

The Northern Quaker

Autumn / Winter 2018

North Scotland Area Meeting



poet Kenneth Steven, guest speaker at Pluscarden

Contents (click on link)

[Comments](#)

[Notices](#)

[Meetings for Sufferings July 2018](#)

[Pluscarden AM August 2018 - report](#)

[Pluscarden poems](#)

[Pluscarden AM August 2018 - minutes](#)

[The post-truth world and our response to it -](#)

[Aberdeen AM November 2018 - report](#)

[The future of NSAM; Looking Forward with Hope](#)

[Obituary; Olivia McLeod](#)

[Blue Poppies \(in memory of Esther Nicolson\)](#)

[Quaker Life Rep Council, Oct 2018](#)

[Scottish Parliament Working Group](#)

[The Inverted Near-Death Experience s a tool for peace](#)

[The End](#)

[Kinmuck Cemetery](#)

[Quaker Contribution Schedule 2018](#)

Area Meetings for 2019

9th February at Inverness

4th May at Oban

23rd-25th August at Pluscarden

26th October at Aberdeen

General Meetings for Scotland

9th March 2019 West - Glasgow

8th June 2019 South East

14th September 2019 North

16th November 2019 East - Perth

Comments [^ return to top](#)

Welcome to the latest edition of the Northern Quaker.

Once again, my apologies for this edition being slightly out of sequence. Lack of material has been the main obstacle. My New Year's resolution is to relentlessly badger, cajole, plead to produce enough "copy" for 4 regular editions. So if you have read a book, watched a play, attended a meeting, or anything that you think might be of interest to others, please send contributions for future editions in any form (Word is best) to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ, harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

After many years absence I managed to join the residential AM in Pluscarden where the guest speaker was the poet Kenneth Steven, and his workshop has inspired several Friends to contribute their own poems. Another discussion was on "post truth" (discussion paper included here). This led me to reflect on the irony that, whereas today's Russia is so often accused of manipulating the news through the internet and social media, in another life as a student of the Russian language and politics I spent a short time in the Soviet Union when control of media was such that a licence was required to own a copying machine. Also ironic was the title of the communist party's organ "Pravda" – "the Truth". I had always believed that the following saying was from Russian folklore (in fact, it's from Bertolt Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle); "... truth is a black cat In a windowless room at midnight"

I hope you enjoy the edition; if you are also receiving this in the printed edition, please consider if you might wish to switch to the email version which contains coloured photographs as well as a "clickable" contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. If you wish for your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

Notices [^ return to top](#)

Toilet Twinning

A thought for LBMs; Aberdeen LBM decided in May to have a collection ongoing with the monthly charity for Toilet Twinning. The arrangement is that for £60 per toilet we choose the country - Afghanistan, DRC, CAR, Guatemala, Liberia, Myanmar, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan, S. Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.

By donating £60 to twin a toilet, we help those in desperate poverty to have access to a proper latrine, clean water and the information they need to be healthy.

Your smallest room becomes the proud owner of a certificate, complete with a colour photo of its twin and GPS coordinates so you can look up your twin on Google Maps.

QQ

Erin Quinney Smith writes;

My name is Erin Quinney Smith, I am a young Friend living near Inverness in the North of Scotland. Recently, I was offered a place at a United World College (UWC) in Wales. The UWCs are 17 sixth form colleges around the world, dedicated to promoting international and cultural understanding, sustainability and peace, through education - ever more pertinent in a world that seems to need much more understanding and awareness of the different needs of peoples and nature around the planet. <https://www.atlanticcollege.org/>

What appeals to me about UWC is that they have succeeded in combining a vision for a more sustainable and peaceful future, with . The stated UWC mission is - to make education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. Now, when I am looking for ways to benefit communities and further understand about our world, I can, even while continuing with my education. I am excited by the opportunity this will present, to learn more about the world in a way which crosses over with my Quaker testimonies.

I was offered a place following my second application, and in part, I put my determination to re-apply for a place down to Quaker influences, especially at young friends events such as Summer Shindig, Link weekends and Junior Yearly Meeting. Until I was 11 going to Quaker meetings was more of a habit than something I consciously did. I remember once, my brother and I were asked why we attend Quaker meetings and we had responded with 'mum' and 'the biscuits'! wasn't until I went to Shindig that I really started asking myself - so what are Quakers? What are these meetings for worship for and why do I go?'. Being at shindig - where for the first time I experienced young Quakers maturely discussing our beliefs, opinions and also current issues - opened a whole new avenue for me. I realised I enjoyed learning about the world we live in. From there this new avenue continued to open, branching away from just Quaker events into other areas of my life. Starting an Amnesty International group at school was one such outcome, leading me to UWC was another. I believe it was this particular path to UWC that gave me the resilience to re-apply after not succeeding the first year.

I commence my studies at Atlantic College on the 27 of August 2018 until July 2020. I received a 2/3rds bursary scholarship and I am now seeking to raise approx. £1000 each month for the next 2 years/£6000 each half year (£25,000 total), which enables me to take up this opportunity. I have approached companies, and received one sponsorship so far. I am also doing a Sponsored Workathon, where I have asked my term-time weekend work place to give me as many hours as possible from when I finished school in June, till I leave in August. And I am asking friends and family to match-fund my earnings, or a percentage of them. I would very much appreciate knowledge of any funding bodies, philanthropic friends anyone might know of, to give me a way to fulfill my goal?

With thanks.

In Friendship, Erin Quinney Smith erin4qsmith@gmail.com Woodend, Lochloy, Nairn, IV12 5LE

QQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQQ

Think

Sandy McEwen spotted this on the notice board of the Westray Kirk, and thought it might be relevant to us all.

Before you speak **THINK**

T is it True

H is it Helpful

I is it Inspiring

N is it Necessary

K is it Kind

Meeting for Sufferings July 7th 2018 [^ return to top](#)

Jane Booth requested to be released from serving as representative of North Scotland Quakers at the May Area Meeting in Brora. She had completed her triennium. I was then elected to be the new Area Representative, with Mary Dower as the deputy. This was through a telephone AM on 13 June. It is with joy and 'quaking' that I take on this mantle. I am sorry however that I will not be able to deliver this report in person (I am committed to a teaching programme in Geneva from end August until mid-October).

I am a relatively new member of Quakers and therefore have much to learn about the system and how it works. It was therefore somewhat daunting walking into the large Meeting room at Friends House Euston with 150 people present. Just over half of these people were Area reps and of these half were new to this role. Others at the meeting included staff members. Much of the first half of the day was spent familiarizing us with MFS and the staff and support team involved.

There were two major themes that evolved over the day that echoed the activities of Britain Yearly Meeting

1. The structures have become too complex and too vertical in the way that they are run. We were challenged to simplify and adhere to our testimony of simplicity. We were called to re-imagine ourselves as a simple charity in charge of a simple church. It has grown in complexity. We were referred to QFP 8:22 – 23.... which says

Each committee and department has arisen and developed in response to a particular need. Each generation of Friends has been faced with a structure in some respects untidy, and we may be thankful for the clear-minded among us who help us, from time to time, to set our house in better order. But order without life does not work and our continual task is to ensure that our structures are in harmony with the changing tides of life in Britain Yearly Meeting.

2. Members are not always being listened to

It is interesting to me that N Scotland has been addressing both of these challenges in our Area Meetings over the past year.

Other concerns that arose:

- The ratifying of the Canterbury agreement on sustainability from 2011. It was agreed more action is needed to fulfil our commitment to this. As an Area Meeting North Scotland we have spent time considering this.
- Revision of the book of Discipline. MFS ratified the report to go ahead with this. Consideration and voice will be given to young people, diversity and gender sensitivity and religion.
- Attention was brought to a minute from the Community Justice Group (8 May). It concerns the Lucy Faithfull Foundation news and update on Circles and the withdrawal of funding from the Probation service. It was mentioned that this does not directly affect Scotland's policy, but remains a concern for Friends everywhere.
- Diversity and Inclusion development project: It was requested that all Area Meetings talk and report back on this before November.
- It was considered of great importance to listen to The voices of the You that MSF and this will be on the main agenda for the next MFS (October 6)Unfortunately I cannot be there but ask Mary Dower to go to this one. The focus will be on the Young People's Participation Day.
- The residential will be 23-25 November and here the focus will be on climate change.

It was a challenging, tiring and exciting to be a part of this day and I felt as if I was in parliament!!! . We worked all day and even lunch was a working group for Scotland and Wales. We talked about the challenges of living on the fringes of Britain and also talked about creative ways of delivering our reports.

I will endeavour to record this report and hope that it works. I also wonder if it would be helpful to talk about some of the agenda, particularly the upcoming meetings in order to find our own way of moving to a more lateral voice of participation.

Bridgid Hess Connel LBM

Residential Area Meeting, Pluscarden, 24th – 26th August [^ return to top](#)

This year's Pluscarden weekend started several weeks early for me as bookings started to come in and I saw the beginnings of the rich mix that was to be our community - a community notable for its flexibility and generosity.

Friends contacted me to say they were bringing their children and grandchildren, arranging to camp, to be residential in the Abbey or the women's retreat house, to stay locally in wigwams or with friends, or to come from home on a daily basis. And so many people were bringing food to share or donating to the bursary fund so that the weekend could be affordable for all. Bookings kept coming until the weekend itself, and the monks at the Abbey remained warmly welcoming as I revised our numbers upwards and upwards, eventually reaching a total of over fifty.

Once Friends started to arrive, our community began to form. There was laughter and there were hugs. People welcomed new arrivals and friends known for years, helped each other to settle in, and within minutes we were sharing out the tasks, brewing pots of tea and talking... and talking. The theme of the weekend was spirituality and the natural world, and we had the privilege of being joined by the poet Kenneth Steven. From the start, Kenneth was a part of the group, sharing in conversations and being wonderfully open to talking about spirituality and faith, the island of Iona, and his own story.

For the first time this year we offered a catered meal on the Friday night. This was designed to make the first evening more restful for residential Friends, but it also had the delightful consequence that more local Friends joined us from the start. After supper some people went to the Abbey for Compline while others had a worship-sharing inspired by looking at pebbles from Iona, and hearing one of Kenneth's poems about stones. These sparked beautiful images and memories from everyone present.

The Business Meeting is being written about by another Friend, so my focus is on how we spent the rest of our time. I was struck by how relaxed and at home everyone seemed to be, whether they were sharing meals, helping with the washing up or sitting quietly, reading or chatting. People came and went from the main sitting area and there seemed to be no pressure to do anything but enjoy the weekend and each other's company. And within that, a lot of Friends worked very hard to prepare lovely nutritious meals, to keep everywhere clean and tidy, and to provide teas and coffees in the breaks at the Village Hall. People gave each other lifts up and down the valley between the Hall and the Abbey, and those who chose to walk often ended up in groups, sometimes going across the fields together.

The children and young people had a workshop with Kenneth, and the younger ones in particular enjoyed it very much. They also spent time out in the surrounding fields and woods, climbing trees and playing on the straw bales. Some of them described loving the sense of freedom and open space. They each decorated a tee shirt, and when the adults returned to St. Scholastica's for lunch they were met with a Welcome chalked on the ground around the entrance. We enjoyed hearing one of the children playing the recorder with an adult Friend at the end of lunch on Saturday. It was lovely to have them all as part of our community. They described getting to know the North Scotland Quakers, who at first seemed a huge group of strangers, and finding us friendly.

On Saturday afternoon Kenneth read some of his poems to the adults, sometimes explaining the context and process of writing them. I found them deeply moving, and I was also profoundly affected when he talked about the need for a peaceful and quiet place to go in order to enter into the 'dwam' (dreamy state) necessary to write. For much of my life, having the ability to be dreamy was seen as a negative. It was

wonderful to have it described as essential. We then had the opportunity to spend some time outside or in the Hall to focus on a nature image or experience, perhaps from childhood, and to write about it. Kenneth explained that at this stage we may only come up with a few words or phrases, but he encouraged us not to cross anything out, and to allow a poem to develop over time. Friends were writing busily, it will be lovely if they are willing to share some of what they wrote.



Our catering Friends appreciated all the contributions of dishes of food, and to give just one example, they told me that this year there was a surprise bounty of bananas. They worked creatively with them, offering a dessert on Saturday night of banana splits with raspberry coulis... it was lovely.

After the Business Meeting and the closing Meeting for Worship on Sunday, we were catapulted into having our last meal together, and people were already preparing to leave. We shared out the food that was left over, and Friends gave donations for it. Some was also taken to the Elgin Food Bank. Over the next few hours, as Friends gradually left, we did a final clean up. We were delighted to receive an email afterwards from Brother Thomas thanking us on behalf of the monks for having left everywhere spotless.

I think this may have been our largest Pluscarden weekend, and for me this shows how much we value spending time together as a community of Friends who work co-operatively, flexibly and supportively - and, most importantly, it shows that we are thriving.

Lynden Easterbrook Forres LBM

Postscript (ed); This message was received from the Pluscarden Abbey Guest Master;

“Many thanks from the brothers at Pluscarden Abbey to the Friends of North Scotland.

You did a wonderful job of organising everything. Please thank all the Friends for their kind consideration and tidiness. St Scholastica's was spotless!!!!The men at St Benedict's are also to be commended.All in all a wonderful example to us!! Thank you also for the very generous donation.

Please pass on our gratitude to all the Friends!

Peace, Br Thomas”



(brother Thomas obviously wrote the email before he had spotted the crime scene of the mass murder.....(ed))

Pluscarden poems

[^ return to top](#)

The following poem was written by Kenneth Steven, the guest speaker at Pluscarden and is part of a collection he is putting together. Kenneth has given his permission for it to be published in The Northern Quaker.

At Pluscarden Abbey Kenneth Steven

Only once have I stood beneath a tree
holding my breath to hear an owl.
Its voice was ragged; tattered at the edges –
a call that carried wide across the woods
in the still blue warmth that August dusk.
And everywhere along the valley's edge
came callings of other owls until I thought
they talked to one another, voices
almost like strange lamps strung out into the night
over a darkened sea.
I held my breath and heard their woven calls
as the moon rose whole and huge above the hills.

Shapes in the Dark (Lynden Easterbrook, Forres Meeting)

My grandmother gets down on her knees
Before the laurel hedge,
Lowers herself to lie
Face downward in the grass,
And motions for me to join her.
Why...?
She puts a finger to her lips,
Shh...

The space below the hedge
Is dark and full of shadows
Like the ominous world of night time
Where strange shapes lurk
Beneath my bed.
A small sound, just a peep,
And the shadows move.
Tiny points of ears,
Soft paws and tails, whiskers and fur.
Oh...
My eyes are asking questions.
Shh...

We watch, and creep away, return another day.
My grandmother teaches me stillness, reverence,
And letting be.
We tell no-one.
The following week I go home,
The wild cats stay all summer.

“16 minutes in August”

Autumn, and I feel the first signs
Of the hope of Spring
Buds are pushing off their autumn leaves,
Fattening for the winter
Bulbs, unearthed, stir with tiny white roots.
And the Queen of bees rests, satisfied,
Slow but knowing she may remain,
To go into the Spring

In the garden- sharp, bright autumn morning
Jewel-like spider on a bush, sitting in the middle of the web –
The colours sparring better than cut crystals

(Issy and Eleanor Fairclough, Inverness LBM)

**North Scotland Area Meeting. Meeting for Worship for the Conduct
of Church Affairs Pluscarden, 24th -26th August 2018** [^ return to top](#)

Minutes

Note: The meeting was held in two sessions due to the residential structure of the weekend.

ROLL: 49 Friends and Attenders were present for all or part of the weekend, including 7 children and young people. Kenneth Steven, poet, was our guest.

Friends appointed to attend: Clunie Conochie, Sila Collins-Walden & Eleanor Fairclough (Inverness), Eva Deregowska, Penny Selbie, Nigel Dower (Aberdeen)

Prevented: Jane Booth, Ian Bonner Evans, Michael Hickford, Chris Mayo, John Melling, Ann Millar, Colin Millar, Kathleen Quinn, Roger Quinn

Permission to attend is given to the following: Alan Carr, Helen Milnes, Lesley Reynolds, Cleo Welsh

SESSION ONE: Saturday, 25th August 2018

Minute 25/18: During worship, the assistant clerk read from the article ‘Post Truth World’ by Julian Baggini.

The Post-Truth World: The clerk, Constance Tonge, and assistant clerk, Oriole Hall, were at the table.

Minute 26/18: William Purser led us, in a worship-sharing session, to consider the ‘Post-truth world’, about which Meeting for Sufferings has asked our reactions. Several Friends have researched, written and spoken during worship.

We are conscious that, as Quakers, we have a tradition of testimony to truth, and that witness to this is powerful, but we are also aware that the operation of what has come to be known as ‘Post-truth’ itself is a deliberate attempt to maintain the status quo. It is the opposite of equalisation; a manipulation aiming to negate empathy and emphasise polarisation in an increasingly binary world.

We feel that, as individuals and meetings, we need to develop good tools, consider a variety of points of view, and personally struggle to maintain truth in word and deed, engage in respectful dialogue, and resist intolerance.

Despite all attempts to manipulate, when critical thinking is under assault, we must

not be tempted to avoid other people’s pain and terrible agony. We must question and not sit back in horror, or in comfort. If each of us lights a candle, the world can be illuminated.

The Shape of North Scotland Area Meeting for the Future: The clerk, Constance Tonge, and assistant clerk, Andrew Collins, were at the table.

Minute 27/18: The meeting considered The Shape of North Scotland Area Meeting for the Future as preparation for the meeting with Paul Parker, Britain Yearly Meeting Recording Clerk, and Jonathan Carmichael, newly appointed Simpler Meetings Project Manager. Friends welcomed the fact that our Listening Project and our other efforts have been taken seriously at national level, and a national need is felt for simplification of structures. Friends who attend the meeting at Perth on 13th September 2018 will report back to NSAM in Aberdeen in November. We acknowledge that change involves

struggle but often leads to a better place. We note the feeling of this current meeting that our residential meetings are deeply valued and provide connection and growth.

SESSION TWO: Sunday, 26th August 2018

The meeting asked Robert Wilson, Orkney LM, to serve as assistant clerk for this session. Constance Tonge, clerk, was also at the table. Half an hour silent meeting for worship was held preparatory to the business.

Minute 28/18: Friends felt that it would increase efficiency in communication if the area meeting clerk sends AM papers directly to all NSAM Friends.

Minute 29a/18: Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2017: David Sanders, Clerk to Area Meeting Trustees, has presented the 2017 accounts, which have been sent for examination but not yet returned. They have been approved by the trustees, subject to examination. Anthony Buxton, Area Meeting treasurer, spoke to the accounts and said that our financial matters are healthy. Friends asked a number of questions regarding the claiming of expenses by appointees attending meetings on behalf of North Scotland Area Meeting, as well as the necessity of maintaining our environmental witness by using air transport as frugally as possible. David Sanders said that the Area Meeting Trustees and North Scotland Quaker Trust are engaged in the simplification of both trusts. North Scotland Area Meeting accepted the report and accounts as presented, subject to positive examination report.

Minute 29b/18: North Scotland Trustees' Terms of Reference and North Scotland Area Meeting Governing Document: David Sanders presented this document, with its marked alterations.

Minute 29c/18: New developments: A new finance policy, developed by the trustees, will be brought to our November AM.

Minute 29d/18: We appoint Heather Hartman, Chartered

Accountant, to consolidate the Area Meeting accounts for 2018 and to work with the trustees in preparing a Finance Policy.

Minute 29e/18: The Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR): Advice has been sought from OSCR as to whether its permission is required for these changes. It appears that permission is not required unless the charitable objects themselves change.

Minute 29f/18: The meeting records its thanks to David Sanders, clerk to Area Meeting Trustees and to David James, clerk to North Scotland Quaker Trust Trustees, and the other trustees, for the large amount of work they have done and are continuing to do.

Minute 30/18: Nairn Local Meeting: We have received the following Memo of Understanding from Nairn Local Meeting:

"Memorandum of Understanding between Nairn Local Meeting and North Scotland Area Meeting:

"Friends meeting for worship as Nairn Local Meeting have been in discussion with North Scotland Area Meeting trustees and reviewed those duties and responsibilities which a Local Meeting normally undertakes as part of an Area Meeting. Nairn Friends have decided that we are jointly and equally involved in and responsible for the roles necessary in the upholding and right ordering of our meeting, accepting an individual mandated to act independently as 'correspondent' to provide a contact address.

In consideration of this review and changed responsibilities it is advised that Nairn Local Meeting be laid down and then regarded as a 'worshipping group' associated with another Local Meeting within NSAM.

Friends in Nairn propose that this worshipping group be held within Inverness Local Meeting as we are advised that they are content with such an arrangement.

D McRobie et al Nairn LM"

We accept its contents and lay down Nairn Local Meeting, acknowledging instead a worshipping group attached to Inverness Local Meeting. The clerk will advise the recording clerk's office.

Minute 31/18: This Area Meeting hosted a visit by the poet, Kenneth

Steven, on Saturday afternoon. His contributions were much appreciated by Friends, who found them inspiring. Kenneth also facilitated a most enjoyable and useful session with the children and young people on Saturday morning. The latter was reported on by Thomas Wilson.

Minute 32a/18: Membership matters:

We have received an application for membership from Anthea Mason of Aberdeen LM. We appoint Sue Buxton and Clive Potter to visit her and report to us when the time is right.

We have received an application for membership from Cleo Welsh of Nairn Worshipping Group (and Inverness LM). We appoint Clunie Conochie, as first visitor, and will ask Nairn Friends to suggest another name. These Friends will report to us when the time is right.

Minute 33/18: NSAM dates and places for 2019:

The meeting felt that the following are suitable:

9th February 2019 at Inverness

4th May 2019 at Oban

23rd-25th August 2019 at Pluscarden

26th October 2019 at Aberdeen

The meeting for worship for church affairs closed at 11.15am and was followed by one hour's meeting for worship.

It was necessary for the following business matters to be continued to North Scotland Area Meeting at Aberdeen on 10th November 2018.

Minuting of Archive matters from Clare Trinder, AM archivist

Resignation of membership (Emma McLeod)

Minutes 20 and 21a from AM at Brora, 5th May 2018 – the clerk is asking for revision.

Communication matters – the clerk requests that the clerkship team be copied into the relevant communications of both the residential organising group and elder/overseers, which would avoid both duplication of work and the potentially disruptive and confusing existence of more than one agenda.

Local Meetings' arrangements – It is noted that some meetings have altered their arrangements for eldership and oversight, although area meeting has not been formally advised in most cases. As elder/overseers hold AM appointments, arrangements must be brought to Area Meeting and minuted.

Meeting for Sufferings reports: There are two Sufferings reports which ordinarily should have been presented at this meeting. Mary Dower's has been published in the Northern Quaker and Bridgid Hess's will be. AM needs to advise on whether this should happen on a regular basis, or whether Friends appointed to attend Sufferings need to report in person to keep Friends in touch with what is being done in our name.

Northern Friends Peace Board: see no.6 above

Diversity & Inclusion Project: We are asked to consider how we are progressing in becoming more diverse in meetings and our work in the world. As Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee requires information before its October meeting, AM clerk will need to hand this off to LM clerks.

It should be noted that Safeguarding arrangements need to be kept under review by AM and scheduled into a future meeting. It may be useful to schedule this matter for a regular annual date.

Signed: Constance M Tonge, Area Meeting Clerk dated:
26.08.2018

Signed: Oriole Hall, Area Meeting Assistant Clerk

Signed Andrew Collins, Area Meeting Assistant Clerk

Signed Robert Wilson, Area Meeting Assistant Clerk for the day

The Post-Truth World and our response to it [^ return to top](#)

What is Truth?

John 18:37-38 "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all."

This preparation paper is an attempt to make available to NSAM Friends the necessary knowledge which will enable them to test the concern, if they are moved to do so. It does not intend to present any particular point of view, as the testing will be done in our meeting for worship for church affairs.

The 'Post-truth World' is a tricky concept (one Friend consulted, said that the concept was as difficult to get hold of 'as a greased pig in an entry') for which we might think we have a definition but for which we may not. Friends House does not provide a definition, in its request for our testing, and has commented that, should we not understand it, Meeting for Sufferings will receive that information!

We are asked whether we agree that we are living in a post-truth world, whether we share the Concern of Southern Marches AM (their minute, and that of Meeting for Sufferings, is at Appendix I), if so, what commitment can we make (individually or corporately) to taking this forward, whether there is something particular that Friends, as a faith body, are called to do, and, if we are not yet clear, what other questions need to be explored?

The paper written by the Deputy Recording Clerk, also covers the background of the work of the programme on Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs, 1990 - 2004. Appendix II to the current document is a summary of the Deputy Recording Clerk's paper (please ask the clerk if you want a hard copy of the TIPA background – it is not included here).

We are coming to recognise certain, fairly new, clichés in the media, and have even taken them into our own speech patterns. Fake news, alternate facts and "clickbait churnalism" are becoming common currency, as well as 'Post-truth world'. It has to be mentioned, though, that much of the whole concept is imported from the United States, whose political scene is considerably more melodramatic than our own. It would be easy to fill many pages with criticisms and examples drawn from Trump news, but it is less likely that there is any

way British Quakers can address that as a group. Perhaps we have to concentrate on what we can do, if anything, in the UK? Although the reality, frequently, is that things which happen in America eventually happen in Britain too and our own politicians and media are by no means innocent of manipulating us!

Quakers are fond of the Truth; we even have a Testimony to it. But how do we tell, how does the world tell, what is true and what is not?

Are we heading, inexorably, to the world of 1984:

War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength

One of our Friendly political scientists and historians says: "It's a far too widespread, insidious, and powerfully - backed phenomenon for such a simple word as "truth" to have any affect on it."

and

Does it not all depend upon the masses believing it, acting on it, spreading it around so eventually it becomes like the last word in a game of Chinese whispers – totally removed not only from the «truth» but from the idea it began with.

How can such deliberate absurdities be challenged, prevented even?

One solution could be to hope that a good system of schooling would at least help most folk to discern the difference between what might be reasonable and what is absurdity. For this to happen we would need to encourage young people to develop their own ways of deciding, of choosing, of denying the legitimacy of the fantasiers. If this was possible we would then need a system which enabled all disagreements not only to be voiced but to be effective.

We all live in our own comfort bubbles I suppose – and I would be the first to accept that not everyone sees the world through my specs...We should make it clear, as a Society, that we understand what the phrase means, and that we will use all means we have in our power to deny its legitimacy at every opportunity.

(W.P.)

There is a difference between facts and truth. There can be truth in good fiction because, even though it does not have facts (although some do), someone made it up, it can convey truths about the human condition and cause us to think for ourselves.

Truth can change over time. In scientific disciplines 'facts' are explained as they are now, they will be up-dated when someone discovers a 'more true truth' e.g. physicists thought the atom was like a plum pudding, with electrons embedded in it, but now it's described as shells of electrons (diffused electrical charge) around a splittable heavy nucleus, like something we can hardly comprehend, and mostly space.

Some people misunderstand truths and continue to perpetrate their misunderstanding e.g. Darwin's phrase 'survival of the fittest' doesn't mean that the healthy will necessarily survive(!); the survivors are those who are able to reproduce/carry genetic variations!

Many people have no grasp of the statistics they are given e.g. we've been subject to the sliding in meaning of huge amounts of money and few any longer even think about the difference between spending £/\$1 million and £/\$1 billion. Look at the numbers. One way to understand it is this:

Counting 1 second takes 1 second (one hippopotamus)

Counting 1 million seconds takes 12 days (Interesting)

Counting 1 billion seconds takes 30 years (that's a lot)

Counting 1 trillion seconds takes 30,000 years (!!!!)

There are many real life examples of manipulation of the people.

Erich Obermayer & Hans-Otto Meissner wrote:

Goebbels caused a well of propaganda to spring up, which seemed to fill the whole world.

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propagandist, himself, said:

"Tell a lie, tell a big lie, Tell it often enough and even you will come to believe it."

Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, in the 2nd Century, said:

"Everything we hear is an opinion not a fact; everything we see is a perspective not the truth"

Language: The English language is subtle and precise but it is subject to manipulation and perversion by those who wish to use it for evil(!), e.g. if we persistently call refugees 'illegal aliens', many people will see them as people it is OK to hate, people to be afraid of. Or not really people at all! This is a moral issue, not just a political one.

Truth is the Daughter of Time: History will record what really happened, or will it? We could talk about holocaust deniers, people who still think aluminium causes Alzheimers Disease, and those who still maintain that Richard III murdered the Princes in the Tower. Might what we do now alter what is recorded in the future?

Witness is powerful, especially where politics is corrupt.
(C.M.T.)

Appendix I – Southern Marches Minute and Meeting for Sufferings Minute

Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting / Cyfarfod Y Crynwyr Rhanbarth Y Gororau Deheuol: minute written at the meeting held on 13 January 2018

AM18/06 'Post-truth world' – What can we do?

Further to Minute AM17/85 of 9 July 2017, we have returned to the question of restoring truth and integrity in the public sphere. Since that meeting, minutes have been received from three local meetings: Ross-on-Wye, Clun Valley and Hereford. All LM minutes received to date on this matter are set out in the attached document.

We have considered what we are led to do as individuals, as local meetings and as an area meeting.

We need to begin with ourselves before we point the finger at others. As individuals we should be more open to listening to those we do not agree with (including via social media), and not just talk to those who share our views. We should also consider reading newspapers promoting different views from our own, and writing letters to them.

The intense scrutiny of pronouncements by those in the public eye

makes them cautious about speaking honestly. On the other hand, the social media tend to polarise views. It is important to listen sympathetically and be moderate in our response, so that we can build bridges. Different spheres of life need different responses in holding people to account. People often have good reasons for holding particular ideas. We should support those – especially politicians – who have the grace to change their minds. We need to beware of allowing the strength of our convictions to betray us into ‘making statements or allegations that are untrue or unfair’ (Advice 17).

Challenging those who have different views is distinct from challenging those who consciously mislead the public, with the intention of dissuading people from taking action on matters of concern.

At Area Meeting level, we would like to hold a workshop on truth and integrity. We ask Elders and Overseers to look into making arrangements for such an event.

We feel that the situation has changed radically. The lack of honesty in public affairs is impacting on all our testimonies, and the challenge to living out our Quaker values is greater than ever. We see this issue as integral to the aspiration expressed in Our Faith in the Future for Quaker values to be active in the world. We wish the matter to be taken up at national level. We hope that our Yearly Meeting might be a public champion of truth.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to test this concern, and in particular to consider reviving the programme on Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs, which was laid down some years ago. We know that this concern is shared with others beyond the Quaker world, and we would wish Friends to work with others, as described in Our Faith in the Future.

However, we acknowledge that if we take this concern seriously, we will have to commit ourselves to constant vigilance and repeated action to counter false information. We have asked ourselves whether we have the right to call on others to act if we do not show that level of commitment ourselves.

Stevie Krayner, clerk

Minute of Meeting for Sufferings held on 7 April 2018

MfS/18/04/09 The post-truth world and Quaker response
We receive minute 18/06 of Southern Marches Area Meeting held on 13 January 2018. The Area Meeting has been considering the question of restoring truth and integrity in the public sphere, and their leadings as individuals, as local meetings and as an area meeting.

Friends in Southern Marches AM are concerned about a lack of honesty in public affairs; and that in turn this impacts on how we live Quaker values in the world. The AM recognises that we need to begin with ourselves before pointing the finger at others; to be open to listening to those with whom we disagree (including via social media), and communicate with those who do not share our views. We have also been reminded about work within our Yearly Meeting in 1990 – 2004 under the heading ‘Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs’, which was laid down at a time when the energy and sense of urgent leading in the concern had abated.

MfS has heard a clear call to test this concern more widely and will send this minute and the briefing papers to Area Meetings. We ask Friends to consider this concern, to send any relevant minutes for our further discernment and to share news of any work they are already doing. We expect to return to this matter in November.
In Friendship 

Appendix II – Summary of FH discussion paper

(Note: headings are Juliet Prager’s)

Integrity in the media

One of the issues which is much discussed in the wider community is fake news. Different news outlets often accuse each other of misrepresenting the facts, or of participating in clickbait churnalism where journalistic standards are seen as less important than audience figures.

A testimony to truth and integrity means that Quakers do not support lies being told or misleading information being spread. Some responses may also be suspect in their black and white nature. Reality is full of nuances, and in some areas fact-checking is not the most appropriate response. Many issues are less to do with the facts than with subjective opinions or perspectives.

We should remember that 'the people' does not speak with one voice; there are many views and points of view. Assumptions exist that the only reason for disagreement is lack of knowledge, that to disagree with someone is to dismiss them entirely. We maintain that it is possible to agree with the symptoms while disagreeing with their diagnosis.

Personal integrity of those in power

Through much of BYM's work we aim to challenge those who make decisions as well as supporting them in their work. Corruption in politics undoubtedly exists, but the majority of people who enter politics do so in order to serve. Quakers aim to support them, rather than questioning their motives every time they make a decision with which we disagree. The systems of power can produce a 'bubble'. BYM aims to help decision-makers hear from people outside of that bubble. It also works to help voters understand what power their representatives do or do not have, and to recognise that public opinion is often divided.

Integrity of our political systems

If Quakers are concerned about the truthfulness of our information and the integrity of people in politics, then we should also be concerned about the system within which it all operates. It may be helpful to uphold those supporting an alternative electoral system which may represent all views in a more reflective way.

The questions we are asked to consider:

In your experience, do you agree that we are living in a post-truth world?

Do you share this concern with Southern Marches? If so, what

commitment can you make (individually and corporately) to taking this forward?

Is there something particular that Quakers, as a faith body, are called to do? If

so, how do you express this?

If you are not clear yet – what other questions might need to be explored?

Although the above are the 'official' questions, it may be helpful to think about the following too:

Do we feel that there is already a specific BYM position on any of the strands of this concern? If not, should there be?

Do we feel that there is a Quaker-shaped gap in the responses of other organisations

Where, if anywhere, are we being led to act at this time?

Reflections to help consideration: (some FH, some me)

Two ways: Policy and heart (see What does Truth Sound Like?)

Accountability

Need to notice how much is educational

Need to notice how much is economically driven

GLOSSARY: Clickbait churnalism is where journalistic standards are seen as less important than audience figures. The term originates in media further down the line cutting and pasting others' words without checking them first.

Scotland's differences:

We have our own Parliamentary Liaison Officer and Committee; FH has remarked that it is often easier to engage with them than with Westminster. Can we ask them (and support them) to do more?

Take Truth on as a new project?

GM Scotland has considered something like this in the past (but could not find the minute), they could not, at that time see a way forward or recognise a leading.

Possible that that there is a re-emerging concern but not yet found a focus

Multiple strands: integrity in media, personal integrity of those in

power, integrity in our political systems
Tradition of engaging with politicians (Advice 1.34) and see Scotland above.

Report of AM at Aberdeen Nov 19 2018 [^ return to top](#)

About 30 Friends gathered in Aberdeen FMH on a beautiful day. I had travelled by train from Inverness with other Friends joined by members of Forres & Nairn Meetings along the way. This was a delightful way of connecting with Friends at a slower pace than the usual slightly hectic AM lunch break catch up.

AM was well clerked by David James assisted by Andrew Collins who, I was pleased to see, was typing the minutes on his laptop, The first item on the agenda was a small thing that caused some consternation! The clerk asked friends whether they wished the full names of those attending AM to appear on the minutes. This always used to happen but in recent years, all AMs in Scotland stopped putting names on minutes – I assume because of Data protection and/or privacy if minutes were posted on-line. When I was clerk, I read WSAM minutes clerked by Michael Hutchinson (former BYM clerk), these were so clear and well set out that I modelled NSAM minutes on them, and when I noticed that names were no longer published with the minutes, I followed suit. However I always kept the sheet of names and meetings with the set of minutes that was archived. However I was told this time that the only reason minutes were not published on-line was to do with membership matters – this I do not understand. So Friends – I take the blame

We then moved on to the Future of NSAM and various Friends spoke of their impressions of the special meeting that had taken place on September 13 in Perth clerked by Adowa Bittle. Here in NSAM we have given much time to how to organise ourselves to maintain our worship and spiritual life with less burden on our office holders.

I had written a suggestion which I had only circulated to a few people of how we might proceed – which I hope is published here. One Friend rightly pointed out that a small group working closely together can become an “elite” – so AM would need to question and keep oversight

of such a group. However – perhaps there already exists a tendency for a small group to take charge of everything?!!

Another Friend said that it was time to experiment! Several Friends began worrying about details before we had agreed any change. The clerk’s final minute is clear and to the point. The recently appointed officers of AM will do their best to work closer together and support each other and we will experiment by organising the next AM as a “residential”, which of course it always is for many Friends.

Our trustees have been working hard for two years to amalgamate responsibilities of NSQT and AM. It was time for AM to formally approve their 3 documents to allow them to continue this work.

Our treasurer presented the budget for 2019, Friends are very generous in supporting the residential AM at Pluscarden and we have enough money to hold a second residential .

Mary Dower alternate Meeting for Sufferings rep. presented her report which was short, cheerful and to the point. Thank you Mary!!!

Lynden Easterbrook presented a lively report from Quaker Life, the theme of which was Young People. I was glad to hear of the excellent work being done to attract and include Young people.

Nominations committee brought forward names efficiently for various posts BUT now only 2 people on Noms cttee – when there should be 6. It was wonderful to hear two reports of visitors and to welcome 2 Friends into membership!. Reports from visitors are always inspiring.

There were also 2 applicants from the Aberdeen area, the first from Banchory and the clerk duly asked for names for visitors, there was a very long silence but eventually names were found. The second applicant was in the room, again when the clerk asked for visitors there was a long silence and I was shocked and embarrassed – what were Aberdeen Friends thinking of? Were you all asleep?

Anthea Mason and Clunie Concochie presented the safeguarding report, this was brief but prompted a very useful discussion and a timely reminder to all of us about the importance of safeguarding and updating or applying for PVG registration. Please contact Anthea or Clunie for advice.

We had begun the AM late enough for Inverness Friends to get the later train, which was much appreciated but this meant that it was a rather longer afternoon than usual. Aberdeen Friends as usual had provided an excellent lunch and tea.

Phyllida Sayles, Orkney LBM

The Future of NSAM - Looking forward with hope! [^ return to top](#)

On Thursday Sept 13, about 40 Friends including the BYM recording clerk met to consider how we might change our structures in Scotland. I hope you will read the full report of this meeting. The clerk of Scotland GM – Adwoa Bittle was firm that this should be a united Scotland wide exercise. She is right up to a point. BUT – we in NSAM have given more time and thought to this than any other AM. I would like to suggest that we should now continue to discern what might suit our particular needs.

At AM in Pluscarden, one thing stood out for me, and that was the feeling that we valued our residential AM very highly. So let us build on that, leave the Pluscarden August residential as it is for now. Why not consider having another residential AM in the Spring, perhaps February or late March, hopefully to coincide with a school holiday to make it more attractive for families.

Let's assume that our Two AM trusts, are safely amalgamated and sorted. We are still very short of people able and willing to do our work. My suggestion is that we keep the basic structure of our AM BUT slim it down. Imagine that we have only 2 AMs per year – both residential, one in August and one early in the year. I envisage that a team of 8 people would be needed to organise the 2 AMs, but they would work as a team supporting each other in their different roles. Below are the roles that I think would be needed:

- 2 people who have experience or training for clerks.
- 2 people who have experience or training as book keepers: 'treasurers'
- 2 people who have experience of organise catering and/or finding venue.
- 2 people supporting and learning to do the different work needed

Of course all of these people would also act as Overseers & Elders, but

my crucial point is that they would need to work closely together on ALL of the work, planning the programme, agenda of business meeting, securing venue etc.

Two people would stand down each year and those newly appointed would learn and practise the roles needed in the team. It would be incumbent upon the whole team to ensure that each member was encouraged to try out each role and be ready to step into each other's shoes. My experience of Friends is that there is a reluctance to let go of our roles and equal reluctance to share responsibility.

Phyllida Sayles, Orkney LBM

Obituary; Olivia McLeod [^ return to top](#)

Sandy McEwen kindly pointed out the following obituary published in the Herald newspaper.

The McLeod's were Members of Orkney LM for many years. Joyce Farrar (Emma's mother) was Clerk in 1990/91. The following is an abbreviated version. The full obituary can be found at <https://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/16882852.obituary-olivia-mcleod-civil-servant-and-former-director-for-children-and-families-in-the-scottish-government/?ref=erec>

“OLIVIA McLeod, who has died aged 41, was a gifted civil servant with a powerful determination to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and young people. One of the youngest ever directors in the Scottish Government, she was responsible for the children and families division, and had an acute concern for looked-after children. She was considered by colleagues to be a future candidate for Permanent Secretary.

The mother of two young girls, she had a busy personal life, pursuing pastimes such as playing netball with the Bass Rocketeers, while also volunteering for charities such as East Lothian Action for Refugees, to which she devoted many hours following her cancer diagnosis.

She was also a committed Buddhist, giving at least an hour a day to her religious practice.

Olivia McLeod was born in Edinburgh, the youngest child of Emma, a physiotherapist, and Roderick, who worked in Edinburgh University's

computing service.

When she was five, the family moved to Orkney, where Emma established the community physiotherapy service. Roderick took prime responsibility for the care of Olivia and her two elder brothers, Nick and James, then gradually set up a computing business (later becoming a councillor on Orkney Islands Council). Olivia's work ethic was shaped by seeing her mother work hard in a job she was passionate about, and her egalitarianism by the division of roles between her parents at home.

She learned to read before starting school, and devoured books. She also loved being read to, and – sometimes to the surprise of visiting friends – would still ask her father to read to her by the fireside in her 30s.

After St Andrew's Primary in Tankerness, she moved to the local comprehensive, Kirkwall Grammar, where she excelled.

She was challenged by the childhood experience of being overweight, once commenting that her leadership journey had begun as "a fat child trying to avoid being bullied", adding that "I had to take control of the situation, realise that despite difficult circumstances, I had agency."

The threat of bullying did not hold her back. She was sporty and musical, and joined the pupil council at Kirkwall Grammar, as well as Stromness Ladies Debating Society, in which she was the only teenager in a group of mainly middle-aged women.

From early childhood onwards, she showed extraordinary self-confidence, epitomised by her decision to drive from Scotland to Cambridge in driving rain the day after she passed her driving test.

She talked Cambridge University into accepting her to read English at 17, instead of 18, and embraced college life, taking up rowing and rugby.

After graduating from New Hall in 1997, she worked for Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Jim Wallace in the House of Commons. However, realising that policy interested her more than politics, she joined the civil service fast stream, starting in the Home Office and quickly moving

to the No 10 Policy Unit, focusing on issues such as asylum policy. From there, she went to Washington, to research American criminal justice – work that led to the establishment of a community court service in England and Wales.

Returning to the UK, she was desperate to "get out there and do something 'real'," as she put it. She was proud of her father's involvement in Orkney Council and told him enthusiastically that "local government is where the real action is". In that spirit, she joined Tower Hamlets borough council, which had the highest level of unemployed young people in England, to work on crime policy.

It was a baptism of fire, as she soon found herself doing her boss's job. As she put it, "in my mid twenties, having never managed more than three people, I was suddenly leading crime reduction for Tower Hamlets – serious front line services".

The work was rewarding but intensely stressful. A job back in central government followed, working on climate change, but she disliked it and left. During this unsettled period, she discovered Buddhism. Home beckoned, and in 2007, she transferred to the Scottish Government, as deputy director for Children, Young People & Social Care. (In typical style, she took up volunteering in Edinburgh as a counsellor for the Samaritans, fitting in all-night stints alongside the day job.)

But on that occasion, the move north proved temporary. Olivia had met her future husband James Lowes, an IT specialist, in 2005. They started a relationship just before she moved to Edinburgh. After two years, she decided to move back to London (to become director of early years in the Department of Education) and they moved in together, marrying in 2011.

The couple lived in Tooting Broadway. The house's proximity to St George's Hospital proved useful when Olivia went into labour with her first child, Iris, in July 2011. Mr Lowes' plans to call a taxi were abandoned as he chased his rapidly-marching wife down the road and into the maternity ward. Edith, a sister for Iris, arrived in 2014.

Having children thrilled and delighted Olivia. She adored the girls and proved to be a parent with boundless patience.

In 2015, the family moved to Scotland and Olivia, aged 38, returned to the Scottish Government as a director, pioneering a job-sharing arrangement. They settled in North Berwick, so that the girls, like Olivia, could grow up near the beach.

Faith was central to Olivia McLeod's life. As a child, she worshipped mainly as a Quaker, like her mother, and occasionally attending Church of Scotland services. In Buddhism, she found a way of living that supported her desire to make a difference in the here and now. She believed strongly in people's capacity for self-development. Her faith helped her when she was diagnosed aged 40 with advanced bowel cancer. She saw her mission as being to inspire others who were facing adversity.

She was a person of great generosity, both with her money and her time. Alongside the string of high-pressure jobs, and the tireless volunteering, she always made time for her children, loved ones and wide circle of friends. She did her utmost to live according to her principles, becoming vegan because she opposed animal exploitation and going to great lengths to avoid using cars or planes. Drawing on her Buddhism, she always encouraged others to be "the best person they could be".

Olivia McLeod is survived by her daughters, husband, parents and brothers."

Rebecca Mcquillan (reproduced with kind permission of the Herald)

Blue Poppies [^ return to top](#)

In memory of Esther Nicolson

She took ages to answer the door

In the heavy summer rain

Finally she fumbled open the catch,

Her hand was in a bandage, her eyes blackened, on a white face

"Err I've had a fall" she said, her hands still shaking

"Err I've come about the garden, gardening" I said

Suddenly her eyes sparked then ignited

Ninety plus years held in darkening pupils

The delicate filament in her blue iris illuminated

"Did I tell you about trekking in the Himalayas?

Right over the pass for 6 days,

I remember now, the blue poppies, wonderful" she said

She began talking, if she'd known me all of my relatively short life

She took my arm and leaned hard on the old wooden stick

"Now let me show you the roses"

The summer rain pelted on like an Asian monsoon

We didn't notice.

Alastair Simmons (Inverness LMB)

In memory of Esther Nicolson who died recently, she was a long standing well liked and respected Attender at Inverness Meeting over many years.

Quaker Life Rep Council: October 2018 [^ return to top](#)

The challenge to us at Rep Council this Autumn was to recognise how we have unwittingly created a separation between adult Quakers, Young Friends and children. We were encouraged to recognise everyone in our meetings simply as Quakers, and to look for ways to develop into all-age communities.

In the large group sessions, we were privileged to be joined by babies and toddlers who added their ministry in the form of gurgles and cries of approval, often at surprisingly appropriate moments. A group of Young Friends talked about their experience of feeling both included and excluded in the Religious Society of Friends. It seems that while we provide excellent opportunities for them to learn and develop as Quakers, we have not matched their progress in our own Quaker Meetings. We can spend too much time talking about our structures and too little discussing Quaker values, growing as a spiritual community, and engaging in urgent issues in the world.

The young people I talked to were familiar and fluent in taking on Quaker roles in Young Friends General Meeting, alternating every two years so that everyone had a chance to learn. We saw videos of Junior Yearly Meeting playing trust games, doing physical challenges and discussing Quaker values. One boy videoed suggested that Quaker meetings should be 'like a swimming pool' – giving a sense of joining together in joyful exuberance. A Young Friend described the formula for the evenings her group spend together: 'Worship, Fellowship, Food and then Pub.' She said they reached a greater level of depth during the evening because of the time spent together and the range of activities and discussions that they shared.

Sadly, Young Friends also spoke of being overlooked in their Local Meetings, not considered for Quaker roles, and being talked down to. We came away with a piece of advice: 'Don't keep asking us about school, and don't ask for our exam results. It feels intrusive. Try asking us instead what we enjoy doing outside school.' And they challenged us, pointing out that we are less diverse than the general UK population. Given our Quaker values, why aren't we more diverse than wider society?

Epilogue each evening was led by Young Friends who offered simple and profound activities. On the first evening we said who they would like to thank for something they had done that day. These included a railway guard, family members and people in shops and garages. Another time we were given squares of paper and battery-operated tea lights. When we were ready, we crumpled the paper and threw it into the middle of the circle, symbolising a worry we were letting go of. Then we lit the candle and placed it in the centre for something good that we would like to put in the light. We didn't speak during this process. Another suggestion was to have paper and pens available during Meeting for Worship so that anyone can write their ministry instead of speaking it. Young Friends sometimes have the room festooned with written ministry, like Tibetan prayer flags waving in the breeze for people to read.

There is a wealth of information and suggested activities available from Friends House, including 'Journeys in the Spirit' for use with children aged 5 to 12, and a youth version for ages 12 to 18. All of these can be

used in children's meetings but ideas from them could also be used in all-age sessions. Meetings will have received a copy of 'Living Our Beliefs', the simple, accessible version of Quaker Faith and Practice that has been compiled by Young Friends. It isn't only for young people, it's for all of us, and the intention is that we have it on our tables alongside Quaker Faith and Practice during Meeting. Further copies can be ordered for £6 and we are encouraged to ensure that every Young Friend has a free copy. Another resource that has been sent to us is 'All Are Welcome', a set of Advices and Queries, and suggested action, for Elders and Overseers growing all-age communities.

We now all have an opportunity to share in learning and discussions with other Quakers in 'Quaker Life Live', using 'Zoom' to connect via phones, laptops or tablets. Registration is via Quaker Life Network on www.quaker.org.uk/QLNetwork where you will find out how to access Zoom. Future topics are: Spiritual Nurture (29th November), Supporting Parents in Meetings (4th December) and Living and Learning Together as a Meeting (15th January).

In his reflection at the end of the weekend our clerk read from Quaker Faith and Practice (19.35) about the Bristol children in 1682 who kept their Meeting going while their parents were in prison. They refused to abandon it despite repeatedly being beaten and sent to the Bridewell cells twice. They were mostly aged between ten and twelve. It was electrifying to hear the children's names read out, and a timely reminder of the strength, dignity and potential of young Quakers.

Lynden Easterbrook, Forres LBM

Scottish Parliament Working Group

[^ return to top](#)

I was at FMH Edinburgh Monday 10th as AM rep on our Scottish Parliament Working Group. This was my first visit so I listened a lot and was able to contribute little. But everyone welcomed me since our AM had not been represented for ages. Most business was taken up with the evaluation of the Group's work so far and how it should proceed. A video link with FH London enabled the "professionals" to keep all to the practical possibilities rather than what we would like to see happening...

All present stressed to FH the importance of the differences in law and

the rest between England and Scotland - something which staff at FH can ignore, it seems...

So I was present and assured all that we in NSAM will in future be involved and able to contribute.

William Purser, Forres LBM

The Inverted (Hellish) Near-Death Experience as a tool for peace [^](#) [return to top](#)

“If they live well they will die well” Basque saying

If the title to this article suggests I am somewhat detached from the realities of peacekeeping I would urge the suspicious reader to approach it with an open mind. My findings are derived not only from medical books but also from my own experience of an inverted episode many years before I became a Quaker.

Many people now have heard of the heavenly near-death experience (NDE): meeting with affectionate relatives or strangers, moving along a tunnel towards a loving light, a life review, however relatively few will have heard of the "hellish experience. This is despite the fact that it takes up an albeit short mention in most books on the NDE. Maybe this is because it is so rare, or because sufferers are reluctant to admit to having one as it might reveal poor behaviour.

My own experience occurred following a mania triggered suicide attempt where I stepped in front of a speeding car. I was in severe pain throughout my body and my ankle had broken' My condition was made worse by the fact that I did not receive pain killers. As I drifted out of consciousness I found myself in a world which was dedicated solely to my torture, and it was manned mainly by people I had hurt. All were still alive except one. It is not necessary to go into details other than to say that I was my own torturer and that I constantly struggled not to think up new horrors. Luckily I was saved by an anaesthetic and when I came round from the operation on my ankle the nightmare was over.

Although I felt that I had experienced something biblically hellish I knew that it had happened in my mind: despite it feeling otherwise. And I only heard about NDE's some years later when my dad described

a beautiful scene he had witnessed, including dead relatives and a loving-light, as he lay unconscious following a cardiac arrest. It was his episode that prompted me to investigate this field, reading books written by hospital doctors and nurses, and it was through this that I came across the lesser researched hellish experience.

Now, I believe that there are two aspects to this phenomenon which could help deal with current conflicts. First, research is revealing that people who attempt suicide are more likely to suffer an inverted NDE because of the frame of mind that they are in. This begs the question as to whether a wider understanding of this would deter suicide attackers: The knowledge that a deeply unpleasant horror might accompany them to their death bed. However there are problems with this as it would necessitate talking publicly about taking your own life, and this could be upsetting to people, especially to the loved ones of those who have committed suicide. This could be further aggravated if religious elements were to hold it up as proof that suicide was a sin punishable by eternal damnation.

The second use of the inverted NDE in peacekeeping could stem from the observation that behaviour in life can impact on the dying stage. While it seems unlikely that a loving God would allow this to last for eternity it is my opinion that this moment has the potential to impact on people who are ruining the lives of others. Although research into the deaths of cruel men and women is hard to come by, I did come across a book on Stalin which described his terrible death and this led to his daughter's belief that some people suffered for their behaviour as they died.

It is said that when Pope Paul III first saw Michelangelo's painting, The Last Judgement, in which sinners are dragged down to Hell, he fell to his knees and begged for forgiveness. Would it be possible to see such a scenario today? I would suggest yes, although obviously using a different approach. I believe it is possible to create a pool of knowledge based on medical research, the field of mental health, aspects of religion, folklore and individual stories, which could stem "evil" behaviour. While this might not appear to be in the Quaker tradition, I would suggest that it needs to be acknowledged that there are people who are far from God and who are behaving mercilessly towards

others. Maybe they need to be shocked into recognising that if their conduct continues they will not only be risking proven horror as they die, but they will probably also be missing out on the loving light, often referred to as God.

Neil Crabtree, Inverness LBM

The End

A feature of our Meeting which we discreetly try to encourage is to take care of the fragile moment right at the end of the Meeting for Worship. We hesitate to come 'back to earth' with a bump. But especially we feel it is important to just be still for maybe half a minute or so. Then there is a little space for anyone to share anything which seems important at this time; it may be following on from some ministry during the Meeting, or something else which they feel needs to be said. Often of course some item of Ministry seems to need a response; it may stir up ideas or feelings which we think need to be carried further, yet did not feel moved to say anything more during the Meeting – to break the Silence.

This may lead on to some interesting and useful discussion, or perhaps a deeper sharing of more profound thoughts, feelings, experiences, hopes, insights, difficulties. It can be a rare and valuable opportunity for some deeper communication than we are often able to achieve, to experience, through the week. While we are in a more 'subdued', more sensitive state, more detached from daily preoccupations. And perhaps more sensitive, potentially more responsive to each other.

This moment is a fragile one, which can be instantly broken and lost by anyone helpfully leaping up to put the kettle on, or starting the conversation with some chatty remark about the weather etc. Any announcements or welcoming of visitors or other necessary business are carefully delayed (usually), until this subtle but vital process is completed. If anything comes of it at all – if it has been appropriate and necessary.

As a small Meeting we have not – yet – found it necessary to have Elders or Overseers. This perhaps puts more responsibility on each of us to be ready to do a bit of eldering or oversight when it seems

necessary. Which we do, sometimes, with varying levels of success.

It also means we have to be sensitive to the moment when the Meeting is ended. Whether this is 11:59 am or a few minutes past 12 is not critical. But there has been an unwritten agreement that no one ought to finish the Meeting independently, without a shared sense of completion, some acknowledgement, with at least one other. Our informal way might seem to be undisciplined, but it really is not, and I have always been impressed how well it works.

Iain Oughtred Isle of Skye RM

Kinmuck Quaker Cemetery [^ return to top](#)

The recent storms have resulted in damage to two parts of the boundary wall. This was caused by the roots of the trees adjacent to the affected parts of the wall transmitting vibration during high winds and disturbing the old mortar. This then triggers a collapse of the stones. Fortunately, there were no injuries or damage to neighbouring property.

The damage is being repaired by a stonemason and, looking to preventative measures, Scottish landscapes have previously provided a quote to survey all the trees including resistograph testing.



Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Giving to North Scotland Area Meeting (Registered Charity SC017958)

Membership entails a financial commitment appropriate to a member's means, for without money neither the local meeting nor the wider structure can function. Quaker Faith and Practice 11.01

Friends in North Scotland Area Meeting uphold Quaker worship in 10 Local Meetings and meet 4 times a year as an area meeting. We have 132 members and 160 attenders.

We believe our faith is lived through action working with others to create a more just and peaceful world. Our testimonies to peace, equality, truth and simplicity encourage us to work for social justice, to support peacemakers and care for the environment. We can do this in many ways but contributing financially is important.

How will your money be used? Your contribution will support Quaker work carried out by your Local Meeting, Area Meeting, General Meeting for Scotland and the work of Britain Yearly Meeting here and throughout the world.

Area Meeting relies solely on contributions from individual members and attenders to finance its running costs and to meet its obligations to GM for Scotland and BYM. We ask you to support our work practically, prayerfully and financially. Some examples of how your contribution will be used:

Local Meetings:

- fund the hire of a venue for meeting for worship
- purchase books
- support children's work
- promote and support Quakers locally

Area Meeting:

- helps Friends attend conferences and training to strengthen our Quaker witness
- supports the work of GM for Scotland

- supports and funds the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer along with GM and BYM
- funds the newsletter and our website
- meets essential administrative costs of insurance, teleconferences, Friends travel
- General Meeting for Scotland:
- 'has national responsibilities on behalf of Britain Yearly meeting to represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Scotland' QFP 5.03
- directs the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer to work on our behalf on the themes of increasing militarisation activity and recruitment in schools and economic justice, sustainability and peace.

Britain Yearly Meeting:

- works with and on behalf of all Quakers in Britain by supporting the Quaker community and speaking out in the world to promote our testimonies
- supports Quaker Living Wage Campaign
- organizes Yearly Meeting Gathering which this year will bring together around 2,000 Quakers at Warwick
- works with other faith based organisations to engage with decision makers and to get our message across to governments
- has arranged media interviews which have been used to reach millions of people to raise awareness of Quaker views on militarism and conscientious objection
- launched a new programme to explore how Quakers can make a difference to forced migration.

How can I contribute?

We realise that everyone's circumstances are different. Some friends will be unable to contribute the amounts suggested, but we are grateful for all donations, regardless of size. Others will be able to contribute more, and we hope that they will do so.

If you wish to make a regular commitment please complete the contribution schedule indicating how your contribution should be allocated. If you do not tell us how to allocate your donation, the whole amount will go to North Scotland Area Meeting.

