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2010

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Scottish Friend

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Graham Marsden took the cover picture.
Please send material for next *Scottish Friend* by 1st October to Margaret Peacock, 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk.

For the front cover I like to publish photographs of your meeting places. Please go on sending me news, reports, thoughts and pictures. Many thanks to all who have made suggestions.

Scottish Friend will be posted on the GM website at the same time as it goes to the printer. If you would like an email copy instead of a paper one, please email scotfriends@gmail.com, to let Bronwen Currie know.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain Yearly Meeting or elsewhere.



Representing North Scotland, where last General Meeting was held, here are some Nairn Friends outside their meeting place.

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Circles of support and accountability for released sex offenders.
David Turner

A number of Friends in Scotland have followed with interest the history of the development of Circles in England and Wales since the inauguration of two pilot areas in 2000. Since then the growth of Circles has been remarkable, particularly since 2005 and, following the setting up of Circles UK as an independent agency in 2007, new projects have been emerging with ever-increasing regularity.

A Scottish Steering Group, representative of criminal justice, prison, the police, SACRO, Victim Support, COSLA and the churches was set up in 2001 at the suggestion of Scottish Quakers (the latter being consistently involved over the years of activity) to publicise Circles, and promote the idea of a Scottish Scheme widely - including with the Scottish Government since 2007.

With the reluctance of the Scottish Government to commit any funding, despite regarding Circles sympathetically, the attention of the Group was redirected to a number of the new Community Justice Authorities. Interest was found, and was followed up, in South West Scotland and Fife. Now, after a period of intensive negotiation and networking, there has been a breakthrough in Fife. Funding is on the table to set up pilots in that area - a year's money initially. This has enabled the Group, through a SACRO criminal justice adviser being employed part-time, to pursue a process of preparation for setting up a first Circle, including recruitment, training and support of volunteers. Alongside this there is the establishment of protocols governing the inter-agency work which is vital for the integrity of a Circles scheme. Location of a suitable candidate to be involved as "core member" can be undertaken in parallel with these tasks.

Interest from Friends is invited, both to obtain more information and to express a desire to help in some way. This can be done by phoning or emailing Tim Richley:- Tel No. 0131624 7266. Email trichley@national.sacro.org.uk

The writer of this article is willing to be contacted at any stage -
David Turner, Tel No. 0131 669 1308

Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network David Turner
Annual Gathering - Aberdeen Meeting House - Sat 17 April 2010

Allan Weaver, a Social Work Team Leader in North Ayrshire, addressed the 14 Friends present under two headings:

I. His experiences as a young offender in the 1970's.

Allan was brought up in the Ayrshire town of Saltcoats, one of the "three towns" on the River Clyde coast - the others being Ardrossan and Stevenston, in a time of industrial decline, with unemployment, poverty and crime (mostly theft) the abiding context of life for his family, and for many others. An interweaving element was the dominant "macho" culture of a large area of West Scotland, with heavy drinking as normal male behaviour, and domestic violence a common linking feature, and frustration an aggravating one.

Allan's own family scene included a gentle loving mother and an emotionally distant father who in bouts of drunkenness assaulted his wife brutally in the sight of the children, leading on at least one occasion to hospitalisation. By his 8th year home was for Allan not a safe place.

Unable to protect his mother, angry, resentful and bitter, he sought detachment from the home atmosphere. In dodging school, he linked with rootless and like-minded street children in one of the area's youth gangs. An earlier well-meant but ill-judged attempt to toughen him for self-protection served to give him a reputation later for ruthlessness and a leading role as a fearless street-fighter, together with growing experience in crime and accompanying violence. Alongside was his educational failure, and his unfitness, by 13\14 years, for accessing any doors to alternative pursuits. While he feels now he had no enjoyment from the life of shopbreaking, drinking and violence, a momentum existed in which the question of "choice" simply didn't arise. Over his mother's unconditional love he felt guilt and shame, but these perversely fuelled his rage, for which the only target possible was an uncaring society, and especially those who were seen to condemn and exclude him from normal youth activities and simply "didn't want to know him". Instead there was an ever-repeated attendance at children's hearings with his mother (father never

involved), periods of statutory supervision in which the possible causes of his behaviour, his domestic circumstances and social environment were never explored, followed by custody in young offenders' institutions, and latterly in Glasgow's "Colditz" - the notorious Barlinnie prison.

Allan remembers this as a kind of "badge" he wore with some pride, an admission to membership of a group of very violent young men he emulated and also challenged for supremacy. More violence was inevitable, both outwith and within institutions. A particularly brutal incident left him with facial scarring still visible.

But that is decades ago. So what changed?

Allan identifies a number of factors in a lengthy process, with setbacks. One was an older inmate of an adult prison, a man who had committed murder and, from bitter experience, encouraged him to look at his way of life and what it was doing to him.

It was Allan's beginnings of reflection that there may be a possibility of "choice", even for one so channelled into offending, and of having a different kind of role model. Another major influence was a deeply caring social worker who listened, not warned, and was always there for him after failures. Latterly, a prison programme involving woodwork training gave a sense of achievement and self-worth. On release this time employment was possible and was maintained, and relationships blossomed. He re-discovered a grandfather he'd hardly known.

His mother, now living apart from his father, was free to give emotional and practical support. Allan took up an educational opportunity, which led to college and a social work qualification, a place in an area team and, for some years now, a senior position in a team focusing on youth offending.

Working with Young Offenders Today

In all he does today, Allan uses his life experiences and combines his learning from that with knowledge and understanding gained in his social work studies. In a sense, the context of vulnerable young people's lives is seen as little changed.

Unemployment has soared for this age-group particularly, after a period of alleviation. Alcohol abuse is still a major concern, as elsewhere - a factor in 75% of youth offending behaviour. Allan sees drug addiction as deeply serious, causing misery in families and having little or no answers in short prison sentences. It is another symptom of the hopelessness of lives in our "sink estates". For Allan alcohol, with its wide social acceptance, is the real issue, so much more the background to most crime and violence. He views measures such as minimum pricing and health warnings on containers as irrelevant - young people tell him so.

A notable aspect is that, although less than 1% of young people become offenders, there is a culture of demonisation and labelling - jobs and thugs are words on the front pages of popularly read newspapers almost daily, to an extent not common in his time. Allan doesn't discount individual responsibility, but remembers well his sense of having "no alternatives" in the face of family problems, social decay and peer influences, of having "nothing to lose". What he sees to be necessary is our collective responsibility - awareness of society failing young people in difficulties, and a real commitment to social policies that strengthen and support families and communities. Without this, and the targeting of resources that goes with it, social work, with all the skills and compassion of its practitioners, is a constant struggle against the tide and one that is becoming ever harder as our social divisions widen.

In the following questions and discussion a number of key points included:

The need to be realistic. The pace of change, when it does begin, can be slow and uneven. Probation orders and accompanying conditions, and licence requirements and the measurement of progress, can fail to allow for this and give space for efforts to change.

The need to recognise and address the "whole family" situation and the social barriers faced by young offenders ready to take the first steps. Also to work across professional boundaries, agreed in principle but often absent in practice.

The encouragement of informal approaches, such as volunteers and community agencies whose ways of contributing may not easily fit with the risk assessment processes now employed.

While good work is being done by many social workers and other professionals there are financial negatives in the system which favour surveillance and control over creative and imaginative projects.

More research is needed into why young people stop offending, as a guide to reinforcement of the positive factors that worked in favour of change. Allan promotes "doing relationships" in casework, a practice once at the heart of social casework but rarer now, recalling that nothing worked for him except that. He tries to divide up work in the team, raising the special gifts and skills of members to the maximum.

The above is just a flavour of what this session offered so richly. For those who would like to explore more of Allan's thoughts and ideas, his book "So you think you know me?" is infinitely worth reading. For further information on this contact the writer of this report.

Learning from Experience:

Personal narratives from the criminal justice system

Eva Deregowska

Victims and offenders are often poorly served by the current criminal justice system, but the effects can also be devastating for the family and friends of the convicted person. Their voices are rarely heard, yet the echoes rebound for years around them.

Through *Learning from Experience: Personal narratives from the criminal justice system* the QPSW Crime, Community and Justice Group (of which I am a member) is collecting stories from anyone who has been affected when they, or someone they know, receives a prison or community sentence. For many, this may be the only chance they get to tell their story. Quakers around the country have already joined this unique initiative.

Specifically, we want to know what it was like to go through the

court process and what effect the sentence had upon the person telling the narrative. We are asking what was worst about it all and what – if any – positive outcomes they can tell us about. We would also like to know what might have made things better for all those involved.

Many of the stories so far have come from the person who was sentenced. Others are from parents or friends, or from Quakers within the criminal justice system. Some stories confirm things we know such as the difficulty in getting employment or housing with a criminal record: "being seen only in terms of the offence, not as a whole person." Some highlight less obvious effects upon the family: "My parents had extreme difficulty in renewing their house insurance because a criminal (me) lives there too."

There are some positives too: "The voluntary organisation with whom I carried out my Community Sentence Order have offered me volunteer work."

We welcome all personal narratives, asking only that they have been collected directly from (or contributed by) the person whose story it is. Two key elements of this work are to protect the privacy of the story-teller, and to put the personal narratives in a context to help with our analysis of what all the stories are telling us. This means that in order to use what people tell us *we need to have a completed Agreement Form with the story.*

You don't have to be involved in any way with the criminal justice system: you may know someone where you work or live or meet socially who has a story to tell – you can send it to us as a 'collector'. You may have a story of your own which you can contribute. As Scotland has a different criminal justice system from England and Wales, it is especially important that we receive stories from Friends in Scotland.

For more information and a Guidance Pack for collecting/contributing stories, contact Paula Harvey, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Crime, Community and Justice Group, Friends House. T: 020 7663 1036 E: paulah@quaker.org.uk

End Of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill
Oriole Hall - Co-Clerk, Inverness Local Meeting

Inverness Meeting opposes the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill, which was introduced to the Scottish Parliament by Margo MacDonald MSP and is now going through the committee stage prior to parliamentary debate later this year.

We feel that it grossly undermines the universally accepted need to offer care and comfort to all, especially those who are placed in a vulnerable position as a result of age, incapacity or other circumstance. The Bill puts the responsibility for providing "end of life assistance" on the shoulders of Scottish doctors, for whom it contains no conscience clause. This would put at huge risk the traditional doctor-patient relationship, which is based on trust and the duty of every doctor to protect the individual.

We call for far greater access to and emphasis on quality palliative care. At present, according to a review article in The Psychiatrist (Royal College of Psychiatry April 2010) only 16% of cancer deaths occur in hospice care and 4% of all deaths are under this care. Even if these figures do not take account of palliative care provided outside the hospice setting, we believe that it is still a minority of people who have access to these services.

There must be more information, advice, counselling and practical support available to patients, carers and families and more training for specialised nurses.

In addition, as the population ages, we all have to take responsibility for those whose greatest fears are isolation, loss of dignity and becoming a burden to family and friends. End of life care has to keep improving even when budgets are being cut.



End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill John Higgon

Margo MacDonald's proposed End of Life Assistance Bill has brought into sharp focus a particular moral fault line, namely, whether it can be permissible to bring about another's death in order to end that person's suffering. There are deeply held convictions on both sides of the debate. In the May edition of Scottish Friend Roger Quinn argued against the proposed bill, likening assisted suicide to murder and noting that 'the Bible is unequivocal on the subject of murder'.

I take a different view, but before explaining that, it is perhaps worth briefly summarizing the current legislation and Margo MacDonald's proposed bill. Until the 1960's suicide was illegal, but the legislation was revoked in the 1960's and suicide is now seen as the remit of mental health agencies rather than the courts. The great majority of people who attempt suicide or complete suicide have histories of severe mental illness and a sense of hopelessness that Roger Quinn refers to in his article. These individuals need and deserve the protection and care of society. However, a relatively small proportion of individuals who commit suicide do not do so out of a sense of misguided despair. Rather, they find themselves in the end stages of a terminal disease and the suffering associated with their condition means that, *for them*, life is no longer worth living. Margo MacDonald's bill aims to assist the even smaller number of individuals who find themselves in the final stages of a terminal illness, but who are physically incapable of the act of suicide.

As an example of how the law currently works, take Motor Neurone Disease, a condition characterized by a slow and progressive loss of muscle control. The patient can elect to endure whatever suffering the disease imposes on him, up to the point of natural death (asphyxiation, generally). The patient can alternatively take his life early on in the course of the disease, when he has the physical capacity to do so but is still capable of finding some enjoyment in life, and in this case he has not broken the law. Or the patient can enlist the help of a doctor late on in the disease, at a stage where he can no longer lift the pills to his lips. At present, the doctor who assists has committed a criminal act. Margo MacDonald's bill seeks to exempt the doctor from prosecution, recognizing that the act was conducted

with the patient's best interests at heart.

Of course it is important that safeguards are built into the act – and they are. The patient will need to convince his physician that he is of sound mind, is not being pressured into making this decision, and is not suffering from clinical depression. He will need to go through all of this again with a second doctor on a separate occasion. He can of course change his mind at any point. (There are other safeguards which I shall not detail here.)

Many critics of Margo MacDonald's bill refer to religion to justify their arguments, but I believe that this is mistaken on two grounds. First, it is not the job of the law to create heaven on earth. The law is the lowest common denominator that all of us must submit to. Of course it is illegal to commit murder or to steal another's property: society would not function without some basic code of conduct. But there is no law against failing to love your neighbour as yourself. As individuals, whether religious or not, we may choose to set ourselves a more demanding ethical standard but this cannot and should not be demanded of us by the state.

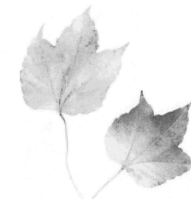
The second problem with using religious beliefs to support arguments about the law is that religious beliefs are no longer widely shared throughout society. Many of us have no religious beliefs, and amongst the proportion of the population that *does* adhere to religion we will find Moslems, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, and so on. Even within any one of these religions you will not necessarily find a fixed view. (Quakers are notorious for finding it difficult to agree on anything – that's why I was attracted to Quakerism rather than a more didactic fellowship.) This plethora of belief invites the question: which religion shall we look to as a basis for our laws? Given this country's history and predominant culture, it might be tempting to say "The Christian religion!", but this is surely not a road we want to travel.

Opponents of Margo MacDonald's bill often use a particular kind of religious argument, namely, that life is a gift from God or that there is a purpose or spiritual benefit in suffering. Once again, I find myself unconvinced for the following reason. One person might perceive

life as a gift from God, God's to give and God's to take away, but what of the atheist who sees life as an accident of biology? Who am I to tell her that she must not end her life because of my particular beliefs? After all, it is just possible that some of my beliefs are mistaken. Similarly, where one person might find some spiritual meaning in suffering, another might find nothing of value. Thus, I cannot see that it is right to constrain another person's behaviour on the basis of my own beliefs about what is for the best.

The medical argument against the Bill also strikes me as mistaken. Medics appear to be against the Bill on two grounds. First, they argue that good palliative care makes such a Bill unnecessary. Well, I am all for good palliative care, but does it really obviate all suffering? Is good palliative care incompatible with a patient having the choice to end his life if palliative care fails to bring relief? Second, they argue that their training and Code of Conduct is based on giving life rather than ending it. Leaving aside the fact that doctors engage in abortion (morally much more problematic, surely, in those cases of a viable foetus with the potential of a life ahead of it), medics might like to re-think their underlying philosophy so as to put more emphasis on the use of medical technology to improve quality of life rather than concentrate all their efforts on length of life. Like it or not, they are already in the business of taking life (abortion) and giving life ('unnatural' life-saving interventions) so the moral line is not as clear as they might like us to believe.

No doubt many of you will disagree with me, and perhaps some of you might agree: 'twas ever thus. Where there is no obvious right or wrong way, surely we should look into our own hearts to decide the best way forward as we see it – and leave others to find their own path.



Eighteen of us from 6 different countries, including 17-year-old Qossay from Friends School in Ramallah and two non Quakers, met at Quaker House Brussels to study how the Quaker voice is heard at the level of the European institutions. We had a fascinating week, which included witnessing a debate of a European Parliament committee discussing safety measures in place in European oilfields, a visit to the Court of Justice in Luxembourg, (where we were warned not to eat, drink or fall asleep!) and talks by Martina, Liz, Joe and Neil from QHB and from various officials from the Institutions. The highlights for me concerned three main areas: human rights, peace and the Middle East.

Human rights

The Council of Europe which is based in Strasbourg has 47 member states, in comparison to the European Parliament which has 27 member states.

The primary object of the CoE is to safeguard human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Court of Human Rights can be accessed by governments, groups and individuals. Given that there are 800 million Europeans you'll not be surprised to learn that there is an enormous backlog of cases, 100,000 in 2009! The budget is limited, deliberately so, to encourage the individual states to deal with their own cases. The council also conducts Europe-wide campaigns, one of the most recent being on human trafficking. The importance of the 400 non-governmental organizations, including QCEA, was stressed. These NGOs, which form a vital link between politicians and the public, have participatory status and can table motions.

One of the areas Liz and Martina are rightly most proud of is their success in the field of women in prison. Thirty-two of their forty-five recommendations were taken up by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and recommended to the 47 member states. Liz and Martina are now engaged in follow-up work on implementation of these recommendations.

Peace

The overall aim of QCEA is to work for peace through fighting for economic justice and human rights. Since 1985 there have been 8 reps, 50 programme assistants and over 60 publications from QHB. We ourselves witnessed and benefited from the huge success in

networking and gaining access to key decision makers that Liz and Martina have had. They have established a European Peacebuilding Liaison Office and Martina is on the steering committee of this. One of the speakers referred to his policy of advising colleagues to turn down invitations to speak. The fact that he took time to come to QHB speaks volumes.

There is ongoing dialogue between QHB and the European Investment Bank on conflict sensitivity. This impressive institution which pays no profits or dividends lent 79 billion euros for private enterprise and projects that support European policies, including that of encouraging renewable energy. Reference is made in the EIB booklet on lending for health and education to PPP projects in North Lanarkshire, and in Argyll and Bute.

The Middle East

Since visiting Israel and Palestine last year, Quaker House Brussels staff have been engaged in raising awareness about issues relating to these two nations, especially new Israeli Defence Orders 1649 and 1650 that came into effect in April, whereby an "infiltrator" has been redefined. Two consequences of this, among others, are an increase in deportation orders, and Jewish groups criticising the Israeli Government being considered as terrorist groups. A briefing pack is available from QHB and there is a conference in Brussels from 29th-31st October on Israel/Palestine issues. Full details can be found on the QCEA website. Qossay from Ramallah gave a moving presentation on his homeland and begged us to spread awareness of the situation in Palestine.

How you can support and be involved

My Concern, supported by Dunblane meeting, West Scotland AM and Meeting for Sufferings in Feb 2009, is regularly to pray for and hold in the Light the two peoples of Palestine and Israel and on behalf of Qossay, his family, friends and fellow countrymen I ask you to continue to do this.

New leaflets are now available from the British support committee for QCEA, which give details of how you as an individual or your meeting can support the work of QHB financially.

Liz and Martina are to address the residential GM Scotland to be held in Dunblane from 13th-14th November 2010. I am the contact person for accommodation for this event and warmly invite you to attend.

Tel 01259 760853 Email memunro@btinternet.com

A complete copy of the Gospel of Thomas was discovered near the ruined monastery of Chenoboskion in the Nile Valley in 1945. Written in the Coptic language the text is virtually intact. Prior to that only a few Greek fragments had been found. The opening lines of the gospel are;

These are the hidden logia
which the living Jesus spoke
and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote.

The gospel was divided during translation into 114 logia (or sayings) many of which are not recorded elsewhere hence the widespread interest in Thomas. Several scholars now claim that these logia are the earliest record we have of Jesus and his teaching.

The Northern Thomas Study Group has around thirty members and at the moment we hold twice-yearly seminars. Fourteen people attended on this occasion at Wiston Lodge near Biggar in Lanarkshire. In this informal group all are encouraged to make contributions in their own way.

We started the day with a question in the form of 'Creative Listening' which consists of passing round a stone. The person holding the stone can speak or not as they feel appropriate. The question was "What are the unique features within the Gospel of Thomas that stand out for you?". The response was wide ranging, here are some of them with apologies for those missed. "You feel that this is Jesus speaking directly to you". "A direct appeal - passion and humanity". "Look beyond the earth mother and father". "The unmodified and direct teachings". "The simple statements". "The intuitive feeling of spirituality". "The lack of paraphernalia found in some other forms of religion". "Totally non-judgemental". "A conviction of another form of reality". "The kingdom is in your centre and is about you". (a line from logion 3)

Following the 'Creative Listening' Patrick Bealey spoke on logion 38.

Jesus said:

Many times have you longed to hear these logia
which I say to you
and you have no other
from which to hear them.
There will be days
when you seek after me
and you will not find me.

He was followed by Chris Stapenhurst speaking on logion 25.
Jesus said:

Love your brother even as your own soul,
guard him
even as the pupil of your eye.

Before breaking for lunch we paused and took time to remember Margaret Gladden who sadly died recently. Margaret was a founder member of the Thomas group and will be greatly missed by us all. A special thank you to those who spoke in her memory.

Following lunch we discussed the books we have found useful when studying Thomas. The titles covered specific Thomas books and also a wide range of faiths and subjects. We also discussed the book 'Jesus lived in India' by Holger Kersten. The claim in the title was first made by the Russian author Nicolas Novovitch back in the 1890s and is now being revived by several authors.

Margaret Roy then talked about Buddhism and Meditation, throughout relating her subjects to Thomas. All the main speakers had prepared handout sheets which were greatly appreciated by us all.

We commenced on Sunday morning with a half-hour Quaker meeting for worship. This was followed by a general discussion on the logia and related subjects. Thanks to everyone for their input. The next Seminar will be on Saturday 2nd October. Further information by email from Mary Harris maryzair@gmail.com or from Rosemary Gascoyne Tel:01644-430468

It's not enough my Friends

Bill Bingham

I never thought I'd see the day when the 'Glesga polis' would be walking through our airport terminal carrying sub-machine guns ; but they are. Why should our police force be engaged in such activities ? Are there gangsters abroad ? Do serial killers roam our streets ? Have we unwittingly purchased a ticket to Calamity ? What are the answers to this? - I ask myself . I am sure that I am not alone in my perplexity. The answer, my Friends, must be glaringly obvious to any human being who has the courage to look at this diabolical phenomenon squarely in the eye for what it really is. Its name is 'Unholy Fundamentalist Religion'.

This is the type of religious engagement which decides that "the scriptures" i.e., Bible or Koran (or any other book for that matter), is the definitive, and ultimate, 'Word of God'. This has, for centuries, been at the root of many human conflicts in the world, and is currently the underlying cause of violent tensions in the Middle East. In this part of the world, Cain now chooses to slay his brother Abel on an almost daily basis.

We have now beheld jihad - Holy War, which (it is claimed) is "justified by scripture ". This of course, presents major problems for those of us who try to promote peace, within a religious context. Unfortunately, the god we read of in the Old Testament was not simply a god of peace; he was also a god of war.

The Jewish people of course, believe that this god 'gave' them the land they now slaughter their fellow men to retain. If we look honestly at Jewish history, however, it becomes clear that YHWH (the ancient deity of Israel) apparently found it necessary to kill thousands of men, women, and children in order to provide this service to his "chosen" people.

The Jews now feel theologically justified in taking military action, because their scriptures support these most unworkable, and futile, problem solving strategies which are doomed to failure. God (they believe) still blesses the armies of Israel, and 'Joshua' rides in their tanks.

Israel's god at one point, we're told, got pretty worked up about his created species, and flooded the entire earth to impress his influence upon them. Modern geological research would now, of course, dispute this claim. Fundamentalist religious intransigence, however, remains firm on this matter. The Earth of course, being flat, meant that the water couldn't run away either (?)

There is a macabre sense in which today's religious killers do us all a very great service: they reveal to us the true nature of brutal, ignorant and intolerant religious perspectives. Sad to say that this ambiguous religious thinking, still holds sway in many parts of the world even to this day. Worryingly its 'Christian' version strongly influences American foreign policy.

As Quakers, we claim to have abandoned the sword, but is this really enough ? Is that all that the Christ-figure demands of us ? What Osama Bin Laden did at New York, Joshua did at Jericho. What Joshua did at Jericho, Cromwell did at Drogheda. Each of these completely misguided human beings had one disturbing thing in common - they each claimed to be acting on behalf of God. It is not enough for me, my Friends, to be associated with such mistaken and terrifying perspectives. Is it enough for you? Has our God now Himself become the great Vengeance-Seeker who mysteriously resides somewhere beyond the clouds and promotes celestial mischief ?

BY WAY OF CONTRAST

Albert Schweitzer, a perhaps long-forgotten missionary doctor of the Congo, has something to say to each of us today in respect of these matters. His life and work speaks to me of HEALING. It speaks to me not only of putting away the sword; it speaks to me also of 'picking up the scalpel'. It speaks to me of repair and of renewal, and in this it speaks to me of God.

For those who are not familiar with Schweitzer, let me remind you. Schweitzer was a German pastor / doctor, and a world-renowned musician. Schweitzer played the organ. Not only did he play the organ, he built and repaired organs; human organs too, he also learned to repair at a later stage in his very worthy life.

Ultimately rejected by the Paris Missionary Society (they allowed him

to heal, but told him not to preach), he decided then to build his own hospital in the Congo, at Lambaréné. This he did at the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, the Congo was a desperate place of death and of terrible affliction. I am not sure that much has changed in this regard, except that modern medical treatments are now, to some degree, available in the region.

Schweitzer taught the natives about Jesus; he healed their illnesses; and he played to them his music. He financed the entire project himself by giving organ recitals in the most prestigious theaters and venues of the world. He later won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work.

In the course of building his hospital, a perimeter boundary had to be constructed around the compound. This work required that heavy posts had to be driven into the ground to support the fences. Occasionally Schweitzer would interrupt the work and halt his army of labourers, while he stooped down to remove beetles from the holes that were being prepared to receive the posts. Only then could the men finally hammer the securing timbers into the ground ; such was the depth of Schweitzer's compassion. To the good doctor, ALL of life was sacred.

When his feet were badly ulcerated, and he could no longer wear his shoes, Schweitzer made wooden boxes to wear on his feet, in order that he might continue to operate on his patients.

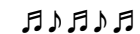
When W.W.1. broke out he was, as a German living in a French colony, interned. Meantime the civilized nations of Europe blew themselves to smithereens in the trenches of France. The putting away of the sword is not enough my Friends, we must now learn to 'pick up the scalpel' and become part of humanity's healing processes. Only by this means can we ever hope to enter into the kingdom that Yeshua, the Alternative Jew, points each of us towards.

CONSIDERATION

Luke, alone, tells us a very puzzling and disturbing story, one which I feel is most worthy of our consideration. This is a tale of two disciples who, when walking along the road to Emmaus, (it might well have been Sauchiehall Street) met the newly-transformed God. Sadly, the story goes on to tell us that both of them failed to recognize their ultimate salvation. Could the same perhaps be true for some of us today ?

Footnote :-

The Buddha told this story, 'A man threw a stone at a dog. Crazed with pain, the dog barked at the stone, not understanding that the cause of his pain was the man, and not the stone'.



Scottish Friends' Summer Gathering – Kindrogan 2010

Ed Tyler

On the evening of 11th June Friends gathered at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre near Pitlochry for the annual Scottish Friends Summer Gathering. The title this year was: "Celebrating the Light, Sustainable Quakers – and Trees."

All three themes were intertwined and interwoven between the fascinating presentations, workshops and Meetings for Worship. Bryan Bowes' talk included his own beautiful slides of trees both in Australia and Britain (one highlight for me was an incredible ancient yew near Glasgow). We also learned about the comparative structures of monocotyledons and dicotyledons.

Images of trees fed into one of the afternoon workshops led by Bridget Ramsay. Bridget "challenged" (her word) us by not only getting us to make our own book but "taking it for a walk" outside and recording our impressions using only a black pen. Reassuringly she afterwards said that we had risen to the challenge. I came out of it feeling truly engaged and fully stretched, and I know that the others were too.

The other workshop went on in the lovely old library of Kindrogan House, a fitting setting for Alison Burnley's session on how to create your own tapestry. Participants practised stitches on samplers in an atmosphere of quiet Victorian-style contemplation. Alison is one of the principal figures behind the Quaker tapestry, which since 1985 has involved 4,000 women, men and children from across the world.

The trees theme was echoed in a talk by Steven Watson of Community Energy Scotland, who gave us fascinating insights into how we might insulate our Meeting Houses and heat them with biomass, giving examples of medium-scale installations and of the different forms: logs, pellets and chips. He also invited us to take away a Monkey Puzzle tree or two and plant it in our neighbourhood: yes, a wee seedling still with its big pine nut attached for food! Propagating such trees is his passion.

After such a busy programme you may think we'd had enough for the day, but being Kindrogan there had to be a spirited Saturday evening celidh, which consisted of poems, sketches, live music and games.

On Sunday we held a Meeting for Worship, during which a moving tribute was paid to Margaret Gladden, who had been organising the event when she unfortunately passed away. All the wonderful things that had happened during the weekend became in our minds and hearts her very special gift.

After Meeting we discussed the issues surrounding the fact that this will be the last Summer Gathering of Scottish Friends for a while. Attendance has been dropping for a number of years and this year only one family with one child attended. Over the years the intergenerational mix of families and elders has been the hallmark of Kindrogan get-togethers. A debate was initiated about how to hold future gatherings which would attract families, perhaps on a regional basis to avoid distant travel, perhaps linked to Area Meetings. Let us hope the debate is taken forward and something new will spring up, perhaps regional, perhaps national, perhaps a combination of the two.

Meeting for Sufferings 3.7.10

Margaret Peacock

The Review Group made a preliminary report on the effect on Sufferings of the appointment of trustees. There was more discussion on Sustainability and a new draft of Quaker marriage procedure. A minute from Staffordshire AM invited us to establish a memorial in the National Arboretum to the Friends' Ambulance Unit and Friends' Relief Service. We enjoyed the innovation of meeting in home groups at the beginning of the day, with a loose remit of being heard on any of these subjects, none of them being for final decision today.

The review was very much appreciated. The function of trustees was thoroughly examined in theory and in practice. Trustees are not for influencing policy but for making sure BYM/MFS policy is carried out. Old chestnuts were re-heated - the name "Sufferings", and the number of AM representatives, which may have to be reduced for cost reasons. A bigger proportion of Friends would get the opportunity to speak, but there would be fewer Friends to engage in the important sharing of experience.

There was remarkably little exploration of sustainability, in spite of this being the selected priority for this meeting. Sunniva Taylor introduced the work of QPSW, and asked us three questions: How much of what we do is inspired by guilt and fear? How much by love and joy? How much do we do as a faith community? (In my opinion the first two are irrelevant)

The Quaker Faith and Practice Working Group let us see their draft of Ch.16 on Quaker marriage, inviting our comments on three points.

1. At present there are alternative declarations in the Quaker marriage meeting: "with God's help", or "with divine assistance". To some Friends, even the second is too Godly, so a third choice of "with help from the Light" is proposed. (Light, not light)
Others felt that if marriage is "the Lord's work only" (which is the basis of our recent shift in marriage qualification), we could not in honesty ditch God. Moreover, if the couple do not believe in any kind of divinity, they should not be using a Quaker wedding. Looking for the truth behind the words, maybe we can find a phrase like

“Higher Power” that implies purposeful non-human help.

2. In Scotland we can get married any time, anywhere, but in England it has to be in daytime at a normal place of worship. The writers want to make us all the same, so I was pleased to hear that English people want if possible to be the same as Scotland.

3. In the interests of uniformity, the writing group are recommending the title “spouse”, which can mean either husband or wife. This could be very welcome to gay couples, implying a real marriage, but some Friends see it as an archaic word. Allowing the couple to choose their titles seemed sensible to some, but to others it seemed like a slippery slope to a write-it-yourself wedding.

The National Arboretum is at Alrewas, near Lichfield, old woodland with new trees. It has perhaps 500 memorials to many victims of war - various sections of the armed services; the police; the merchant navy; the medical corps; and there is a garden of innocence, for child victims, and a peace garden. The general atmosphere is of deep longing for peace, and it is possible that a memorial to the Friends’ Ambulance Unit could provide a silent introduction to the Quaker peace testimony. For more information Google “National Arboretum” and use the NMA tab to get a complete list of the memorials.

If Friends wish to take this further, it would need to be owned and financed by BYM, not Staffordshire AM, though if asked they would undertake the negotiation and organisation.

Earlier this year, Meetings were asked to comment on questions about use of resources. Johanna Kocziwski had done a wonderful job of summarising the responses. I was impressed by the variety of experience and approaches; this sharing of ideas is immensely useful - both what works and what doesn’t. Below I have copied some extracts which may interest some Meetings in Scotland. I could have selected wrong! Read the whole thing at quaker.org.uk/priorityg.

1.2: Issues emerging from the consultation:

* Central work: nearly all meetings consider involvement in central work to be beneficial, allowing them to ‘keep in touch’ and gain a

sense of wider community. Meeting for Sufferings representatives were singled out as offering a valuable communication link. There was still some lack of awareness about how to become involved in central work and a clear need to widen the pool of service and representation at a central level.

* Appointments: many smaller meetings take a pragmatic approach, deciding which are essential and which they can do without. Most meetings recognise that there is more they can do to make the most of the skills and interests of Friends within their meetings.

* Meeting Houses: most Meetings value their meeting houses greatly although recognising that they require a significant amount of money and time to maintain.

* Communications: most meetings are using e-mail; however all are keenly aware of the need not to exclude those who are not IT users. Videoconferencing was mentioned by several meetings and the costs of installation and equipment should be investigated further.

2.5:

Northumbria AM noted that the centring of our resources in London and Friends House ‘does not challenge, nor provide an opportunity for Friends elsewhere to make a more significant contribution to our Society’s evolution.’ They hope that new communication possibilities of information technology are explored in this context.

2.6:

Almeley LM shared a similar concern about the merits of carrying out what they saw as essentially a cost-benefit analysis of a Quaker meeting. Ross on Wye LM commented that queries about resources were felt to be too narrow, placing too much emphasis on buildings without recognising that it is the people who are far more important.

4. Impact of Central work: 4.1:

Almost all meetings, while recognising that energy can be drawn away, recorded that the benefit of those serving centrally outweighs any negative impact. It ‘broadens horizons’, helps meetings feel ‘connected with the wider Quaker world’ and ‘inspires confidence.’ Redland LM noted that ‘we do not regard service at central or local level as separate but as complementary.’ Many of those Friends who

serve centrally also tend to be those who make the most contribution to the life of their home Meetings.

4.2:

Many Meetings observed in particular that Meeting for Sufferings is a useful channel of communication. Bradford on Avon commented that 'when one of our own LM Friends attended Meeting for Sufferings we were very well informed. Swindon noted that 'it is good to have an interchange of ideas and information with the Friends serving on Meeting for Sufferings, who in turn are working hard to encourage two-way communication'

4.4:

Some meetings, for example Leiston LM and Torbay LM, still feel a lack of connection with central work. Harrogate wrote that they need more information for the meeting about how to serve at a national level, explaining what is involved, especially with regard to the Quaker Life network. Oxford LM proposes that those involved in central work have more responsibility in communicating with local and area meetings about their work. 'This could have the effect of making the issues come alive for Friends locally.' Blackheath noted that 'we perceive a risk that central committees may be drawn from quite a limited pool of known Friends. Would like to see wider usisf Quaker service information sheet forms.' An example of good practice is Jesus Lane LM where they held a successful meeting for office holders and Friends who work with central committees to share their experiences with members and attenders of the meeting to attract new volunteers. This was well publicised.

5.4:

Aberdeen Friends commented that there should be more opportunity for Friends to actively offer their skills. They suggest that the 'yellow form' method used by BYM could be adopted at a local level so that individuals have the opportunity of offering their various skills and interests. Salisbury noted that last year the nominations committee adapted questionnaires provided by Quaker Life and other Local Meetings to compile a list of Members' and Attenders' interests and skills. 'The response was very good and helped enormously when we had to set up new committees or augment existing ones for

responsibilities with the new Meeting House.' However Lewes recently adopted a yellow form and found it was off-putting to some.

6. Meeting Houses: 6.1:

Most meetings acknowledge that a considerable proportion of their resources are devoted to the running and upkeep of the Meeting House; nevertheless nearly all meetings greatly value their properties. Those meetings without the responsibility of a meeting house can focus more on people and needs and many commented on the relief of being burden-free. However, most recognise that a meeting house gives the meeting a spiritual home and encourages membership. The buildings provide an excellent means of outreach and a space for children's meetings. For most, the income currently balances expenditure and meeting houses tend to be well-used community resources. Balby, for example, commented that the area of deprivation they are in has extensive need for a venue like theirs. Darlington LM tried to sell their building and encountered resistance from the local community! Several meetings recognise that more can be done to encourage lettings.

6.2:

For many it is important that they are able to manifest Quaker values in the fabric of their buildings, ensuring they are both sustainable and simple. Huddersfield meeting notes that once all the eco improvements are in place they can use the meeting house as an eco flagship to all users. Frenchay Meeting, for example, hopes to become a model for a green building in the heritage environment.

9. New ways of working: 9.1:

Alnwick and St Andrews suggest that video-conferencing is something that the Society should be exploring in view of the need to travel less and cut down the use of fossil fuel. It looks forward to a time when there would be video-conferencing facilities available, avoiding travel to Friends House.

9.2:

Several meetings are looking at changing times of business meeting, and meeting for worship to make them more accessible. Wandsworth LM is holding threshing meetings as part of preparation for business

meetings when there is a big issue to consider. Keswick notes that their AM is exploring merging 3 meetings into 1 administrative unit.

9.3:

Carlton Hill Meeting records that in developing their Meeting's 'medium term framework' they used a range of creative approaches to involve Friends in the discernment process – a 'talking wall', market-research-style 'focus groups' and a shared art activity. This process itself was felt to be very valuable for the Meeting.

10. Ideas: 10.1 Reserves / Funding:

Blackheath: 'While we acknowledge that it is important to keep a reasonable level of reserves for unanticipated future expenditure, we have on occasion lent and given funds from our reserves to Friends House when we have been in a position to do so. Many of us have found the system of organised giving impenetrable. Friends have found it difficult to access information about legacy giving. The term "schedule" is not easily understood, and while Friends seem to be excellent at raising money for other good causes, we seem reluctant to acknowledge that if the Society is to carry out its work in the world it must be direct with Friends and Attenders about the responsibility we share for funding it. We suggest that the system of weekly envelopes practised in many churches has much to recommend it.'

10.2 Giving:

Hebden Bridge: They have recently split the role of treasurer from the newly set up roles of their new 'collectors group'. They explain that their treasurer was doing good book-keeping, '... but the big issue was that the good books she kept showed that income was failing to keep up with rent and outgoings!' They then got together a few very enthusiastic Friends with a zeal for increasing their income, to form a collectors' group; they did a very clear, positive and assertive letter out to all Friends, and as a result their income via CAF and standing orders shot up, and they are now on course financially (and so now actively encouraging Friends to start more giving to wider Quaker work). 'The lesson for us here being: let's not assume that the treasurer, however good at their job, is the right person to be doing the chasing of people for increased giving. Give the networking / chasing role to people better suited to it.'

Ethical Futures for Businesses and Economies in a Sustainable World



Principal Speaker: Alastair McIntosh
Quakers & Business Group Spring Gathering
Edinburgh Friends Meeting House, 2 April 2011

- What could be changed within our businesses, and our economy generally, for wider benefit? How would this look in the 21st C?
- How can Friends' spiritual sense, testimonies and principles be lived as sure foundations for more sustainable businesses - and a more sustainable national and global economy?
- What forms of business ownership, control and financing are better for distributing power and wealth, rather than concentrating it into ever fewer hands?
- How do our individual purchasing and saving decisions affect the world we all depend upon? How can we manage them better?
- Complex adaptive systems cannot stand still. Their states are patterns varying with time, either within an equilibrium or outwith a self-sustaining range. What can we do in our personal and business lives to promote a more sustainable, but not static, world?
- What framework of understanding most clearly links our own local freedoms and powers to act with beneficially changing the present, uncomfortable 20th C global economic and business reality?

Come to Q&B's first event in Scotland for the Quaker business community. A recognised interest group in BYM, with 120+ members worldwide, our purpose is to promote Quaker principles in business and the workplace.

Besides getting to know each other in that which is eternal, also we will be cheerfully conversing on that which is more temporal. Come and be part of one of the best networks for meeting interesting, stimulating, and activist Quakers. Leave refreshed anew for your own work.

For more about us visit www.qandb.org or call 0300 321 4649
To register and come, email Tim.Phillips@qandb.org

General Meeting for Scotland is an important body and deserves support. In 2007 all the General Meetings in England and Wales were removed from the administrative structure of Britain Yearly Meeting. But it was recognised that GM for Scotland held an important role in liaising with the Scottish government and with ACTS (Action for Churches Together in Scotland). We now have a whole page in Quaker Faith and Practice.

It says something about the recognition of Scotland's special status that GM can send two representatives to Meeting for Sufferings in addition to the two from each Area Meeting.

Margaret Peacock, one of those two, has already reported in the *Scottish Friend*. But at this meeting she was able to bring us the good news that the government has decided to end the detention of the children of asylum seekers, though where they are to go instead does not seem to be clear. Margaret is also worried about how to fulfil her role as a two-way channel of communication between Meeting for Sufferings and Friends throughout Scotland.

I then gave an account of Yearly Meeting which had been held the previous weekend in Friends' House. This has been fully reported in *The Friend* of 4 June. There were sessions on engagement with the political process and on the ministry of giving which were very worthwhile. I think the only positive decision made this time was that in principle journalists will be admitted to Yearly Meeting sessions. But some work is needed on the practicalities of this arrangement.

Robin Davis reminded us of the launch of Geoffrey Carnall's book about Horace Alexander who had translated much of Gandhi's work.

After the financial statement for 2009, which Trustees had already approved, there were three items of a "deciding not to" nature.

We had wondered at the last GM whether to ask Woodbrooke to hold a training course for "Becoming Friends" companions in Scotland. But there was found to be very little support for this so

we shall ask Friends to make their own arrangements to go to Woodbrooke or Swarthmoor Hall.

Secondly, we heard that there has been a decline in numbers going to the Kindrogan summer gathering. With the added difficulty of finding organisers it was sadly decided to lay the gathering down after this year.

And thirdly, the Horniman Trust, which provides small grants for the spread of Friends' principles in Scotland, has been largely dormant in recent years and it was decided to lay that down also.

More positively, we had received a statement from the Inter-faith Group on Domestic Violence which starts "It is God's intention for all human beings, male and female, child and adult, to enjoy safety, freedom, dignity and fullness of life. " Several other faiths and churches have signed this statement and the meeting was happy to do so too.

All that business being completed, General Meeting could turn its attention to our speaker for the afternoon. This was Isabel Smyth, a Roman Catholic sister, who has spent nearly all her life working in inter-faith relations in Scotland.

Isabel grew up in a time when it was assumed that one was a Christian and all holidays were based around the Christian festivals. But how things have changed. There are now many thousand Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and "others" living here. And we also have a much more secular society with a decline in religious practice.

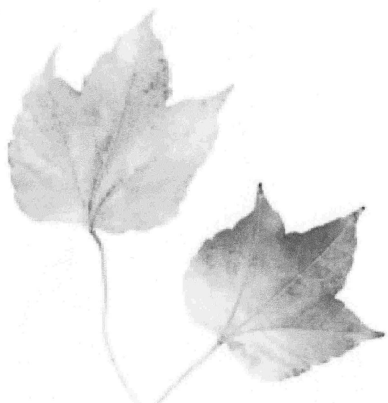
Ways that these diverse groups can live together are now on the political agenda – for instance "Time for Reflection" in the Scottish Parliament can be given by a person of any faith. We need ways of promoting dialogue and of recognising the truths in all faiths, even if we ultimately come back to our own.

Isabel described her background being brought up in a religious community and the shock of first going to live in a secular society as a student in Lancaster. But she came back to Glasgow and helped to set up the International Flat, run by Stella Reekie. Here her work for interfaith grew so that she was (and is) instrumental in the work of CAIRS (Churches Agency for Inter-Faith Relations in Scotland), the Council of Christians and Jews, the Centre for Interfaith Studies at Glasgow University, the Scottish Interfaith Council and probably others that I have missed.

She came to realise that God does not care what religion we are. Each has something unique to teach us about God and yet there are huge similarities between the religions.

Although the government is beginning to take interfaith issues seriously, along with social equality and inclusion, there are still questions to be answered – not least "what is a religion?" (The Pagan Society was not admitted into the Scottish Interfaith council because they are not a major world faith but a system of belief.) Also, the Equality Commission legislates on gender, disability and age, but it cannot act in cases of religious discrimination.

With these thoughts and others, Isabel Smyth had given us plenty to think about as we travelled home. Her presentation was a fitting end to our General Meeting.



General Meeting for Scotland

Edinburgh Meeting House - 11-00 am - 11 Sept 2010

"We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other ... but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace and unity with God, and with one another, that these things may abound."

Edward Burrough, 1659, Quaker Faith and Practice 23.11

Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

Our meeting in September will be in Edinburgh Friends' Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace. We start at 11 am - tea and coffee available from 10.30 am. Please bring your own lunch. Refreshments will be provided after the meeting, which is expected to end about 4 pm.

The morning session will include a talk by Phil Lucas about his recent experience in Palestine as an Ecumenical Accompanier. In the afternoon we will welcome Chloe Clemmons, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer. Chloe has been in the post since March 2009. Friends will be well aware of the outstanding work done by the Office since its inception providing a channel of communication between the churches and the parliament in Holyrood and more recently that in Westminster. Many Friends have contributed to the consultations the Office has set up, working with ecumenical partners on matters of common interest. In a year when Westminster politics became very interesting and with elections to Holyrood next spring Chloe will speak about her role and offer a perspective on our political life.

Please join us in Edinburgh, meet new Friends, and uphold our business method. Do please encourage anyone from your Meeting to come who may not have attended GM before.

Robin Waterston, Clerk