to Christmas?

We project our helplessness on to others. Much of our activity is about deflecting our own pain. Rather than an act of generosity, it is an act of cowardice, not facing up to our own issues. As part of my psychotherapy work, we do retreats that reassess our life and commitments. At the end of each year I try to find a few days to be silent and listen to myself. It keeps me relevant. Try it. Maybe we should do it as a community, as part of our witness, keeping fresh our intent!

Christmas for me is a deeply spiritual time of renewal and regeneration when the Earth is nearest the Sun and Nature in her darkest places nurtures the seed and the little lambs are warm in their mum's tums. So much is now possible.

**Margaret Roy, Glasgow**



## A Sustainable Christmas?

If we meditate on this, what does it mean?

To me it is encapsulated in “Relationships”.

Christmas is often a time to nurture and celebrate friendships and family, and to express their importance in our lives by our gift of our presence and presents. A time of sharing. If the relationship means something to us, it is a time when we often are willing to put ourselves out: by traveling great distances, and at expense, to nurture this relationship.

What is our relationship as Quakers?

The focus in Quaker Worship is to be connected to the Divine, and then to be led by the Spirit.

*“I will lift my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”* Psalm 121

Many people often feel overwhelmed by world events and how they can practically respond, as opposed to react? During the past year many have been challenged by a Swedish teenager in our relationship to the Earth, and to take part in Extinction Rebellion Demonstrations. As Quakers, as with other faiths, we can provide a spiritual dimension to the environmental, humanitarian and peace issues, and through our actions.

This has been acknowledged in the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.

So how at Christmas can we act sustainably, and in our gifts?

It may be to reduce our use of plastics, e.g. by making plastic free Christmas crackers <https://www.facebook.com/100001408198025/posts/2682786938444886?d=n&sfns=mo>

It may be to preserve biodiversity by only eating organic foods and use organic materials, and by giving presents of packets of (organic) flower or vegetable seeds, or plants, (fruit) trees etc.

If that is not feasible, there are many ways of expressing our relationships at Christmas (e.g. giving blood) or by a donation to a charity.

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals/charity-gifts/>

However, our greatest gift is our presence in our communities, celebrating “the God in everyone”: George Fox.

**Mike Shilson, Mull & Iona**

## News from Local Meetings

### **Dumfries and Galloway Quakers cluster to discuss the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration – 22 October 2019**

About twenty from Dumfries, Wigtown and Castle Douglas Local Meetings gathered in Castle Douglas Community Centre to meet with Councillor Dougie Campbell who has been appointed Climate Emergency Champion for our local government region. The idea for this meeting came originally from Dumfries Friends, some of whom, along with a Friend from Castle Douglas, were at the full council meeting last May when the decision was taken to work towards carbon net-zero by 2025.

In the lead up to that declaration and growing in numbers since then, Community Climate Groups have been set up across D&G and several Quakers are also active in these. Wigtown Friends who live where Scotland's annual Book Festival took place in September surveyed the public about issues they saw as priorities for climate action. Top of the list was plastics.

Before introducing Dougie, Clare Phillips, facilitating the discussion, reminded us of our recent Quaker commitments and achievements on the topic of climate justice. Others spoke of their support for Friends of the Earth, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Green Party and other environment and climate related activities, agencies and organisations. During Councillor Campbell's address we heard about the cross-party group he's leading to steer efforts towards the ambitious goal that's been agreed, the twelve point plan he's written to act as a focus and the additional plan to create four citizen's assemblies bringing together people from the various districts of our region to discuss and inform progress and keep the Council's 'feet to the fire'. Dougie is not an 'expert' on climate change and sees it as vital that all departments work together and everyone who lives in D&G, especially those with scientific, professional or other relevant knowledge and experience is encouraged to contribute.

In the question, answer and discussion session that followed, we covered many aspects of the challenging task ahead including: -

Plans to improve biodiversity, not just reduce fossil fuel use.

Local economy/ businesses as well as the Council forming a 'Natural Power' grouping.

All Council priorities must include the 2025 aspiration in their work plans and budgets.

Innovative plans at the former Chapelcross site to involve solar power and hydrogen.

An improved waste management scheme has replaced the contract with Shanks.

Pensions divestment from fossil fuels – a hard task but one that must be addressed.

There is Council support for the School Strikes to draw attention to the climate crisis.

Changing the Council's complex procurement arrangements, tricky but needs addressing

Many Friends contributed to the conversation and all were pleased with the humble and serious tone of Dougie's responses to our questions. It was agreed that holding the meeting had been worthwhile and we will continue to involve ourselves in this work.

**Clare Phillips, Castle Douglas** *Reprinted (with a little editing) from Dumfries LM Newsletter*

## **Glasgow Meeting**

### **Minute 19/114 Special Meeting to discuss Meeting House plans.**

The Architect has drawn up proposals for redeveloping the Meeting House and costs will be available in the middle of November. The Funding Group has assessed the possibilities for raising funds to carry out this work.

Information from the architect and the Funding Group will be circulated before Christmas. We feel that there may be a need for several meetings to discuss these plans.

We agree to meet on January 5<sup>th</sup> for an initial meeting instead of our normal Local Meeting. We will ask Friends from across the Area Meeting and representatives of Trustees to attend this meeting as the final decision is a matter for Area Meeting which owns the building. It is expected that brief presentations will be given by the architect and the Funding Group.

Further meetings will be arranged as required, before a final recommendation is made to Area Meeting.



Kath Allan and Tom Morrison are pleased to announce the birth of Rowan Matthew Allan Morrison on Thursday 14th November.

As you may know, Friends House Moscow operates a publishing company for Quaker books. They have recently translated "No Extraordinary Power" into Russian and it is available to download from the website. However they would like to print 50 copies which would cost about £120. Could any Scottish Friends donate towards this? (And even possibly a wee bit more, as we're getting a bit skint). This is used for Outreach in Russia.

See their website for information.

Contact Barbara Forbes on [forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk)

Barbara is willing to come up and speak about Friends House Moscow if Meetings would like that.

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

2 <sup>nd</sup> December	Area Meeting by telephone 7 – 9pm
11 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	Area Meeting in Glasgow 11am – 4pm
7 <sup>th</sup> March	GENERAL MEETING SE AM
9 <sup>th</sup> March	Area Meeting by telephone/video 7 -9pm
18 <sup>th</sup> April	Area Meeting at Castle Douglas 11.30 – 4pm
8 <sup>th</sup> June	Area Meeting by telephone/video 7 -9pm
13 <sup>th</sup> June	GENERAL MEETING Elgin
22 <sup>nd</sup> August	Area Meeting at Lochgilphead, Argyll 11.30 – 4pm
12 <sup>th</sup> September	GENERAL MEETING Dundee
10 <sup>th</sup> October	Area Meeting in Ayr 11.30 – 4pm
14 <sup>th</sup> November	GENERAL MEETING Glasgow
7 <sup>th</sup> December	Area Meeting by telephone/video 7 -9pm
16 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Area Meeting in Glasgow 11.30 – 4pm
6 <sup>th</sup> March 2021	GENERAL MEETING North Scotland

### **Hold in the light**

Bill Bingham whose sister has died.

Kate Allen - congratulations on the birth of her baby.

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***The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).***

**The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 15<sup>th</sup> February. Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair McIver or Margaret Roy**