

West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

October 2018

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Clerk's Letter

Learning Sparrow

I was never very good at languages, even English, as I don't have fast recall. But I did learn through good teachers to observe and that's been helpful. One of the blessings in moving to Glasgow was a garden with lots of shrubs, surrounded by privet hedges (that seem to be compulsory in the East End). Ideal for small birds to hide. I now feed them all year to encourage the sparrows – rare in some parts now. I have 20 or more sometimes. I've always liked their cheery ways and squabbling in the hedges. They remind me of us. I've been observing them as I come and go and learning their vocal language. The "cheep, cheep, cheep" seems to me to be the equivalent of "me, me, me – I'm here" with a sub-text of "where are you?" They're communal and depend on the group for support and help and can't see each other through the hedge easily so need the sound. Like us they have this balance between the individual wanting notice and the need to take part in the group. So there is also, commonly, a tussle in the hedge accompanied by "chur, chur" which seems to be "mind it, pal". This is different to the warning cry against potential threats (be that me, other humans, cats or foxes). The one thing that creates absolute silence is the coming of the sparrow hawk – any noise then betrays where you are, and can result in the screech of death (I've heard and seen that).

After being here a while, I heard a new cry. I'd go out the back door or up the path from being out and an observant bird would shout a high pitched, rather excited, short "wheet". It took me a time to work this out. They had recognised me and the cry meant "there's that nice man again! Food is coming!" I'm accepted.

It's a gift to be able to communicate, which takes two. Much in this issue of the newsletter thinks about simplicity and sustainability. My relationship with the sparrows can illustrate this. On the one hand I'm building relationship and helping sustain a threatened bird. But there is big industry behind growing bird food on land that could sustain humans needing cheap, reliable food. Is this simple? We become increasingly aware of the complexities of trying to live in a way that sustains the planet. It can mean we just avoid thinking about it.

I was surprised by the enormous pleasure I got from hearing the sparrow shout 'wheet'. It meant relationship and that seems to be a key towards approaching the problems of simplicity and sustainability. How do we live with and sustain each other – all of us, people and sparrows? For some reason it reminds me of psalm 139.

Michael Hutchison, Glasgow

Psalm 139

O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

Report on Area Meeting, Tarbert on 25th August 2018.

Area Meeting in Tarbert is always a treat – that wonderful journey through those craggy mountains and past dark brooding lochs. Up the ‘Rest and be Thankful’, what a well named bit of Scotland. (I don’t need to narrate the awful saga of my brakes disappearing and Margaret Morton and I sitting in Inverary for 3 hours

waiting on the AA who had sent the garage at the other end of the car park all the way back to the old Military Road at R-a-b-T. No! Pouring rain, floods and an accident at Glasgow airport delayed several.)

However, it felt a joyous AM of good fellowship and good Highland hospitality. We started at the fish restaurant the night before (we four to include Margaret Morton, Mary Latham, Joyce Minnis and myself) where we bumped into Robin Davis – it is a small place! Next morning 28 gathered in the village hall to get down to the business, a major topic, diversity and inclusion.

A new member Diane Scott is to be welcomed into Glasgow Meeting whilst Louise McKeown who attends Mull & Iona Meeting has applied for membership. Two deaths were reported. Maris Armfield of Dunblane died on 24th June and was laid to rest at the Woodland Cemetery near Crieff. Some members, particularly from Glasgow, may remember Bernardo Alhucema, a Chilean refugee who was with us for many years before returning to his native Chile.

Included also in our meeting were the epistle and a report of JYM delivered by Sarah Bibb. You will find these elsewhere in this newsletter and Sarah has agreed to contribute more frequently relating the activities of Young Friends. Minute 78/18: We agreed to speak more of the involvement of young people at the AM by telephone on 3rd December.

At lunchtime the Media Technology Group demonstrated ZOOM linking us up with Clare Phillips in Castle Douglas. We were able to connect on our laptops and mobile phones so look forward to future developments that will bring more of our geographically scattered network to future AMs! Interestingly, folks from the islands could get to Tarbert more easily, including the Friends from Arran. A different world: Mike Shilson from Mull related that when the storms stop the ferries he can be marooned from home in Oban, or not get to work at all!

Diversity & Inclusion brought in reports from Glasgow, Dunblane and Dumfries Meetings. Just how relevant is this to us? Meeting for Suggestings asks us in what ways we are already diverse, could we be more diverse, would it help to be more diverse? We looked at a document from an Anglican church purporting to welcome strangers in their midst. There were mixed views on this. LMs have varying local circumstances. It was a useful exercise to break into pairs to discuss it, and a welcome opportunity to get to know other Friends more closely. In conclusion it was felt that we were ‘not supermarkets that have to have something on every shelf’. ‘We live our faith through trusting all as being unique Children of God, allowing them (and us) to grow.’

This AM felt very much about people. In the afternoon we approached the thorny issue of nominations. Why do we find it so difficult to fill some posts? Part of the problem may be that our committee does not know everyone in our 12 LMs so the clerk of Nominations, Ian McDonald, appealed for help - local

reps or involvement of local clerks. We asked how we supported Friends in roles and also how we involved younger Friends. A few ideas came up such as shadowing more experienced Friends in roles, or shorter terms for younger people who may be more geographically mobile.

Margaret Morton our new treasurer presented the accounts and explained them. See the web site.

Running out of time we were glad to have Martin Mansell's written report on the Parliamentary Engagement Group. You will find it attached to your minutes. They continue to work on defence but are starting to look at Land reform and Tax Justice (see report and interesting paper from last General Meeting).

Finally, Trustees are reviewing our Governing Document which needs a few tweaks in accordance with the current Quaker Faith and Practice. More detail in the minutes.

Before the long journey home, Argyll Friends shared more hospitality. It seemed all left in good spirits and on a dry day with grand views. Poor Michael Hutchison was taken aback to find three Margarets in his car. I will spare you the photograph!

NEXT MEETING at AYR on 13th October.

Margaret Roy, Lanark

Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting

To all Friends everywhere,
Junior Yearly Meeting met between the 4 and 7 May 2018 to explore the theme: 'Quaker faith in practice: What are our beliefs and how can we express them?' There was a strong sense of community over this weekend. Indeed we learnt from Melinda Wenner Bradley (a Friend from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting) that Community is one of the Quaker testimonies in the USA. In addition to Melinda, we were delighted to welcome into our community Jo Harris from the United Reformed Church, as well as Rhiannon Grant from the Revision Preparation Group.

Worship was one element of the event which helped us feel closer, and gave us space for spiritual development. In particular, we appreciated the diversity in the different ways of exploring our spirituality, such as the guided meditation epilogue which many felt enabled them to open up and be themselves. We gave and heard powerful ministry in our worship, which further inspired many of us to better connect with our spiritual side.

In part due to the speaker's young age, Chris Alton's Swarthmore Lecture about being creative in effecting change in the world, resonated with us well. The lecture was humorous as well as eye-opening and encouraged us to think about

how we could make a difference in our communities and our lives or, in his words, ‘may we go forth and reshape the world’.

Through our Meeting for Worship for Business we wrote a minute to voice our community’s sense that we should revise *Quaker faith & practice*. This was read before Yearly Meeting where the decision was made. We appreciated the chance to be involved in the decision – through our minute and young people’s ministry in Yearly Meeting session – and expressed a wish to be involved in the revision itself.

The smaller communities of base groups enabled us to discuss further our thoughts and feelings and of course to have lots of fun and meet new people. Our ‘Where am I?’ orienteering game and quiz were other sources of great enjoyment and helped us to grow even closer together while the final night’s ceilidh was a fitting finale to an inspiring and memorable weekend.

Over the weekend we learnt more about our own beliefs and reflected on how we could express these in Quakerism and the wider world. Friendships were forged and strengthened, and we leave in the knowledge that as a community we can achieve great things.

As one participant said ‘JYM is an experience that I’m never going to forget’.

Signed in and on behalf of Junior Yearly Meeting 2018

Arjun Nanning Ramamurthy Daniel O’Toole

Clerks of JYM 2018 TRUSTEES

Attending JYM for the First Time

In early May, I attended JYM for the first time. This year was one of the years it was held at the same time as Yearly Meeting which was discussing the possible revision of the Quaker faith and practice. The theme of JYM was “Quaker Faith in Practice: What are our beliefs and how can we express them?”.

For the last few years I have been attending Young Friends Summer Shindig, which is for ages 11 to 16, and though I have always enjoyed shindig, after being at JYM I appreciated that we were treated more as young adults there, as it is for an older age group; 15 to 18. I knew the theme of the weekend was focused on Quaker Faith and Practice and our beliefs, but I expected to be discussing this theme among the young people at JYM exclusively. So I was surprised and impressed that we were included in a session at Yearly Meeting discussing revising Faith and Practice and that our input was valued equally next to older Quakers attending. This made me feel more included as a member of the Quaker community, and that young people’s voices are heard and respected, which is a group that I have found is often ignored in other areas of life.

For this reason, I thought the Swarthmore Lecture was very engaging, and well-suited to those of us at JYM, as the speaker, Chris Alton, at 27 is young for a Swarthmore Lecturer. He spoke about how he uses his art to make peaceful and creative forms of activism, such as the slogan on my t-shirt, *Still Anarchy*. Another example which particularly amused us was his creation of the English Disco Lovers, a joke he and his friend made to make fun of the English Defence League, a far right nationalist organisation. What started as a joke became more popular online and at one point was the top search result when the phrase EDL was Googled, instead of the English Defence League. It also gained a life of its own when people spontaneously started protesting at EDL events by showing up wearing disco clothes and singing disco songs. A separate thing he brought attention to was difficulties relating to Membership of the Society which are occurring more regularly, particularly for younger people. Because of unstable working conditions, for example zero hour contracts, which make it hard for people to plan for the future and may force them to move regularly, it can be difficult for them to become Members, since they have no long term connection to one particular meeting. In fact despite the fact Chris Alton considers himself a Quaker and has attended meetings all his life, he is not a member, because of these kinds of reasons.

There was a strong sense of community at JYM, which we learnt from Melinda Wenner Bradley of Philadelphia is a Testimony in the US. It being held in south East England meant it was attended predominantly by people from that area, which meant a lot of the young people there knew each other already from previous Quaker events. Despite the fact I was joining as a newcomer, I was made to feel welcome and found by the end of the weekend I had made firm friends with people I had never met before. The delegate from the United Reformed Church who attended, Jo Harris, also integrated seamlessly into the group and made many useful contributions due to her different viewpoint. The accommodation, a youth hostel near London, was well chosen as it had a large green space for us to enjoy organised games and tables for people to study and read together, as many people of this age group were preparing for exams at that time of year. In my opinion this, as well as the excellent weather, will have greatly helped this sense of community being formed, as people were talking and enjoying activities outside, where they otherwise may have been tempted to stay inside their rooms.

I'm very grateful for this opportunity, and I would like to thank the area meeting for nominating me and funding my attendance of the weekend.

Sarah Bibb, Glasgow

**‘ . . . the idea of spirituality in older cultures and traditions emphasizes
relationship and community more than our own.
from Neil Douglas-Klotz The Hidden Gospel**

Report from Area Meeting Trustees

When I became a Friend over thirty years ago, I joined a Society which owned property, which managed its finances carefully, and which cared for its spiritual life and the welfare of its members and attenders. In fact, it seemed to me, coming from a mainstream church background, that Friends did most of this rather better than some churches, and it did it without the help of paid clergy by means of committees and appointed roles - clerks, treasurers, elders, overseers, property committees, finance committees etc. Underlying this structure, it quickly became clear to me, was the understanding that these responsibilities, this stewardship of our Society's resources, did not rest on any particular person or committee, but on all the Society's members. As Quaker Faith & Practice has it (15.02) "We are all called to participate in building a responsible and caring community."

Not included in that list of roles I encountered thirty years ago were Trustees. So what and who are our trustees? And what do they do? Well, as I have already said, we are all as Friends responsible for the stewardship of our Society and the care of its members and attenders. QF&P puts it very succinctly: "Friends who accept service as trustees take on specific and personal responsibility, on behalf of the meeting, for the obligations that rest on all Friends." (15.04) As trustees we are there, not to do everything, but to make sure that it is done, in right ordering and according to the law. That last bit is what has changed. There are Friends who regret that we, like the churches, have now become registered charities, but we have, and there is therefore a whole range of charity law with which we must comply. Also, employment legislation, quite rightly, has been tightened up. We must comply with that. Work with children is now regulated and we must ensure that those regulations are observed and complied with. None of these things did we necessarily do carelessly or wrongly before. The difference is that we now have to show to the outside world by means of reporting to organisations such as the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and by our compliance with legislation, that we are stewarding our resources, both material and human, not only with an eye to our own Gospel Ordering but also according to charity law.

The way I see it, trustees in West Scotland make sure that our employees have proper pay, terms, conditions and support, that our resources - especially our meeting houses - receive appropriate stewardship, that our Local Meetings (and of course Area Meeting itself) are nourished and held in right ordering, and that all our members and attenders, adults and children, are cared for. None of this could be done without Friends as a whole, and none of it is done without Friends' knowledge and consent. We are just another committee of Area Meeting, reporting to AM regularly and bringing to AM any decision or change we have discerned is necessary.

Lastly, who are we? Well of course like all Quaker appointments each of us serves a triennium or two, so our composition changes regularly, but just now we are, in no particular order, Bronwen Currie (Islay & Jura LM), Clare Phillips (Castle Douglas LM), Martha Hatch (Wigtown LM), Peter Christy (Ayrshire LM) and Sarah Brown and Charlotte Wright (Glasgow LM). In addition Margaret Morton (Treasurer) and Margaret Roy (Asst AM Clerk) meet with us on an ex-officio basis. We meet three times a year in Glasgow and once by telephone conference, and we are a very Ffriendly bunch which would quite like to grow a bit. So if you are approached by Nominations Committee, please consider coming and joining us!

Bronwen Currie, Islay & Jura

Quaker Life Representative Council seek a future where Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all age. All are heard, valued and supported both in our needs and our leadings”. This Representative Council will explore how we might all work towards this vision in our meetings. They will hear from Quaker children, young people and young adults about their experiences of and hopes for our Quaker communities. **Howard is asking for feedback** from local meetings and individual Friends who might be prepared to let him know if there are any related issues they would like him to raise at the Council.

Howard may be contacted on howardbartlem@gmail.com

The Changing Face of Faith in Britain - how should Quakers respond? QCCIR conference held at Woodbrooke, 16-18 March 2018

A visitor to my local Meeting recently asked, “Does your Meeting DO anything?” It didn’t take long to formulate the guilty reply - “Well actually, as a Meeting, No, though as individuals we are involved in a plethora of GOOD WORKS, be they caring, creative, campaigning, charity

Why have I started my report with this? Because one of the things I actually learned at the conference was that what I describe above is, in fact, a common pattern throughout Britain Yearly Meeting, and not, as I had thought, our local guilty secret. The conference was built around a report, commissioned by QCCIR, into the present, changing, religious landscape in which we operate. We’re no doubt all aware that traditional, formal religious observance has declined markedly in recent years, and Quakers have not been immune to this. Part 1 of the report dealt with the facts and figures: **2001 census 2011 census**

Percentage declaring as Christians	E&W	71.7	59.3
	Scotland	65.2	53.8
Percentage declaring NO religion	E&W	14.85	25.0
	Scotland	27.8	36.7

Quaker numbers UK (Members and Attenders) have fallen from 26,757 in 1991 to 21,055 in 2016. (made up of 13130 Members, 7925 Attenders).

But does this mean we are becoming an irreligious society? Not necessarily. There are many more options readily available today, ways in which people can organise themselves around community, ethics, social concerns, spirituality in the widest sense all places where faith, hope and love, (the traditional religious virtues) may thrive.

And of course it isn't true that all Christian denominations are declining numerically. Certainly locally our Baptist congregation outgrew its church several years ago, and is about to open a huge state-of-the-art building, which is also a community facility. Nationally, evangelical/charismatic denominations are doing very well. Cathedrals apparently are also seeing an increase in worshippers, perhaps because they offer anonymity. Not everyone wants to be clasped to the bosom of their fellow worshippers. And a modern spiritual practice, especially in cathedrals, is to light a candle, photograph it, and send the photo (electronically) to the person being prayed for/held in the Light. I confess to being a lighter of candles, but I'd never have thought of doing this.

Pilgrimage too is a growing activity, attracting those far beyond the boundaries of religious faith—but offering an experience which may well be life-changing.

Part 2 of this report asked new Quakers what had attracted them to the Society. Mostly they are, as ever, from Christian backgrounds and have often been active in, and then left, other denominations. They wish to express their spirituality without signing up to a creed and value theological openness. Silence is central. Quaker spirituality is seen to combine contemplative practice with social activism which is carried out in everyday life, not just in or by the Quaker community. (See the opening paragraph.) It was agreed though, during small-group work, that the whole Meeting does benefit from, and is enriched by, working on a project together as a Meeting. However, the treasured Quaker method of conducting business meetings was nowhere cited as an attraction, nor was there any reference to feelings of “transformation”. So people hadn't been changed by their encounter with Quakers, but rather had found the place where they could “be themselves” spiritually.

Part 3 looked at current ecumenical and interfaith involvement by Quakers locally and nationally. Sadly data from Scotland did not appear, though it was apparently submitted. Unsurprisingly, Local Meetings do better than Area Meetings in terms of involvement (small is beautiful here), but there was no indication of numbers or percentages of Friends actually involved—my own perception is that ecumenical and interfaith activity is very much a minority interest. The benefits of any such engagement are those of any communal activity - if you meet together, talk together and especially work together, you will soon discover the common thread in humanity.

Part 4 finally brought us to the “How should Quakers respond to these changes”. At least it will when it becomes available. (Parts 1-3 only became available 24 hours before the conference began, and since much of that 24 hours was spent either asleep or travelling, few of us had been able to study the report.)

However, in anticipation of Part 4, Ben Pink Dandelion had drawn up an exhaustive list of ‘groups’, both religious and secular, with whom Quakers might wish to liaise and find common ground in the future. The list is as follows:

- Progressive Christians e.g. Greenbelt Festival, LGBT+ groups
- Evangelical, Holiness and Pentecostal e.g. Church of the Nazarene
- Historic Christian churches, e.g. Christadelphians, Mennonites
- New Religious movements, e.g. Brahma Kumaris
- Pagan and Esoteric movements
- Buddhist, Daoist and Sufi groups
- Well-being programmes.

Under that last heading especially, which included several environmental organisations such as Woodcraft Folk, there is always a strength to be found in uniting around an issue—the spirit draws people together, but what happens when the issue is ‘solved’, the goal achieved? What then holds the group together? Also under this heading were groups practising Mindfulness. I was a little surprised to find that some Quakers are suspicious of this, currently popular, therapy. Apparently Buddhists are very worried, and mindfulness was described as possibly a “blind alley” or a “vacuum”.

Given the above list, it’s not surprising that the phrase ‘market-place’ was used frequently. Mischievously, I imagined a ‘speed-dating’ scenario - Choose your faith here! Many consider the concept of a ‘market’ to be out of place in fields such as health and education. How then can it be appropriate in matters of the spirit? Are we so fixed with the ‘consumption’ model, where we compete for customers/members, focussing on recruitment and retention, that we can’t operate in any other way?

If Quakers are contemplating alliances with some amongst this plethora of groups, Ben Pink Dandelion suggested there might be need of a ‘structure’ into which they might, or might not, fit. Presumably to demonstrate their ‘bona fides’, their fitness/suitability for association with Quakers? I was reminded of the sort of structure already common to many local ecumenical groups, and into which Quakers often do not fit, and indeed take a certain pride in not fitting, and thus require special treatment!! Haven’t we got better things to do than create a similar structure for others?

We learned that currently 16% of Quaker members are actually in joint membership with other Christian denominations, or other faiths. Dual membership has always struck me as somewhat at odds with the ‘commitment’ which seems to be demanded (if that’s not too strong a word) of members. But perhaps these Dual Members actually constitute a very useful resource when

considering how Quakers should respond to the changing face of faith, since they've already found it perfectly possible to work and worship, at a very deep level, with others.

On the Saturday of the conference our keynote speaker was Grace Davie, Professor of Sociology at Exeter University, I believe. She has written several books about religion in Britain since the 2nd World War. In her 1994 book she coined the phrase "Believing Without Belonging" to describe those who perhaps rarely visit an actual place of worship, but who do, when push comes to shove, describe themselves as people of faith. And it goes on, to include people who "only" use a church for worship (no irony there!), and thus to Quaker Attenders. Perhaps a parallel study into Belonging Without Believing would prove equally revealing? But Grace Davie's work has moved on from this, and a more complex picture emerges. Factors come in such as Cultural Heritage, e.g. the traditional Parish arrangement; Vicarious religion, whereby a few (often elderly women) maintain the faith regularly, but others use it almost as a public utility for occasions such as weddings and funerals. In this connection Nordic countries levy a church tax which many are happy to pay, though one can opt out. The market model, already referred to, is another factor, together with new arrivals to Britain bringing their faiths and traditions, and the growth of secular alternatives. All these things now need close consideration. And it seems that the patterns emerging in Britain and Europe are not replicated in global terms.

Currently, religion is much more prominent in public discussion than it has been for many years, though this is often negative and ill-informed. In fact, religion is nowadays often seen as "dangerous". But increasing secularization has meant that many are now ignorant about the concepts involved, the traditions and the appropriate vocabulary, so that meaningful conversations are difficult. This should be where the work of the QCCIR is of most value, though, unsurprisingly, no plans were made for the way forward. But seemingly London is moving from being a "beacon of secularity" to a place of "marked religious growth". There is something called "city lift" - harnessing the metropolitan 'buzz', maximising the use of city centre locations, to meet people, especially the young, where they are. However, I fear it has yet to reach these parts.

Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries

Seeking to know one another in the things that are eternal - Simplicity

This is the third in the series of interviews with Friends in the West of Scotland. 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 the topic of Simplicity. The next topic is Spiritual Discernment, and coming up are God, Death and Truth and Integrity. As I've said before, I hope you will consider whether you are a Friend who would wish to

contribute to this. (I've not been overwhelmed by the rush so far...!). However, the fact that you've not volunteered doesn't mean that I won't approach you...!

Sheila Semple

Simplicity by Zem Moffat

I'm aware of the irony of it, sitting in my house which is not simple in many ways. So many things and it's still a DIY project, and this is not simple at all.

But for me, simplicity is a way of engaging and approaching complexity. I've found choice in the world overwhelming, I've always been like that. Hanging my choices on simplicity and Quaker values really helps.

As a child I hated being anxious when I lost things, and later on I figured that if I had less stuff then I would be less anxious. Less to remember, less to forget. Less stress. Win Win.

I moved to Glasgow seven years ago and this was when I began my de-cluttering business, Insightful Moves, and I wanted it to be based on Quaker principles.

And so I first ran a workshop on how clutter spoke to integrity, truth, simplicity, equality and sustainability.

I also understood that this yearning for simplicity, was shared by other faiths, and so I then ran an event on Simplicity with speakers from different religious traditions. It was about grounding, connecting my work with faith and about how our testimonies speak to clutter.

I work with people who are so anxious and stressed and unhappy that they can't see their privilege. This is infuriating. But it is not helpful getting angry; more helpful to listen out for and to seek their light. It is absurd to have so much stuff, but I have heard social workers say that a house cleanse is a kind of violation, like peeling their skin off or rape. It's powerful

Developing practices of compassion and understanding, trying to understand how this person has got themselves, or been put, in this position. I call it intelligent tea drinking. This is what it's all about.

Four years ago I set-up Clutter Chat, a social support network for people suffering with chronic clutter. If I didn't have faith, it wouldn't have kept going. Weekly donations cover the room rate, but not my time or energy. But those that come tell me not to stop. If it wasn't for my faith and the faith of those around me, it would have stopped long ago.

And in a few days we are having our first board meeting to set it up as a SCIO a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Trust. Within 36hrs of deciding to call its first meeting, the board members, date and room were all confirmed. It was so quick, and this is how I know there is a power greater than me urging us forward. Clutter can be seen as colonisation, owning, where once we would have grabbed land, we grab stuff, we hold the world in our hands. Now I like to see the world in a grain of sand.

Simplicity by Martin Mansell

I think, for Quakers, simplicity is to do with getting rid of unnecessary stuff so that you can get closer to the Light or God. It's not getting cluttered up with complex things, getting back to basics, to the essentials of life. In terms of the testimonies, I suppose peace and truth and integrity are more important, I don't like to rate them, but simplicity is a way of *achieving* peace, truth and integrity, equality etc.

If you live your life simply, you live more sustainably. This is often seen as negative – 'don't fly!' - but there can be lots of benefits. For example, we did not have a car in Africa, and when we got back we chose to stay where public transport was reasonably good. The children travelled by bus and train and met all sorts of people which they wouldn't have done if we had gone everywhere by car. But sometimes you need to be fairly well-off to live simply – in Africa I was part of a walking club at weekends and the local people thought we were crazy to choose to walk; they had to walk miles every day for provisions, while we could buy them in local shops. Simplicity might be Western biased and other cultures might have a different take on it, wanting more technology and more complex lives, a change from the simple basic lives they're living.

Modern technology can make life simpler and easier, helping you keep in touch and get information more quickly, but it can also make it more complicated in a way; you just need to draw limits and use it to meet your basic needs. It's not straightforward.

I trained as a civil engineer and it is relatively simple to know how steel and concrete will behave and their behaviour doesn't change. But working with Alternatives to Violence Programmes I have learnt that you can't categorise people and be simplistic. Many of the participants are people who have split up with their partner and want access to their children and have been referred to an AVP course by a court. They may *appear* to be all in one category, but each person is different and as Quakers we try to see each person as unique.

Simplicity can be dangerous dealing with people and situations, it's not like dealing with inanimate objects.

Simplicity makes you more in touch with whatever you conceive of God. Having simple buildings and meetings make you focus on God and not be distracted. An image of simplicity for me is Quaker meeting, sitting in normal clothing with a table and a book on it. There's a lot going on there, but on the face of it, it's quite simple.

Simplicity by Jane Mitchell

Simplicity has considerable overlaps with other testimonies like truth and integrity, equality and sustainability. It's about being at the service of the divine, as in Quaker Faith and Practice (QfP) 20.27:

‘The heart of Quaker ethics is summed up in the word ‘simplicity’. Simplicity is forgetfulness of self and remembrance of our humble status as waiting servants of God. Outwardly, simplicity is shunning superfluities of dress, speech, behaviours and possessions, which tend to obscure our vision of reality. Inwardly, simplicity is spiritual detachment from the things of this world as part of the effort to fulfil the first commandment: to love God with all of the heart and mind and strength.’

So it’s about: plainness in clothes, speech, not wasting resources. But it’s not straightforward, there are positives and negatives; for example it’s good not to respond too uncritically to advertising, but on the other hand, people’s jobs depend on other people buying things. Another example is about speaking plainly to others. It’s good to do that, but does that mean that you can’t play games in talking to people; no fun, humour or irony?

Some aspects come quite naturally to me; I was a wartime child, and started school when rationing was still on. And my parents were quite abstemious. I think it’s easier for people who are comfortably off to live simply. I’m in that position, and I do give some of what I have away. But, when I look at QfP 24.52, by that standard I’m not at all generous – an elderly Friend gave away all of a legacy to *‘repay as much as possible of the wealth which Britain had taken from the world’s poor... This brought me to the financial level of the old-age pensioner, but with no regret. The pension leaves us room for happiness, contentment and laughter.’*

An example of simplicity in practice is the Friends who faithfully attend Faslane; they’re saying plainly that nuclear weapons are just wrong.

I find it difficult with my young grandchildren, especially at birthday times, I’m appalled at the things they have, the clutter. But there’s very strong peer pressure. I give money to their parents, and for presents I give them books or something handmade.

I admire John Woolman, the 18th-century Friend, who wrote *‘...some claim a much greater share of the world than others...[and] with a view to self-exaltation [cause others] to labour immoderately...’*. (QfP 20.32)

The key bit for me about simplicity is straightforwardness – and waiting for promptings so that you can do something that is really worthwhile.

Simplicity by John Creed

Being brought up in a Quaker family has had a profound influence on what I’ve done as a creative person. The household had just enough things that we needed as a family, but what we had had quality and beauty, it was very much at the core of how we lived and what we did as a family, it’s been with me all my life. As a young person you inevitably fight against it, especially when other friends had things. There was no TV of course, no radio on a Sunday, some

programmes were seen as not in right ordering. For games we only had chess. (I listened to the radio under the bedclothes, and bought my own water pistol!) *‘Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?’* Advices & Queries 41. That seems to me to sum it up. I very much like how ‘Living Our Beliefs’ – an exploration of the faith and practice of Quakers’ written recently by Young Friends uses 6 headings in the chapter on simplicity – appreciation, balance, clearness, priority, reality, truth.

I think Quaker discipline goes hand in hand with simplicity because pursuing it needs enormous discipline, we all make our own decisions on our own values and particular way of living, how we pursue a simple life, a life of quality. It’s about going to the core, and finding a truth of your own.

When I turned to blacksmithing for the first time I was absolutely at home, it was the elemental forces of nature, fire, elements of the earth, water, the hand of God is holding you and it. Going through the phases of creating something is like a meeting for worship. God/creation is physically within nature, but there is also that other thing that we don’t know what it is, strength, mystery, it is compelling.

When designing, it’s a form of a spiritual journey, always making judgements and assessments, allowing it to be still for some time so that you can be at one with it. It’s not about decoration, but about the broad underlying forms, the essence of an idea, using as little material as you can so that you come to the form and the concept. I suppose faith comes into it, if I have faith and just keep at it it will come right.

The Scottish Parliament building has the words ‘Say but little, and say it well’, carved on its wall, it’s the nub of what we do, be firm and positive about it. I saw the new bridge over the Forth, here is something simple but complex, carefully designed, using technical and scientific processes of engineering and mathematics, which has achieved exactly what is needed with a wonderful economy of form. Perhaps due to the rules of sacred geometry, you can arrive at something that touches people with elemental beauty. Physically it’s a delight, spiritually there’s an unknown factor that is more than the sum of its parts, and that’s simplicity for me.

Simplicity by Nuala Watt

Simplicity is about straightforwardness and communicating simply. I’m an academic, working in a field where things are often complicated for the sake of it, some people are not capable of writing simply, the simple point is buried in about 15 feet of syllables! And as an activist being part of a group of people

commenting on Job Centre guidelines for managers I had to translate them into ordinary language so that the group could have a chance of commenting.

I try to be straightforward in attempting to tell the truth (which is not itself a simple concept). In relationships I try not to do the passive/aggressive thing, being truthful about emotions can be difficult, there's a temptation to dodge but it never does me any good. I tend to over-think things. It's difficult, but if it's not challenging then it's not realistic, the entire world is challenging.

I don't think I'm all that good at material simplicity, I like pretty things and pretty books. I'm trying to de-clutter. I know people who have very few things, but that's not me!

The thing that's complicated about disability is other people's attitudes and assumptions, not the disability itself. Of course the built environment can complicate things, I've had the experience of falling into a building because it was the only way to get in. Society is not designed for different bodies, senses and perspectives.

When I've made big life decisions it's been quite simple. 'This fits me, this is where I live.' – so I joined Quakers. I've been lucky, it's been simple, I've found the right religion, the right person, even when it looked like it might be difficult to have a baby that's been simple, too. Life goes substantially better if I try to be simple, but you can be too puritanical about it and beat yourself up if you don't manage.

I don't do well in religions that are more complicated. I like some of the language in traditional Christianity, like the Book of Common Prayer, it's very beautiful but it doesn't make sense to me spiritually. When I arrived in Quakers, 2 people I knew were very ill, one had just died. Advices and Queries 28 was the first piece of religious writing to help. Quaker marriage is essentially simple, I enjoyed saying to people 'no, we don't do that...', I would cheerfully have got married in pyjamas (I didn't!)

The gathered silence in Quaker worship, it's there, profound, simple, you don't need anything material, no communion wafers, so you can have a Quaker meeting anywhere. There are things about other denominations that I like but they don't suit me, it's much easier to get through to God/the spiritual dimension if nothing is in the way.

Prompts for Simplicity

Quaker testimonies have arisen over time from the discernment of individual Friends and meetings about how to live their lives following the leadings of the Inward Teacher/Light. One of those testimonies is Simplicity.

- What does the Quaker testimony of Simplicity mean to you?
- Is this a testimony that you feel led to apply to your life? If it is, how does it play out in your life?
- Which bits are easy? Which are most challenging?
- Which most important?

- Is there a particularly Quaker approach to living simply? What do you think is the spiritual/religious underpinning of this testimony?
- Do you have an image or phrase that sums up Simplicity for you?
- Have you observed Simplicity in practice in the lives of individuals or in Meetings? Or in wider society?
- How important is this as one of our Quaker testimonies? If it is, how could it be encouraged?

Quakers Sharing Experience Saturday 16 February in Glasgow Quaker Meeting House

This is an early notice of an event happening next year. More information can be found on the website <http://www.quakerssharingexperience.com/>. Here is a quote from this website:

Quakers Sharing Experience is a new kind of half-day workshop, tried and tested in meetings across the UK. It offers us the opportunity to tell our stories and know our fellow Quakers in depth - the kind of depth that can help us learn not only about other people, but about ourselves.

Quakers Sharing Experience helps us to listen to one another. What do we think? What do we believe? What is important to us?

Facilitated by teams of seasoned Friends, Quakers Sharing Experience has the potential to bring Quaker communities together in mutual understanding. It provides opportunities for sharing, for listening and, above all, for knowing one another in that which is eternal.

For more information, contact Sheila Semple, Glasgow meeting

SYDNEY PARKINSON, 1745 -1771

It is not often that you open the pages of a popular Scottish Sunday newspaper (the Sunday Post 12th Aug) to find two pages dedicated to a Quaker botanist. Sydney Parkinson was born into a Quaker family in Edinburgh. On moving to London he attended Westminster Meeting. His father Joel was a brewer in Edinburgh— apparently this was a common occupation amongst Quakers in those days. Consider how poor the supply and purity of the water in those days! Sydney himself started out apprenticed to a ‘woollen draper’ but it was in London that his passion for botanical art developed into something else. Another Quaker botanist, Lee Kennedy who worked at the Chelsea Physic Garden, introduced him to Joseph Banks in 1767. Previously some of Sydney’s paintings had been exhibited at the Free Society in London so when Banks

returned from an exploration to Labrador and Newfoundland (where he probably met Captain James Cook) he had reason to choose Sydney Parkinson to draw the plants he had collected. No cameras in those days. Then he choose him again as one of his draughtsmen to accompany him on Cook's *Endeavour* voyaging to Tahiti to observe the transit of Venus, then to journey on to southern lands. Alexander Buchan, his fellow draughtsman died after they reached Tahiti leaving Parkinson to continue the mammoth task himself. He 'produced 955 botanical drawings on the *Endeavour* voyage. Of these 675 were sketches and 280 were finished works. He also completed 170 zoological painting and 125 unfinished drawings.' Quite a feat! Despite this, the work was held up by Banks for a number of years whilst he finished his publications of the journey. Hence Parkinson's work was obscure until quite recently. His journal was difficult to get hold of but with renewed interest you will find it on the internet. He spoke little of his own feelings and thoughts although other journals speak of his respect and concern for others. On one occasion, of the slaughter of natives, he is said to have commented: What a pity, that such brutality should be exercised by civilised people upon unarmed ignorant Indians! As well as plants there are many paintings of natives. Sydney Parkinson died on the return journey after the *Endeavour* visited Batavia (modern Jakarta) which was rife with malaria and dysentery.



His name was remembered in Parkinson's Island in New Zealand, now forgotten. He named Botany Bay because of the richness of species found there. Apart from his artwork there is a plant and a bird named after him: *Ficus parkinsonii*, a tree, and *Procellaria parkinsoni*, the common name of **Parkinson's Petrel**

In Australia there is a national park, the Sydney Parkinson Reserve in the Endeavour Hills. He is remembered as the first European artist to set foot on Australian soil, and to draw an authentic Australian landscape, and to portray the indigenous people of the time from direct observation.

Cathy Davies, obsessed as she claims by Parkinson, choose him and the *Endeavour* as the subject of the first panel of the Australian Quaker tapestry. You will find an excellent article by her on this process from the Australian Friend. See australianfriend.org › Issue › 1806 June 2018. Her interesting article is also on the internet under Sydney Parkinson.

You will find more about Sydney Parkinson in Quaker Plant Hunters David Sox, Sessions Book Trust, York, 2004. You will find it in Glasgow Meeting library.

The photo is of *Banksia serrata*

Margaret Roy, Lanark

Our Faith in the Future* captures the vision that “In turbulent times, Quakers in Britain **Living at 1.5°C*
Quakers and Sustainability - Why is climate change a ‘wicked’ problem?

‘A ‘wicked’ problem is one which is difficult or even impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory or changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise. ‘ (Wikipedia)

The present international policy on climate change is based keeping global warming at least well below 2°C which means we can only afford three more decades of current global emissions. Most scientists say we need to stay below 1.5°C in which case we would have at most five to ten more years and it may already be too late. Several earth systems, such as ocean circulation, permafrost and the jet stream, have already been profoundly disturbed by warming and pose substantial risks for human and other life. Recent heat waves and fires, although possibly not directly the result of global warming, are a reminder of what may be in store in the not too distant future. In any case, we need to move to zero net global emissions on a timescale of a decade or two at the most. The recent figures are not encouraging: after many decades of conferences and treaties, global emissions in the last three years have hardly changed and in fact rose slightly in 2017 (although most rich countries like the UK have seen a steady fall in recent years).

Most people are unwilling even to think deeply about climate change; each of us is in denial in some way. It may imply loss and bereavement on a massive scale and may bring up feelings of grief, fear, anger, despair, shame and guilt and even past trauma. Some people focus on changing their individual behaviour, but sometimes we feel powerless: that whatever we do is not going to make a difference and there is not much more we can do. Even if we change our lifestyle, the effect depends on how the economic system works. If we decide not to travel by train, for example, we may ‘save’ a notional amount of CO₂ per km but in reality, one less person on a train is not going to make a measurable difference to national emissions. But... doing very little is not an excuse for doing nothing - see the Action Plan for practical suggestions. Should we avoid flying altogether? In my view, flying to see a new born grandchild in the US is different from a weekend trip to Spain. I am minded of George Fox’s advice to William Penn “wear thy sword as long as thou canst”.

Some people see the most effective action we can take is by campaigning for changes in society (third person changes) rather than (or in addition to) focussing on the individual (first person) changes. However, we tend to forget that some of the most important challenges are in our interactions with others, in close relationships, communities and organisations (second person changes). This dimension is difficult for people to talk about, raising as it does issues of interpersonal power, trust, acceptance and understanding.

This applies to the Quaker community no less than other groups. In 2010 we made a commitment to be a low carbon sustainable community and subsequently set up the BYM Sustainability Group (BYMSG) – of which I am a member - to oversee this process. Whilst there has been a lot of goodwill towards BYMSG it has struggled at times to get a unity of purpose across the plethora of Quaker committees and bodies as well as staff at Friends House and elsewhere. Nevertheless, we have made considerable progress and it was a surprise – to us and others - that when our work was reviewed earlier this year it was recommended that the group should be laid down. Meeting for Sufferings did not agree to lay the group down immediately but agreed to convene a meeting of the clerks of all the various central committees and senior staff to determine how the work should be taken forward. This meeting identified the need for

- central and standing committees and groups to share the work they are doing and the challenges they are facing on a regular basis,
- opportunities for sharing sustainability work going on across the Quaker world: locally, centrally, nationally and internationally, as also in an ecumenical and interfaith context.
- a simple statement of the path we are all following towards sustainability. If we could unite behind, for example, zero carbon as the goal, then there are many routes to that goal and everything along the way becomes a stepping stone and not a stumbling block.
- ways of supporting Friends in their meetings on their sustainability journey.

The meeting asked the Recording Clerk and the Clerks of Meeting for Sufferings to report to Meeting for Sufferings on the work already happening, where gaps remain and where these might be addressed. The meeting recognised that ‘this journey is about choices we all make – individually, in our meetings and centrally. There are no simple answers and the path to sustainability is a long one. We are not on this path alone nor are we working in our own strength, and the sharing of our work and the faith impetus behind it will help sustain and guide us’.

Martin Mansell, Glasgow

QUAKER UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN GENEVA
News from Among Friends No 142 Summer 2018
Continued engagement at the international climate negotiations.

Now in our sixth year offering quiet diplomacy at the international climate negotiations, (QUNO continues to host off- the-record dinners for negotiators, and side events at the conferences to help build communication and understanding between a diverse group of countries.

As observers of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we engage negotiators, climate scientists, civil society and government representatives on the need to include sustainable economic systems, consumptions and life styles, as well as nature regeneration, in their approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

QUNO remains concerned by increased attention on geo-engineering and technical fixes, many of which fail to address the root causes of current climate change. In April, we published a second edition of A Negotiator's Toolkit, a resource for international climate negotiators that outlines concise cases for urgent, rights-based climate action. It includes updated climate science, economic findings, arguments for gender-sensitive climate policy and policies with the most potential to limit the impacts of climate change. We are currently transforming this work into a booklet for government officials, and another for citizens. We are supporting Britain Yearly Meeting and FWCC to prepare a similar booklet for Quaker and other faith communities.

Sign up to receive QUNO newsletters and monthly updates at quno.org/maillinglist, or visit quno.org and follow @QuakerUNOffice on Facebook and Twitter to learn more of our work.

Book Review: Right Relationship, Building a Whole Earth Economy Peter G. Brown & Geoffrey Garver

I was asked to read and comment on **Right Relationship; Building a Whole Earth Economy** written by Peter G Brown and Geoffrey Garvey and published in 2009 in the United States of America. Both authors are academics and Geoffrey Garvey is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Quaker Institute for the Future based in the United States.

The message of the book, is becoming increasingly important due to political changes which have taken place since 2009 and to speeding development of the environmental impact of climate change affecting the planet and all that lives on it – from mycorrhizia under the earth, to all forms of creatures, insects, animals, plants, and of course humans. The hope is to find the right relationship between humans and nature and to create an ecologically sustainable and socially just economy. This is a very tall order particularly since the election of President Trump in the USA and his denial of climate change and the effects of Britain withdrawing from the European Union.

For me, it is a book I found hard to read, despite knowledge of the issues relating to the changing climate and the devastating effect human activity is having on the natural world; it covers descriptions of the Canadian Tar Sands developments, air pollution, to the effects of “green technology” in agriculture and all we are doing to land, sea and air, and to the whole of the living world.

There are interesting sections about the Quaker's movement to end the Slave Trade in 17th and 18th Century Britain and America and clearly Geoffrey Garvey as a member of the Quaker Institute for the Future is hoping and campaigning for this organisation to work for the institutional changes needed if to enable the change we need to make for all life on our planet. The bulk of the book is concerned with the development of institutions, which the authors see as the means to make the change we need to make.

I am an environmental activist with knowledge of a considerable part of the subject they are concerned with; I own and have read books by a number of writers quoted in their text – George Monbiot, Jared Diamond, Rachel Carson to name three; I have campaigned to raise awareness of the effects of human activity on the lives of pollinators by agricultural and other practices; as well as for the abolition of nuclear weapons and power which is what brought me to Quakers back in 1980. So I know the subject under discussion and I have a degree in history and interest in the wonderful work of early Quakers in abolishing slavery; and more recently following the lead of Thich Nhat Hanh the founder of the Community of Interbeing and promoter of Engaged Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh has written two wonderful books on the subject of our need to care mindfully for the environment, called **Love Letter to the Earth** and the **World We Have**. Thich Nhat Hanh's answer to the problem is mindfulness practice and careful living through Mindfulness Trainings which sit closely with the Quakers testimonies.

So I agree that this is an important book, but it is several steps ahead of the start of the process, concentrating on the institutions needed to ensure the change we need to make.

This is perhaps where we as Friends come in. A number of familiar names are mentioned as catalysts for change in our lifetimes; Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Rachel Carson – Al Gore and his film **An Inconvenient Truth**.

Beside me, as I sit, I see a short article about a woman with a smiling open face, recent winner of The Breakthrough Prize – one Jocelyn Bell Burnell , astrophysicist - who gave all her recent winnings away to establish research studentships for people underrepresented in physics – for example women and ethnic minorities; perhaps Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, generous physicist is one of our Quakers who could raise the awareness needed to enable **Building a Whole Earth Economy**.

Meg Beresford, Lanark

Some thoughts: What is meant by the term “sustainability”?

There are many definitions and interpretations to the question.

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability>

To me the most imminent threat to the sustainability of our lifestyle and culture (and our society) is the predicted eruption of the Katla volcano in Iceland. (A similar volcanic eruption in Iceland in 1783 change the course of history and led to the French Revolution).

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/second-more-powerful-icelandic-volcano-likely-to-explode-soon-1949600.html>

This could cause major disruptions in our society which is geared to internet connections and supermarkets; that supply at point of use.

The health aspect of sulphuric acid air pollution on plants, animals and humans is also daunting.

Is it not prudent that we should prepare for any eventuality. (If someone takes out a house (or car) insurance, are they being a doomsayer or resilient ?)

Climate change:

There is a range of options on the subject. However, it may be helpful to consider the facts and myths on the subject.

It seems in the past 1000 years there have been fluctuation in the climate, which are independent of human influence. Though the accuracy for this information may be limited, e.g. grapes were growing in Norway during the warm period 900 -1300AD , yet it was so cold in 16th Century there were frost fairs on the River Thames and Henry VIII sledged along the river from London to Greenwich in 1536. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11644-climate-myths-it-was-warmer-during-the-medieval-period-with-vineyards-in-england/>

Modern methods of obtaining information indicate an alarming change in our climate that has not occurred in the past 6000 years.

The Arctic ice cap is melting fast, 13.2% per decade, but because it is “floating” on water, it will have little impact on the height of sea level; In contrast to the melting of ice cap in Antarctica and Greenland.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/may/09/global-warming-is-melting-antarctic-ice-from-below>

However the warmer Arctic climate is melting the permafrost, releasing methane gas which is increasing the greenhouse gas:

<https://m.phys.org/news/2017-07-permafrost-greenhouse-gas.html>

The burning of fossil fuels and deforestation has increased the concentration of carbon dioxide by a third since the Industrial Revolution:

<https://climate.nasa.gov/causes/>

The rearing of livestock and meat consumption accounts for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Alongside carbon emissions from deforestation (for pasture or crops to feed animals), the livestock sector is also the single biggest human-related source of methane (from cattle) and nitrous oxide emissions (from fertiliser and manure), two particularly potent greenhouse gases. On current trends, by 2050 we will be growing more crops to feed directly

to animals than ourselves. Even small shifts to feeding crops to humans instead of livestock would lead to significant increases in food availability.

How do we prepare for the longer (?) term effects of climate change on our society; with the predicted more severe and extreme weather and the impact on food production? So with this information what should we do?

Quakers have a tradition of being advocates of change; in our own lifestyle and influence on society.

As individuals we can reduce our own impact on the environment, and to lobby politicians, the media, and others of influence, to “educate”: to prepare for the change.

Kirsty, my wife, and I live on the Isle of Mull, where we are trying to convert a windswept bracken covered hillside into a more sustainable forest garden, by attempting to adopt the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner’s “biodynamic” methods. We have planted over 5000 trees, have two goats, bees and hens (but a rogue otter ate our ducks and geese).

Our house is built to German high insulation standards; so boiling a kettle in the morning heats the house for the day! It is designed with large windows for passive solar heating. Our heating system uses an air to water heat pump/exchange to convert the “waste hot air” that leaves the house into hot water for central heating and domestic water.

Kirsty and I have also been actively involved in establishing a Community Orchard with over 150 fruit trees, including 45 varieties of apples.

Mike Shilson, Mull & Iona

At the funeral of Marion Fairweather earlier this year, friends were given sunflower seeds to plant to remember Marion. Here is a picture of one of the sunflowers from these seeds, grown by my daughter, Christine Brown.

It's a lovely thought that 'Marion' sunflowers are brightening lives everywhere. **Felicity Bryers, Perth**



SUSTAINABILITY

What is this? How do we engage with it?

Generally speaking, although accepted, this is not rating high on the concern scale!!!
But of course, we are all ticking the boxes. What's going on?

Generally speaking, and possibly too simplistic, we think of sustainability as preserving the world we know of today. Often action on the issue involves inspecting our carbon footprint, especially in relationship to climate change. There is a frustration we can do little because we all need to co-operate on common goals especially nations and big corporations. Do you remember how the heavy smogs of Glasgow? They disappeared with the introduction of smokeless zones that curbed domestic fires (OH, irony that pollution is returning with the advent of wood burning stoves in urban areas!).

As Quakers, we speak of simple living. John Woolman compels us to ask, what do we need? Is the stuff that surrounds us purely down to our greed – our insecurity that we may not have enough? The Buddhists call it attachment. Our curiosity and need for stimulation often means we want diversity of food and clothes, or we like to be in vogue. Is it ridicule we fear, or to be left out of the gang? What do we need?

What is a simple life? *Consider the lilies of the field* . . . can we trust that our needs will be met? Have you ever read that wonderful book *Mutant Down Under*? Sustainability is a relationship with our community, with our family and friends, and with Nature.

Our patriarchal world has a concept of ownership and possession that leads to exploitation and the evolution of inequality – the rise of poverty and injustice. **How do we contribute?** How many boxes can you tick below?

ENERGY USE This is more than dependence on fossil fuels. How do we use energy? What do we need?

- ☐ Public versus private transport
- ☐ Economising journeys to do more than one thing when 'out'.
- ☐ Use smaller more efficient cars.
- ☐ Use a bicycle for shorter journeys.
- ☐ Share transport.
- ☐ Avoid air travel.

HEATING This is separate as we have different needs depending on our health or age.

- ☐ Turn down the thermometer 2 ° – remember the Glasgow smog.

- ☐ Use woolley jumpers and thermal underwear
(Aldi do a lovely soft merino wool leggings, not just for cyclists!).
- ☐ Effective insulation such as double glazing.
- ☐ Close doors and heat one room of your palace efficiently.
- ☐ Sitting reading, watching TV, using computer – use a shawl or lap rug.
- ☐ Eat warming foods such as oats, soups, ginger.
- ☐ Exercise to improve circulation – get up and chase the cat every hour!

FOOD What is the quality, where does it come from?

- ☐ Buy local to avoid transport costs and fuel consumption.
- ☐ Fresh food contains more nutrients and fewer additives.

CLOTHING Much is thrown away so an enormous waste plus modern cloths often dependent on the petro-chemical industry.

- ☐ Buy clothes made of natural fibres such as wool & linen. Cotton uses volumes of water in it production but it lasts.
- ☐ Reuse – recycle if you need diversity. Rip out old wool jumpers and knit up in new Style.
- ☐ Repair clothes.

AVOID PLASTICS Your home may have a low carbon footprint but how does it fare on the plastics scale?

- ☐ ???

Let's really get down to it.

BIBLE STUDY/ THOMAS GROUP

Our Autumn mini-conference will look at **Sustainability and Theology** and the Jesus teaching on Holy Wisdom that leads us to a spiritual relationship with the Earth.

Discussion, silence, good friendship are our hallmarks.

Join us on 10th November in Glasgow Meeting House at 10.30 for 11am

Contact Lorraine McFadden or Margaret Roy to indicate that you are coming

‘ . . . everything that vibrates its way into existence as a seemingly separate being carries its own unique *shem*.’ Neil Douglas-Klotz

Review: **Richard Holloway: *Memento Mori***
at the Edinburgh International Book Festival

Richard Holloway has long been one of my heroes. An ex-Episcopalian bishop who used to be priest in charge of Old St Paul's, where he would famously conduct weddings for lesbian and gay couples when the Scottish Episcopal church refused to allow that we were human beings too, he has been described as "gorgeously unorthodox" and "Britain's barmiest bishop". I admire him because of his searingly honest writing, which over the years has charted his progress from almost evangelical certainty to frank and open uncertainty about the 'whateveritis' that many people call 'god'. 85 years old in November, he was at the book festival ostensibly to promote his latest book Waiting for the Last Bus but in practice to have a fascinating and deeply moving conversation with James Runcie.

Richard explained that this most recent book started life as a series of essays for the BBC and then expanded. As a priest, he spent much of his life with death, tending both to the dying and to those who were left behind to mourn, and so has a deeper acquaintance with the subject than most of us. He suggests that man is the only living creature with a foreknowledge of death: animals have different ways of dealing with imminent death and its aftermath, but they don't live their lives in the consciousness of mortality, whereas wo/man can spend her/his whole life so terrified of death that he or she is unable to live. In the past, religion helped people face the unknown and promising immortality in the afterlife: now scientists are taking over, and science-based technology offers the horrifying prospect of physical immortality. Richard hopes that Hollywood will take over this idea and produce the ultimate zombie apocalypse movie, with himself as the chief zombie....

He has much wisdom to offer us all. He spoke movingly of his own advancing years, and particularly of the ageing and death of Daisy, "his last dog". As we age, we look back at our past selves: he advises us to do this with tenderness - it's okay to be embarrassed by this younger self, but we need to forgive it, too. The worst thing is "dying not knowing who you were" - and being aware of our eventual death doesn't mean we have to live in a state of morbid obsession - say yes to death, but don't ruin life because of it!

As religion fades out of our consciousness, present-day people tend to ignore or gloss over the knowledge that this life has an end. In the Middle Ages, people knew they would die, and prepared for dying while they were still alive. *Ars Moriendi*, the art of dying, was studied and talked about, the illiterate were reminded by carvings in churches and cathedrals. Richard hopes that his book will be an *ars moriendi* for the present day because it is vital to prepare for dying, not only for ourselves but for those who are left behind - it is horrible to have to watch someone die who is angry, terrified, or simply doesn't want to go.

He spoke of the comfort and consolation of poetry and well-known passages from religious writings - it doesn't matter whether one believes in what they say, the important thing is the comfort it brings people nearing death, even those who profess no particular religious beliefs.

The hour raced by, and we could have stayed as long again and more. I rushed out of the tent to go buy the book and queue to have it signed - glad not only to get a copy of yet another of Richard's wise and thought-provoking works, but also to have the opportunity to thank him for his honesty and kindness: he is the epitome of his own maxim "kindness to all, including yourself, is the essential".

Mary Woodward, Portobello & Musselburgh

Originally appeared on ScotsGay's Fringe website sgfringe.com

Review: Gie's peace, Morna Burden at the *Scottish Storytelling Centre*,

A full house in the small intimate setting of the Storytelling Centre's George Mackay Brown library welcomed Morna Burden as she slipped from behind a screen and launched straight into her first song, a lullaby with a difference, written in 1958 by Nancy Nicholson. *Mushroom cloud and heavy water* and the lively refrain beginning *merrily, merrily nuclear power* plunged us straight into the brilliantly black humour with which women have creatively waged peace in a world which is seeing an ever-increasing proliferation of wars.

Morna told the stories of women of all ages who in their own way have tried to bring peace to situations and protest against the stupidity of war. Sadako Sasaki was a young Japanese girl who died from leukaemia in 1955, ten years after she was caught in the fall-out from the atomic bomb that targeted Hiroshima. She folded over 1,000 paper cranes while in hospital, and her story has inspired people all round the world to join a movement which began with her schoolmates and resulted in the erection of the Children's Peace Monument in Hiroshima Peace Park in 1958. Buffy Sainte-Marie, a young First Nation Canadian woman, was shocked by the soldiers she saw returning from the Vietnam War: at a time when the horrors of that war were being denied, she wrote the powerful *Universal soldier*. Artist Jill Gibbons disguises herself in smart suits and appropriate jewellery and infiltrates arms fairs, where she makes art deriding the civilised veneer of the whole arms industry, which denies that it sells products designed to kill and maim, preferring instead to protest it is purveying "defence and hospitality".

Fellow-Quaker Penny Stone went with a choir to Palestine, to sing to and show solidarity with Palestinian people and on her return home talk about it "to anyone who would listen". When the choir went with the local people to attempt to reach their fields their way was blocked by Israeli armed forces: as they were fleeing from tear gas, chemical stuff and rubber bullets, she realised she was singing a song sung originally by members of the LGBT community, but later adopted by many other protest movements, *We are a gentle, angry people*, which has the refrain *and we're singing, singing for our lives...*

Morna met another of my fellow-Quakers, Beth Cross, in the Boundary Bar which straddles the Leith-Edinburgh border, and heard how she, while at university in Annapolis, Maryland, intended simply to support for a week a peace walk that started in California - but found herself joining this World Peace Walk and travelling through Scotland, England, and much of Europe. A song often sung on the walk was Eric Anderson's *Thirsty Boots*. And then, of course, there was Greenham Common, and Helen John who found her life transformed by her involvement in the women's camp. My favourite song has to be *Lily of the Arc Lights* - sung to the woman with the bolt-cutters, beside whom the singer is attacking the perimeter fence, this is a wonderfully anarchic rewrite of *Lili Marlene*. Its fantastic rhymes and dauntless spirit made me laugh out loud and salute the women who could be so brave in the face of very real danger, carrying out civil disobedience because they simply couldn't stand by and do nothing,

Morna sings simply, and her songs come straight from her heart: in the interest of accuracy, the stories she tells are read from a folder - but she is continually interjecting her own and others' experience, which stops them being dull factual monologues. It might be helpful to have a brief 'fact sheet' of names and dates to take away with us as we leave, to help us remember - but the overall impression on leaving the venue was of the courage and determination of so many people, which gives hope and lifts us above the sadness of the refrain to Pete Seeger's song *Where have all the flowers gone?* - *WHEN WILL WE EVER LEARN???*

Mary Woodward, Portobello & Musselburgh

Thought for the Day – c. 0723, 19 September 2018 - BBC Radio Scotland
from Alastair McIntosh, a Quaker, author and independent scholar

Good Morning

Tomorrow sees the completion of a three day summit between the presidents of North and South Korea, an event that, for the first time in ten years, involves a leader from the South, President Moon Jae-in, visiting the North Korean capital.

It's to try and resolve a division that dates back to the Cold War, much the same as Germany got split between the East and West.

Sigmund Freud observed that splits can be the greatest when we share the most in common. He wrote about "the narcissism of small differences" – the self-obsession that so easily sets up boundaries where there need be none.

It's not hard to project our negativity outwards and demonise the other, but what about the healing of divisions? Moon Jae-in's quest in North Korea is being called a mediation bid. And could it be, I wonder, that there's more than just power politics at play?

Back in March, I was astonished to see the president photographed in a Korean newspaper reading a book called *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, by Parker Palmer, an American Quaker activist and educator.*

Palmer draws attention to the gap between the realities and the myths that we build up of one another. Realities that could humanise. But myths that feed “the politics of rage”, and when their own foundations crack, expose a “politics of the brokenhearted.” Whether as nations or as individuals, our capacity to “get well”, becomes our capacity to “get real”.

Our call, is to unclench the fist around the wounded human heart. To see dissolved our narcissism of small differences. To cultivate a shared humanity, so that we learn to live and let live while looking out for one another.

The healing of our politics, says Parker Palmer, is to make a “new normal” of such “habits of the heart”. That, in North and South Korea. That too, much closer home to home.

* <https://goo.gl/2xjScR>

Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2011.

Think it possible that you may be mistaken: uncertainty as a spiritual force for change

Workshop for attenders and members, 1-3.30pm, Sunday 14th October, Meeting House (bring lunch)

We are living in uncertain times. Many of us are looking for ways of coping with this uncertainty and see a need for urgent action.

We can feel irrelevant as Quakers because striving to “think it possible that [we] might be mistaken” (Advices and Queries 17) takes time and seems like the opposite of taking bold, clear, timely decisions. Having strength of conviction often feels like the more rapid and effective way forward.

This workshop will explore the possibility that uncertainty is actually a more powerful way of getting things done.

Helen Minnis will discuss how problems in her work as a scientist helped her realise that uncertainty is essential in leading change – and how a Quaker Meeting for Clearness helped her embrace uncertainty as a personal leadership style.

Over the centuries, Quakers have been known for leading some major social changes... from the abolition of the slave trade to equality in marriage. Are Quakers inherently leaders – as individuals and as a collective – and is embracing uncertainty a strength that Quakers use to lead change? Do we have a particular role, now, in helping society to cope with uncertainty and to use it fruitfully?

The workshop will allow us to think, together, about uncertainty as a spiritual force and about whether it can help us lead change both as individuals and as a Society.



Bernardo Alhucema: An appreciation of his life

Bernardo came to Scotland with his family as a refugee after the overthrow of President Allende by General Pinochet in 1973. He described in an interview how he first came into contact with Quakers:

I had a friend who was a student at Glasgow University. She told me about a beautiful place in Sauchiehall Street where I would find someone called Hugh Pyper. The first Sunday I knocked on the door I was too late for worship. The same happened for the next two Sundays then I managed to arrive just in time. I immediately felt it was where I belonged. It was the place I had been looking for for a long time.

He was part of a community of Chilean refugees in the West of Scotland and some of them began to use the basement of the Meeting House in Newton Terrace as their studio. They produced vivid paintings capturing their experiences in Chile and these adorned the stairwell of the Meeting House for a long time. On one occasion Bernardo arranged an art exhibition in the church at Kelvinbridge.

During his years in Glasgow his wife died and he brought up his young family. It was a constant frustration to Bernardo, a former lecturer, that he could not obtain work in Scotland and in the late 1990s, some years after the end of the Pinochet regime, he decided to return to Chile because, he said: “*that is where I belong*”.

There were no openings for him in the city so he settled in a small town in the foothills of the Andes, where he acquired an old property in which he lived for the remainder of his life. From the beginning he worked with people in the community – helping a women’s cooperative to form and knit socks was one initiative. He soon realised the impact of the drugs business on the town and became a campaigner against the drug trafficking which impinged on almost every family in some way. For a time he had a local radio slot on which he condemned the trade. This made him enemies and there were arson attacks on his home. Then he came up with the idea of introducing the young people of the community to sport.

He discovered badminton – a sport hitherto confined to the urban elite in Chile. He managed to acquire basic equipment and his badminton group took off in a big way. Over the years it was instrumental in keeping many young people out of involvement with drugs and in due course local young people started to go into higher education and obtain jobs. Neither of these possibilities had ever been a possibility before.

Bernardo constantly struggled to obtain enough income to live on. Friends in Scotland sent money on a regular basis which he used to build up the badminton group. He supplemented his income by using his garden to grow crops, by selling his photographs, and by short-term initiatives like making rain sticks from cacti – we still have one from a consignment he sent for us to sell. But there were constant setbacks - drought, earthquakes, floods, and the falling water table as the snow line in the Andes steadily retreated. Somehow he came through all of these episodes with his spirits intact.

He continued to witness his Quaker faith in his life. He later wrote:

**FRIENDS
WHO
SHARE
OUR
JOURNEY**

It was one of the most beautiful things in my life when I was accepted as a member in 1982. How they accepted me! It didn't matter about my poor English. It filled my empty soul.

He started holding meetings for worship in his home and some local people came. But he commented that the influence of Catholicism in the region made it difficult for people to understand that they could think freely, and the gatherings often became simply social gatherings.

His badminton group was named 'Ovalle Friends' Badminton Team', and they proudly wore club T-shirts made in Glasgow. Over the years the team took part in tournaments across South America, giving members memorable experience of the wider world.

Bernardo returned to Scotland twice. On the first occasion he was able to attend Britain Yearly Meeting where he proudly announced, when introduced, that: *I am Chile Yearly Meeting* ! On the second occasion his purpose was to gain a coaching qualification in badminton which would open the door to employment in the education system. He didn't quite manage the qualification but went home with a first aid certificate (in English and with an impressive letterhead) which did the trick and he was paid as a sports coach on and off for some years from 2008. Over time the badminton group welcomed a number of wheelchair users who gained in confidence through sport.

Of this period of his life, Bernardo wrote:

I have tried to give people the meaning of living in community through Quakerism and badminton. When the children decided to stop their involvement in drugs that was a real victory. The economic aspect of their free decision became something spiritual. The idea of universal love being stronger than aggression has taken root.

Bernardo's health declined over the past decade, with increasing respiratory problems, but despite this he remained active well into his seventies, gaining inspiration from his mother whom he described as indestructible. When a tsunami devastated the south of Chile, Bernardo joined the ranks of volunteers helping with the clear-up.

But circumstances were closing in on him. His house, and the vital well, were severely damaged by quakes, the population of Punitaqui fell dramatically as people were forced to leave by climate change, and his income from sports coaching dried up. He investigated moving to Ecuador where he would be employed (on the strength of his knowledge of the English language) to guard an area of hard wood forest against illegal logging, in return for a house and the possibility of making a meagre living from bee-keeping. This was not to be and in one of his last communications, in April 2018, he wrote: *"Sorry friends for my silence am so frustrate even i can (cannot?) understand myself. In 5 months my full life collapse into nothing...sorry friends"*. A crowd funding initiative in Scotland raised money which paid for him to receive treatment for his cancer but the end came in early August 2018, with his elder daughter, Cristina, and other friends beside him.

A Chilean friend wrote on Facebook: *"I want to remind (remember?) you wise friend thank you for teaching us that you can be happy with the simple things of life thanks for those chat and follies fly high friend and rest in peace."* (Claudia Cecelia Marin Cortes) A fitting tribute to a remarkable person, and a good friend to so many people.

Philip Bryers, Perth (formerly of Glasgow)



Elspeth Smith

Elspeth Smith is a woman who, alongside others I've been very fortunate to get to know over the past year as her overseer, since she became a member of Glasgow Meeting.

She moved to Glasgow about 18 months ago and lives with her niece Caroline and her family in Highburgh Road in the Westend of Glasgow. Elspeth is 89 years old and unfortunately has limited mobility so has not yet been able to attend Glasgow Meeting. However, when Friends visit her she always enjoys a short period of silence after a chat over a cup of tea.

Visiting Friends always get a warm welcome from Elspeth and her family and it is a pleasure to visit her.

Elspeth was born in Ceylon (former Sri Lanka) went to school in Edinburgh and lived and worked as a Health Visitor in Yorkshire for about 40 years. She was a member of Quakers in the past and some time ago left, then when she came to Glasgow reapplied for membership and was accepted into Glasgow Meeting.

Despite Elspeth's limited mobility she has a very active mind and in her 70's began writing poetry more seriously. She is very modest about her poetry, but nevertheless she was 'discovered' by a publisher who took a great interest in her poetry and has now published two of her books.

Here is a couple of her poems:-

Miss Tiddy

moves in elevated places,
passes through garden party gates
we are not invited to enter.

Such sights

her discreet green eyes
have seen,

such mighty heights

she reaches,

such social trees

she climbs.

Our simple home

is understandably
not quite to her taste.

But we will

Never

Let anyone know

She was born in a barn.

Morning Coffee

This will be the last time
we sit here together,
you with your smooth hours of the
day,

me with my sixty brittle minutes.

This will be the last time

I watch that creamy cup
raised smugly to your mouth,
see the delight in the icing
on every cake on the plate,
know there will be no difference
in the size of your waist,
the shape of your face.

This will be the last time

I listen to your indecisions
concerning your designer dresses,
smile politely at your escapades
with people in high places.

This will be the last time.

After you discover
What I have done.

Phillida Ball, Glasgow

Bob Williamson, birthright Friend and long term member of Glasgow Meeting is just about to turn 80. Here he is with the mug presented to him by his old Quaker school at Wigton (that still has a reunion each year).

ABOU BEN ADHEM

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."

"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still: and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names who love of God had blest,

And lo Ben Adhem's name led all the rest !

Leigh Hunt - 1784 - 1859

Leigh Hunt was the son of a Quaker mother.



NEW BOOKS IN GLASGOW MEETING LIBRARY

Cowton, Gordon *Community energy: a guide to community-based renewable energy projects.* Green Books 2017 184p. S/COW

Boulton, David (ed.) *Godless for God's sake: nontheism in contemporary Quakerism by 27 Quaker nontheists.* Dales Historical Monographs [n.d.] 142p. Q/BOU

Dworkin, Ronald *Religion without God.* Harvard U.P. 2013 180p. R/DWO

Warnock, Mary *Dishonest to God.* Continuum 2010 172p. C/WAR

Holloway, Richard *Godless morality: keeping religion out of ethics.* Canongate 2004 163p. C/HOL

Dear, John *They will inherit the earth: peace and nonviolence in a time of climate change.* Orbis 2018 161p. P/DEA

Lubelska, Anna (ed.) *How to be a peaceful school: practical ideas, stories and inspiration.* Jessica Kinglsey 2018 224p. P/LUB

Borg, Marcus J. *Evolution of the word: the New Testament in the order the books were written.* HarperOne 2012 593p. B/BOR

Mencken, H.L. *On religion.* Edited by S.T. Joshi. Prometheus 2002 330p. R/MEN
Librarian, Paul Burton will send books at cost of postage. paulfburton@btinternet.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

7 TH October	Meeting for Worship at Faslane, North Gate
13th October	Area Meeting at Ayr
14 th October	Uncertainty as a spiritual force for change.
15 th October	East End Meeting in Denniston
29 th October	Quaker Healing Group, 7pm in Glasgow Meeting House
10 th November	Bible Study/Thomas Group mini- conference.
17 th November	Retreat at Ross Priory
17th November	General Meeting in Perth
29 th November	Vigil George Square Thursdays in Black 12.30
3rd December	Area Meeting by telephone
8 th December	Memorial service for Bernardo Alhucema 4pm in Glasgow M H
12th January	Area Meeting in Glasgow
11th March	Area Meeting by telephone

Woodbrooke are conducting a survey which you can access on Woodbrooke's facebook page and twitter feed and you can access it here:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HLJ8Q7F

It takes about 10 minutes to do and individuals are encouraged people you know to complete it, to help out – especially if they've never been to Woodbrooke or not for a long time.

Hold in the light

Men are more likely to die of suicide than any other single factor. 84 each week in UK. Research says they can't talk but are greatly helped just to know that others are thinking of them! *From an article by Dr.Xand van Tulleken.*

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

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

The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 15th December

**Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair Mclver or Margaret Roy
Someone to write book reviews and dig into our history would relieve you of reading Margaret Roy's efforts.**