



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

16th June 2018
Inverness

Minute 1 Worship

We began General Meeting with worship. We were encouraged by George Gorman in Qf&p 22.08 to listen to others with sensitivity. We are glad that we have Elders present who are willing to uphold our Meeting for Worship.

Minute 2 Welcome to all present

We are glad to welcome everybody, including 3 attenders and one visitor to GM in Inverness. We welcome Mary Woodward who will lead our morning session.

The total numbers of all present.

East Scotland	2
South East Scotland	5
North Scotland	29
West Scotland	7

Total: 43

Minute 3 Reporter

We appoint Kate Arnot and Jacqueline Noltingk from South East Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask North Scotland AM to report on GM in Glasgow in September.

Minute 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting from Area meeting minutes:

New Members

West - Susan Mitchell - Dunblane LM
Sarah Parnacott - Glasgow
Ruth Johnston - Dunblane LM

Wendy Reynolds- Argyll LM
Anne Macarthur- Castle Douglas LM
Ursula Edge- Milngavie LM
Kathryn Allan- Glasgow LM

North - Lynden Easterbrook - Forres LM.

South East - Annette May - South Edinburgh LM

Deaths

We record the death of Marion Fairweather from Glasgow LM on the 5th of April.

Minute 5 Dates and Venues for 2019-20

We agree the following GM dates and locations for 2019-20:

March 9th 2019 Glasgow (already agreed)
June 8th 2019 South East Scotland AM
September 14th 2019 North Scotland AM
November 16th 2019 Perth
March 7th 2020 South East Scotland AM

We ask that the Area Meetings concerned confirm the acceptability of these dates and inform our clerk of the venue (where not already done so) and the contact details of the person nominated to oversee the local arrangements.

Minute 6 Morning Session led by Mary Woodward

Mary Woodward of South East Scotland AM helped us to understand the steps that were taken at Yearly Meeting held 4th to 7th May 2018 towards the decision to revise our Book of Discipline. First Mary led us to consider privately times when we felt excluded. Initially when we were younger and then of a time more recently. Next, she helped us to think about this in relation to people who may be feeling excluded from our Meetings and especially from our Book of Discipline.

We then spent time in Worship Sharing where we considered whose voices that are not in our current Book of Discipline. Some concerns were raised in relation to what may or may not be left out of a revised book and some thoughts were shared on what could be considered for inclusion. We heard many voices and some pain.

We are clear that our new book needs to include many diverse voices that are not currently there. We hope that our new Book of Discipline can be like a healthy ecosystem. Healthy ecosystems have great diversity.

We are reassured that our thoughts will be passed to the Revision Committee and are excited to learn of how we can be involved in the revision process. We thank Mary for leading us in this special consideration.

Minute 7 Nominations

We thank the GM Nominations Committee for their work in bringing us the following names which, all being acceptable, we appoint accordingly. We thank the Friends being released for their service.

Request for Release

Robin Davis, GM Assistant Clerk in December 2018

Jane Booth, Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (North) as soon as a new nomination is found.

GM Assistant Clerk

Elizabeth Allen

January 2019 to December 2019

GM Trustees

Catherine Brown (2nd triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

Michael Hutchinson (2nd triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

Derek McLean (2nd triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

Web Manager

David Sterratt (2nd triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

Northern Friends Youth Events Trust

Genevieve Orr (1st triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

ACTS Group on Human Trafficking

Kate Arnot (1st triennium)

with immediate effect until

December 2021

Job share with Pam Brunt

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees

Hilary Patrick (2nd triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

Faith in Community Scotland Action Fund

Lynne Barty (3rd triennium)

January 2019 to December 2021

Minute 8 Annual Report of GM Trustees

We are glad to receive the Annual report of Trustees for 2017. It is attached to these minutes. We are grateful to GM Trustees for their work and for their clear and helpful report. We welcome the idea that GM Trustees begin consideration of the role of General Meeting for Scotland and the current description of it in Qf&p chpt. 5.03. We hope that the work they produce on this can, in due course, be agreed by GM then passed to the Revision Committee for possible inclusion in our new Book of Discipline.

We welcome the suggestion that BYM is encouraged to fund fully our Parliamentary Engagement Officer from 2021. We see this work as part of the core activity of BYM and thus should be funded from their regular budget. We note and would like to reiterate our gratefulness for the support given and work done by our GM Administrator, Marion Sharkey and our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell Jack.

Minute 9 NSAM concern on Trusteeship

We welcome the minute and the following summary of the telephone conference held 18th April 2018 between GM Trustees and NSAM Trustees. We recognise that this area of concern is one that we want to fully understand and come to unity on. There is a need for those concerned to move forward, to continue to explore and look at all possibilities with as positive a light as possible. We celebrate the work of The Listening Project and want to acknowledge the passion, work and listening that went into this. We also feel the distress at the sense that the amount of work completed has been forgotten or may be repeated. We hope NSAM's role holders can be better supported. We realise that we need to seek and give support. This can be sought and found among Friends in LM, AM and hopefully from God.

We warm to the idea of setting up a meeting with Paul Parker our Recording Clerk to include Scottish AM trustees, GM Trustees, Clerks to AM and GM Nominations Committees and those in GM who feel invested in this concern. We ask all those who would like to be invited to this meeting to contact adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk

We ask our clerk to convene and clerk this meeting and report back to GM as soon as is practicable. We ask that this meeting happens as soon as is possible. We need to find a way that allows us to feel connected, spiritually enriched and part of a growing community.

We hope Friends present will hold NSAM in the light and share this concern so that there is a feeling of openness, love and sensitivity around Scotland as we work through this together.

Minute 10 GDPR Information

We are glad to note that GM Trustees have published a Data Privacy Notice and that AMs will be making arrangements to draw Friends' attention to this. Friends will be asked to sign a data consent form at the time that the new Book of Members is being prepared in the Autumn.

Minute 11 PEWG report

We are grateful for the PEWG report which is attached to these minutes. We are looking forward to our discernment of this work in September at GM in Glasgow and are reminded that information on all this work is found on our website and from our M reps on PEWG. We congratulate the PEWG and Mairi Campbell Jack on the work on militarisation in schools.

Minute 12 Tabular Statement

We have received the tabular statement for 2017.

We note the following numbers of Members, Attenders and children at 31st December 2017.

	2017			2016	2015	2014	2013
	Members	Attenders	Children	Members	Members	Members	Members
East	88	52	14	89	94	101	110
North	134	126	27	129	129	126	127
South East	243	282	72	255	254	236	232
West	220	223	20	216	216	231	223
TOTAL	685	683	133	685	693	694	692

Minute 13 Sufferings report tabled Mike Shilson

We thank Mike for his report which is attached to these minutes.

Minute 14 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to North Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM and look forward to meeting again on 15th September in Glasgow where will be sharing Glasgow Meeting house with the European and Middle East Section of Friends'

World Committee for Consultation and lots of young people some of whom will be reporting back from this summer's Shindig.

Adwoa Bittle
Clerk

Notice: A meeting for all involved in Ecumenical and Interfaith work is to be held in Edinburgh at Victoria Terrace Meeting House on 8th October from 10am to 4pm. This is to share information, learn from each other, make sure we are all supported and not duplicating work if not necessary. Kate Arnot is facilitating the meeting but please send expressions of interest for attendance to adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND Annual report of trustees for 2017

Each year, General Meeting Trustees report to General Meeting on the work in which they have been directly engaged during the previous calendar year. This should not be confused with the Annual Report on the work of the whole General Meeting which is submitted to OSCR along with the Annual Accounts. That report, while drafted by Trustees, is agreed and approved by GM in session.

One of the major responsibilities of Trustees is to ensure that the finances of GM are properly managed, that we are acting as responsible employers for the General Meeting Administrator who is our single member of staff (the Parliamentary Engagement Officer is legally an employee of BYM), and that we are complying with all legal requirements in areas such as Safeguarding and Data Protection. We also try to relieve the pressures on Area Meeting Trustees by co-ordinating the Scottish response to new legislation or regulations. This work is not glamorous but it is necessary.

2017 was the final year of the three-year agreement with BYM to fund jointly a post of Parliamentary Engagement Officer. An external review had been commissioned jointly with BYM in 2016 which reported at the end of that year. This provided a basis for us to enter into discussions with the Recording Clerk in 2017 regarding an extension to this project.

During the first three years we were contributing £10,000 pa towards the costs, of which £4000 pa was drawn from reserves and £6000 pa contributed by Area Meetings. It was clear we could no longer draw on reserves and we did not feel we could ask AMs to contribute more, so BYM agreed both to a further three-year extension and to shoulder a bigger proportion of the cost.

We then learnt that GM was to receive a generous legacy from the estate of Jenny Auld and we proposed to BYM and GM that approximately half of this legacy should be used to finance an additional day per week for the Parliamentary Engagement post over the second three-year period, bringing her hours to 3.5 days pw. This was approved, and we negotiated a revised Memorandum of Understanding with Friends House covering the project extension.

The external review of the first three years had recommended that better arrangements be put in place to establish more specific objectives for the project and to review progress on an ongoing basis. Jane Dawson, the Advocacy and Public Relations Lead at Friends House commissioned consultants to work with us to try to develop better assessment methods, but we were not convinced that the consultants' approach was realistic and we have still to agree a better approach to review.

We are conscious that we have not secured ongoing funding for this project beyond this second three-year period. The BYM funding is from legacies and is not guaranteed beyond 2020 and we are unlikely to receive a further legacy comparable to that from Jenny Auld. It is Trustees' view that the value of this work has been established and that it should in future be regarded as part of the core activity of BYM, completely funded from their regular budget. We believe that the Recording Clerk is sympathetic to this view but there are financial constraints.

We reported last year on a suggestion from the Recording Clerk that there should be a broader Memorandum of Understanding covering the whole of the relationship between BYM and GM. Some preparatory work on this was done by staff in Friends House and it was discussed at a meeting in June 2017, but since then progress has stalled.

Among more detailed work, we clarified some aspects of the policy on payment of travelling expenses; we continued to monitor the operation of Safeguarding arrangements; and we have continued to maintain links with the GM's working groups which are now operating under a new structure agreed in June 2017.

Towards the end of 2017, we considered how best to prepare to implement the new regulations on data protection which are due to come into force on 25th May 2018. It was agreed that GM Trustees would co-ordinate the issue of model policies and guidance for the whole of Scotland to avoid duplication of effort by AM Trustees. GM holds the data protection registration with the Information Commissioner's Office for all Quaker records in Scotland.

In terms of future work, the decision of Yearly Meeting to revise Quaker Faith and Practice, beginning with the sections on Church Government, provides an opportunity to improve the wording in para. 5.03 which describes the role of General Meeting within the structure. To enable this, we recommend that GM reconsiders its role and the way it relates to Area Meetings in Scotland.

The Society of Friends has been recognised as a charity since the 17th century, but it was only in 2005 that BYM decided that all AMs should appoint designated trustees. Before that, all members of the Area and General Meeting shared trustee responsibility. There is a danger in having designated trustees that other Friends feel less engaged with and less responsible for the

running of our affairs, which is contrary to the concept of a non-clerical structure with shared responsibility that is inherent in Quaker beliefs.

We see a need to increase understanding within our Meetings of the fundamental beliefs that lie behind Quaker business methods and of the responsibility of all Members for the running of the Society. We will consider how this can best be achieved. We are grateful for the support given during the year by the GM Administrator, Marion Sharkey and for the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, supported by the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group.

We thank those who have served as trustees during 2017 listed below. There have been no changes of Trustees in 2017.

Martin Burnell, Clerk May 2018

Trustees 2017 Martin Burnell (clerk), Michael Hutchinson (West), Derek McLean (North), Catherine Brown (West), Jacqueline Noltingk (South East), Nigel Dower (GM treasurer ex-officio)

Report of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group to General Meeting for Scotland to be held in Inverness 16th June 2018.

Militarism in schools: the report produced by the Petitions Committee was published on Monday 4th June and we were pleased with the recommendations which mostly addressed the concerns which were raised in our petition.

The Committee recommended that:

the Scottish government carries out a child rights and wellbeing assessment in relation to armed forces visits to schools to ensure that content provided across all visit types is appropriate for the agreed purpose and information resources are available which allow a balance of views and that this is not solely a question of balance provided in presentations by the armed forces but more widely within the curriculum.

information about armed forces visits to schools should be collected and published by the Ministry of Defence on an ongoing basis.

that the issue of consultation on participation in armed forces visits to schools should be included in the child rights and wellbeing impact assessment.

The government is required to respond to the report within two months.

The issue of balance in the curriculum is welcome as it provides an opening for the work that the PEWG is undertaking to ensure that peace education is included in the curriculum (see below).

We obtained considerable media coverage about the Petitions Committee report including large articles in the Herald, The Scotsman and the National as well as on Radio Scotland.

Peace education: Mairi is pursuing a meeting with Education Scotland to look at how the Curriculum for Excellence could accommodate peace education. Members of the PEWG have gathered information on what Quakers are doing elsewhere in the UK including the work of Peacemakers in the W. Midlands and the recently launched Peace Week materials from QPSW. We would welcome contact with any Quakers involved in schools to share their experience. It is not the function of the PEWG to produce materials for use in schools but to influence government and education policy in Scotland.

Cadet Forces: Ross Greer MSP has tabled a number of questions on our behalf about an MOD announcement referring to a cadet force being introduced to a Scottish state school. He has been given a holding answer which implies that the government was not aware of the MOD announcement and is looking for answers.

Prisoner Voting Rights: the Equalities and Human Rights Committee published its report on prisoner voting rights on 14th May. Our submission supporting prisoner voting rights is referred to in paragraph 106 of the report with a link to the complete text. It is likely that this issue will go to further consultation.

We are continuing work on our other priorities— economic justice and Land Value Tax. In September we look forward to asking for GM's help in discerning the guidance of the Spirit in the work we are proposing and to finding ways in which meetings and individuals can support our work.

Report of Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker House, London. Saturday 7th April 2018

This was the last meeting of the triennium, and I attended as a visitor representing the GM Scotland.

The key items to share from the minutes of this meeting were:

Minute 5. Appeal Review Group report

This concerned conflict in meetings.

Some of the procedures to resolve conflict were thought no longer to be useful and it was agreed to changes in our current appeals procedure.

It was realised that some conflicts were due to fundamental problems: both of a lack of familiarity with our Church Government and the spiritual basis of our decision making, and of the increase in mental health issues within our meetings.

We all need to realise this is a big issue, and Minute 5 outlines some guidance as to how we should act in the first instance, and that we need to prioritise preventive work by encouraging a ministry of teaching in cultivating our understanding of Quaker ways.

It is important for us to ask for support and advice from Quaker Life at an early stage and to be realistic in our expectations

Minute 6. Report of the BYM Sustainability Group Review Group

This was a disheartening and challenging report from the Review Group; especially with the additional statement from the clerk of the group, Liz Burch. The group felt constrained and inhibited in fulfilling their remit.

It is a concern that 5 groups in the past 30 years have stood down because of being unable to fulfil their remit regarding climate change and sustainability.

Yet, Climate change and sustainability are a key Quaker priority, as Yearly Meeting minuted in 2011.

"Sustainability is an urgent matter for our Quaker witness. It is rooted in Quaker testimony and must be integral to all we do corporately and individually" (AFFA 2009-14)

Minute 6 re-emphasises that our Quaker faith is the spiritual basis of this concern which should permeate everything we do. But as we also minuted, we seem unable to go forward with this as we would wish and so, as an organisation, we have started on a different approach.

The MfS meeting asked that a specially convened meeting, with representatives from each of the major Quaker groups, be held to determine jointly how this work is to be taken forward.

Minute 9. The post-truth world and Quaker response

Friends in Southern Marches AM are concerned about a lack of honesty in public affairs; and that in turn this impacts on how we live Quaker values in the world: promoting egalitarianism, conflict resolution and non-violent communication.

Various aspects of integrity were highlighted, including politicians, the press and media; and for our own role ~ how we listen to, and communicate with (including via social media), those who do not share our views, and with whom we disagree.

MfS asked Area meetings to test this concern and to report back for the November MfS.

Michael Shilson
Mull and Iona Meeting

The following report is from Liz Burch. Mike thought Friends might like to see it as it puts some of his report in context.

The Sustainability Group has been faithful in trying to help the yearly meeting follow its leading, and I hope that you will have reminded yourselves of our report to your last meeting. But what I am going to say now is my own view, not the agreed view of the Sustainability Group.

There are several recommendations in the report, some of which are helpful and others don't go far enough. Where the review has been really clear is in identifying the major blockage to our work. But we need a bolder response than these recommendations.

There are three main points that I want to respond to:

- that the Sustainability Group is laid down
- that a group of committees and staff take responsibility for taking the commitment forward
- that Meeting for Sufferings takes responsibility for reviewing progress

1. That BYMSG should be laid down

The major reason why the report recommends laying down the Sustainability Group, is that the Group sits outside the 'normal structures' (that is, the centrally managed work) and has found it difficult to engage with them.

This is true. It's also *outrageous*. It's shameful.

Think about it Friends – we have a yearly meeting concern, about a global emergency. A group is set up as a working group of Meeting for Sufferings, with representation from the centrally managed work. So firstly, how do we come to think of this working group as being *outside* the structures? It's a cross-section of the yearly meeting, trying to link all the different sections of our community. Why can't that work?

At the last meeting of the Sustainability Group, Paul Parker explained (and the report cites this too) that the problem has been in clarifying our role and authority because *working groups* have advisory roles, with no resourcing allocated to them, whereas the centrally managed work has *committees* discerning priorities, resourced by Trustees and employing staff. So as an organisation, we've set up structures in which committees and staff effectively outrank and don't have to cooperate with working groups of Meeting for Sufferings. This seems to me inflexible and wrong. How can it work, when both committees and working groups are functioning in a worshipful way? Does the Spirit know not to bother sending any leadings via the working groups? This is more Kafka than Quaker.

What this has meant to the Sustainability Group is clear from the report but let me remind you of some examples.

in February 2016 the Sustainability Group asked Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee for a joint meeting and in February 2017 we were invited to a session to present to them. Yes, it took 12 months, and even then it wasn't a dialogue.

The report says that the Economics, Sustainability and Peace committee expressed surprise that they had not heard more from the Sustainability Group, yet there has been a staff member from ESP ex-officio on the Sustainability Group all along, precisely to provide this link.

The Sustainability Group is charged with running face to face gatherings *at least* every 2 years. The next one will be 2 ½ years after the last one, because this was the earliest date that Staff could allocate time for.

You now have to decide whether the answer is to lay down the Sustainability Group, or transform the structures. The Sustainability Group's experience has certainly flagged up a problem. Are you going to shoot the messenger, or heed the message? I am not here to argue for the continuation of the Sustainability Group per se, but we must understand why it hasn't been more successful, and change how we do things in the future.

2. The role of committees and staff

It's right that the commitment should be embedded across *all* the work of the yearly meeting. This is something the Sustainability Group supports and has been trying to achieve. The major problem has been in how we connect a YM concern with the existing BYM workplan. It is shocking that it has taken this long to get a recommendation that the different committees and staff members should work in a concerted way to meet the YM commitment. The review helps us understand why this is: we now need to decide what we can do about it.

I think the review report overstates the extent to which most committees are currently engaging with the commitment. Management Meeting and BYM Trustees have provided substantial funding for the more secular, political expressions of our concern. But the Sustainability Group has repeatedly asked for priority to be placed on the ways our sustainability commitment relates to our Quaker faith and lives. Staff seem unable to get beyond preliminary exploration of possible work in these areas.

So although I support the idea of making all committees and staff responsible, if it is to work it will need careful planning and monitoring. We can't just diffuse the concern among a number of groups, so that championing it is always seen as someone else's role. I think we will still need a group whose main focus will be keeping the YM commitment on track.

3. That progress is overseen by Meeting for Sufferings

If you accept this recommendation, you will be responsible for keeping the YM commitment on track. You will need to be clear-sighted when the committees report to you, ask probing questions, speak plainly, hold them to account, be bold. And for area meetings, it will be *your* responsibility to be the inspiration, the champion, the support. Think of the Friend in your meeting who says 'Oh no, not sustainability again,' - how will they be reached? Are you, as members of Meeting for Sufferings, able and willing to educate yourselves about what this will mean, and to educate the yearly meeting about what it means to follow a corporate leading? If you can do this, meeting after meeting, year after year, with all the other items on your agenda, this could just work. If you can't, we need to plan differently now.

This is important to me. At the start of YMG in 2011 as far as climate justice was concerned, I was an average, well-intentioned but ignorant Friend. By the end of the gathering, I felt inspired by the movement of our gathered meeting to make that remarkable and serious commitment together. I am committed to Quaker ways of working. I took the YM commitment very seriously. I trusted we as a yearly meeting could be true to our leading.

Can we?

Conclusion

At least five groups in the last 30 years have attempted to discern a way forward for the Yearly Meeting on sustainability.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in the 1980s/90s.
The Earth: Our Collective Responsibility in the early 2000s.

The Testimonies Committee, focused in its final devastating epistle to Sufferings in 2007 on the urgency of engaging with climate change.

2011 the Canterbury Commitment Group set up, worked for three years, laid down.

2014 BYM Sustainability Group set up, worked for three years, now proposed to be laid down.

We set up groups with limited authority, and then lay them down when they begin to find a voice. One after another. Why?

Of course there are reasons for this. Climate change and sustainability are complex and challenging. It's not surprising that we find it difficult, everyone does. We say we are called to be patterns and examples but I think we can be sure this kind of pattern and example is not what George Fox had in mind. If we can look openly and honestly at what is blocking us in our own corporate response, and allow ourselves to be led to new corporate life, it could hugely enhance our spiritual lives, our vibrancy in meetings, our diversity, and our capacity to know a place to stand in and what to wait in. Every word in the epistle from the Testimonies Committee to Sufferings in 2007 could still be said now. Nothing has changed, except the overall situation has got a lot worse.

The report gives a reasonable overview of the work of the Sustainability Group in the sense that what the Group has achieved is as clear as the problems we've faced. And certainly if I were beginning now as Clerk to the Sustainability Group I would do things very differently. It's taken us a while to figure out what the problem is and why things haven't worked more effectively. But we do now know that much of the problem is in our structures, and how we all respond to corporate leadings. We might say with Thomas Ellwood that there are many plants growing in us which were not of the Heavenly Spirit's planting, and that all these ... must be plucked up.

I think the recommendation which is missing from the review group report is that, in the same way that we review our committees and working groups periodically, that there should be a thorough review of our YM structures, including the centrally managed work, and the ways in which they can adapt as new concerns arise. If in the last 7 years we have been unable to meet a YM commitment because of our structures, we need to be prepared to change those structures.

You must now choose whether your decision will be to repeat old patterns, to fudge, to bury difficult things, or whether this will be a transformative moment for our Society. Scour your hearts to be clear what love requires of us now.