



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

11 March 2017
Edinburgh

Min. 1 Worship

We began with worship.

We are glad that we have Elders present who are willing to uphold our Meeting for Worship.

Min. 2 Welcome to all present

We are glad to welcome everybody, including 5 attenders, to GM in Edinburgh.

We welcome Rev John Bremner from the United Reformed Church, he is the convenor of the URC National Synod Ecumenical and World Church Committee. We welcome Gretchen Castle of Friends World Committee for consultation and we welcome Beryl Milner and Douglas Rennie who are here to give their report on the Scottish Advocacy Project which we will consider this afternoon.

We will record the total numbers of all present and add them to these minutes.

East Scotland	13
South East Scotland	25
North Scotland	8
West Scotland	21
Total:	67

Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint Robin Waterston and Joyce Taylor from East Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask Scotland South East AM to report on GM in Glasgow in June.

Min. 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members and transfers-in since our last meeting from Area meeting minutes:

Deirdre Armstrong (SE)

Martin McCaffery, Renagh Christopher (E)

We record the following deaths from Area Meeting minutes:

Deborah Henry (02/12/16), Friedgard Adams (21/12/16), Eric Caulton (25/12/16) (SE)

Min. 5 Dates and Venues for 2017-18

We suggest the following GM dates and venues for 2018-19:

Possible dates for GM 2018/19

10 th 2018 March	South East (already agreed)
9 th 2018 June	North
15 th 2018 September	West
17 th 2018 November	East
9 th 2019 March	West

We ask that the Area Meetings concerned confirm the acceptability of these dates and

inform our clerk of the venue and the contact details of the person nominated to oversee the local arrangements.

Min. 6 Morning Session led by Gretchen Castle

Today we have welcomed Gretchen Castle, General Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), who has led us into deep reflection on the nature of God and how Friends around the world share their spiritual insights, or whatever words we use to describe what is essentially indescribable.

We have asked ourselves lots of questions. Are we comfortable with talking about deep things? What stops our doing this? Are we afraid of intruding? Or do we seize the opportunity to talk of things spiritual with any we meet - Quakers or not? We use a range of words - God, Spirit, inward leader, ground of being - or none of these. Within the world family of Friends, there is a huge variety of ways we practise our Quakerism. FWCC sometimes struggles to find bridges between the various traditions. Yet there are joys in sharing. What drives us? We acknowledge that we each must share a tiny bit of our experience of the divine, and ask for blessing and love as we go out into the world.

We thank Gretchen for her wonderful, warm and encouraging talk. We have not found answers but we have found depth by sharing. We ask our Clerk to circulate to Friends the questions Gretchen asked us today.

Min. 7 Opening worship, afternoon session

During Meeting for Worship we heard read the Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Christine Davis. We ask our clerk to endorse this testimony and forward it to Yearly Meeting.

Min. 8 GM in session

Our clerk has introduced newcomers to the right holding of a Quaker business meeting.

Min. 9 Annual Report and Accounts

On behalf of GM Trustees, Nigel Dower, our incoming treasurer, has introduced the GM Annual Report and Accounts. We accept the Report & Accounts for 2016 and authorise our clerk to sign the Report on our behalf.

Min. 10 Review of the Scottish Advocacy Project

Beryl Milner and Douglas Rennie, the two Friends appointed to carry out this review on behalf of GM and Britain Yearly Meeting, have spoken to the papers attached to the agenda. Beryl pinpoints the sense that Mairi feels very supported by staff in London and the PLFG, as being one of the key messages she carries from the process of the review. She also notes that the ongoing goodwill between BYM and GM to make the relationship work is palpable. She is struck by the commitment, from all parties, to keep all communication working. Finally, Beryl is impressed by the extent to which the work done in Scotland has raised awareness of Scottish issues across our Yearly Meeting and in British politics.

Douglas asks “Are we just another lobby group?” In some ways we are but we are also trying to influence by giving our views. It’s unusual for a faith group to have a particular voice like this. Our actions strengthen our worship and can deepen it.

We need BYM to recognise its responsibility and to take on board that this work is not an off-shoot, but core Quaker work happening in Scotland and in Britain. GM trustees along with AM trustees feel at present that it is not possible or practical to increase our future contributions. We can no longer draw on our financial reserves. However, we see it as important to have a stake in the work by making some financial contribution.

We have considered if we are still spiritually led to support this project. It is clear from ministry today that

we recognise that this is core Quaker work. We are greatly thankful for, and encouraged by, what has been achieved so far. This work has to continue.

We are glad to receive these reports and minutes and thank Beryl and Douglas for their work.

We ask that this minute is forwarded to Ingrid Greenhow clerk of BYM Trustees.

Min. 11 Parliamentary Liaison Function Group Report

Joyce Taylor has given us an update on recent progress. Of the four priorities being worked on, the focus for now, is our continued work on militarism in schools and economic justice. There is positive and exciting news on the movement of the petition through the Scottish Parliament. We are also glad of the progress of our minute sent to Meeting for Sufferings regarding cadet forces in state schools. It has been passed to QPSW. Please read Joyce's report for detail. It is attached to these minutes.

To follow up last years successful symposium the group plan to hold a working seminar towards the end of April, with an invited group, to thresh how to take this work forward particularly looking at some ideas raised by Richard Murphy, Quaker and tax specialist, round Corporate Tax.

One of the additional aspects of our advocacy work is letting Quakers know what is coming up around Quaker concerns in Westminster and Holyrood. Where PLFG and Mairi feel individual contact with local MPs and MSPs could be effective, they will alert us via the GMS emailing list.

It is important to the PLFG and to Mairi that communication to Quakers across Scotland works. We have a representative from each AM on the PLFG who should update your AM. Mairi keeps Facebook, Twitter and our website up to date. The PLFG writes regular detailed reports on all aspects of this work and these are given at GM. These papers are always attached to the agenda which is circulated widely across Scotland prior to GM. It is also our responsibility to ask for information if we feel we need more.

There is a balance to be found between bombarding those who don't want it and missing those who do.

We ask our clerk to send a card to Mairi expressing our thanks for all that she does and has achieved.

Min. 12 Sufferings Report

Due to time constraints Jane Pearn has encouraged us to read her reports already published. She is keen, though, to highlight that Meeting for Sufferings would like to encourage dialogue in different parts of Britain Yearly Meeting and for General Meeting for Scotland to be more visible to Friends across Britain. It will mean a report to be presented regularly at M for S. It seems right that all the hard work we do up here will be known around the Yearly Meeting. We are invited to send our thoughts about what such a report should include to adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk before the end of April.

GM is content that GM Central Committee writes such a report, using contributions sent by Friends, and that our clerk will deliver it to Meeting for Sufferings on 3/06/17.

Min. 13 Proposed changes to GM group structure

Our clerk has alerted us to appendix 4 of the agenda, which will also be attached to these minutes. These structural changes, including amendment, will be considered at our meeting in June.

Min. 14 Conscientious Objectors' Memorial Steering Group

We appoint Andrew Farrar and Mary Alice Mansell to represent GM on the Conscientious Objectors' Memorial Steering Group. This will not incur any costs to GM. We ask them to keep us up to date with developments on this. In due course we hope to enter into a collaborative partnership agreement setting out how Quakers in Scotland assist in practical promotion of the project. We ask that this minute is forwarded to the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre.

Min. 15 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to South East Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again on 10th June in Glasgow, where we will consider our Q logo and Zemirah Moffat will lead us to consider our contemporary gender and sexual diversity concerns.

Adwoa Bittle
Clerk

Gretchen Castle's Presentation Reflecting on the Nature of God; a World View

I have edited Gretchen's presentation down to the questions we thought about. I hope Friends find this helpful and interesting to use in local meetings.

Gretchen spoke of being frustrated about times when she was without opportunities to share spiritual longings.

1. In pairs: share your experience of wanting to/being able to, share spiritually. 5 min each

Whole group: What barriers prevent us from sharing our spiritual lives with others? What did you hear in your stories?

God as "indescribable" – no name, OR many names for God. Call them out.

- a. Choose 1, choose none, choose many. Let's agree not to judge ourselves or others but to find some language for the indescribable
- b. Think in terms of spectrum: **continuing revelation to biblical literalism****
 - i. We are all on the spectrum somewhere
 - ii. Where would Geo Fox have been?
 - iii. What parts of what traditions would he relate to? Mix of all
 - iv. At either end, what think of other end of the spectrum?
 - v. Quakerism changed by culture and history. God is constant.
 - vi. How has Quakerism in Britain changed from early days?
- c. How does your experience of other ways of worship expand your understanding? How can you see our diversity as a strength?

2. Pairs, preferably with someone you know

- a. Sharing: try it out, ask for what you need, dare to trust
- b. Listener: suspend judgment, posture of openness and love, listen to understand
- c. Conversation keeping focus on person sharing
- d. 10 minutes each
- e. Questions not intended to make you feel uncomfortable, but they may. Answer as you wish, change the question if you like; this is entirely for you. Or just worship together if you like.
 - i. What is your experience of God, the indescribable?
 - ii. How would you describe your relationship or connection to God, the indescribable?
 - iii. How does your belief in something greater than yourself inform your life and choices?

3. Move right into worship sharing

- a. Not discussion, but speak more readily than in worship; don't wait for that quaking we do; willing to share a newly forming thought
- b. Reflecting on the nature of God, the indescribable

4. Intentions and hopes
 - a. How can we allay fears of being intrusive, ask a question, and give the person the gift of showing interest in his/her spiritual life?
 - b. How can we suspend judgment and be encouraging of newly forming spiritual understanding?
 - c. How can we encourage more sharing of our spiritual selves in our lives and in our meetings?
 - d. How can we be the spiritual community that helps us all seek and grow and live into God's universal love?

5. To pray is to invite change. To seek within spiritual community is a gift to each other.

Appendix 4

Children and Young People

Looking after and inspiring our children and young people

Scotland

I have been researching the structures that enable our children and young people to meet and be spiritually inspired. It seems a bit cumbersome and roles are being duplicated which is causing a nominations headache at General Meeting and Area Meeting. The people involved are carrying on regardless (thank goodness) and enabling great events to happen. I am very grateful for this and hope to make their lives simpler in terms of role descriptions and lines of communication. As I find it, we should have 4 Advocates, 1 from each AM. This currently works well and these people have a network of people that they call on to provide CYP events. **The Advocate posts are AM nominations.** This works, and people are found to fill these roles reasonably easily. These advocates are supported by an Advocate Support - this is what Madeleine Harding is doing. **This is a BYM appointment, that covers the 4 AMs in Scotland.** Madeleine has been asked if she will carry on and she has agreed. We also have a GM Children and Young People Function group. This does not currently have a clear role and finding people to serve is proving tricky. Seeing as the important work is carrying on regardless of the administrative confusion I propose that we lay down the Function group. The advocate support could have in the role description to be a link with GM. i.e. take part in Central Committee calls/meetings. Madeleine is happy to take part in these calls. In time we will find the right person to shadow Madeleine with the view to taking on this role.

Overseeing the advocates, in terms of legalities and Safeguarding are our Trustees and each local meeting has a Safeguarding person appointed.

Naming our groups

GM in session is asked if it agrees to the following changes.

To rename our groups as follows;

Nominations Function Group to be re named ***Nominations Committee***

Parliamentary Liaison Function Group to be re named ***Parliamentary Engagement Working Group***

GM Central Committee to be re named ***GM Committee*** and on it are: Clerk, Assist Clerk, Treasurer, ACTS Rep, Editor of Scottish Friend, GM Meeting for Sufferings Rep, Advocate Support, Convenor of GM Nominations Committee, Convenor of Parliamentary Engagement Working Group and GM Administrator

Children and Young People Function Group is laid down and the work will continue to be completed by our Advocates with BYM Advocate Support who will report to GM as a member of GM Committee

Agenda Function Group is laid down and this communication is part of the job description of the Assistant Clerk to GM

Report on the work of the Parliamentary Liaison Group for General Meeting for Scotland 11th March 2017

The Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack has been in post now for 2 years working 2.5 days per week. Four themes for Scottish advocacy work were discerned by GMS and the Parliamentary Liaison Group

- the Elections 2015 (Westminster) and 2016 (Holyrood),
- Trident replacement,
- Increasing militarisation activity and recruitment in schools
- Economic justice, sustainability and peace.

Of these four the elections have taken place and on Trident all the main churches in Scotland share the Quaker view so the focus for now is our continued work on militarism in schools and economic justice.

The Petition which we have raised in the Scottish Parliament in partnership with Forces Watch has now had 3 hearings and after each the Petitions Committee has called for more views from a variety of bodies. The most recent hearing was on the 2nd March at which the members of the committee acknowledged the strength of supportive views sent in by, for example, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference, Young Scots for Independence, Scientists for Global Responsibility and the Scottish Parent Teacher Council as well as individuals. The petition asks for: Transparency – for armed forces visits to schools be recorded; for parents to be informed of visits beforehand so that children can withdraw if they object and for guidance to be given around creating a balance in the classroom. At this last hearing the committee unanimously decided to call the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, for questioning and that they would hear a briefing from the MOD.

At the same time as this work a second but separate issue has arisen which is the £50million set aside by the previous Chancellor to fund cadet forces in state schools “prioritising schools in less affluent areas”. This came to our notice in Scotland and we raised it through a minute from GM to MfS. At their meeting in February MfS referred this concern to a number of Quaker bodies including QPSW

Economic Justice: many of you will know about the very successful symposium which the PLFG and Mairi Campbell- Jack hosted in Edinburgh last year which drew a large and wide range of people together to talk about “Creating a Just Scotland: transforming our land and taxation policies”. We are following this up with a working seminar towards the end of April with an invited group to thresh how we take this work forward particularly looking at some ideas raised by Richard Murphy, Quaker and tax specialist round Corporate Tax.

One of the additional aspects of our advocacy work is letting Quakers know what is coming up around Quaker concerns in Westminster and Holyrood where we feel

individual contact with local MPs and MSPs could be effective and we will do this from time to time via the GMS emailing list.

Joyce Taylor

Convenor Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

