

West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

October 2020

Clerk's Letter	p. 2
Report on Area Meeting 22nd August	p. 3
Report on Special Area Meeting 19th September	p. 6
Report on Area Meeting 10th October	p. 9
Book of Discipline report to Meeting for Sufferings	p.11
Book of Discipline Revision Committee	p.13
Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations	p.15
Reflection from Children and Young People's MfW	p.16
Build Back Better	p.18
To Zoom or not to Zoom	p.21
News from Europe	p.25
Quakers deep in thought	p.27
Where does the spirit come from?	
Careful discernment or spiritual timidity?	
Modern Slavery in Glasgow, today.	p.32
Seminar Dates for your Diary	p.33
Poetry Please	p.34
Book Reviews	p.36
The Health Gap	
Riders on the Storm	p.37
Do we have leisure?	p.38
Meetings for Worship in West Scotland	p.39

Clerk's Letter, October 2020

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow

Like many of us I've been thinking on all the issues and events in the world that seem to magnify, so we want to hide under the duvet, physically or metaphorically. The wayward heads of government, the pandemic, the inability of us humans to treat each other equally with respect, climate change and all the rest hang over us. Plus all the things that stem from our own personal situations; from where we are with things.

In meeting for worship recently the phrase 'the still, small voice' came to me and dwelt in me. Afterwards I googled where it came from and re-read 1 Kings 19:11-13 in the King James VI & I Version.

¹¹ And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

¹² And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

Elijah was in his cave in a frump: all other people seemed incapable of doing anything right. The wind, earthquake and fire represent all the things that come at us. I thought 'we're not told what the still small voice said'. Perhaps it was the answer to everything, as satirised as '42'. (42: the answer to life, the universe and everything, from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.)

But I'd forgotten that the story goes on:

¹³ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

I pondered more on this. Where does the emphasis go in that sentence? You could put it on any of the words, but then perhaps the meaning doesn't change that much wherever you do.

We're not all called to great deeds, but we are being asked 'what are you doing here?' The voice being still and small, the question is not asked in an overtly challenging way, but as a gentle reminder to stand aside now and then to review your life. It may be we have to wait for a way to open, but at least we'll be looking out for a door to open. It is clear though – the world will really change not by wind, earthquake or fire but by the way we all live when we discover our purpose.

Report of Area Meeting by Zoom, 22 August 2020

Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries

I must admit that my first thought, on leaving last Saturday's Zoom Area Meeting, was "How on earth am I going to write that lot up?!" But here goes

It was very much a game of two halves, but, with almost every Local Meeting well represented, both morning and afternoon, it certainly demonstrated one positive benefit of Zoom.

It was necessary for business matters not to overrun into the afternoon presentation. Fortunately some anticipated items, updates concerning the Local Development Worker, Glasgow Meeting House, Deaths, Correspondence and AOB were not required, and several others were taken on draft, such as dates for AMs in 2021.

In Treasury matters, important questions about increasing contributions to both Area Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting were deferred until October, but clearly this needs to be considered by all of us as a matter of some urgency. We are faced with possible job losses at Friends House, while the future of Woodbrooke is unclear. Certainly the Woodbrooke experience, cherished by so many of us, will be an online one for some time to come.

Now that COP26 is rescheduled for November 2021, nothing more was said about that, except for the planned relay walk, the intention of which is to keep the whole issue in the forefront of our minds. Though the precise route is not yet known, clearly Dumfries Meeting must be one of the closest geographically, perhaps they will use what we refer to as the service road, which closely follows the M74, but is usually very quiet? I would hope we can at least offer support and accommodation to walkers, although the hoped-for volunteer to join the organising group was not forthcoming.

Local Meetings seem to be managing reasonably well in adapting to current conditions, with Zoom being something of a lifeline, for those able to use it. Outdoor meetings are now being considered, though the prevailing weather isn't helping us just now. Lanark has tried an interesting way of doing this—ten minutes sitting quietly, followed by a walking meditation. Margaret Roy is collecting Zoom experiences for a future newsletter

Local Meetings are encouraged to consider the Build Back Better campaign, as some people may be feeling a truer sense of what is really important in their lives, and be able to continue with behaviours which touch more gently on the planet.

Reports were received of a meeting with MP Lisa Cameron, and notice given of one with MP Alison Thewlis, taking place as I write! Also a comprehensive report of this year's Enquirers' Day. These reports can be easily accessed from Daphne Wasserman and Gill Reid respectively.

The most substantial matter in the morning was, without doubt, the three applications for membership which were heard. The clerk mentioned beforehand that he was allowing plenty of time for these, and wanted us to be fully engaged with what we heard, and to view these stories of individual's spiritual journeys to Quakerism as precious sharings which would enrich us all. Thus, with appropriate Quaker procedures having been followed, and the personal stories listened to, James Friend, Pam Currie and Josephine Friedrich-Thomas were accepted into membership of West of Scotland Area Meeting, and will be personally welcomed by nominated members of the individual local meetings concerned. Perhaps it is a matter of indiscipline that I remain, after approaching 40 years of regular, committed attendance at Meetings, still an attender! I do recall an early primary school report suggesting that "... Janet resents correction."

On then to the afternoon, and the presentation on the issue of White Privilege by Helen Minnis and Ellie Koepplinger, supported by Edwina Peart, who is the BYM Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator. I recall being once told that "Diversity is inviting someone to your party. Inclusion is asking them to dance."

A comprehensive report had been issued detailing what has been achieved so far on this issue, which Helen, who is the daughter of one black parent and one white, had been instrumental in leading. Many actions had been suggested and I would urge everyone to obtain a copy, from Glasgow and Milngavie Elders.

Helen and Ellie shared some of their own experiences in the UK and the USA of being excluded, abused, discriminated against, ridiculed and ignored, and explained how much more difficult it had been for them to achieve on a par with their white cohorts at school/university/and in employment. The 'default setting' seems always to be a white male, and Edwina echoed these experiences. One memorable example was of a shameful episode at a Quaker Meeting in the USA (but it could happen here). When faced with becoming homeless, Ellie, who is one quarter black, was offered a leaflet, whereas in a similar situation her white father received three offers of a bed for the night!

The "Where are you from" question can be difficult. It is so obviously an easy conversation opener, but it can be understood as having a subtext of "What are you doing here?". It isn't so much the questions you ask, but what might lie behind them. But we shouldn't be too afraid of making mistakes, better to speak to someone new than to ignore them. And as in all encounters with strangers, if

you are warm , friendly and genuinely interested in them, then that should come across.

Helen and Ellen used a power point presentation to illustrate the backgrounds to some of their experiences, and the strategies they have been forced to employ to protect themselves from racist behaviours — the Mask, and the Cloak of Invisibility. To a degree, we can probably all identify with these strategies. The mask—the appearance, face and often the voice that we might use in situations where the ‘real, relaxed self’ might not be so welcome. You’ll probably know what I mean when I say that I’ve often wished I could be more like Jo Brand! And although I haven’t read the Harry Potter books, where the Cloak of Invisibility features, it is largely self-explanatory—keeping your head down, not drawing attention to yourself.

The Hall of Mirrors exercise is for us all. Imagine a hall of mirrors with the faces of your friends on, (much like a zoom screen). Do they all look like you, is it just like looking in a mirror? If so, can you, should you, want to change it? I am uncomfortable with the idea of deliberately ‘courting’ certain people because they are in some way different from myself, be it in colour, religion, ability, wealth, social class, social status, and so on. Relationships should evolve and develop naturally, over time. But I do sometimes wish that I lived in a more diverse area, so that everyday life would provide these opportunities for relationships. The slide presentation has been sent to all Local Meetings, and can be easily viewed at home.

Comments and questions followed the presentation:

Where can we go to learn about/experience more black culture? Quite a bit on TV now.

How much do we really know about anyone? Don’t categorise.

Comparison of radio with TV—radio is colour blind.

Black and brown people (the frequently-used phrase during the presentation) poorly represented in this area, excluding the Central Belt.

How do people of mixed heritage view their white ancestors?

Should you go out of your way to sit beside a black person on the bus?

Does the term ‘White Privilege’ stereotype white people, many of whom may have little or no privilege, as it is understood here?

Is Zoom useful in bringing communities together, since it starts at arms length?

What do East African Quakers think about White Privilege?

A feeling of ‘US and THEM’ present in our deliberations.

These questions, and many others, will no doubt be discussed at Local Meetings and elsewhere in the near future. Edwina Peart is charged with producing a strategy on diversity and inclusion before the end of the year, I believe. No

doubt we in the West of Scotland will follow this strategy when available, and adapt it as necessary to suit local conditions.

As I have been writing, the Johnny Nash song, ‘There Are More Questions Than Answers’ has been going round in my head. It seems most appropriate here.

‘There are more questions than answers Pictures in my mind that will not show There are more questions than answers And the more I find out, the less I know And the more I find out, the less I know.’

Memo to self: Read proposed agenda in full before volunteering to write a report!

Report on Special Area Meeting on Concern Violence Against Women, 19th September

Margaret Wadsley, Milngavie

I appreciated the WSAM Special Meeting to discern the concern brought to us. The concern is for: What of Scotland Quakers to consider how we might take action to alleviate the effects of the inequality and injustice around women in our society. The convenor of Quaker Action on Domestic Abuse, based in Gloucestershire, conveyed her support towards the Special Meeting.

I believe that the progress made in Scottish society over my life time began with seeking equality of opportunity in education from the 1960s but was limited by institutional discrimination, especially prevalent in higher education. This was highlighted through the discussion groups and consideration of the influence institutionalised discrimination has had and is having, even yet, on the youngest members of Scottish society, our children and grandchildren. The origins of gender discrimination can be traced back thousands of years, into Judaism and Old Testament biblical references.

At the closing of our meeting it became clear, as the minute from the meeting was created, that we collectively evoked a non-violent approach to discrimination and inequality. For me that meant that we did not apportion blame for oppression towards specific causes, individuals or institutions. Instead we, as Quakers, opened our hearts and minds to seek restoration and recovery for all affected by the impact of misogyny and social injustice, alongside institutional change. Just as our quest to act as we do in challenging the climate crisis and nuclear disarmament, we decided to become active in challenging the oppression of people.

Our Gathering in the Light:

We gathered for a Meeting for Worship from which three prepared ministries were shared. The first, led by **Verene Nicolas**, who explored the origins of the oppression of women, and other forms of oppression such as racism and homophobia, and indeed the destruction of nature. She argues that Patriarchy is the overarching oppression and is fundamentally rooted in separation: men from women and children, white people from people of colour, humans from nature etc. As a system, patriarchy is present in Western culture, as indeed in many other cultures in the world. Under patriarchy both men and women suffer. Women's rights and indeed as it emerged, men's and children's rights too. She highlighted the presence of patriarchy in western culture. Patriarchy, we learned, embraces a world view on how we live in relationship with planet Earth and how we raise our children. It led to male quest to sustain possession over women and children and became an embedded cultural system. Despite feminist aims to overcome controlling, oppressive social and gender structures, oppression can still emerge in the name of feminism, where structures, for example, collectives, lead to discrimination against men and women who may challenge hidden hierarchies. She also highlighted how approaches, such as Nonviolent Communication can make a positive difference to how we live with each other. Like feminism it is a movement for change. The 'mother' principle is an orientation to care for all needs without expectation to receive anything back.

Next, **Mary Kennedy** spoke of her experiences as a midwife in northern Glasgow. She recalled the bitter disappointment of a mother who had given birth to her third girl and fear of retribution from the male members of her family, both toward her and her other female children. She went on to describe the brutality of societies in the wider world where mothers, aunts and grandmothers go to extreme physically and emotionally painful lengths to disguise femininity in young girls, for example breast flattening, in an endeavour to protect very young girls from childhood marriage and the abuse of militia in their communities. The reality of life for women seeking asylum in the UK, facing the patriarchal system of immigration and Home Office procedures which are callous and devoid of compassion. We heard disturbing accounts of interviewing that sounded more akin to the worst kind of interrogation that leads to the re-traumatisation of those who seek refuge from exploitation, repeated rapes and sexual abuse for the commercial gain of the traffickers. The only positive change being; their children no longer have to witness these 'interviews'.

Finally, **Clare Phillips** placed our discernment of gender oppression in the context of Quaker values, bringing the invisible into the 'light'. She spoke about the domination of women as, until recently, endemic in our culture. A husband's rule over his family permitting him to take the children away from

their mother. The domination of the patriarchal institution the House of Commons still is, women who speak out, deepening their voices to fit in. The courage of women who risk their lives as breadwinners for their family, resist being forced into arranged marriages, owned property, but still their worth is always seen as less than by males in their villages and towns. The impact of expectations of exploiting the Earth's resources for commercial gain and for example, resulting in the rapid melting of the Siberian permafrost and the impact of patriarchal industries that pollute the environment. Clare mentioned Kate Raworth's economic model which balances planetary essential human needs and Marilyn New Zealander, Marilyn Waring, economists' influence in her home country. She referred to slavery which Quakers had opposed and supported its abolition and the persistence of crimes against women. She noted that in the present edition of Quaker Faith and Practice there are over a hundred "well-loved phrases" sited in the index at the back. Ninety-eight are said by men and eight by women, five of the eight were by Margaret Fell/Fox. This is, she suggested, a place where Quaker action could begin as the book of discipline is revised. Quaker Faith and Practice 23.44, challenges hierarchies and names the words we use, acknowledging patriarchy, but there is no reference to domestic violence. Cultural change is before us and questions if challenging violence as a whole, not sexual violence alone, is what is needed. She ends her ministry by noting that Quakers have a testimony that speaks for the unity of creation, she hopes that "well-loved phrases" spoken by more recent women, are included in the new book of discipline.

Between each ministry the meeting worshipped in silence and discernment. Space was opened for questions. Once the period of ministry was over, the meeting moved into breakout groups for discussion. This ended with lunch break followed by a sharing of the discernment from each of the six groups, all given a set of four questions to discern answers from:

- What are the structures that preclude an equal and just society for all?
- If communication is a key to a participatory society, how do we feel silenced as women?
- Silence is one tool of misogyny.
- What is the link between misogyny and violence against women?

Feedback from the groups included ideas for action and obstacles to change, here are some:

- The questions restricted discernment
- Quaker processes can assist voices to be heard
- There are Quaker processes where women can experience patriarchy

- Patriarchy can be felt within a women's life experience
- There are Quaker structures that favour men
- Have men stayed away today
- Patriarchy cannot be separated from the issues around privilege
- People experience internal and external structures and the pervasiveness of attitudes
- Speaking out can attract abuse
- Men need to speak out in support of women and themselves
- Economic structures and status are examples of the wider issues of oppression
- Further discernment is needed

The time came to create the minute for the meeting following time to discern having heard group contributions.

As I reflected at the beginning of this report, I experienced the process of the meeting as a collective one, where we moved to be of 'one mind'. The minute that reflected our collective voice, is outlined on full in the Minutes of this Special Area Meeting

The first forward step for WSAM will be for Nominations to identify a group of people to take the concern forward.

Report on Area Meeting by video conference, 10 October 2020

Jane Mitchell, Argyll

"...But he who, with a view to self-exaltation, causeth some with their domestic animals to labour immoderately, and with the monies arising to him therefrom, employs others in the luxuries of life, acts contrary to the gracious design of him [the Creator] who is the true owner of the earth; nor can any possessions, either acquired or derived from ancestors, justify such conduct."

John Woolman, 1763 Qf&p 20.32

The meeting was well attended (around 35, but fluctuating a bit over the day) with someone from each of the Local Meetings. The afternoon topic was Build Back Better, and the above sentence from *Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p)* on our use of our planet's resources is part of the reading during the opening worship.

We started on the process of appointing people for the next triennium, which begins in January 2021. People are still sought for positions of assistant newsletter editor, to edit the AM's web page and to serve on the group on Violence against Women. More posts will be filled at the December meeting.

Because of the cessation of face-to-face meetings and training this year, our expenditure has been well below budget and we agreed to increase by £2000 our donation to Britain Yearly Meeting, which is under financial strain. The Treasurer asked for ideas on how to spend the surplus (on Quaker purposes). Trustees will be deciding this. Now that some meetings are starting to meet again face-to-face, the importance of risk assessments and of keeping Trustees informed was stressed.

The meat of the meeting was the afternoon session on Build Back Better. I am ashamed to say that in preparing I had read the first two pages of the supporting document which formed a self-contained letter from the Clerk, and had overlooked pages 3-12 of the document, which I now find is full of good stuff! If you are interested in this topic and haven't already done so, please do look at (all of!) the Build Back Better paper that Michael circulated on 2 October and also a further short paper "Report to AM on Climate Change" that he circulated on 9 October. Pages 10-12 of the large document contain the submission made by Quakers in Scotland to the political parties' election manifestos written by the Parliamentary Engagement Group (though it doesn't say who the author is).

Here is a small extract from the accounts of local discussion groups:

How can we change our lives to bring to fruition the kingdom of heaven on earth so that the planet and all its creatures can live at peace and revisit the teachings of Jesus especially on social and economic justice?

The afternoon took the form of worship-sharing. It was a moving session, with encouraging contributions to counteract the more pessimistic ones. There is no doubt that poorer people and countries are suffering the effects of climate change and the corona virus disproportionately. Actions are needed at all levels, from individual / local to international. Quakers have power as a trusted organisation. We can take heart in that views are beginning to shift.

In formulating the minute, screen sharing was used so that we could all see the draft as it was being discerned - another advantage on on-line technology.

Everyman

Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own goodness and act on it.

Pablo Casals

Book of Discipline Revision Committee: First report to Meeting for Sufferings.

Ed Tyler, Alternate Rep on MfS.

What really resonated with me during our last Meeting for Sufferings (during weekend of 2-4 Oct.) was the Book of Discipline report. I quote from it below:

“To take this forward we have agreed some principles for our work in developing **content** – including spiritual underpinnings; reflecting the diversity of our community; and the language, tone and voice of the “book” as a whole. We are clear that we are engaged in a major root-and-branch revision of the whole of the “book”, not just some minor amendment.

We have identified **seven** key interlinked common themes that will need to be reflected in it:

- Spirituality, worship and discernment – individually and collectively with God
- Quaker community – life in our meetings
- Testimony and faith in action – in the world
- Stages of personal life journeys and close relationships
- Church government – how we organise ourselves
- Our story – where we have come from and where we are going
- Advices & Queries^[P]_[SEP]

Also, we have identified five key insights describing the unity of our Quaker way which will run as threads through it:

1. We can all have direct access to God/Spirit/ the Divine. This experience / encounter /relationship can transform us.
2. We live under guidance from God/Spirit/ the Light/ the promptings of love and truth in our hearts.
3. We recognise and seek to address that of God in each human being – each of us is unique and precious.
4. There is a dynamic Spirit bringing continuing revelation.
5. We hold the whole of life sacramental and so we do not divide the sacred and the secular.^[P]_[SEP]

We have referred in shorthand to a “**book**”, but we are clear that the material will need to appear in a variety of formats and platforms – printed, electronic,

audio- visual and more, with different ways of accessing it. We have not yet decided whether there should be one or more printed volumes, nor how they should be titled, nor whether church government and anthology material should be integrated together or separated.”

I was very impressed with how the group has made it a collaborative process, encouraging Meetings to contribute; and also enabling us, as individuals, to have an input. There is a webpage which gives details of how to be in touch with the committee, including a link to the collection tool where ideas (both general and specific text) can be offered. The page is:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/quaker-faith-and-practice/revising-quaker-faith-practice>.

On top of all this, a new creative project, called [Open to new Light](#), welcomes submissions to inspire the committee as the work gets under way.

[Submit an idea for the new book](#)

[Read the story so far](#)

[Read the current Qf&p](#).

Regarding Open to new Light, I have already made a contribution. It is a fabulous art project which you can upload images and thoughts to. In my case I think that the fifth insight should include reference to the inanimate such as rocks and water. To illustrate I included this image which is taken from Gigha to Jura. I am looking at Gigha as I write this!



Book of Discipline Revision Committee update August 2020

Working with the ‘Dream Team’ Mary Woodward

Taken from Sesame.

Our last full committee meeting was at the end of April. It was our first by zoom, and therefore shorter than our usual all-weekend meetings. During it four sub-groups were set up, including the one I’m co-convening with Jess Hubbard-Bailey, *Engaging with Friends*.

The other three groups are working on specific topics: identifying where Church Government is [and is not] in *Qfp* and starting work on the chapters on Eldership & Oversight and Marriage. All four sub-groups will report back to our next committee meeting in October.

Regular zooms with the clerking team and the convenors of the sub-groups enable us to check in with each other and report progress etc. Our most recent zoom meeting highlighted people’s widely-differing responses both to the work and to the whole lockdown situation. Some Friends’ personal circumstances meant they had been unable to give much time to their sub-group’s work, while others found their personal isolation, and working by themselves on their writing, very difficult. One of the positive but unexpected outcomes of working in the sub-groups is that the convenors were able to keep an eye on the others in their group and, where necessary, offer help and support. Another more obvious outcome was not only hearing how the other groups were getting on but also being inspired about one’s own work by telling others about it and hearing their reactions.

Our group had a somewhat different brief and timetable to the other three. Our initial thought was to try to run something virtual during the week that Yearly Meeting Gathering [YMG] would have been held, while also working out how to make best use of the rapid expansion of the use of zoom among Friends to offer virtual sessions to LMs, AMs and other groups, either stand-alone or as part of LM, AM, etc.

Following an approach by Rosie Carnall, one of the co-clerks, to Simon Best, Head of Learning at Woodbrooke, our plans changed dramatically. Jess and I zoomed with Rosie and Simon, and it was agreed that, with help and support from Woodbrooke, we would offer four on-line sessions based on those we were planning to offer at YMG, inviting Friends to join us in *prayerfully, joyfully, creatively, and boldly revising Quaker faith and practice*.

Woodbrooke offered us technical support during the sessions and advertising through their usual channels. We approached those committee members who had offered to facilitate the Special Interest Groups at YMG to see if they’d be happy to facilitate a zoom session, and worked on the sessions’ content, expanding what would have been a one-hour session into a ninety-minute one and making best use of the fact that we would now be meeting virtually.

A set of slides was produced outlining the ‘who, what, when, why, where, and how’ of the committee and its work, to give each facilitator a basis for the beginning of their session. These were ‘road-tested’ by one of our group at her AM, where she had been invited to speak about the committee and its work: her feedback on this was very valuable, both as to the slides and the content of the session.

Much discussion, both by email and by regular zooms, fed into the preparation of a ‘lesson plan’ outline guide to how the sessions would run [introduction, discussion in small groups, Q&A session], as well as the order and dates/ times of the sessions and how they fitted into the rest of Woodbrooke’s offerings over the summer.

At the same time, we began discussing the possibility of having an electronic version of what had been going to be a hard copy book: *Our Book – Bath 2020*, to which we would invite Friends at YMG to contribute drawings, writings and/or recordings of their thoughts about how they would like their new Book to be. Anya, our teenage member, spent a lot of time researching possible websites and eventually advised us that padlet would be our best option, as it would permit moderation of contributions before they were posted. The title *Open to New Light* was agreed. [www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonewlight if you want to have a look!]

We wrote the text for the web page and discussed how to make the project known to Friends – Woodbrooke would not be advertising this for us. We had to ensure that using the padlet site, which is based in the US, was approved by Friends House [confidentiality/ data protection issues were a potential drawback, as US regulations are not as stringent as European ones]. We also needed to set up arrangements for contributions to be submitted by email or snailmail for those Friends who didn’t want to post directly on to the site. [opentonewlight@quaker.org.uk or snailmail to BDRC/ Open to New Light at Friends House]

Once padlet had been approved, Anya worked very hard to set up *Open to New Light* [it looks fantastic!] and we set about the work of making its presence more widely known. The facilitators of the four Woodbrooke sessions would mention it, but this would only reach the participants. A press release was sent to the news desk of *The Friend* and resulted in a news item in the 7 August issue. We also got an ad into the August 7 and 14 issues, and a mention in *Quake!*

Both the Woodbrooke sessions and *Open to New Light* have been posted on our various social media channels by members of the committee’s Communications team - one of my contributions to *Open to New Light* has appeared on Instagram!! We also ensured that the rest of the committee is kept up to date with our work, invited them to take part in the on-line sessions and to contribute to *Open to New Light*, and asked them to spread the word by all the means at their disposal.

Dora Czibik at Friends House has been supporting our sub-group’s work in the absence of our secretary Michael Booth, who is still on furlough. With our agreement, she circulated the news of our work to other BYM committees, and this resulted in an approach from Jude Acton, Children and Young People’s Officer, inviting us to run sessions at the virtual Yearly Meeting for young people [aged 11-17]. Anya, Sally, and Rosie gladly agreed to do this: their sessions took place on 3 August, and I’m

eagerly awaiting a zoom to find out how they got on: what they did in their sessions could be adapted for use with Friends of all ages.

I had thought that, once the Woodbrooke sessions began my work would be mostly over, and I could have a rest while the younger members of the sub-group took over all the whizzy IT stuff. I was wrong! Emails continue to fly through the ether, in a glorious tangle of different threads, and I've found it necessary to spend hours at my pc sorting these into subjects and chronological order, to ensure that nothing gets missed, everything is followed up, and I feel I know what's going on!

Two of the Woodbrooke sessions have taken place as I write [July 28, August 11] and two are to come [August 25 and 8 September] and have been well-received. The first session was a sellout [60 people], and numbers were increased for subsequent ones. Many people have booked for all four – an interesting mixture of well-seasoned Friends and people new to the revision process. We will be looking at Friends' response to both the Woodbrooke sessions and *Open to New Light*, to see what recommendations for the future we should bring to our October committee meeting, including inviting interested Quaker groups to contact us if they would like us to provide similar information and discussion sessions, either by zoom or, where possible, in person.

It's been a lot of work, but it's been a joy to be in the company of such loving and inspiring women – regular zooms have not only progressed our work, but kept us all connected and inspired to do the work. At our first meeting in April, one of our members jokingly called us the *Dream Team* – I don't think she knew how prophetic that was!

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries

Survey Update (or not!)

Local Meetings may remember completing a survey for QCCIR last year, following the annual conference in March which I attended. Some may even wonder what became of it?!

Results from this Area Meeting were submitted, and in due course I received a response from the central committee. Nothing has really been done yet with the collected responses from all over the UK. Other important work has taken priority, including discussions with Christian Churches and other Faiths in Ireland, and uncomfortable conversations with Churches Together in England. This is perfectly understandable, given the limited time and resources available for much of the central work of Britain Yearly Meeting.

This year's conference had already been cancelled, even before COVID raised its ugly head. Instead, a significant presence had been envisaged at BYM in Bath, with invitations having gone out to several other churches and faith groups.

My personal view is that the three year project, of which the survey was a part, may well be abandoned altogether, given the more urgent issues surrounding the COVID pandemic, the Climate Emergency, Build Back Better Campaign, and the current heightened racial sensitivities.

All of these issues, however, present opportunities for joint working and dialogue between Christian Churches and other Faiths. I am certain that, on the ground, much informal but significant work continues. I shall find out if QCCIR is to be involved with the online BYM in November, and attend if so and if numbers permit.

I'm well aware that Interfaith and Ecumenical matters are very much a minority interest among Quakers - last year I was the only person from Scotland attending the annual conference. However, I still have the Area Meeting results of the survey, should anyone be interested.

Reflections from Children and Young People's Meeting for Worship.

Mary Troup, Glasgow

I have had the joy of worshipping regularly with our children and young people in Glasgow LM for the last three years. In that time, I have returned regularly to Advices and Queries 17 to reflect on the question: "How do you share your deepest beliefs with them (your children and young people), while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?" In recent months, while we have been meeting on Zoom, I have valued the Philosophy for Communities for Quakers approach ([P4C4Q](#)) to use ideas in children's stories to examine our Quaker values and beliefs, often in a very spontaneous, spirited way. Books by Oliver Jeffers, Eric Carle, Eileen Browne and others have helped us to identify key questions to explore on many different levels: How do we learn to communicate in a meaningful way and to respect others? Who owns our planet's resources? How best can we care for our planet and our friends? What would it mean to have to leave our home and our country? What makes us happy? Who makes the rules? Who initiates reconciliation and how? What changes are needed in the world and how can we work together with courage to achieve positive change?

Ideas shared have the potential to be developed into art work and songs to express new insights. Here are the words forming a tiny part of the song we developed from the book Dreamers by Yuyi Morales:

Amor, love, amor, we are dreamers together,
Amor, love, amor, words that give us hope;
Love, amor, love, we are dreamers together,
Love, amor, love, words that give us hope.

Sharing the essence of the ministry and insights from our children and young people's Meetings for Worship has become a much valued contribution to Glasgow Meeting for Worship as a whole, helping us all to rejoice in the presence of children and young people in our meeting and to recognise (and treasure) the gifts they bring.

Mary Troup, on behalf of Children and Young People's Meeting for Worship,
Glasgow LM



And not forgetting the older ones

Peggy Bartlett with her telegraph from the Queen, celebrating her 100th birthday. Peggy now of Edinburgh South was the overseer at Lanark for many years with husband Bill. Both were regular attenders at Area Meeting. Those were the days! Congratulations Peggy.

Editor: I am going to put a section on this subject in future newsletters so welcome your comments and contributions. What follows is Clair Phillip's presentation to the Special Area Meeting which I have put in here as a starter that goes beyond the purely economic to embed change within our Quaker values.

BUILD BACK BETTER

I was asked to explore connections between violence against women, patriarchy and Quaker values. I was also asked to consider politics.

Globally, women are disproportionately impacted by famine, disease, warfare, environmental degradation and poverty. Women who risk their lives bearing children and caring for others are often also family breadwinners across many cultures including our own.

Arranged marriages, abuse of female servants by male employers and men's exclusive rights over property and access to paid work and higher education used to be normal in British culture. Past laws gave men the right to remove children from their mothers and condoned those men beating their children. Men became used to having power over their families.

Trying to understand today's Islamic culture, I asked my Syrian friend about it. '**Women believe they need protection**' she said, '**even me**' and looked embarrassed.

Behind all forms of oppression and deep in patriarchal cultures and religions, is the idea that its subjects (in this case women) are less than fully adult or even less than fully human which sanctions the dominant class/gender/race (in this case men) having power over them.

Recently in WSAM we have been exploring 'white privilege'. The parallels between racism, colonialism and violence against women seem strong. We make connections between historic slavery and the position of BAME people today. Although past Quakers opposed slavery and helped to end it, we accept that we still have a responsibility to examine its relevance to today's racist acts and attitudes. Doesn't the same apply to patriarchy with its legacy of inequality and unfair treatment towards women?

In her 2015 Swarthmore Lecture '**Faith, Power and Peace**' Diana Francis states that '**Domestic violence is endemic, in varying degrees, in most if not all societies**'. I learned during the planning meeting for today that two women a week are killed by their partners or ex-partners.

Diana Francis goes on to describe what she calls '*the tragicomical performance of masculinity*' that is the House of Commons and suggests that '**when women**

...enter the male world they must perform their roles accordingly if they want to climb the ladder.' Many more women are in senior roles now but the speed with which we have returned since Teresa May's resignation to a UK government dominated by privileged men suggests patriarchal culture still prevails. There are notable women (such as the current home secretary) but they must deepen their voices and talk tough to survive and prosper. And endure appalling social media bullying.

Evidence reported in the Independent this July led to the assertion *"Even accounting for institutional context and other controls, being female-led has provided countries with an advantage in the current crisis."* But in Trump's USA and in Putin's Russia (where my lesbian step-daughter was arrested in 2018 for speaking about feminism) and in so many other political settings, misogyny continues to obstruct the progress of women in politics. Harriet's talk took place in Siberia now in the news because of the permafrost that's melting at a terrifying rate.

To what extent is 'climate change' also about a patriarchy that saw exploiting nature as 'fair game' and built the west's industrial wealth on that presumption? To quote Diana Francis again *'just as an assault on the basic needs of another human being is violence, so is an assault on the basic needs of the earth's whole ecosystem.'*

In her 2011 Swarthmore lecture on sustainability, Pam Lunn identified structural and mindset barriers to people acting more sustainably. Is this why it feels like swimming upstream? Patriarchal systems that protect polluting industries are not helping. Thank God for do-nut economist Kate Raworth proposing *'an economic model that balances essential human needs within planetary boundaries'*. And New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring who influenced Jacinda Ahern.

Our peace testimony began in 1660 with the delivery of a paper to the King and both Houses of Parliament *'against all strife and wars'* by a woman, Margaret Fell, later Margaret Fox. In the back of Quaker Faith and Practice: the Fifth Edition, is an **'Index of well-loved phrases'**. It has 111 entries. Of these, only 8 are by women and 5 of those 8 are by Margaret Fell – not surprising given her importance in our Quaker heritage.

But might our Quaker movement have **herstories**? Like other areas of public life, might there be women overlooked in our documented past? I mentioned the Quaker activist and first UK woman Mayor, Ada Salter, to a weighty Friend over coffee before he stood to address Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2017. He remarked with a smile 'Wasn't her husband behind her success?' I checked my sources and I don't think he was right. Why did he say that? For a joke?

From the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture given by the Quaker Women's Group '***Bringing the Invisible into the Light***' QF&P includes one section on Greenham Common. 35 years on with so many countries still willing to use nuclear weapons, this Greenham woman still feels unheard.

In the QF&P section on Social Justice, I found only one quote (23.44) specifically naming patriarchy. It's about the use of sexist language and the limitations of gender roles.

I found nothing about domestic violence or any other examples of what the Quaker Women's Group called '***the dark side of being female***'. In the lecture itself I did find this statement:

'Violence is to do with power over others....How can we expect men ...who are taught to equate success and physical prowess ...with the ability to hurt and kill – how can we expect these men to differentiate between violence against women and violence against countries?'

How indeed? Or to distinguish between sexual harassment and light-hearted banter perhaps?

In **#Me Too and the Politics of Change** Australian academic Lauren Rosewarne calls sexual misconduct a '***wicked problem***' – a social policy term for problems that are never solved. Such crimes persist she argues because few governments make addressing them a priority. Until we start talking about harmful manifestations of masculinity we are unlikely to create the cultural change needed to reduce sexual violence.

Or any kind of violence perhaps?

Quakers have a testimony to the unity of creation. Is it possible that patriarchal assumptions have created ***a unity of destruction*** that's leading humanity lemming-like over a final cliff?

We are in the process of updating QF& P

Will violence, including sexual violence which diminishes people of all genders, be addressed?

We may choose to include some ***well-loved phrases*** by more recent Quaker women? I hope so.

Ministry prepared for consideration at West Scotland Area Meeting 19 September 2020

Clare Phillips, Elder, Castle Douglas Local Meeting

Further to Mull & Iona Quaker Meeting minute 19/20, seven of us gathered by zoom and in person to consider the climate emergency and Build Back Better. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the issues and at times we have floundered with the magnitude of the issues.

We considered individual actions, recycling, political structures, the impact of affluence and the throwaway society. We reflected on who are we saving? The world for ourselves? The human race? Or for the full equal diversity of creation? The Covid 19 pandemic has shown us that as a society that we are able to make significant changes to preserve life; how can we harness this capacity to preserve the planet that we share and perhaps claim to be our own?

Are our lives whole? Do we divide our worlds into spiritual activities, family life, secular pursuits and political action, into good people and bad people, us and them, old ways and new ways? Let's make them one. Let's find the goodness in the other, the infinite in the humdrum, the wisdom in the ancestor, the eternal in the here-and-now. Let's elicit these surprises to engage the powers of oppression, to set people free, to live creatively. May our lives ring with truth to the whole of our being, the whole of humankind, the whole of the earth.

One of the *Advices & Queries* number 7 of Central & Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, from *Living Adventurously* (2009):

To zoom or not to zoom

During the Lockdown we were severely challenged as to how we could support our members through our meetings for worship. We found Zoom and wonderful new opportunities that enabled us to reach out and to gather in Friends from many different quarters, many who could not normally get to meeting and many of us took the opportunity to visit other far-flung corners of the world where other Quakers worshipped. In our midst there are hidden Friends who have not been able to join us – sight/hearing problems, cash for the apparatus needed, difficulties with technology to name a few. Here are some thoughts – Editor.

From Gretchen Ellis in Paris:

There are probably not very many positive things to be said about a major health pandemic and the precautions one must take regarding actual contact with others, but I have found one. It is the opportunity to share with others on «things which are eternal» after meeting for worship on zoom.

France Yearly Meeting has been meeting via zoom for about a half year now. The administrators usually mentioned they would leave the microphone open for people who wished to chat and visit after the introductions and the announcements. I realized early on that it was rather difficult to actually socialize under such conditions but that it might be a perfect chance to share on «things which are eternal». So I began kind of informally suggesting topics and moderating. The first subject tied into a vocal ministry where someone had talked about prayer. After that it was mostly about afterthoughts, things which

had occurred to Friends during the silence which didn't quite seem to be at the level of ministry. At some point one of the administrators realized that some people were staying for quite a long time to share and asked me if I could continue. So I have. For me it has been marvelous, really enriching to have this chance to explore faith (or lack of such, or doubts and questions) with other seekers.

Then my friend who is a member of the Paris Meeting told me that zoom had enabled her to attend mid-week worship with members of her former Meeting in Glasgow. I began joining in there. And when Margaret Roy talked about a Experiment with the Light Meeting later in the afternoon I joined that as well. Here are Friends doing that for which I have hungered and thirsted so many years, actually talking about their spiritual experiences. So while I'm sorry we all have to be confined because of covid and that some people are gravely ill or dying, I'm very grateful for this wonderful chance to really get to know Friends in both France and Scotland every week!

From Helen Sutherland:

2020 is likely to be remembered not just as the year of the pandemic but as the year of Zoom which is now used to host international academic conferences and local book clubs; yoga classes and church services and all stops in between.

Despite the obvious advantages I have chosen not to join Zoom Meeting for Worship, not because of a Luddite spirit, but because the technology does not do for me what Meeting for Worship does.

We call it 'meeting in silence' but in fact the silence is filled with tiny background noises: the sound of people breathing; the rustle of jacket being removed; the quiet clearing of throat. The silence, in other words, becomes instinct with the presence of Friends, each one of whom has that of God within them which is mediated to, through, and from me. And Zoom cannot give me that - indeed it emphasises the absence of Friends.

I might, of course, change my mind about this and join the Zoom Meetings, depending on how long restrictions are in place but in the meantime I will stick with Quaker Faith and Practice and find fellowship with Friends of the past through the silence of the printed page.

From Anne MacArthur:

When 'zoom meetings' took off I was very quickly overwhelmed by invitations to join zoom events from various organisations. I find it tiring to be part of a zoom meeting for a few hours at a time so decided I would generally stick to our weekly Meeting for Worship and Area Meeting and General Meeting. I actually prefer our zoom MfW to our face to face Worship (or should I say mask to mask!) at the moment because I find it difficult to wear a mask for more than a

short time and I struggle to hear what people are saying because of the distance we are from each other. I love being able to see the faces of Friends on zoom and hearing them is not a problem.

From Sheila Semple:

'What is the ground and foundation of the gathered meeting? In the last analysis, it is, I am convinced, the Real Presence of God'. QFP 2.40 Thomas Kelly

I wonder whether the real presence of God can be found in a meeting for worship by Zoom? My experience of these meetings by Zoom is similar to our usual 'in person' ones. Sometimes the ministry speaks to me, sometimes the silence feels deep... and sometimes it doesn't. And occasionally, very occasionally, time stands still as I join the community of Friends in the things which are eternal.

That doesn't mean that I don't long to sit with Friends, to shake hands, to hug if needed. Early Friends often spoke of the meeting as 'the body'; I remember a Glasgow Quaker, a medical bio-chemist, who wondered if at some level, like animals, our scent changed as our brain waves changed as we gathered.... And if meeting would be deeper if we had lower ceilings to sense each other physically more strongly. That may seem bizarre, but we do have an animal nature. Perhaps Zoom meetings for worship lose the human element?

Thinking about this, I've just re-read the Pendlehill pamphlet *'Four Doors to Meeting for Worship'* and notice how it almost entirely applies also to a Zoom meeting:

- The Door Before with us stepping into the eternal Stream throughout the week;
- The Door Inward as we settle into worship;
- The Door Within where *'the holy place is not the meeting room, it is the convergence of willing souls with the Stream which can occur anywhere, anytime'* and;
- The Door Beyond as we move from the depths into worship in our daily lives.

It seems to me that the divine spirit is not limited by our technology, but maybe we need to learn how to reach it. I've tried unsuccessfully to track the quote down, but the advice on meeting for worship to *'Feel the power of God in one another, drawing you together as he draws you to himself'* is a reminder that our task is to draw near to God, and when we are there, we meet our beloved community there, too. (I suspect this quote has been dropped because of the gendered language).

In practical terms, there are benefits. Unless in a small meeting, you cannot see everyone else. But here, on the screen, in the heart of our homes, are the faces of the worshipping community. And settling in can include prayer for each person by name, reaching out intentionally to them. Also, gazing on Friends' faces in a still meeting can lead to prompts to act – to phone, to send a card.

If your sight is poor, or you struggle sometimes to hear clearly, in Speaker View you can see the faces and the movement of the lips clearly and can catch the words of ministry. Maybe we have a new phrase, Friends – from *'our Friend is not heard'* to *'Our Friend is muted'*!

What does looking on a screen encourage? Do we gaze at the camera to connect with others? Or do we end up looking at ourselves? Early Friends remind us to lay aside the self. Or can we see our Friends and think, these are Children of the Light, God's beloved children; and can we see ourselves as others do, and say 'I, too, am God's beloved daughter?' Or do we shut our eyes to distract us from the external world?

Sometimes the journey to the meeting house can be a time of transition, marking the move to an expectation of shared worship. Perhaps at home it can be the same, if we are intentional about it. It doesn't matter where we are, domestic and family duties can rush us into the meeting.

At home there might be distractions – the dog barking at the binmen; the cat walking in front of the camera; the washing machine making a funny noise - but bringing the worshipping community into the heart of the home has a value.

Zoom meetings are both exclusive and inclusive. They exclude those without the technology and those not comfortable with it; but they include remote Friends, those with physical or mental illnesses or disabilities, those with child or adult care responsibilities. And they give us the facility to reach out to the community of Friends around the world, from different traditions. The blended model could have great benefits.

Yearly Meeting was set up *'to see one another's faces, and open our hearts one to another in the Truth of God.'* In this time of physical isolation, we can, at least, see one another's faces on Zoom.

Meetings now open to meet 'face to face':

Ayrshire, Castle Douglas, Glasgow, Islay and Milngavie.

Contact the clerk for more details.

NEWS from Europe

Can you lend a helping hand?

The British charity *Friends House Moscow* is looking for an honorary Company Secretary to help oversee our finances and admin, in collaboration with the Chair of Trustees and the Treasurer.

We need someone with a little spare time who is comfortable with spreadsheets, and would be interested to delve into the workings of an international charity operating in multiple currencies. Duties are negotiable, with no fixed time commitment. Ability to speak Russian is not required!

Interested? Please email marym@friendshousemoscow.org for details.

How Quakers Saved Russia...

is the title of a new book by Sergei Nikitin (a former director of Amnesty Russia, and a longtime associate of FHM). It is about the famine relief operation by Quakers in southern Russia in the early 1920s, and is the product of many years' research.

The book has been published by a prestigious publishing house, (New Literary Review), in “What is This Thing Called Russia,” their series that reconsiders issues in Russian history. You can buy the book through this link:

https://www.nlobooks.ru/books/chtotakoe_rossiya/22481/

The book is currently only available in Russian, but an English translation is being worked on. For more information and a book review, see:

<https://friendshousemoscow.org/how-quakers-saved-russia/>

Racism - an urgent concern for peace churches

Church and Peace is a European ecumenical peace church network of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies.

On 1 September the Britain and Ireland region of Church and Peace hosted an online event to discuss the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and why racism must become a priority for peace churches and peace groups.

Our Friend Natasha Zhuravenkova was one of the speakers. Others taking part were from the UK (Anglican and Quaker), Germany (Quaker), Belgium (Roman Catholic) and Switzerland (Mennonite).

You can read a report of the meeting, including Natasha's talk, at the Church and Peace website

COVID update

The projects we support are still operating successfully under the new pandemic conditions. We'll give an update report in our winter newsletter. A roundup of what was happening in the spring can be found [here](#).

Contact us Email: info@friendshousemoscow.org

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And of world import:

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - which, as a UN treaty, would then come into force 90 days later. There are three more countries that still need to ratify. As members of the ICAN UK network, we've been part of a discussion to share ideas about how to mark this event. I shall try to get something on our website and in social media as soon as I can as and when it happens. Other groups are working with local, national, organisational and other media to get things ready to be published. Vigils and actions online and in person may be happening around the place - one group will be having placards listing the 50 countries that have ratified, for instance. Some church bells may be rung. How about pumpkins or other window displays with the anti-nuclear CND symbol? What might you do to help mark and raise awareness of this event?

Vigil at Faslane will take place on 7th November
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Quakers deep in thought

Where does the Spirit come in to it?

A friend of mine bought a flat in the West End of Glasgow, and was delighted to be living in the area. There was a problem however, because the main sitting room had a rather ornate fireplace that had been covered over with a very dull and uninteresting shade of brown paint. My friend decided that the fireplace had to go, but out of sheer curiosity, he first of all decided to ‘investigate’ the paintwork by stripping off a small section to see what lay underneath.

To his delight he found that the fireplace he had thought of dismantling, was in fact made of very beautiful and ornate natural marble. Clearly the painter had decided that the material from which the fireplace was built was not to his/her taste and had thereby decided to ‘alter’ the appearance of the already beautiful structure.

It is my belief that what we refer to as ‘Christianity’ has suffered the same fate, and that the original message has been altered almost beyond recognition. So too, I believe, has ‘Quakerism’ and I’m never quite sure what sort of Quaker I’m speaking to. I have met atheists, humanists, non-theist and ‘double-barrelled’ Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Muslim Quakers. Clearly some of them “talk to God” and others don’t. Atheists certainly don’t talk to God.

The Christo-centric Quakers and the Muslim Quakers especially have a problem because it appears that they both have come to terms with the Archangel Gabriel who seems to have delivered one message to Mary and a completely different message to Mohammed. In fact this ‘confusion’ gave rise to the Crusades in which ‘the faithful’ slaughtered one-another wholesale!

Sadly ‘the faithful’ are still at it 2000 years later. “What was Gabriel thinking?” I ask myself.

Having been born and raised in Scotland, I have been exposed to Religious intolerance all my life, and I’ve heard some of the most ridiculous things said by people who ‘speak to God’ on a regular basis. There are too many instances of this to record here, but let me give you just one example told to me by a minister of the Kirk whom I’ve known from boyhood.

During a conversation in which this man (he ‘speaks in tongues’ incidentally, and also claims an intimate relationship with the Creator of the Cosmos) I asked him, “What happened to the estimated seven billion human beings who lived and died before Yeshua was born, John?” His reply was both instant and full of certainty; it also rather surprised me. Without hesitation he said, “When Jesus was in the tomb, he went to Hell and preached to ‘them’, thereby giving ‘them’ a final opportunity to be saved!”

Now this man was well educated and was a fully ordained minister of the Church of Scotland who clearly believed that Yeshua (Jesus was a Jew, he was not a Christian) preached to more people on the weekend in which he was crucified than during the

thirty-odd years that he was alive. I am no mathematician but that seems to me to be quite improbable, and rather badly organised.

So where does the Spirit enter into things ? because clearly this is an issue which causes much concern amongst members of The Religious Society of Friends who obviously are not all singing from the same hymn-sheet. What indeed is a 'Contemporary Quaker' ? I ask myself.

A Quaker, as I see things, is a fallible human being who recognises that 'none of us has a monopoly of truth' and therefore is not dogmatic about his or her opinions. Some 'talk to God' and others don't. What then can be the explanation? where does the Spirit come in to it?

I think perhaps my 'fireplace' story might offer an explanation of sorts.

Something very beautiful ie., the gospel of peace, truth, tolerance, and love, has been 'painted over' by fallible human beings who have simply failed to understand it. This 'failure' has led to burnings, beheadings, slaughterings, and general mayhem, each side claiming that "God told me to destroy you, because you are damned sinner and are bound for Hell!"

"Live by the sword and you will perish by the sword." has thus been completely ignored and we have instead chosen violence as The Way. We now have enough W.M.D. to destroy the planet (our home) entirely. "Rumours of War" has now become the everyday reality we live with.

When Thomas 'doubted' he was simply asked to examine the evidence, and not for a single moment did the Christ-figure ever suggest that Thomas be 'burned at the stake', but that is precisely what has happened. We have been torturing people to death in the name of the Prophet who was himself tortured to death ! What on Earth is wrong with us? Is there something in our drinking water? I sometimes ask myself these questions

We have, from my perspective, taken a can of brown paint, and covered over the fireplace, We have taken something beautiful and turned it into something very ugly indeed. We have smothered the Spirit and replaced it with stone buildings, rituals, and false prophets. Fox recognised this fact four-hundred years ago and turned his attention to Truth, Justice, and Peace.

We 'listen' to the Spirit in Silence and we respond to the promptings of Love in our hearts, If we do otherwise, we are mistaken, and we become 'painters of fireplaces' instead.

Bill Bingham - Glasgow

When you come to the edge of all you know you must believe one of two things; either there will be ground to stand on, or you will be given wings to fly. *Barbara Potter*

Careful Discernment or Spiritual Timidity? By Kat Griffith

Taken from the Friends journal

For me, one of the most powerful, unspoken Quaker creeds is this: Spirit moves very slowly. What is my evidence for this belief? It is that when we say we are being Spirit-led, we move v-e-r-y sl-o-o-w-l-y! I have been pondering some questions about this: Why do we think a hallmark of obedience to the Spirit is a slow, deliberate pace? Why are we so sure that the Spirit is present mainly in silence and coolness and slowness?

Perhaps the impatient voices among us are Spirit-led. For that matter, how do we know that God herself is not impatiently rolling her eyes when she hears another call to “season” something until next month’s or next year’s meeting? Friends elsewhere recognize passion and heat and boldness as signs of the Spirit active in their midst, yet unprogrammed American Friends see these as qualities likely to lead us astray.

Our decision-making apparatus is very focused on not making mistakes. In other parts of our lives, we acknowledge that making mistakes is a great source of learning, a sign of boldness, and the inevitable price for thinking outside the box. Yet in our meetings, we use Quaker process as a kind of sea anchor. We seem to believe that a single sin of commission—doing something wrong—is worse than centuries of sins of omission—doing too little or nothing at all.

Why do we seem to assume that the frequently heard statement “I do not feel led” is a sign of responsible, careful discernment, as opposed to a sign of unwillingness to listen?

Why do we seem to assume that the frequently heard statement “I do not feel led” is a sign of responsible, careful discernment, as opposed to a sign of unwillingness to listen?

I’ve recently been reading the 2017 book *The Fearless Benjamin Lay* by Marcus Rediker. Lay was an eighteenth-century Quaker abolitionist who was mostly rejected by Friends during his lifetime. Rediker’s account gave me a renewed understanding of the context in which our corporate discernment practices were developed. They were put in place at a time of intense religious ferment, political dissent, and harsh response to dissenters of all kinds. This was a time when people, including some Friends, arguably went off the rails with some regularity. They did things like go naked in public as a sign of spiritual innocence.

In October 1656, English Quaker leader James Nayler rode a horse into Bristol in a reenactment of Jesus’s Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem. Some of his followers sang hosannas to him, for which he was pilloried, imprisoned, and branded as a blasphemer. Pretty intense stuff.

George Fox was apparently horrified by both the untrammelled “my conscience is the highest guide” behavior of some of his peers and the resulting harsh, bloody persecution of Friends. Individual inspired witness began to be reined in by collective efforts at control and guidance, and the fledgling Quaker movement began to institutionalize itself.

I firmly believe in the same things that Fox did: that the Spirit can and does speak powerfully and authoritatively to individuals, that individuals can be deluded, and that checks on individual discernment are a good thing. Much of what we call Quaker process grows out of the tension among these paradoxical truths.

But I wonder, could it be that our mechanisms of discernment are acting as overly powerful brakes on Spirit-led impulses? Could it be (as one Friend put it) that we are deifying Quaker process: elevating the architecture of decision making over the call of Spirit to help heal this beautiful, bleeding world?

Quaker process is not sacred, though at its best, it can bring us closer to what is. While it has been honed over centuries and has much wisdom and experience embedded in it, it is still a human construction. If we created it, we can evaluate it. If we built it, we can modify it. Should we?

If we want to see how our decision-making apparatus is serving us, we can observe the evidence. Are our meetings growing and thriving? Some are, but overall our meetings are declining, especially from losing and failing to attract young adults. It is not enough to say that most churches are declining and that it's inevitable. Some churches are growing. (One where I live went from around 20 to around 800 members over a period of 18 years.) Friend Kenneth Boulding's First Law comes to mind: Whatever exists is possible! We too could be growing!

Is our witness in the world prophetic and transformational? We have some things to be proud of, but overall we are a small and not especially cutting-edge presence on the national stage. I periodically read my mother-in-law's Living Lutheran magazines, and as far as I can tell, we Friends have nothing on the Lutherans. (You should see the ambitious social justice agenda the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA] committed to at their last annual gathering!)

I notice that many entire mainline denominations have denounced the Doctrine of Discovery (the papal instruction to claim Indigenous lands for the church and the crown) while just a few yearly meetings have: not Friends General Conference (FGC), Friends United Meeting (FUM), nor Evangelical Friends Church International (EFCI). I notice that even organizations as famously deliberative as the League of Women Voters were quicker than our yearly meetings to come out with strongly worded statements about George Floyd's death and its meaning for us. Not that proclamations and denunciations themselves change the world, but if we can't even get ourselves to agree to say something, what does that say about our ability to do anything?

My yearly meeting recently made the decision to become an actively antiracist faith community. This is good news. And I am happy that we made the decision the day before George Floyd's murder. But it's not lost on me that prior to that, I was co-clerking a faith community that had not yet seen its way clear to being actively antiracist. As was the case with FGC a few years ago, every time the subject came up, there were people who felt we needed to do more discernment before making such a commitment.

Really, Friends? Is it even remotely conceivable that God does not want us to heal the cancer of racism in our midst? It is even remotely plausible that God does not want us to build the Blessed Community? Is it even remotely possible that God does not want us to examine ourselves and our institutions in the light of divine love, and be remade?

Yes, there are decisions that require deep discernment and which may well take time. There are decisions in my life where discernment has taken place over years, a slow and meandering path generating data and insight along the way, with dead-ends and rabbit paths explored, rejected, and learned from. And there are decisions that we may make quickly but, to carry out rightly, require us to obtain all kinds of new skills, new knowledge, and reshaped hearts. I'd put racial justice work in this category. But whether we should do this work—how hard can that decision possibly be?!

Reading about Benjamin Lay is a good reminder of the ways our careful, earnest, and yes, sometimes timid processes of discernment can be hijacked to block progress toward the Peaceable Kingdom, to drown out the voice of the Spirit among us. The machinery that early Friends put in place in response to a genuine problem also ended up being the means by which prophetic voices were silenced. It was the means by which people we now recognize as having been right were written out of meetings.

Have you ever witnessed the deflation of someone who suggested a good—or at least harmless—idea that got asphyxiated under the weight of Quaker process? Have you witnessed teens and young adults walking away in frustration—often forever—at the reception to their ideas? We don't need to write them out; they leave.

Before bringing the whole weight of the Quaker collective decision-making process to bear on a tender new shoot of an idea, could we ask whether the possible costs of a failure or a mid-course adjustment are high enough to warrant such an effort?

I think there are lots of reasons, some of them good, why many of us are involved more heavily in non-Quaker than Quaker initiatives. But is one of the reasons that the non-Quaker ones are more nimble, more dynamic, and don't throw up so many procedural obstacles? Are they simply more likely to embrace our ideas and let us get on with the work? Friend Emily Provance talks about the importance of fostering a "permission-giving culture." I sure like the sound of that! What might it look like at our meetings?

Before bringing the whole weight of the Quaker collective decision-making process to bear on a tender new shoot of an idea, could we ask whether the possible costs of a failure or a mid-course adjustment are high enough to warrant such an effort? Before demanding a long process of discernment, or running a modest idea through a gauntlet of committees and checkpoints, could we just say, "Yes! Give it a try! What do you need to bring that idea to life in our meeting?" Could we do as Henry Cadbury suggested: stop consulting the seed catalog; get on with planting our garden; and see what comes up? If it is weeds, we will know it. We can then take action as needed.

If we could create the permission-giving culture Emily Provance talks about, might we find more energy in our sessions? Might we find more of our activist efforts happening under the Quaker banner? Might we find more of our non-Quaker colleagues getting

interested in what this whole Society of Friends thing is about? Might we find more people checking us out because we and our meetings and institutions are vital and passionate and often to be found at the cutting edge of Spirit-led social change?

Modern Slavery in Glasgow, today.

Rev. Elizabeth MacKay

People trafficking/slavery. Perhaps those are terms which we read about, but do you really think about it?

Does it happen in your area, your city?

Sadly, people trafficking goes on in our towns and cities in the UK. As a United Free Church of Scotland minister, I am based in a very multi-cultural area of Glasgow and many people of ALL ages, residing in the area, are victims of trafficking.

At the worst end there are the people lured into the country, from poorer areas of the world, many of whom are illiterate, they are brought in on the promise of a “good life” but when they arrive, they discover their flats and accommodation which is provided comes with “conditions”.

Some people are set to work in the food industry, long hours, and for their “wages” they have “accommodation provided” at best a small flat for the family, at worst, dormitory, hot bedding accommodation. Others “work” as beggars, given a regular pitch and a shift rota, some are allowed to keep part of their takings, but the profits go to “Fagan” masters. Many others work in nail bars, do you ever chat to the girl who does your nails in the shopping centre? Many young men work in hairdressing, etc. In some areas they provide “cheap” baby minding services.

At the worst end is the people, notice “People”, involved in the sex trade of which there are many layers, almost a “class system” and it is not only females, men and children are also involved. Nowadays the use of technology means much of the trade goes on quietly, but perhaps that is more dangerous for the “victims” and it reaches a wider market. (If one books an appointment by technology there is less chance of one’s neighbours seeing them and cars allow one to travel to the “appointment” in a very different area as to where one lives.

In the area where I am based, it is almost impossible for a lone woman, to hail a Glasgow Black Cab and many older, experienced drivers can tell you of arriving at a destination, only to be offered the services of a young person/child, to pay the fare.

However, I must praise Glasgow Police, who if anyone has concerns about a situation, and alerts them, they will quickly and quietly move in to investigate the situation and they will follow through with their investigations, to find other houses, flats etc. that are involved.

In Glasgow the police will act but they need information, and that comes from people, like you, being alert, noticing what is happening in the area, talking/chatting with people, building up a “known face” relationship with people and being aware, asking questions. Not being a nosey neighbour but a listening available ear. Listen, THINK - What would Jesus do?

As Christians we should remember God gave us wonderful gifts, eyes to see, ears to hear, feet to move, and minds to think, assimilate/question/ and reason/ It is an insult

to God not to use his gifts. But, his most important valuable gift he gave us is the gift of prayer, please pray for those involved, the victims and perhaps the enforcers of the “trade” as there are often far more profound reasons why they are involved. This is a HUGE evil international business.

And do ask questions, you are God’s eyes and ears.

Seminar dates for your diary

Concern for compassionate assistance to die Saturday 7th November 4 – 5pm

Luton & Leighton area meeting invites you to their meeting for learning webinar

Luton and Leighton [L&L] Area Meeting has, for several years, been considering a concern for compassionate assistance to die. Last year, 3 AMs sent separate minutes to Meeting for Sufferings on this issue. As a result, MfS asked for more information, and also asked all AMs to consider this further and let MfS have their views.

With this in mind, L&L AM has arranged a webinar meeting for learning on this issue with Dr Stefanie Green. Dr Green is a Canadian doctor, a practising GP and also a provider of Medical Assistance in Dying [MAiD]. Our hope is that Dr Green’s outline of MAiD and our discussion, focussed on the approach doctors may take with patients when considering an assisted death, will deepen our understanding and so help in our discernment of a Quaker view on the issue of legally assisted death.

L&L AM wishes to invite meetings across BYM to join this webinar. Registration is now open and the links to book a place and/or submit a question, are below.

Here is the link to book your place: <https://tinyurl.com/register4web> The webinar will be recorded, so it may be made available across BYM, and YouTube

Questions for the webinar to be submitted by Saturday 24 October to: qcadwebinar@gmail.com We anticipate receiving many questions. The questions to be posed will be decided by a panel. . Only the panellists will be visible on screen.

General Meeting for Scotland

INTRODUCTION TO QUAKER TRUSTEESHIP Saturday 7th November

Why do we need trustees? What do they do? Are they masters or servants of the Area Meeting?

You don't need to be an expert to be a Trustee - we look at the training and support available and how your skills can be used within the Trustee team.

The responsibilities and rewards of being a trustee. To what extent do trustees carry personal liability? What other questions do you have?

This session is intended for new trustees and those who might consider becoming a trustee if they knew more of what was involved. More experienced trustees are also welcome to join in.

Speakers: John Phillips, Gill Reid and Kate Gulliver

Advance registration required - go to www.bit.ly/trustee_intro

Grannie

W.J.B.

Ah had a little Grannie, she wore a black straw hat,
Aroon' the edge, red cherries, whit dae ye think o' that?
She lived her life in Glesga', in a euphemistic flat,
She didnae know that she deserved, a better hoose than that.

We ca'd them 'room an' kitchens', the stairs were far worn doon,
Yet never did I see mah grannie, offer me a froon.
She loved me like a treasure, an' showed it in her smile,
An' I too young to know much, responded for a while.

An' then her life was o'er, that struck me sad an' numb
Wait a meenit grannie, ah need tae blether some.
How did ye walk sae cheery? yer life was fu' o' woe,
Two husbands ye ha'e buried, far away, an' long ago.

Baith o' them were so'jers, loyal tae the cause,
They lived in a haze o' whiskey, that wis the w'y it was.
It took away the pain they felt, unable tae provide,
A' the wee bit pleasures, deservin' o' a bride.

Bit they hid will tae live their lives, wi' honour an' virtue,
The country geid them uniforms, resplendent in their hue.
So noo at last, they felt like men, an' walked wi' heids held high,
They even hid a war tae fight, wi' sojers o' the Kia!

You watched them walk away fae you, wi' bairnies at yer knee,
An' wan o' them, in later life, gied the gift tae me.
Where ur ye noo dear Grannie? livin' wi' yer God?
Ye worshipped Him thr'oot yer life, that wis the path ye trod.

Wis that the thing that saw ye through? That made ye whit ye were?
Wis this yer secret formula, thit people find sae rare?
Ah'd love tae meet ye wance again, an' tell ye hoo ah feel,
Hoo much ah miss ye Grannie; yer lovin' long-lost chiel.



All grannies and all busy on Area Meeting

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Brooke The Lilac Tree And Me

Here we are
Outside the vets hospital
My Brooke , the lilac tree and me
Watching out stretched loving arms
Reaching to fuzzy faces
In a happiness of waggly tails
The sweet aroma of the lilac tree lingers within the embrace to dissolve a fake world
In one pure breath of love
Two legs
Four legs
One spirit
A place of heart in tummy rubs
Brooke and I have had these
Precious moments
My teacher of laughter and goodness
Skate boards and bringing shoes
Slicky slides and endless walks
Hi fives and playing ball
What's your favourite trick Brookie
Run to the foot stool
With paws placed in prayer
And head bowed
So quickly we are victims of tick tocks
This limited world has engrained in us its many endings and obsolescences
It has doled out to you all you're allowed
Thirteen years
So give it the gift it deserves An old worn out body
It is a master of such decay
Leave with me the essence of your love
To cuddle with my love for you
Do you favourite trick Brooke
Pray that I see beyond my eyes
Like you and the lilac tree
Pray that we see the truth within our being
Like you and the lilac tree
I will hold you in my arms as the beautiful stillness of the sunset caresses you
In my mind I will hear the hopeful
melancholy song of the whip -poor -will as it sings into the dusk before dark
We will find that forever heart place
Then we will run with happy waggly tails through a universe of lilacs
To the out stretched loving arms of God
Bj McComis

Book Reviews

The Health Gap – the challenge of an unequal world Michael Marmot

2015, Bloomsbury. [ISBN 9781408857991](#).

Barbara Potter

This book is not always an easy read, it has statistics and graphs, and for me it took the extra time granted by the pandemic to really engage with it. It is absolutely the book to read to understand how our health is affected by so much more than availability of medicine – what Marmot calls the social determinants of health.

As well as looking at the roots of the inequalities in health, Marmot proposes ways to address these health inequalities. In his role working for the World Health Organisation he engaged with countries around the world to improve these social determinants of health – education, housing, nourishing food, environment etc. Each country has developed their own way to implement the findings of his reports, for us in Scotland I think that the NHS Scotland Place Standard has been developed as our response.

This insight into the effects of disease at a population level was fascinating to read while the pandemic has been happening around us.

Riders on the Storm *the Climate Crisis and the Survival of Being*, 2020.

Birlinn **Alastair McIntosh**

Margaret Roy

‘Climate change is simply where we are at. It is where the evolution of conscious life on earth has brought us to’. Yet, we still have choices individually and collectively. We are advised that the first 4 chapters are an update of the science with a consideration of the economics and politics involved. That we could miss out these chapters! That would be a mistake because Alastair McIntosh writes an insightful introduction that is very readable and full of personal anecdotes.

However, the importance of this work (his best yet) is what he calls *‘the deeper question of being itself: a wake-up call, as it were, that quickens to the nature and survival of our deepest humanity’*. His skill with words enables us to identify with the inner change needed to survive the pandemic, to really change our world if we choose.

His human approach is through dialogue with visitors from New Guinea that have come to Lewis to study landform and community empowerment. He is able to take a spiritual approach to his activism like a modern John Woolman. Like Woolman he is a pain to modern Quakers, stirring our conscience and our

complacency, but not negatively or with blame, rather with story and potential. Talking of Eigg with his group, he says they looked *through a lens of drivers of consumerism . . . But the more that we dug into the wider issues of the world, the more we connected the local to the global and saw the patterns of a common human cause.* To build community demands a common demanding task, said George MacLeod. Eating together on the beach, collecting their food as mussels from the sea and building a fire in the ruins of the past village, they could share views of past disaster and current opportunities. He says, *A people without a history struggle to know themselves. A person who struggles to know himself will feel insecure in their sense of agency in life. Rootlessness left unresolved can lead to inner disconnects between people and place. . . The search for 'roots', the intense yearning to belong, raises questions as to what became of lost connections to identity. It raises questions of both personal and cultural psychotherapy.* One study is of Donald Trump. But he could be speaking of many in our modern society.

So how do you define the resulting illness collectively? *The cut-off point when healthy consumption tips over into consumerism is when we start to grasp at things with such addictive avidity that we no longer care about the social and environmental relationships embedded in them. That is when economic exchanges turn from blessing to pornography. . . . If unrestricted by an ethos of and a requirement for service and accountability to society, such capitalism is no more than the substitution of money for the flows of grace as providence. This usurpation of the holy accounts for its vulgarity. Therein lies its vice-like grip – vice in the moral sense – on many if not most of us.* From needs to wants. How can our society pull it back? Something is missing that links the individual and the collective.

He goes on to talk about the *survival of being* as a balance encouraging *faith groups and all who live and work with soul . . . that have such important parts to play in opening up the avenues of inner life that flow through into outer life.*

And so, *What can we do when we wake up and realize that we have got to do something? One answer is to feed the hungry. Refute the graceless spirit of mere utility . Restore the broken cycles of grace, put right the devastation of the past, and celebrate resurgence of the flows of gratitude, of blessedness, or what gives life.*

The book is an inspiring and practical approach that brings Quakerism into a modern era.

Some of us want to explore this further as a spirituality more closely connected to the earth. Contact Ed Tyler or Margaret Roy.

Do we have leisure time?

Listen on Radio 3 catch up.

Music Feature

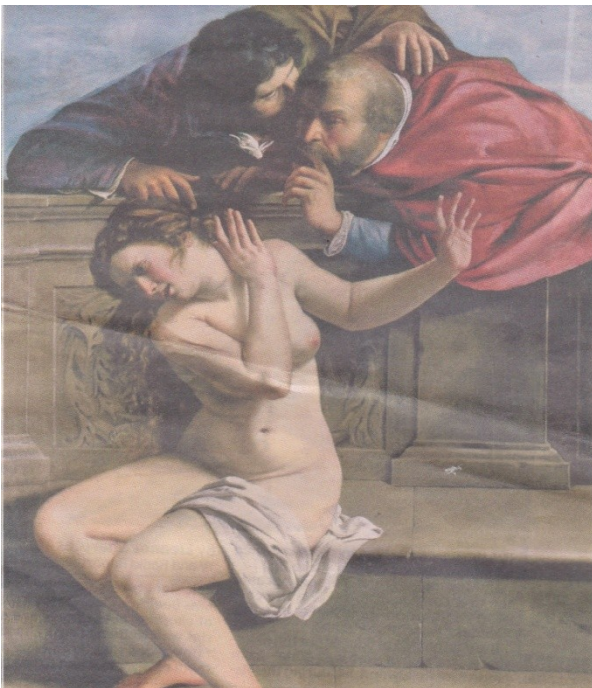
Our Lady of Paris

Listen now



Simon Russell Beale marks Notre Dame's 850th anniversary, exploring French sacred music.

Artemisia Gentileschi at the National Gallery in London
(or The book by Jonathan Jones by Lawrence King Publishers)



Described by some as one of the greatest painters of the Renaissance she told her story of her rape and torture in her 'grisly, bloody masterpieces'. Then came to London in 1638 at the invitation of Charles I where she painted a self portrait amongst others. Below, Susannah and the Elders, from the Book of Daniel, 1610.

Autumn is not just about fruit. How about fungus and misses with leaves are gone?



**From Dawyck Botanic
Gardens.**

Meetings for Worship in West Scotland Area Meeting

Meeting	Day	Time	Type	Contact
Argyll	1 st Sunday	13.30-14.00	Zoom	Ed Tyler edtyler@bioengineering.com
Arran	2 nd Sunday	10.30-11.00	Zoom	Helen MacLean hmac9203@gmail.com
Ayrshire	Sunday	10.30-11.30	Blended	Alastair Reid alastairh Reid@gmail.com Stair Community Centre KA5 5HT
Castle Douglas	Sunday	10.30-11.30	Physical	Bowlers Hall, Castle Douglas
	Wednesday	16.30-16.40	Zoom	Clare Phillips clarephillips100410@gmail.com
Dumfries	TBC			
Dunblane	Sunday	11.00-12.00	Zoom	Elaine Millar millarclan@btinternet.com
Glasgow	Sunday	11.00-12.00	Blended	charl morayplace@outlook.com lm@aquarius1000.plus.com
	Wednesday	12.30-13.00	Zoom	doreen.osborne@outlook.com katephilbrick@uwclub.net
Lanark	Sunday	10.30-11.00	Zoom	Malcolm Crosby crosbyfamily1988@btinternet.com
Isle & Jura	2 nd Monday	11.30-12.00	Zoom	Bronwen Currie
	4 th Sunday	13.30-		bron.currie@gmail.com
Milngavie	2 nd & last Sunday	11.00- ?	Zoom	Bob Mandeville milngaviequakers@gmail.com
Mull & Iona	Sunday	11.15-11.45	Zoom	Rob Claxton-Ingham claxtoninghamrob@gmail.com
	Alternate Wednesdays	11.30 - ?	Physical	Leob Croft, Bunessan
Wigton				Tony Ellis a.c.ellis2@protonmail.com
Area Meeting	Sunday	19.30-20.00	Zoom	Kate Gulliver kathryn.gulliver@phonecoop.coop

Please contact the clerk for IDs and passwords for Zoom.

Swarthmoor Hall Spiritual Support Group

Extended Meeting for Worship – Last Thursday of each month

The Swarthmoor Hall Spiritual Support Group invites you to the last Thursday in the month Zoom meeting for worship, at 11.00am to 12 noon.

Please email info@swarthmoorhall.co.uk for the link or phone numbers.

We welcome anyone wishing to join by phone

Zoom room will be open from 10.45 and the meeting for worship will commence when the first Friend connects. Please be ready to settle into worship when you join.

☀ **Hold in the Light** So many these days that call on our healing ministry. Here are a few:

Barbara Potter on the death of Maxwell Graham.

Helen Sutherland waiting for an important operation.

Anne MacArthur and her sister Ruth Goodheir.

Derek Read.

Bob Williamson.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

31st October GENERAL MEETING by Zoom

15th November Britain Yearly Meeting

9 – 19th November COP26 Glasgow POSTPONED

7th December Area Meeting by telephone/Zoom

16th January 2021 Area Meeting Glasgow

6th March 2021 GENERAL MEETING

Yearly Meeting 2020 is taking place by Zoom on 15th November. There will be capacity for up to 1000 Friends. If you would like to attend, advance registration is required. It opens on Thursday 29th October at 12 noon and closes on 10th November at midnight. Further information can be found at <https://quaker.org.uk/ym/register-book> . Only one registration per computer/device is required, however many people may be viewing through that device.

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

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The deadline for contributions or the next issue of WSQN is 15th December. Copy should be send in Word format only to the editors Alastair McIver or Margaret Roy