West Scotland Quaker News

March 2016

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Clerk's Letter

This newsletter has articles on the revision of Quaker faith & practice and on Alastair McIntosh's talk at the January Area Meeting, amongst other things.

I remember when I first realised, with a feeling of revelation, that there could be more than one 'right' at the same time. It was an area meeting and we had difficulties in agreeing about something that I've forgotten about (significant in itself). I realised I had my view and understanding, but someone else had another view that I suddenly realised could be right too – for them. What was more important was the empathy gained from listening and identifying with someone else. Acknowledging their perspective allowed us all to reach agreement – not compromise, but unity. And this was because we valued each other and wanted to move forward with respect to all. A lot of the time it was about going beyond words. Unity doesn't mean uniformity, but it means we are one underneath the outward expressions of matters that we represent. I've been struck since how often unity comes when we seek to listen and respect, and can express our own understandings in safety. Our Quaker experience teaches us that there is deeper truth beneath which can unify us in the most odd circumstances. I am looking forward to the revision of Quaker faith & practice because I believe it will open up opportunities to find unity in expressing belief – and both heal us and give a model for the future. If what we experience is valid, then how we express it may be in some ways irrelevant. At the moment, concerns about 'theism' or 'non-theism' can divide: it can force us into opposing camps. That's not what it is about, it is about how we express the reality of what works, not what should be 'right'. I was so pleased to hear Alastair McIntosh's talk at last area meeting as it challenged our thinking and assumptions. This does not mean attack, but for us to look deep into what we believe. I hope Friends can feel secure enough in our Society to respond with their understandings of Truth – perhaps in these pages. So we can all learn.

Michael Hutchinson (Glasgow Meeting)

Deadline for contributions to the next issue of WSQN is 14th May and should be sent to Margaret Roy. Please note the format preferably employed should be Microsoft Wordas other formats often make the task of transferring edited articles to our desktop publishing system both difficultand time consuming.

Report on Area Meeting Glasgow January 2016

The morning was spent dealing with mainly routine business. Margaret Wadsley was unable to be present, so a full discussion of her paper of concern 'Children are unbeatable' was postponed. The two items that provoked most discussion were the Tabular Statement and the Treasurer's Report, both of which you can read in our Clerk's Minutes. The discussion around the Tabular Statement focused on gender, and it was decided to ask Friends' House why it was necessary to distinguish between men and women, and how this information was used.

Kate Gulliver, our treasurer, particularly asked us to thank local meetings for their financial support, which turned a projected deficit into a surplus. However, she did stress the need for us to increase our regular giving in 2016 to avoid having to make a similar appeal at the end of this year. Guidance is being asked from local meetings as to how a bequest of £25,000 from Mary Jean Laurie should be spent.

The address given in the afternoon by Alastair McIntosh entitled: "To Become the People of the Cross: Climate change, violence and some Meanings of Creation in Out Time", was for me the highlight of the day. Many of us felt challenged and pushed out of our comfort zones by his questions and assertions.

Alastair's address raised many questions:

Who are we as Quakers today?

Are we sipped to speak to today's burning issues?

Are we the salt of the earth?

Does God still have the power to make us quake?

Does God still speak to us, and if so how?

As peace activists do we quake as we question where our authority and power come from?

What kind of society do we need to be in this third millennium?

Climate change and Violence

Alastair feels that the key driver is consumerism. Excessive pride leads to colonisation and expropriation of land – leading in turn to violence, which feeds back into excessive pride.

Do our meetings bring an additional dimension compared to meetings of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth?

Have we sufficient understanding to carry on this extra dimension?

Are we channels through whom things quake and crack open?

People of the Cross?

Many Quakers have found the Society of Friends to be an oasis from 'churchianity'. Some of us are Christocentric, many are more universalist, drawing on many faiths. Alastair stressed the need to ground ourselves in the mystical, the life of the divine. Statistically in 2015 on 57% of us accepted a divine reality, whilst in 2013 only 15% sought God's will in meeting for worship. 37% identified themselves as Christian. Can we deny divine reality and still be Friends?

Are we merely Humanists at prayer? Does Christ still speak to our condition today?

The Meaning of the Cross

In the video depicting the beheading of Coptic Christians by the so-called Islamic State, a message was given to the nation of 'the People of the Cross', who over centuries have violently colonized Muslim lands.

If we reject the Cross do we understand what we are rejecting and why? Earlier theologians based their understanding of the Cross on a 'ransom for many'. Alastair's view is that Jesus was an activist who stood with the poor and chose to die rather commit violence. His kingdom is not of this world, and we can still be touched by transcendence, as witnessed to in Quaker Faith & Practice. W may struggle to bring something to the table of today's issues but the courage that Christ showed in electing to die rather than kill is the greatest pouring out of love and light that the Society of Friends knows.

Where stands the Light in our Society today?

There followed a powerful period of worship sharing then questions to Alastair, which amply expressed our appreciation of his passionate outpourings, as well as the discomfort which Alastair shared with many at what he felt led to say. He closed by asserting that at our best meeting for worship is where we magnify our community together, where life equals love made manifest, and where we follow 'the still small light'.

The snowflakes whirling past the windows of Glasgow Meeting House that Saturday afternoon provided a suitable cosmic background to the thoughts and emotions whirling around within us all. The uncomfortable questions put to us are going to have to be addressed and answered if we are serious about revising Quaker faith & Practice so its reflects our Society in this third millennium.

Margaret Munro (Dunblane Meeting)

Financing Area Meeting: How do we do it in West Scotland?

Many area meetings in England, and one in Scotland, use a *Quota* system to ensure sufficient funds are available to finance the work carried out by the area meeting. To calculate the *quota* amount per member the area meeting having set its budget for the year ahead divides the total cost by the number of members in the area meeting. Each local meeting is then asked to meet their *Quota*; the amount per member times the number of members in their meeting. This system ensures the area meeting receives sufficient funds to finance its activities, but relies on the local meetings to carry the responsibility for raising funds.

West Scotland Area Meeting does not use a quota system, it uses a Contribution Schedule and relies on the personal commitment of all Friends to contribute towards the cost of financing the area meeting. Friends are able to decide how much they wish to contribute to the area meeting AM, to their local meeting LM, and to Britain Yearly Meeting BYM and can send the whole amount via the AM. Payment can be made to by cheque, standing order or CAF voucher and if the donor wishes to sign a Gift Aid Declaration the tax on the contribution can be reclaimed by the AM treasurer. The allocated funds and any reclaimed tax are passed to the LMs and BYM on a monthly basis.

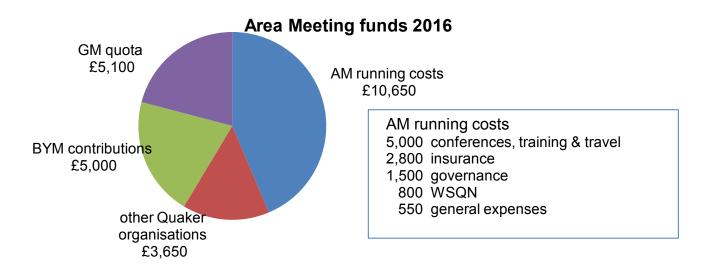
Cash contributions put into the local collection box are kept by the LM to use in accordance with their budget and/or minuted decisions and only contribute to financing the AM if the LM decides to contribute some of the funds to AM, or if it holds a special collection for AM and sends the money directly to AM. Gift aid cannot be claimed on cash collections.

The AM uses the funds it receives to:

- pay for the running of the area meeting activities; conference representation, training, travel, insurance (AM and LM activities and meeting houses), communication (WSQN) and governance costs
- Q pay the quota required by GM for Scotland to cover the cost of its Quaker work
- a make a contribution to BYM to top up the amount given by Friends via their contribution schedules
- a make donations to other Quaker organisations which rely on the Quaker community to support their work and to members and attenders of the AM with personal needs.

In the 2016 AM budget about one fifth of the funds will be sent to GM for Scotland to meet the quota commitment, about one fifth will be sent to BYM and just less than one

fifth is allocated as donations to other Quaker organisations and bursaries, leaving just over two fifths of the funds received to cover the AM running costs.



The 2016 contribution schedule asked Friends to reflect on what they can contribute to their Quaker community; physically, spiritually and financially. The meeting needs all three types of support to function effectively and we recognise that the amount of each that any individual can contribute will vary. The schedule gives guidance on the amount of financial support needed per member by AM (£105) and by BYM (£150), each LM has its own financial requirement and LM treasurers can give guidance according to their own meeting's needs.

http://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Contribution %20Schedule%202016.pdf

I hope this helps in your understanding of how we finance our Quaker community. Please get in touch if you would like any more information or guidance.

Kate Gulliver (AM treasurer)

Catching Light Outreach Conference,

High Leigh Conference Centre, Buckinghamshire, February 2016

Three weeks ago I attended this outreach conference on behalf of West Scotland Area Meeting. Nearly 100 delegates attended from all around the UK. The conference program was packed with interesting speakers as well as room for discussion and reflection. Each of us were assigned a Home Group of 6-8 people with whom we could share and find support if moved.

Writing in the here and now, three weeks on, three things stand out for me: The word Transparency; the whelm of sadness I felt when hearing several Friends speaking aloud their feeling that they were not "good enough Quakers"; and Kevin Redpath's presentation on positive web work, within which he drew upon some wonderful examples from The Street Quaker Meeting in Dorset.

In our first Home Group session we were asked to consider three questions: What brought me to Quakers, what held me there and what holds me here now. What this session did for me was draw my attention to the need for me to learn a Spiritual Literacy and to have more Spiritual Chats. Whilst telling our Spiritual Stories each of us worked to connect with a Spirit filled Language. Not an easy task, but very good preparation for our next session 'Being Transparent: Beyond Outreach' Being Transparent was our first session as a big group in which we examined the revolution of Inreach and Outreach. We were shown some revelatory statistics, from a Joseph Rowntree's Report, about how little The Religious Society of Friends is understood by the world at large. I understood that part of the problem is that we are currently working through a crisis of confidence as a religious society. I heard and believed that by Speaking our Spiritual Stories with Friends, we shall grow in confidence and be able to draw upon such confidence on the occasions when we are moved to Reach Out. This session presented three ideals: to have Clarity with each other; an Openness in public; and Visibility to all. These make much sense to me.

One of my favourite jokes of the weekend was, "Why is Quakerism like a fridge? Because you open the door and The Light comes in". It was suggested that a new person to meeting simply wants Enlightenment. Having good signage lets people know who we are, telling our stories inspires curiosity and giving a listening ear encourages it. Since the weekend I bought myself the same lime green hoody that my Home Group Leader proudly wore. It says, "Quaker Gear: Outfitting the Strong and Silent Type" and I love it! My beginning to Spiritual Transparency has apparently begun with some light consumerism.

Humour played a large part in the weekend. Saturday night saw the mock up of a pub table where a stranger asks searching and provocative questions. For example - Do Quakers believe in God? You all seem like such privileged do-gooders, how does that work? So what about Quaker schools? They're fee paying and designed for the privileged. What's all that about? Friends took it in turns to answer!

It made me sad to hear some Friends say, I don't think I'm a good enough Quaker. And the next sentence seemed to be, if this is the case, how can I speak? It's a shame. A

shame that I witness stops Friends speaking their truth, a truth I want to hear. One of the most engaging discussions of the weekend concerned a dialectic between The Activist and the Mystic. People challenged the idea that the Quaker Activist - that person who is out there on the world's front line - has the moral high ground. Friends also challenged the idea that one is either an Activist or a Mystic, proposing instead that there is an Activist and Mystic within everyone. There is no hierarchy. At different times in our lives, and indeed of our day, the Activist or the Mystic may be more present, but both need space, and one may need more encouragement than the other. Furthermore, learning and speaking comfortably within a Spiritual Language will enable us to explain our Actions, whatever they are, In Faith.

I shall end this wee piece with the usual encouragement to all Friends to seek out and go to Quaker conferences and gatherings. Take up Area Meeting's offer of funds, and your local meeting may have funds too. The Society of Friends and depth of connection is nourishing, inspiring and simply good stuff.

Thank you for your time and attention. I have posted on Glasgow Quakers Facebook page the Joseph Rowntree Report on UK perceptions of The Religious Society of Friends. Come find us and it there. Or if you don't do Facebook and would like a copy, just send me an email or give me a call and I can print one out for you and mail it through. And finally, for the curious with time, here are a few inspiring links:

- http://www.tunbridgewellsquakers.blogspot.co.uk A great wee blog spot from Tunbridge Wells. They are currently without a Meeting House, so this is their home!
- http://www.quakersatstreet.org.uk The Street Quaker Meeting Dorset. Like Scotland, they have a scattered constituency and do lots of inspiring work: from hosting Quaker art exhibitions, to providing space for the local Muslims to pray, and using their Twitter account to help fill containers going to Calais migrants.
- http://www.quakergear.com The home of American company Quaker Gear from whom I bought my wonderful hoody, some T-shirts and a travel mug too. Very impressed by their quality and prompt service. Go on, do a bit of light consumerism, you know you want to!

Zem Moffat (Glasgow Meeting)

From **Tom Paine** (1737 -1809), whose father was a Quaker: He who would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.

Visit of the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer to Glasgow Meeting

Mairi Campbell-Jack, the Scottish parliamentary engagement officer visited Glasgow Meeting House on Wednesday 20 January 2016 accompanied by Jessica Metheringham, the UK Parliamentary Liaison Officer. Both Friends discussed their work and raised awareness of the issues they are currently prioritising as well as their involvement in the processes of Government in Scotland and England. About 20 Friends attended.

In particular, Mairi informed us of the proposed Scottish Parliamentary public petition regarding armed forces visits to schools. If you've not yet signed the petition it is still open for signatures. Please share and let as many people know as possible http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/armedforcesvisitstoschools

She also informed us that Quakers in Scotland, along with the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, marked the centenary of the Military Service Act with an event in the Scottish parliament sponsored by Patrick Harvie MSP. Quakers worked for the conscience clause of the Act, which provided for conscientious objection to military service and was a fundamental shift towards individual freedoms. This event, held on the 21 January, was attended by Mary Millington, a Glasgow Friend.

Request from Forces Watch

An e mail was received from Forces Watch asking us to either organize or help publicise an event they may be arranging in support of the petition to the Scottish Parliament, subject to funding being available.

It has been difficult to identify the number of visits by the armed forces to schools in Glasgow, an issue the petition addresses.

Mary Alice Mansell is to liaise with Forces Watch with a view to publicising to Glasgow Friends any event to support the petition. *For an update, watch Mairi's facebook page*.

DATES OF FASLANE MEETING FOR WORSHIP March 20th, May 22nd, June 19th Sept 25th, Nov 13th





THE RED BOOK AT EDINBURGH

Some of us have been taking part on discussion groups or self-study on the 'Reading Quaker faith & practice' theme. These are taking place all over Britain for 18 months and working their way through the chapters of the Red Book. So it was interesting to have the chance to meet members of the initiating committee: Britain Yearly Meeting's Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group. There's a mouthful. It was set up after Yearly Meeting in session thought the time wasn't right yet for a revision of the Book (done every generation or so). Subsequently Meeting or Sufferings set up this group to prepare the ground for a revision process in the future – something we will all decide in 2018 probably. Anyway, the Group held its January weekend committee meeting in Edinburgh, with the invitation to any interested Scottish Friends to meet with them informally at the Central Edinburgh Meeting House on Friday January 29th January. There were 20 or so who came, including several from Glasgow, Dunblane and Lanark Meetings. We found out from the clerk, Lesley Richards, and administrative secretary, Helen Rowlands, about the work of the group. We then told them about how we were getting on with the Reading Quaker faith & practice programme, and we all discussed the possible future revision of the Book. This included to what extent the church government (regulatory and guidance sections) should be updated and how, as well as they should be put back in a spate publication, as formerly. If you don't know about the study programme, look it up on the Britain Yearly Meeting website at http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/

Michael Hutchison (Glasgow Meeting)

Film Night in Glasgow Meeting House

The Learning Team in Glasgow Meeting chose a wonderful film for the opening of their Film Night season on 22 Jan. They put on 'Marvellous', a film made for television which was scripted by Peter Bowker and tells the story of Neil Baldwin, a man with the label, 'learning difficulties' who simply does not let it get in the way of his life. He reminds us that these labels do not tell you very much about a person. Unlike most of us, he has an 'unselfconsciousness' about him and he's not afraid to ask for favours. He has been, amongst many other things, a clown in a travelling circus (Nello the clown), a lay preacher, an unofficial Student Support Officer at Keele

University, a Kit Manager and mascot at Stoke City Football Club ("Nello, Nello, Nello") - a list of roles that says something about the man, Neil Baldwin.

Bowker's script has scenes where the real Neil Baldwin is conversing with Toby Jones, who plays him in the film. 'How did you get to be Kit Manager at Stoke City?, says Jones. 'I asked', replies Baldwin. Later on Lou Macari who was Stoke City's manager at the time makes an appearance. He is talking to Tony Curran, who plays him in the film. 'It's all true', says Lou, 'it really captures Nello as he was.'

It could have been twee and sentimental but it is not. The script is spot-on. The actors play their parts with a skill that has you almost in tears in parts and laughing out loud in others. A wonderfully life-affirming drama and our Learning Team should be thanked for choosing it for the first of the Film Nights

Pete Stuart (Glasgow Meeting)

DIALOGUE ON THE DARK

Nuala Watts of Glasgow Meeting was at the Centre for Contempory Arts on 11th February to launch her booklet *Dialogue on the Dark*. This was part of Glasgow Poetry Society's St Mungo's Mirrorball, a free association of about 45 Glasgow-based poets who meet regularly in the Glasgow School of Art. St Mungo is the patron saint of this most Celtic of Scotland's cities, and a mirrorball reflects and sparkles upon scenes of enjoyment, so there is a clear link with the spirit of Glasgow, and a democratic dimension that is also part of the city's sense of itself.

The launch in Edinburgh on 23rd January was attended by Tom Leonard.

In her booklet Nuala 'explores partial sight as a philosophical and creative starting point. The poems grow out of a conviction that, although there is a long history of blindness and partial sight in poetry, the poetic potential of these experiences has often been insufficiently imagined.'

The View

Vision is still a draft.

The brain corrects the eye's syntax.

The trees are black lines, their roots seeking nutrients in blue earth. The box on stilts will be a cathedral.

Those holes will become your face. We walk on our hands over a deep blue ground.

John Milton: On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent, ere half my days in this dark world and wide, and that one talent which is death to hide lodged with me useless though my mind more bent to serve therewith my Maker and present my true account, lest he returning chide. "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?" I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent That murmur, soon replies "God hath not need either man's work or His own gifts. Who best near His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state is kingly. Thousands at His bidding speed and post o'er land and ocean without rest. They also serve who only stand and wait."

Untitled

I once heard a river as a car, Hovered on a kerb to let the breeze past.

Traffic is each walkers indrawn breath. Cyclists make the darkness move nonstop.

I walk on my ears, The road changing shape as I eavesdrop.

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OLD QUAKER - OLD FRIEND - Mary Latham

Interviewed by Margaret Roy

This article is in the series AT HOME: Getting to know Folks. In them we hope to capture the wisdom of a life lived through Quaker principles in some of our older Friends. NOTE: it is not an obituary (!) but an invitation to get to know some experienced Friends more deeply- Ed.

Mary Latham, of Glasgow Meeting, was born into a Quaker family but is not classed as a 'birthright Friend' because her parents believed in waiting to let her choose membership herself when she was ready. She did attend Sidcot Quaker school and went to Meeting in Edinburgh when at University.

After trying different churches where she enjoyed singing hymns, she was put off as she could not go along with the preacher's choice irrespective of her own concerns of the moment. While she believes in God, it is not as a bearded one up in the clouds. There is a spirit or a feeling, something intangible. Meeting is important as she has 'leadings' as to what she should be doing. When in Meeting, she absorbs the feeling in a way that is not the same as when sitting at home on her own. A Meeting of complete silence can be as helpful as one with lots of ministry. She enjoys visiting different Meetings even when she does not know anyone.

Mary has been an Elder for a year. Although she had been asked several times she turned it down before as she felt she was no good at putting spiritual matters into words. When she accepted the Eldership this time she thought that Nomination committee must think she is the right sort of person. It is interesting being an Elder because of the different types of problems they cope with, as opposed to being an Overseer in which capacity she served for several years. She felt Overseership more suited her personality as a practical person. She sees herself more of a Martha than a Mary! She says she sees both sides too easily.

A Quaker to her means seeing that of God in everyone and being part of a group of like-minded people. It very much affected how she brought up her children – all three of whom appreciate that, i.e. thinking of others, and doing the right thing. What is the 'spiritual way'? In Meeting real love arises. How do you put it into words? It is more than friendship or respect, or love of others or humanity. Looking after others is seeing them as whole people, irrespective of the role they display at the moment. Martin Luther King asked

us to see the person as more than their anger! She likens it to a concert where someone will like one piece whilst another is moved by a different piece. She likes to see all the new people in the Meeting marking that we continue to grow and change, and the Meeting varies from week to week.

For myself, I see Mary as one of the pillars, quietly supporting in all the committees she has worked with — Wardenship and Lettings, Nomination Committee, Finance. . . She doesn't see herself as a weighty Friend like Kenneth Laurie and Norman Peacock but I remember her from so many years ago along with Vera Long and Jenny Auld as a stalwarts of the Meeting. Her husband Joe edited this Newsletter for many years and Mary today is our distribution editor.

News of Meetings

Dumfries Meeting – Second Sunday Visit from the Juniper Trust

The Juniper Trust offers programmes for schools designed to promote peace, cooperation, respect, compassion all these wonderful qualities which somehow fly out of the window in the face of conflict.

Two of the trust's educators, David Keith (initiator of the programme) and Maris Warrior, came to talk to our second Sunday discussion meeting in February. They work in primary and secondary schools, usually with small groups of pupils, and sometimes with staff who can then continue the pro-gramme. I must confess that I was expecting work which showed up the evil and pain of conflict—but I had grasped the wrong end of the stick!

Theirs is positive, affirmative work, encouraging children to begin with themselves, developing their own strengths, to love and respect them-selves, value themselves and their abilities, then to work outwards to other individuals and the community at large. Full version of the report by Jan Lethbridge is in the Dumfries Meeting Newsletter

Mull and Iona Meeting

Our meetings are held in what can be described as a very beautiful location, in the Boardroom of the harbour building (Taigh Solais) in Tobermory. It has a wonderful panoramic view of the harbour with its fishing boats and yachts and the distinctive colourful buildings across the bay and beyond, out to the Sound of Mull and the Morvern and Ardnamurchan peninsulas.

Our meetings are held on the 2nd Friday and the last Tuesday in the month at 11am. The Tuesday meeting is followed by a Bring and Share Lunch. At present there are

7 members and 10 attendees, and are always pleased to welcome visitors. Sadly, the meetings in the Ross of Mull have been laid down, in the meantime.

Last Autumn one of our members, Mally Gower, celebrated her 60th birthday by cycling to the 4 compass points of Britain: Lands End, Ipswich, John O'Groats and Ardnamurchan to raise money for "Toilets Twinning". Her target was to raise money for 60 toilets, but she achieved over 65. A fantastic achievement. Many congratulations Mally..

In January we joined with other church communities on Mull for an Ecumenical service, where each congregation chose a hymn and a reading.

It is nice that the role of Quakers on Mull and Iona has also been highlighted and appreciated by the islands' community; especially for the financial support from The Quaker Housing Trust to the Iona Housing Partnership, and the Ulva Ferry Housing Project.

Ayr Meeting

Meeting for Worship: PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN THE VENUE for worship on the first and third Sunday

First and Third Sundays at 10.30 a.m. at the Riverside Flats Community Centre, Riverside Place, Ayr KA8 0ED

Riverside Place is on the south side of John Street (A79). John Street is the dual carriageway that links Ayr Police Office with Ayr Fire Brigade Station. (King Street roundabout to the roundabout at Ayr College). Parking is free in the public car park. Meeting for worship on the third Sunday is followed by shared lunch and a discussion Second Sundays at 10.30am at the Civic Centre, Glasgow Street, Ardrossan KA22 8EU Fifth Sundays, please contact for details

Clerk: Howard Bartlem (01292 475019) Email: ayrshire@quaker.org.uk

₹₩¥ HOLD IN THE LIGHT

Jean Oliver of Lanark Meeting whose father has died recently.

Bob Williamson of Glasgow Meeting for a speedy recovery from an operation.

Rob Quinn of Castle Douglas Meeting for a speedy recovery from his treatment.

Bill Perry of Castle Douglas Meeting for a speedy recovery from his treatment.

Muriel Robertson of Milngavie Meeting who is almost on her feet again.

And of course . . .

Our love and wishes for Peace to the Meeting and People of Dunblane.