

SESAME

Number 182: October 2013

Stillness in Kelso/Thinking of Membership/ Bible Study/ Clutter/
Theist:non-theist debate/Plainness and Simplicity testimony/
October Meeting for Sufferings/ AM September Minutes



PREDICAZIONE DE' QUACHERI

A 17TH CENTURY QUAKER MISSIONARY PREACHES IN PLAIN DRESS (SEE P. 8)

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to the editor Alan Davies at 49a Lockharton Avenue, Edinburgh EH14 1BB, (email: a.davies@ed.ac.uk) at the latest by Tuesday 5 November, for distribution week commencing 17 November. The Editors reserve the right to condense articles. If possible please submit articles by email, sending as an attachment as well as in the body of the email, or on CD-ROM typed in Word TM accompanied with hard copy. Email versions of Sesame are available in PDF and Word TM format. Contact the Editor.

South East Scotland Area Meeting

Our next Area Meeting will take place at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, on **Saturday 26 October** and will start at **11 am** and finish by 5 pm. Tea/coffee will be available from 10.30 am, soup will be available at lunchtime (bring your own packed sandwiches/salad), and there will be tea at the end of the afternoon session.

We have one or two items to follow up from the September AM: we shall receive an initial report and recommendations from our Festival Committee and we shall be invited to begin a consideration of whether our Yearly Meeting should start on the work of producing a new *Quaker Faith & Practice*.

A major part of the day will be given to considering the role of Quaker trustees, how Yearly Meeting trustees relate to Meeting for Sufferings and how our Area Meeting trustees relate to Area Meeting. We will have the opportunity to see the report, in the form of a lively video, that BYM Trustees made to Yearly Meeting in London this year; and we will play a game to see how we would cope with the sort of scenarios that Quaker trustees have to deal with.

Come and worship, learn, exercise your responsibility as a member or attender and enjoy the company.

Phil Lucas
Area Meeting Clerk

A Day of Stillness & Reflection at Kelso Meeting House

(with Ginny Wall)

Saturday 2 November 2013

Friends and Attenders in SE Scotland are invited to join us for the last in our series of 'learning Saturdays'.

Could you 'set aside a time of quiet for openness to the Spirit, to deepen your awareness of the divine and find the inward source of your strength' (*Advices & Queries* 3)? Grounded in silence and stillness, the day will involve a gentle rhythm of prompts for reflection, opportunities for spiritual practice and worship, times for sharing and times alone. We will eat part of our midday meal in silence. Come and spend a little time resting in the Light!

Ginny Wall leads courses on prayer, stillness and meditation for Friends and others in a wide variety of settings; she is passionate about exploring the possibilities for weaving contemplative practice through everyday life. Ginny developed the 'Becoming Friends' course and 'Deepening the Life of the Spirit', a guide to spiritual practices commissioned by Quaker Life.

We are asking for a contribution of £5 per head, to help cover costs. **Please book your place by sending a cheque (payable to Kelso Quaker Meeting) to:**

Phyl Wigham,
Rashercap Cottage,
Mardon,
Cornhill-on-Tweed TD12 4SJ.

For further information, contact Phyl at wighamfamily@gmail.com

The day will begin at 11 for an 11.30 start; we aim to finish at about 4.30 pm.
Kelso Friends will provide lunch. We look forward to welcoming you.

Jane Pearn

Thinking of Membership?

A two day event in South East Scotland

There will be an informal weekend in Kelso Quaker Meeting House on Saturday and Sunday, November 23-24, for attenders who are considering applying for membership of the Religious Society of Friends. The programme will run from 10.30 am to 7 pm on Saturday. On Sunday it will start with meeting for worship with Kelso Friends at 10.30 am and finish with tea at 4 pm. There will be a charge of £25 to cover lunch and tea on both days. For those who wish to stay overnight, we can suggest B&Bs in Kelso. Please phone us if you wish to know more, or book by completing the form below and posting it to us with a cheque for £25.

Pat & Phil Lucas, Woodray, Stenton, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1TE

Tel. 01368 850227 email: patlucas1@gmail.com

Thinking of membership

Kelso Quaker Meeting House 23 – 24 November 2013

Registration form

Name _____

Address _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Quaker meeting you attend _____

Any special dietary or other requirements (food will be vegetarian):

STUDY THE BIBLE ?

Yugh! Surely that is old hat.

It belongs to a past age!

It was put together by theologians.

It symbolises control by a patriarchal authoritarian society.

Maybe.

Our discussion group, *Studying the Bible with Friends*, is examining the relevance of the Bible to us today. It includes its history, the history of Christianity and of how Early Friends used the Bible. At a seminar in Woodbrooke, it was suggested we read it as testimonials of people's encounter with God. In an age when most people reject the Great Super Ego in the Sky and fear to drop below/beyond the 3D Newtonian thinking mind, I can buy this testimonial view as a guideline to explore Quaker spirituality.

Our group is very small but we are friendly and open. Usually we use the "Friendly Bible Study" method backed up by a DVD short lecture – provided by Alastair Reid – I don't know where he finds time for it all. We also get in plenty of discussion between 7 and 9 pm on the third Tuesday of every month.

Currently we are studying Revelation (no s), taking the bull by the horns in terms of modern speculation but asking why this was so important to George Fox and the Early Quakers.

Margaret Roy

Speaking to Clutter

Glasgow Meeting House (38 Elmbank Crescent, Charing Cross, Glasgow)

1-5pm, Sunday 17 November, 2013

The media portrayal of hoarders is often indecent and always distressing. Closer to home, most of us know of someone who is affected by clutter. Maybe it is an elderly friend living alone, who ought to move for health reasons, but can't because they have too much stuff that they can neither physically move nor emotionally let go of; or alternatively it is a busy friend who is not coping with the emails, mail and circulars that arrive unbidden each day, causing their daily rhythm to slow down and them to become depressed; or maybe it is someone whose books, clothes and beloved collections are overwhelming their loved ones, those whom they share space and/or time with. Or maybe this is us.

What do our Quaker Testimonies of Peace, Truth, Simplicity, Equality and Sustainability have to say to such sufferings? What Advices and Queries can we draw from our personal experiences?

Glasgow Friend and passionate declutterer Zem Moffat invites all to a Creative Listening discernment session on Clutter, at 38 Elmbank Crescent, 1-5 pm on Sunday 17 November, 2013. It will be an afternoon of sharing and mutual learning, out of which, she hopes, will come some useful advices that can then be circulated to Friends further afield.

If you can and would like to come, please express your interest to Zem (in person, by phone or email) in good time. Falling on the third Sunday of the month, it follows a shared lunch, so it will be good to be aware of numbers!

Furthermore, on Saturday 16 November will be one of Zem's *Simply Clear* declutter workshops. These are now running monthly at Glasgow Meeting House. To find out more about these workshops, and Zem's other decluttering ventures, simply visit her website www.insightfulmoves.com or give her a call on 07971600301. It's her passion, and she's always more than happy to speak on Clutter! zem@insightfulmoves.com

Zem Moffat

The theist/non-theist debate among Friends

(Based very loosely upon the notes of the introduction to this subject Phil Lucas gave to Central Edinburgh Friends on Sunday 6 October 2013).

*Words are like leaves and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.*

Alexander Pope

I was given this quotation long before I found Quakers. It is well to bear it in mind whenever we embark upon theological discussion.

'Do you believe in God?' 'Do Quakers believe in God?'

I am unable to answer this sort of question without first ascertaining where it comes from. Is the questioner stuck with the grey-bearded-old-man-in-the-sky God they may have learned about in Sunday school? Or is the God they are talking about the God Richard Dawkins *doesn't* believe in; the God fundamentalists of scientific or religious persuasion are stuck with? If that is where the questioner is coming from, I have to answer No! God forbid!

But my No cannot be an unequivocal No. Just as I need to find what lies behind the questions above, I need to share something of my background with you so that you can understand where my equivocal yes comes from.

I was brought up by parents who at the time were evangelical Christians, both of whom had Plymouth Brethren backgrounds and who had decided to become Baptists when they married. I was conformist as a child, was baptised as a believer when I was fourteen, and, despite misgivings and doubts, followed the advice I was given and, after taking an arts degree, went on to theological college and trained to be a Baptist minister. My exposure to liberal academic theology, first at Exeter and then at Oxford Universities, blew away the fundamentalist God and Jesus of my upbringing and exposed me to a God and a Jesus I found infinitely more interesting and appealing. But being a Baptist minister was not easy. How could I retain my integrity while preaching in a way which reached out to people and developed their faith? And how could I remain within a congregational system which depended so much on the relationship between the charismatic shepherd and his (or her) flock and where earning a living wage would mean moving to a middle class area where the congregation could afford to pay it? No sooner was I in than I was on my way out. I was a poor minister (in more than one sense), but my second church, in the heart of the Black Country south of Wolverhampton, supported me generously and warmly when I told them after only three years that I was quitting and they allowed us to live on in the manse while I did my year's preparation to be a teacher.

I spent a time in a spiritual wilderness, worshipping with Methodists but withdrawing increasingly into an inward, uncertain, silence. Until one day during the wild and wet August of 1979, I chanced upon Come to Good Quaker Meeting House, near Truro, picked up some Quaker literature and realised immediately that I had found a community of like-minded, open, tolerant, fellow-travellers who could give me a home and the support I needed to start growing again. Here were a people for whom being and doing seemed to be more important than saying. We found the people in the Quaker Meeting in Stourbridge more than matched that expectation. Pat and I were accepted into membership the following year.

For some years in the late 70s and 80s I did not wish to use the God word. I had turned my back on a god made in the image of man, which I now believe was the god I had been brought up with. I had no other word for what I was groping towards. I continued to have huge respect for Jesus. My theological education had given me some tools to excavate beyond the myth-making of the early church to find a man, all humanity, who not only crystallized in his teaching some of the most telling messages from earlier and contemporary Hebrew literature but who also walked the walk. I continued to value the Old Testament for its poetry and especially for its record of dissidents and hopeless cases, whose experience and courage caused them to challenge power and money, pride and complacency, the likes of Amos and Jeremiah and Hosea and Ezekiel. But God??

Looking back, I think my experience during the 80s and early 90s of working closely with Moslems, Sikhs and Hindus in multiracial Dudley helped me to take ownership of the God word again. I was particularly moved by one devout Moslem family I got to know, whose faith was reflected in generous hospitality, openness and self-giving. Why would I want to dissociate myself because of language, because of 'notions', from those, including many evangelical Christians, whose belief in the personal, revelatory God I felt I had left behind, compelled them to live compassionately, often living the kind of lives I could only admire and aspire to?

Theism, according to Wikipedia (that fount of all wisdom) 'conceives of God as personal, present and active in the governance and organisation of the world and the universe'. I have come to acknowledge that the road I have travelled has led me away from belief in a God who reveals her/himself in any personal sense, who intervenes in human affairs, who has developed a special relationship with humankind through a special act of incarnation. I love the poetry of it but can only understand it as poetry, as a symbolic representation of something beyond words and imagination. In human experience there is and always will be a sense, for those who are open to it, of otherness, of transcendence, of that utter goodness which radiates in creation and draws out the holy, which is the potential of every human being. It is beyond the reach of words, is sometimes experienced but always inadequately told. It is love and creativity, peace, justice and healing.

Using the symbolic word 'God' as a descriptor for this experience gives me unity with those whose lives of compassion and integrity are inspired by quite different understandings of 'God', in which group I include the Moslem family I have mentioned and many Christians of evangelical persuasion. Like David Boulton (whose religious pilgrimage is in many ways parallel to my own and whose integrity and intellectual rigour I certainly respect) and those who have joined him in the Quaker non-theist network, I'm probably a non-theist. But unlike them, I have no wish to declare myself as such or to join their group. I prefer simply to stand alongside those, whether of declared religious persuasion or not, who are for compassion and justice and peace. That's hard enough in itself, without letting barriers of language and what George Fox called 'notions' get in the way.

I finish with a quote from Karen Armstrong, whose scholarship and insights I hugely respect:

We have got used to thinking that religion should provide us with information. Is there a God? How did the world come into being? But this is a modern aberration. Religion was never supposed to provide answers to questions that lay within the reach of human reason. That was the role of logos. Religion's task, closely allied to that of art, was to help us live creatively, peacefully and even joyously with realities for which there were no easy explanations and problems that we could not solve: mortality, pain, grief, despair, and outrage at the cruelty and injustice of life. Over the centuries, people of all cultures discovered that by pushing their reasoning powers to the limit,

stretching language to the end of its tether, and living as selflessly and compassionately as possible, they experienced a transcendence that enabled them to affirm their suffering with serenity and courage. Scientific rationality can tell us why we have cancer; it can even cure us of our disease. But it cannot assuage the terror, disappointment and sorrow that come with the diagnosis, nor can it help us to die well. That is not within its remit. Religion will not work automatically, however; it requires a great deal of effort and cannot succeed if it is facile, false, idolatrous or self-indulgent.

Religion is a practical discipline, and its insights are not derived from abstract speculation but from spiritual exercises and a dedicated lifestyle... Without such practice, it is impossible to understand the truth of its doctrines.

I referred in particular to these books, which have in recent years, helped me clarify my own thoughts. Only one is by a Quaker.

Richard Holloway – *Leaving Alexandria* (Canongate, 2013)

David Boulton – *The Trouble with God: building the republic of heaven* (O Books, 2005)

Karen Armstrong – *The Case for God* (Vintage, 2009)

Phil Lucas

The testimony of plainness and simplicity of life

The following is based on 'A History of the Quaker Testimonies' by Gil Skidmore. In her article, which was first published in The Friends Quarterly, January 1991 (pages 197-208), she examines four Quaker testimonies: the testimony against tithes, the testimony against oaths, the peace testimony and the one below, the testimony for plainness and simplicity of life. (Eds.)

The principle of plain speech was a logical extension of the testimony on oaths and truthfulness. Because there is that of God in everyone, then it is not right to make distinctions between people by using different forms of address. Quakers did not use the flattering titles of this world, but called everyone by their given names. They also made no distinction between *you* and *thou* when, as in the 17th century, social superiors called inferiors *thou*, but were themselves always respectfully addressed by them as *you*. Men Friends also refused to remove their hats (then normally worn in and out of doors) in the presence of their social superiors. Only God deserved that honour, and hats were removed for prayer.

Plain speech also meant that Friends did not use *heathen* names for the days of the week or months of the year, but called them by numbers instead, Sunday being First Day. The names of meetings were literally descriptive – Yearly

Meeting, Monthly Meeting, Six Weeks Meeting, Second Day's Morning Meeting – all were exactly what they said. Even Meeting for Sufferings, which seems outlandish today, began as a bare description of its purpose.

Plain dress was originally just what it said, the ordinary dress of the day shorn of superfluous ornament. For a newly convinced Friend this was sometimes literally what they did. Thomas Ellwood says:

I took off from my Apparel those unnecessary Trimmings of Lace, Ribbands and useless Buttons which had no real service, but were set on only for that which was, by Mistake, called Ornament. And I ceased to wear Rings.

Not only ornamental rings were frowned on. Quaker wives did not wear wedding rings as a continuing witness against what Puritans had thought a Popish practice. Mary Pennington was married to her first husband, William Springett, without the use of a ring in 1642 before she had any thought of Quakers. When, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the practice of wearing wedding rings began to creep into the Society, a letter of protest to the *British Friend* called them *the badge of an hireling ministry*.

By the end of the seventeenth century, however, plain dress was becoming more than just a lack of ornament and more and more rules were being propounded about what Friends might or might not wear. The aim was becoming not so much simplicity as uniformity.

Margaret Fell saw the dangers of this approach. In 1700 she protested:
Christ Jesus saith that we must take no thought what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or what we shall put on; but bids us consider the lilies how they grow in more royalty than Solomon. But contrary to this they say we must look at no colours, not make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them nor wear them. But we must be all in one dress and one colour, This is a silly poor Gospel.

Throughout the 18th and well into the 19th century plain dress continued as important Friends' testimonies, but their purpose had changed. They were no longer a witness to the world of the equality of every soul before God, but had become the distinguishing marks of a peculiar people, keeping them separate from the world. As quietism spread, such isolation was even welcomed. John Roper of Norwich, writing in 1768, was representative of this view:

Although to the eye of natural wisdom the cock of the hat, the cut of a coat, the form of a cap may appear insignificant yet the spiritual eye can see they are all mercifully designed by infinite Wisdom to build a separation, to form though by such despicable briars and thorns, a hedge that pricks on both sides to prevent an improper, unsafe communication, association and intermarrying with those among whom we dwell.

Plain speech and plain dress were stuck in a time-warp. Friends used *thee* and *thou* to each other long after and distinctions between *thou* and *you* had disappeared from ordinary speech. Their clothes were antiquated and so peculiar that they required specialised tailors. Not only unnecessary ornament was shunned but anything which could be construed as ornament, even a collar on

a coat. The Quaker *plain* coat had no collar except a few inches which stood up straight and certainly no lapels. Neave Brayshaw reports that a boy going to Ackworth School in 1853 wearing a coat which had a turned down collar and lapels had them cut off by order of the authorities.

Eventually there was bound to be a reaction to such conservatism, and it began at Yearly Meeting in 1859 over the matter of gravestones. The setting up of memorial stones over graves was thought *a vain and empty custom* and, as a minute of Dorset Quarterly Meeting in 1705 put it, *of no service to the deceased*. It was not until the Yearly Meetings of 1850, 1861 and 1885 that the practice was allowed, subject to the conditions that the stones were to state no more than the name and age of the deceased and dates of birth and death, that *such a uniformity may be preserved as may effectually guard against any distinction being made in that place between the rich and the poor*. In 1861 a new Book of Discipline was issued in which the ancient form of words *plainness of speech, behaviour and apparel* no longer found a place. However, the testimony for plainness and for truthfulness of expression remains. Most Friends nowadays do not use titles, at least among themselves, and the testimony to plain dress survives in an unwillingness to *dress up* for Meeting.

Historically, Quaker testimonies have been the outward mark of Quakerism – the labels that Friends have worn to distinguish them from the world. At their best they have been a witness to others of the truth of the Light within. At their most damaging they have turned inward and have become the means of isolating the Society of Friends from the wider society.

Meeting for Sufferings October 2013

Meeting for Sufferings took place on 5 October. We were joined in our opening worship by 35 young people who then spent the day in their own session considering whether this is the right time to start on a revision of *Quaker Faith & Practice*.

The meeting started by welcoming the statement that the Recording Clerk had made, on our behalf about Syria.

As had been agreed at our meeting in April, we returned to the issue of the boycott of goods from the Israeli settlements in Palestine. There were several minutes from Area Meetings, including ours, supporting the decision not to extend the boycott. We had an up-date from QPSW about their activities in this area. There is increasing ecumenical appreciation of the Ecumenical Accompaniers and, as a result, increased funding for an additional staff member to increase the advocacy aspect. Work has also gone on at the European Parliament and there are now guidelines preventing settlements benefitting from EU grants. Ecumenical Accompaniers are spending time with Jewish families

in Haifa and have also had a session with 18 year old Israeli army recruits. There is on-going dialogue with Jewish groups at both BYM and local level which can be difficult but can bear fruit on an individual level.

We also returned to the subject of the government cuts in welfare benefits. There had been a wide response to the survey about what Meetings were doing in this area and it was clear that many Friends are involved in some way in tackling issues of poverty and inequality. It is hoped to develop stronger networks of Friends involved in different issues. We heard about some of the activities that QPSW had been involved in, particularly with other churches and were referred to various documents on the website, including the Earth and Economy newsletter. There is also a gathering to be held at Woodbrooke from 25-27 October to look at different ways in which Friends can respond to cuts and how we can be most effective in tackling growing inequality.

The next item, which seemed to lead on from this, was a report from the Quaker Housing Trust, who support a wide range of projects, often supplying funding that is not available from other sources. It is a practical response to the housing crisis, involving putting principles into practice. They also work in partnership with other bodies, such as Scottish Churches Housing Action.

After lunch we agreed a number of appointments and the dates for our meetings in 2015.

We then heard from Trustees and received the minutes of their last meeting. We were told that that the issue of Swarthmore Hall would be considered at our next meeting in December. Trustees have been considering issues around giving, having decided against the reintroduction of the 'quota'. There is a need to share good practice and to consider how we get all Friends to financially support central work enthusiastically.

We were then asked to consider whether we should divest ourselves of holdings in companies engaged in fossil fuel extraction. BYM has a small percentage of their investment in two companies involved in fossil fuel extraction. We recommended to Trustees that there should be full disinvestment and that investment in alternative energy should be considered. Trustees agreed to look at the investment guidelines.

Unfortunately, I had to leave the meeting at this point to catch the train as engineering work was making the journey considerably slower than usual. The rest of the agenda was a consideration of various minutes from Area meetings which were to be referred elsewhere. We were also asked to consider and agree the draft terms of reference of the Long-term Framework Working Group which will be looking at creating the framework for 2015-20.

As usual, there will be reports of this meeting in The Friend and the documents are available through the Quaker website. Please contact me if you want to discuss any of the issues.

Janet Grimwade

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Minutes of Area Meeting held on Sunday, 15 September 2013, at 2 pm at the Open Door, South Edinburgh.

2013/09/01: Opening Worship

Extract 21.53 from *Quaker Faith & Practice* was read during our opening worship. This was written by Ruth Fawell in 1976.

2013/09/02: Introductions

Those present introduced themselves by name and the Meeting(s) they attend. (For attendance by Meeting please see closing minute.) We welcome as attenders Ade Cross, Benjamin Cross, Margaret Muir and Tamzin Zawadzka.

2013/09/03: Signing the minutes of the Area Meeting of 29 June 2013

In the absence of the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, we propose these as a correct record and ask Phil Lucas, Clerk, to sign them at our next Area Meeting.

2013/09/04: Matters arising

Introducing the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) to Scottish prisons (Minutes 2013/05/08 and 2013/06/04b refer): We are pleased to report that, through Mark Bitel, an arrangement has been made for representatives of AVP to meet with the chaplaincy team of Edinburgh Prison to take forward AM's request that consideration be given to the introduction of AVP to that prison (and possibly thereafter to the Scottish Prison Service generally).

2013/09/05: Report on Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) 2013

Ade Cross and Tamzin Zawadzka have reported on JYM 2013, beginning by telling us what they enjoyed there. 100 Young Friends (15 to 18 year olds) attended. Two things particularly impressed them: a) the venue at Kidderminster Pioneer Camp which enabled lots of outdoor activities and b) the theme, "Talking About Quakerism".

Quaker journeys differ for all of us and it was very helpful to hear of others' personal journeys.

Summer Shindig has been a good, happy experience. Ade said it made him happy to be a Quaker but JYM made him feel like a Quaker and enabled him to feel more confident in responding to questions about being a Quaker.

There were many interactive activities and games. Speakers, including this year's Swarthmore lecturer, deepened the experience.

Meetings for Worship enabled spoken Ministry. Being in base groups led to a great and sustaining knowledge of each other in the group.

There were many positives but a long way from Scotland!

We are pleased Young Friends could attend and hope that this will continue.

We thank them for their attendance and report and ask that the JYM epistle (which Tamzin read to us) be published in *Sesame*.

2013/09/06: Trustees' Report and Accounts 2012

Mark Hutcheson, our Treasurer, has presented an overview of the trustees' Report and Accounts for the Area Meeting for 2012. The accounts have been consolidated so that they present a record of all financial activity in the Area Meeting during the year. They have been examined by Whitelaw Wells, our independent examiners.

We accept these and authorise the clerk of today's meeting to sign them on behalf of the meeting. Mark thanked the able and gifted Friends who help him with AM accounts. We thank our former treasurer, Caroline Evens, who has overseen the compilation of these accounts, as well as all those who assist with the tasks of treasurership in the area meeting, for the work that they have undertaken for us. We appoint Whitelaw Wells to act as independent examiners of the 2013 accounts.

Questions asked focussed on the amounts we remit to BYM and it was confirmed that after settling the bills to pay for the windows, we intend to revert to our previous level of contribution to BYM (Trustees have written twice to BYM to explain why we have, as a temporary measure, reduced our contributions to them. Trustees, and AM, are keen to increase our contributions and revert to our previous level). We know we have enough money to pay the bills for the windows at 7 Victoria Terrace but we have to re-pay interest free loans from Friends and this requested repayment is an unknown amount.

Copies of the Report and Accounts are available for any member or attender who would like to see them.

2013/09/07: Keith O'Brien and his support for peace

We have received a minute from Central Edinburgh Meeting requesting that we ask General Meeting for Scotland to send the following letter to the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland:

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Scotland always appreciated the strong support of the peace movement expressed by Cardinal O'Brien, and we understand that he was equally appreciative of the Quaker commitment to our peace testimony. This shared concern to work for a more humane and peaceful world transcended our radical differences on a number of issues, most notably same-sex marriage.

We know that the Catholic Church in Scotland has for many years supported nuclear disarmament, and Cardinal O'Brien's powerful advocacy for nuclear disarmament will be missed to an extent we find it difficult to estimate.

We earnestly hope that the Church will do its best to meet the challenge presented by the loss of the Cardinal. The quest for alternatives to war and violence is a difficult one, and needs all our best efforts to maintain its momentum.

Doubts were expressed about focussing on the contribution of an individual, perhaps swaying the views of his successor. We suggest emphasis should be laid on welcoming the incoming Bishops and Cardinal and a hope that they would continue to work toward peace in the world, and that perhaps the words "most notably same sex marriage" should be omitted.

Geoffrey Carnall is willing to co-ordinate suggestions and responses and bring back an amended letter to our next AM on 26 October (the next General Meeting takes place on 16/17 November).

2013/09/08: Request from Elders

We have received the following minute of an Area Meeting Elders Meeting held on 9 June 2013, which is responding to a request from AM Archives Group:

"We have been contacted by Pat Lucas from the South East Scotland AM Archives Group. The group has come across photos of deceased Friends together with AM minutes of record and in some cases memorial minutes. There seems to be no record kept of these since Pat stopped being Central Edinburgh LM Clerk, when she started a folder which is still in the AM Library at 7 Victoria Terrace. Archives Group feel this is something which it would be good to continue, and wondered if Elders would (a) discuss whether they agree and if so (b) who should be asked to carry this out.

"After much discussion, we do not consider that it should be elders' responsibility to do this. We suggest that AM itself considers who might be responsible for these tasks."

There seem to be two aspects to this

- a) Initially to update the file. The last "entry" is 2007 and we ask the Archive Group to do this.
- b) To continue to keep this valuable resource up-to-date with e.g. minute of record of death from AM minutes, Memorial Minute, Testimony, photograph, etc. We ask that this be a role for AM Assistant Clerk.

2013/09/09: Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)

David Turner has informed us that ECCR works for economic justice, human rights and environmental sustainability. It is representative in its membership of most Christian denominations, faith-based investors, religious communities and orders, non-governmental organisations, ethical investment managers and concerned individuals. Some years ago, we took out associate membership, to be reported on and reviewed annually. David is reporting on work in 2012 and 2013.

Until now ECCR has issued 3 or 4 bulletins each year, usually with articles related to the aims, rather than details of particular areas of progress. From this year there will be three briefing papers instead, each featuring one or more aspect of what engaging with companies is achieving.

David summarised the contents of the bulletins since he last reported. December 2012's theme was "The Economic Order – challenging the Status Quo." A key quotation is: "In practice this means challenging corporate activity which lives by short term and speculative gain, which increases the divide between rich and poor, which seeks to manipulate or dominate the market, victimises the powerless."

March 2013 focussed on Supermarkets and the theme of June 2013 was "Keeping Faith in Finance" not meaning having faith in finance but ensuring finance is influenced by faith.

ECCR has been working with QPSW for some months to develop a web site.

We thank David for his report and agree to re-affiliate, and ask our Treasurer to action [*sic*] this. We commend the website of ECCR to Friends.

2013/09/10: Meeting for Sufferings

Janet Grimwade has spoken to us of the latest Meeting of Sufferings, the first meeting after Britain Yearly Meeting in May. An account of this is in the current edition of *Sesame* of September 2013. [No. 181.]

We thank Janet for her verbal and written reports and note some Friends' disappointment that Sufferings has not made a statement about the changes to welfare that undeservedly punish the poor.

2013/09/11: Concern re Drones

Central Edinburgh Meeting has informed us of their minute in which our Friend Marianne Ferguson-Rice raised a concern about the use of unmanned armed drones for military purposes. She is greatly exercised about the use of drones by our own forces as well as the Americans. She feels strongly that it is a subject which should be brought before the Scottish Parliament, especially as at least one component of drones may be being manufactured here in Scotland. Central Edinburgh Local Meeting agreed to pass this concern on to Area Meeting, so that it can be passed, in turn, to the General Meeting Parliamentary Liaison Function Group.

We agree so to do, especially at this time we are engaging through this Group with the Scottish Parliament.

2013/09/12: A response to a letter from Peter Tansley

Jane Pearn has spoken to a letter signed by both herself as Clerk of Kelso Meeting and Phil Lucas, Clerk to SE Scotland Area Meeting, in response to a letter from Peter Tansley. This letter arose from the Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Joan Tansley. We regret any disappointment caused and agree with the letter that the wording of the Testimony cannot be revisited. We thank John Harris for contributing and Jane and Phil for their appropriate written response.

2013/09/13: Membership Matters

a) Further to our minute 2013/06/07a, Cathy Bell and Laurie Naumann met with **Jennifer Wilson** of Central Fife Meeting, who is seeking membership. In their absence, Marjorie Farquharson read their report. We warmly welcome Jennifer into membership and ask Laurie Naumann to do so on our behalf. We ask that the report be signed by all three and it will then be attached to these minutes.

b) [An application for membership was received, and visitors appointed.]

c) Record of deaths

(i) We note the death of **John Fleming** of Central Fife who died on 31 August and whose funeral was held on 6 September after the manner of Friends. We believe that his membership was still with Devon AM and we ask our Clerk to liaise with them.

(ii) We record the death of **Islay Dow** of South Edinburgh Meeting who died on 7 September 2013 and whose funeral was on 13 September. We ask South Edinburgh and Central Meetings to bring to a future Area Meeting a Memorial Minute.

South Edinburgh Friends expect there to be a Memorial Meeting soon and will confirm the time and date. (Addendum to minutes "we have agreed to hold a Memorial Meeting to celebrate the life of Islay Dow at Central Meeting, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh on Monday 21 October at 1pm, to be followed by tea and cakes).

(iii) We record the death of **Marion Morton** who died on 11 September 2013. Marion's Life Celebration (NB not a funeral) will take place at 1pm on Saturday 21 September (i.e. next Saturday) in the Lorimer Chapel at Warriston Crematorium. An explanation of Marion's death, for which she was prepared, and an invitation from the family to attend the celebration and the associated eating occasion and ceilidh, was read to the meeting. We ask Central Edinburgh Meeting to prepare a Memorial Minute for Marion to come to a future Area Meeting.

d) Transfer of membership: We have received a request from Kim Smith, now of 36 Eskview Avenue, Musselburgh to transfer her membership from South Wales Area Meeting to this Meeting. She is worshipping at Portobello/Musselburgh and South Edinburgh Meetings. We agree to this request and ask Sue Sierra to action it.

2013/09/14: Nominations and appointments

The nominating group appointed at our June 2013 Meeting to bring forward a name for the Convenor of Nomination Committee is now bringing us the name of Don Stubbings. This name being acceptable, we appoint Don Stubbing to serve from September 2013 to August 2016.

Nominations Committee puts forward the following for consideration, to serve to the end of August 2016:

- a) Festival Committee: Kim Smith
- b) Archives Group: Madeline Patterson (renomination)

We appoint these Friends accordingly.

Request for release: Jasmine Peripanayagam has asked for release as an Elder which will take immediate effect. We agree to this request and thank Jasmine for her service.

2013/09/15: Dates and Venues of SE Scotland Area Meeting from April 2014 to February 2015

The following dates, times and venues are already agreed:

2014

Saturday 11 January	11 am-4 pm	Central Edinburgh
Sunday 23 February	2 pm-5.30 pm	South Edinburgh

Further proposed dates and venues are as follows:

2014

Saturday 12 April	11 am - 5 pm	Central Edinburgh
Saturday 24 May	2 - 5 pm	Tweeddale
Saturday 5 July	11.30 am - 5 pm	Kelso
Sunday 21 September	2 - 5 pm	South Edinburgh
Saturday 25 October	11 am - 5 pm	Polmont
Saturday 29 November	2 - 5 pm	Central Edinburgh

2015

Sunday 11 January	2 - 5 pm	South Edinburgh
Saturday 28 February	11 am - 5 pm	Central Edinburgh

These dates and venues are now agreed.

2013/09/16: AOCB

a) John Phillips has informed us of the following, arising from General Meeting held on 7 September 2013:

(i) Letter concerning Trident replacement

The Parliamentary Liaison Function Group is finalising the letter that was circulated; it will be completed on 14 September and will be sent to MP and MPSs over Robin Waterston's name. Area Meetings are asked

to ensure that it is known about in their meetings (it will be on the GM website) and that Friends use its content (though not the exact text) when holding face-to-face meetings with, or writing, to their MPs and MSPs.

(ii) Statement on Syria

(See latest *Sesame* [*i.e.* No. 181] for the statement issued by the Recording Clerk)

Friends are asked to contact MPs to encourage dialogue rather than confrontation, especially with Iran, Hezbollah and Russia. Topics that can be thought about might include the role of the QUNO offices, upholding international law through the UN, deflecting unilateral responses towards diplomacy. Friends House have arranged about 15 local radio interviews since the statement was issued.

(iii) Possible GM Family Gathering

This year there was a "Pre-Summer Shindig" event for children who were thinking of going to the Summer Shindig for the first time (but who did not know anyone there). Next year Bronwen Currie and Madeleine Harding are thinking of possibly organising an early-summer GM Family Gathering (a camping weekend) as a slightly expanded version. It is still in the "thinking about it" stage and AMs are asked to pass on their thoughts about the idea to Madeleine. We will return to this at a future Area Meeting.

b) A request from Portobello/Musselburgh

We have been asked by Portobello/Musselburgh Meeting to make the process of appointing a verifier easier by agreeing to appoint Kim Smith as an additional PVG verifier to assist the disclosure of volunteers working with children and young people in that meeting. We agree so to do and ask that this minute be forwarded to Michael Booth, at Friends House.

2013/09/17 Concluding minute

31 Friends, including 4 attenders, from five local meetings have attended all or part of this Area Meeting as indicated below

Central Edinburgh	Central Fife	East Lothian	Kelso
11	-	-	1
Penicuik	Polmont	South Edinburgh	Tweeddale
2	2	15	-

We next meet on Saturday 26 October at 11 a.m. at 7 Victoria Terrace.

Kate Arnot (Clerk this time)

So to the calmly gathered thought
 The innermost of truth is taught,
 The mystery dimly understood,
 That love of God is love of good,
 And chiefly its divinest trace
 In Him of Nazareth's holy face;
 That to be saved is only this---
 Salvation from our selfishness . . .
 That the dear Christ dwells not afar,
 The king of some remoter star . . .
 But here, amidst the poor and blind,
 The bound and suffering of our kind,
 In works we do, in prayers we pray,
 Life of our life, He lives to-day.

J. G. WHITTIER, *The Meeting*

Within us is a meeting-place with God, who strengthens and invigorates our whole personality and makes us new creatures . . . The tempests and strains of self-seeking . . . grow still. We learn to be worked through; serenity takes the place of anxiety; fretful cares are replaced by a deep and certain assurance . . . We learn to walk in quiet assurance and boldness ; for he is with us.

THOMAS R. KELLY, *Prayer*

Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland

Every Sunday

Central Edinburgh: 7 Victoria Terrace	9.30am&	11.00am
South Edinburgh: Open Door, 420 Morningside Road,		10.30am
Polmont: Greenpark Community Centre		1 0.45am
Kelso: Quaker Meeting House, Kelso		10.30am

Every Wednesday

Mid Week Meeting: 7 Victoria Terrace		12.30pm- 1pm
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First Sunday in the Month

Penicuik & Peebles Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik		11.00am
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Children welcome, bring and share lunch.

Portobello: Old Parish Church Hall, Bellfield Street

First Tuesday in the Month

Edinburgh University Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms		1pm- 1.30pm
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(opposite the Weir Buildings) at Kings Buildings: contact

Sarah Martin 07818050853 or sarah.martin@ed.ac.uk for more details

Second Sunday in the Month

Tweeddale Tweedbridge Court, Margaret Blackwood House,

Dukehaugh, Peebles All welcome but please phone tconfirm.

01721 721 050 or 01896 850 389.		10.30am
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Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy		10.30am
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(in Kirk Wynd opposite the Old Kirk)

East Lothian: East Linton Community Hall		11.00am
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Third Tuesday in the Month

Edinburgh University Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms		1pm- 1.30pm
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Fourth Sunday in the Month

Tweeddale: Tweedbridge Court, Margaret Blackwood House,

Details as Second Sunday above

Central Fife Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy as above		10.30am
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Portobello: CHANGES Community Health Project

108 Market St, Musselburgh, East Lothian EH21 6QA		10.30am
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Barony St Meeting 33 Barony Street, Edinburgh		7.00 pm
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Last Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: East Linton Community Hall		11.00am
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Distribution of Sesame & Scottish Friends Newsletter

The current practice is to distribute one copy of *Sesame* and the *Scottish Friends Newsletter* to every Member and Attender household. Contributions to the costs of *Sesame* are always warmly welcomed by the Area Meeting Treasurer, Mark Hutcheson. An email version of *Sesame* is more ecological and is free! A large print version is available on request. Published by Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain: South East Scotland Area Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. Scottish Charity No. SC019165
