

West Scotland Quaker News

May 2016

Clerk's Letter	2
Report on Area Meeting held 14 th April	3
Report in General Meeting 5 th March	5
Report on Sustainability Conference - Next Week We Will Learn About Rocks	7
Some thoughts on QF&P, Section 10 & 17	10
Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust 1	12
Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust 2	14
Peace is People – Stephen Koepplinger	16
<i>Lord of the Myth</i> , Poem by Derek Read	18
Wild Geese in the West - Crianlarich	19
Book Review <i>Through Us, Not from Us</i>	20
News of Meetings	23

Clerk's Letter

Silence is not God, nor speaking; fasting is not God, nor eating; solitude is not God, nor company; nor any other pair of opposites.

These words were written in the fourteenth century by the unknown monk English author of *the Cloud of Unknowing*. Years ago I wrote them in my 'day book' and they often come to my mind when thinking about what we do in Meeting for Worship.

We value the silence of Meeting, which can be a welcome and important contrast to our lives and the goings on of the world. It can be a space to regrow, to heal, to re-energise ourselves. We can sometimes even find the spoken ministry, if it happens at all, intrusive to the silence. Those coming new to Quakers may also take it that the silence is the purpose of the Meeting.

The unknown author's thoughts from his tract *The Discernment of Stirrings* gives us thought here. The tools we use to get closer to God (to reality, to the Spirit, what is greater than us) are not the end result. We risk making the silence our 'god' in the way we humans tend to make a god out of things we need or want. Other religious practices of any sort, for example fasting, can become an end result also. No, silence is the tool for us to become still so we can listen beyond us. As the unknown author said in listing his opposites, *(God) ... is hidden between them.*

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting

The peace of the earth

The peace of the earth be with you,
The peace of the heavens too;
The peace of the rivers be with you,
The peace of the oceans too.
Deep peace falling over you;
God's peace growing in you. *(Old Gaelic Blessing)*

AREA MEETING REPORT 14.04.2016

A bright Spring morning saw some two dozen of us descend upon the Gordon Hall in Castle Douglas for Area Meeting. The octagonal meeting room is attractive, though the high pitched roof may not give the best acoustics – but our Clerk, Michael Hutchinson, had arrived complete with clip-on microphones.

At the beginning of the opening worship, Assistant Clerk Margaret Boland read, in measured tones and with great clarity and impact, 22:13 from QF&P. (I suspect I was not alone in spending the rest of the worship time lamenting my own parental failings.) This passage greatly informed the discussion of ‘Children are unbeatable’, to which I will return later.

There was not a great deal of routine business, and those details will be in your minutes. But three meatier items made the day worthwhile.

Firstly, the Testament to the Grace of God as seen in the life Norman Peacock. Anyone who has passed through this Area Meeting during the past 40+ years will know, or know of, Norman and Margaret. In the nicest possible way, they have been a familiar part of the AM furniture, and of course Margaret continues the presence.

In the written testimony, and the spoken responses to it, Norman is variously described as: “my hair shirt”; an “intrepid pilgrim”; “the still centre”; “the humblest and wisest”; “the grandfather of the meeting”; “well grounded”; “relishing the absurd”. On the practical level, for every problem he would ... “have a bit of wood”, and in my mind I can just hear him saying that! The draft testimony received a few tweaks at lunchtime, and no doubt the final copy will be published in due course.

The second meaty item was a presentation by Margaret Wadsley about her concern to give children in Scotland the same protection from Assault, under the law, as adults have – doing away with the defence of “Justifiable Assault” which a parent, or someone acting in loco parentis, can claim. Margaret emphasized that this would not create any new criminal offence. However, many present were uneasy and fearful of an otherwise loving parent being criminalized for a smack delivered in the heat of the moment. In my experience this usually causes more guilt and anguish to the parent than the child. As someone said from the floor – ‘none of us wants to see children beaten’. But the law can often be a blunt

instrument. No answers were offered as to how often the “Justifiable Assault” defence had been used, perhaps never. Neither were the terms ‘Assault’ or ‘Serious Assault’ defined. Apparently the current situation in the Scottish Parliament is that the proposed amendment – to remove the defence of “Justifiable Assault” – failed on a technicality. So the campaign continues.

In the afternoon we gave thought to the Yearly Meeting theme ‘Living out our faith in the world’ linking it to important issues for the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary election.

Quite a lot was said about militarisation in schools, where many primary schools in this region are well ahead of the game, with their own white poppies, peace gardens and peace poles. Positive work for peace is being carried out by such organisations as the Juniper Trust, the World Peace Prayer Society and the World Peace Flame Foundation, with which several of those present have contact. We need to link sustainability to peace, since scarce resources could easily lead to conflict.

Do all Quakers yet take seriously the Canterbury Commitment? As a ‘church’ we came late to sustainability as an issue, as we did to disability. And I fear we may be coming late to another huge problem for society. The booklet ‘Scottish Election – a guide for Quakers’, issued at AM, makes no mention of health issues at all – and the problem I am thinking of particularly is how we care for our elderly population, especially those with a dementia, whose numbers will mushroom as we all live longer. Yet I suspect every meeting will already have someone amongst them with dementia, given our demographic. The parallel issuing at AM of a book called ‘Assisted Dying’, was an unhappy coincidence to my mind.

We touched on two other important matters – Glasgow Meeting House’s structural problems, much more to come on that within the next few weeks. And the JRRT/JRF confusion, leading to possible damage to Quakers’ reputation. Apparently this has been dealt with by what the Clerk referred to as “BYM’s Rapid Response Unit” (now there’s a contradiction in terms!). The feeling at HQ is that enough has been said. Would that be the case if it had happened in London, rather than Orkney, I wonder?

And I commend the writing of a report as an antidote to the, occasional, soporific effect of Area Meeting, especially after lunch!

Jan Lethbridge

Report on General Meeting for Scotland held in St Andrews on 5 March 2016

This was my first visit to General Meeting for Scotland and it was good to meet so many new Friends all at once, even if the farthest-flung parts of the Highlands and Islands were not represented. It struck me, too, that many of the voices to be heard here seemed, to my ear anyway, to be English voices. This seems significant to me because, while there was no set theme for the meeting, a thread that ran right through it was the visibility and the nature of the role of Quakers in the life of Scotland.

The day was broken into two halves. The first half, leading up to lunch, was the usual round of routine business, and as usual there proved to be too much business to be properly handled in the short time available and ran half an hour over even with a rather rushed take on the later items. The second half was devoted to one major item, the nature of donations and affiliations made to external bodies, and was conducted in the good old Quaker way as a Meeting for Worship for Business, a practice that seems sadly in decline these days perhaps because of the sheer pressure of business to be taken. It was held in a worshipful manner with thoughtful contributions given plenty of space to breathe and ended in a real sense of unity with plenty of time for silent worship followed by tea and cake to go home on. I won't dwell on the fine details of all items raised, but I will draw attention to some salient points.

- We noted that we have taken on a Parliamentary Liaison Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, and General Meeting is meeting half of the costs of Britain Yearly Meeting employing her. AMs have been asked to support this, which is why contributions are now higher. GM has also drawn on its reserves to meet this significant cost.
- Somebody (all right, I confess, it was me) raised the cost of producing a book of members and attenders, wondering how long a printed edition would remain sustainable and whether an electronic, easily modified and republished, version would become available. Naturally this minor quibble at the end of the financial report led to one of the longer and more animated discussions of the day; many Friends regard the printed book as a close companion, dog-eared and scribbled-on as it becomes over its two year life. Some won't be touching any kind of electronic

version, others would welcome the ability to keep contact detail on phones and other devices. Nobody is seriously suggesting the death of the printed book and most suggestions involved the two in parallel; perhaps a printed and an electronic version in alternate years. Many would welcome a return to an annual printed edition but John Phillips, the treasurer, fears that it would mean a reduced print run that would be financially unviable.

- Jane Pearn's Sufferings report brought us new challenges and stimulated much debate. The challenges are generated by adding the words "in Scotland" to statements issued in the name of BYM. Do these statements make sense in the light of the very real and palpable legal, educational, ecclesiastical and culture difference between Scotland and England? All too often they don't; Friend's House is often very anglo-centric. So where does that leave Quakers within Scotland? Quakers are members of, and play a vital role in, various Scottish ecumenical and interfaith bodies and their work is highly valued and appreciated. In the context of general Scottish culture Quakers aren't even on the radar. We are an ageing group; there are Young Friends among us but there is a gap. This led naturally into the Parliamentary Liaison group's report and the terrific publicity for Scottish Quakers generated by the armed forces in schools campaign. We are all urged to sign the petition, which can be found at www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/armedforcesvisitschools. There is a link on the GMfS website, although the accessibility of this site is a whole other issue, not addressed at this meeting.

There comes a time in the life of all organisations when it has to ask itself "what are we here for". Although enough Friends were present to have a healthy debate it was not a huge number. This might be explained by the accessibility problems presented by St Andrews as a venue, but there have been residential weekends that have been problematic, with Friends who had previously signed up for meals and social events that had to be paid for leaving on the Saturday night, and poor attendance at Sunday business meetings. A questionnaire is to be circulated (in both printed and electronic versions) in order to ascertain what Friends want from General Meeting. This is a road much travelled, in my experience, and I don't personally hold out much hope for discernment here. There must be other ways to find enlightenment.

Finally, that worshipful afternoon session on donations and affiliations may seem a dreary sort of topic but it produced some interesting contributions. GM has historically been in the habit of assigning funds itself, without downward reference to the local and area meetings whence the funds came in the first place. We worked towards a set of guidelines, which are not to be regarded as inviolable but nor are they to be lightly transgressed. These, we hope, will lead to support for work focused on Scotland although external projects such as Scotland's relationship with Malawi could be considered. We would also hope that proposals are referred up from, or down to, local and area meetings instead of GM making such decisions on its own.

Rosalind Mitchell

Next week we will learn about rocks'

A few times in the history of Quakers there have been momentous advances in Quaker witness. The support for equality in marriage was certainly one, opposition to the slave trade was probably another. Minute 36 (BYM 2013) which committed us to becoming a 'low carbon sustainable community' was certainly another such occasion. As the Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) at the time said, it was if God had given us a kick up the backside and pushed us forward; perhaps only afterwards do we realise what we have done, and it becomes part of our witness across the whole Quaker community.

But whereas the equality decision only directly affects a small minority of Quakers, Minute 36 is about all of us looking at the way we all live. It is about how the way of life in the developed nations is resulting in devastating consequences right now for poorer parts of the world, and for our own future as well as for the future of our own children and grandchildren. We may need to confront the possibility that in a few hundred years humanity as we know it may not exist. All our Quaker testimonies are involved in sustainability and yet sustainability is still to be 'owned' by all Quakers. To help Friends and meetings overcome barriers to this commitment BYM has set up a 'Sustainability Group' which held its second conference in Swanick recently.

The overwhelming nature of the challenge that we are all facing, and a sense of hopelessness, may explain why some local meetings are finding it difficult and painful to engage passionately with action for a sustainable future. Certainly voices were heard

describing the isolation that individuals were experiencing in bringing sustainability issues to the attention of their meetings. The issue of personal despair came up at the conference and one of the workshops entitled 'Story Telling' encouraged us to talk openly about this. Participants were asked to write two stories: one about living in a sustainable world and one about living in a world where global society fails to get through the "Great Turning'. We all found this exercise extremely powerful and moving. Many may feel that they are already doing as much as they can individually, given that we live in a wider society that is governed by principles with which we often disagree. How many of us, for example, feel:

- I know it is important but I have a young family and I don't really have the time to do anything,
- We should set up a committee to deal with this,
- I have already put in insulation, changed my light fittings etc. and don't feel I can do any more,
- I need my car to visit my family, go to work etc.,
- I really like going on overseas holidays,
- I buy my food from Tesco because I don't have time to grow my own
- Whatever I do won't make any difference because China is opening x coal power stations every week

One of the barriers to discussing climate change is that it is often framed in terms of guilt, having to give up something or make a sacrifice. The key to turning this position on its head is to create a vision of a sustainable world and to stress the positive benefits from developing a more sustainable way of life. We all want to live in a more just and equal society where we do not have to travel so much, or spend so many resources on treating the results of pollution and social disorder. All of us would like to spend more time with our friends and families. There is nothing impossible in this. Sustainability is about deepening the ties of local community life, and thereby its resilience. This is the message of the Transition Towns movement, but Quakers have more to add with our spiritual discernment, development of leadership as service, and our understanding about non-violent communication. Our commitment to modelling a sustainable, low carbon, community should bring us laughter and joy and, above all, energise us all.

Among the positive ideas about developing a real commitment to sustainability in our local Quaker Community were:

- Pool our individual carbon loads in the form of a Carbon Bank where people would be in credit or debit according to their carbon emissions in relation to a

notional national average. People who need to fly or drive for essential purposes would be able to ‘borrow’ emissions.*

- Communicate by story-telling rather by direct challenges
- Spend time building a community before talking about being sustainable
- Find more ways to challenge the existing economic system which is largely at the root of our environmental problems and work for fairer, more human system. We recommend you look at ‘Principles for a New Economy’ recently produced by QPSW which can be downloaded from <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice/new-economy> .
- Work towards climate justice, including direct action.
- Let our Meeting Houses be beacons of sustainability

Incidentally, the title of this report was taken from a story told by one of the conference speakers. She spoke of how her passion for climate justice was triggered by a geography lesson at school where the teacher showed slides of how the devastating effects of climate change could lead to the extinction of all humanity. He then proceeded to say ‘next week we will learn about rocks’.

Martin Mansell (Member: BYM Sustainability Group)

Mary Roslin. (Delegate)

* If you are interested in pursuing this idea further I have developed a simple spreadsheet to calculate your personal CO₂ emissions based on the method recommended by Friends House and I would be interested in setting up a community to pool their emissions as suggested. Please contact Martin.

*Don't talk to me about
that which we must do
the terrible debris of progress*

*Don't talk to me about
the nails that pin us
and wound us
the numbers that pin us
and wound us*

*Permanent is nothing
Certain is a skull word*

*Talk to me about the feeling of leaves brushing your face
 up there where the breezes anoint you
 with godliness*

*Talk to me about gathering in small good places sharing
laughter, food and wisdom*

*Talk to me about the space that is left when we
clear the debris away, under
the mountain
the fresh air in our lungs;
our joys; our togetherness*

*Amaze me
and we shall be prophets
not of actuality but of possibility-
consecrating ourselves to the fullness and
fluidity of ceation's heart*

*Amaze me
with intimacy
with trust

like the flutter and hop of a fearless robin
seeking amongst the earth
with darting beak and reaching spirit*

gifting me its nearness-

*Talk to me about love
and adventures*

Quaker Faith & Practice: Sections 12 and 17 Some Thoughts from Wednesday Afternoon Group in Glasgow

The overall theme of these sections is care of others, not just Quakers. The means to do this is active listening.

Elders serve this purpose through **right ordering** of the meeting. To do it they need to be a strong person within their own faith. We read 12.01: Loving care.....

Yet, it is not enough to be charitable. There is a way of doing it with love in the heart. Eldership is not an easy job, hence why there is a shortage of Friends taking

on the position. We looked at the onerous dictates on eldership, and overseeing, 12.08 We ask a lot of such people.

However, is there a better word for the roles?

Should we all assume communal pastoral care? BYM use a term *pastoral care team*.

Large meetings present problems for Overseers since it is impossible to know everyone. Perhaps they should have lists of no more than 10-12 people so they can get to know members more fully.

Re Elders, we felt there were definite skills that could be learnt. The key to this is active listening. Yet, the most important role was holding the meeting, right ordering and there are strong Quaker traditions here.

Yet, there was a feeling that the roles were out-dated and needed redefined in looking to our future. Some felt they no longer reflected Quaker values. Perhaps they could be seen as hierarchical or even authoritarian? So how did we envisage the role?

Some liked our rich tradition. Others felt an awkwardness, how can you speak truth to power when that power does not own power? We spoke of soft power expressed with love.

We spoke of the need to move away from the institutionalism reflected in the Red Book's requirements for Elders. There was a need to share the role, to own responsibility and to do this we needed to deepen our understanding of each other. To know each other better was to get back to smaller meetings. And, as no one was born with these skills, they needed to be identified and taught. Previously, and currently, Quaker skills such as discernment were learned by osmosis. With so many new people in the last twenty years or so, that process seems to have got lost. Something else was needed if we were to function as a meeting, in a new age, or did we need to change the format of meetings? At the same time we spoke to the need to empower the Elders especially when taking on conflict in the meeting. There was then a need for empathy with the Elders. There are issues such as confidentiality that need to be honoured whatever the format.

THERE WAS NOTHING FOR NEW MEMBERS TO INTRODUCE THEM TO THE QUAKER WAY

It was felt the chapter was too long and overwhelmed with words. It could be halved to be more useful.

JOSEPH ROWNTREE REFORM TRUST 1

I also have been concerned about the grant to Alistair Carmichael MP by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust to help meet his legal expenses arising from the unsuccessful petition raised against him by four of his constituents.

Joseph Rowntree's legacy (both ethical and material) has been a very important part of my adult life, and without it I doubt that I would have become an attender at Quaker meetings. I am inspired by his vision of seeking out the causes of poverty, rather than merely seeking to ameliorate its manifestations. This is reflected in the extract of his writing in *Faith & Practice* (23.17-23.18).

The charitable Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) funded my first academic post 25 years ago; and over the past few years I have undertaken a good deal of research as part of JRF's poverty programme.

The reputational damage to JRF's work in Scotland that is likely to arise from the JRRT decision led me to organise a letter with colleagues in Scottish universities that was published in the *National*:

<http://www.thenational.scot/comment/letters-i-joseph-rowntree-foundation-must-not-be-confused-with-the-trust-that-aided-alistair-carmichael.15623>

This explains my professional interest in the matter.

However, as a Quaker I am concerned about the particular decision itself.

The JRRT states that "Our values are rooted in liberalism and Quakerism." Its aims include "correct(ing) imbalances of power, supporting the voice of the individual, the small and weak where that voice is being stifled by the group, the big and strong."

Another aim of JRRT that will be familiar to Quakers is "speaking truth to power."

The legal case arose from Mr Carmichael's leaking of a memo during the 2015 General Election that was untruthful with the objective of damaging his political opponents. He then falsely denied that he had authorised the leak. He did so when he was still Secretary of State for Scotland, thus a Cabinet member of the U.K. government. He was a man with power. These facts are not disputed. The judges were unimpressed by Carmichael as a witness, and they made a number of damning comments about his integrity ("at best disingenuous, at worst evasive and self-serving"). An excellent assessment of the case by Andrew Tickell (an academic lawyer) can be read here:

<http://lallandspeatworrier.blogspot.gr/2015/12/no-vindication-here-only-survival.html>

Mr Carmichael won his case on a technicality - that that has been characterised as being that the lie was political rather than personal. The four constituents who took him to court risked personal financial ruin - they could not have known when they embarked on their cause that they would be protected by a crowd-funded appeal; or that in the event that they lost, the judges (unusually) would not award costs against them. In short, the Trust's donation supports the reverse of its aims concerning the strong and the weak. It seems to protect the consequences of lying by someone in power; rather than in speaking truth to power.

The Trust's justification is (in my view) unconvincing, but can be read here: http://www.jrirt.org.uk/sites/jrirt.org.uk/files/user-uploads/alistair_carmichael_-_website_statement.pdf

In particular, it is quite clear that the judges did not consider the action to have been "vexatious"; and had the petition been successful, the outcome would have been determined by the electors of Orkney & Shetland in a by-election.

I have no issue with the fact JRRT gives money to support some of the activities of the Liberal Democrats. It is clearly consistent with its objectives, as are grants it has made to causes such as anti-nuclear groups and (going back) anti-apartheid. Nor (I hope) do I lack understanding for Alistair Carmichael. I was active in (Liberal) party politics when I was young, and I understand the pressures, temptations and loss of perspective that can be overwhelming in the heat of an election. (Indeed I found Quaker meetings to be very useful in enabling me to consider ethical issues in a campaign that I led against a proposed quarry by the Falls of Clyde.)

A second statement from JRRT suggested that it would have been perverse to allow Mr Carmichael to face financial ruin as a result of a case that he won. I have greater sympathy with this argument. It might be argued that someone who was once strong had become weak. But weakness is relative: it is inconceivable that his party (with only eight MPs) would have allowed him to become bankrupt (thus triggering a by-election). So I do not accept the premise of this justification. However, this particular case represents such an egregious departure from the Quaker values of the Trust that I would like to raise this as a concern.

Mark Stephens, Lanark Meeting

Response to Bella Caledonia piece by Alastair McIntosh in National, March 29 2016.

JOSEPH ROWNTREE REFORM TRUST 2

I received this piece from three diverse sources on Tuesday, one from a member of our meeting, one from a volunteer in Wiston Lodge garden who is a member of our Border Collie Sangha and attender at our Lanark Quaker Meeting and lastly from a member of our Wiston Lodge Board. Each was very concerned at the misuse of Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Funds. I share their concern and have been thinking how I would like us to respond as Quakers living in Scotland.

I started by looking at Advices and Queries. No 36, which asks “Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations? Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility?”

This is quoted in The National also. The clear answer in this case related to Liberal Democrats is NO whatever their motivation.

So what can we suggest?

Clearly to ensure that Quakers are brought back onto the Board of JRRT immediately.

Second to think of ways in which amends can be made and that the JRRT recovers its integrity in public life.

So How? And please take this as the beginning of an idea.

We are living in times of great change, and at the top of my agenda is climate change and global warming. As a gardener and naturalist who keeps a daily diary, I see the changes occurring as time goes on...rising temperature, rainfall, high winds, lack of important wildlife, bees and butterflies, floods etc.

And then there is in Scotland – (as well as Wales and the North of England) the closure of the steel mills all around, and of course what to do about Faslane and Trident.

This brings me back to my campaigning past in both European Nuclear Disarmament and CND and my remembrance of the ideas of Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards and alternative forms of production. Now is surely the time to put

serious business energy and thought into alternatives which will help us out of these dangerous challenges.

And going back to Rowntree and indeed Cadbury, Wills, Fry's all of which have set up important and vital trusts to do philanthropic works, please look further back in their history.....they made their original fortunes by the sugar and tobacco plantations, worked on by slaves, **before** becoming involved in the campaign to abolish slavery. In their involvement in this campaign they were able to make amends.

I am suggesting that JRRT would consider this route for their future. We have a number of contacts in Scotland who would help in this discussion, Scottish Solar Energy Group, Green New Deal, CND, people like David Somervell from South Edinburgh Meeting, Bella Caledonia of course.

Truth and integrity in public life has to be the key.

Meg Beresford Lanark Meeting

HELEN STEVEN MEMORIAL SERVICE

A Memorial Service for Helen will take place in [Wellington Church](#), 77 Southpark Avenue (off University Avenue), Glasgow, G12 8LE ([Map](#)), at 5pm on 4th June 2016 (five minutes' walk from St Silas, the AGM venue). There will be teas and refreshments after the service in the Woodlands Hall of Wellington Church. If you would like to stay for an evening of sharing stories and songs about Helen, please bring a contribution for a potluck meal and something to drink - along with any instruments to play.

Everyone is also welcome to a celebration of Helen's life to be held the following day at Faslane (North gate) on Sunday June 5th from 12.00 until 16.00. This has been separately organised and if you have any questions relating to it please contact Penny Stone peacepeacewillpeacewillcome@googlemail.com

Peace is people

Mother Teresa said that the greatest illness is loneliness. Jimmy Reid said, "Alienation is..Britain's major social problem". Let's solve this. Let's build connected, happier communities. The best bang for our buck in solving this issue is to focus our attention is the teenage years. While teenagers are designed to be kicked out of the home nest (it's biological), society has a responsibility to ensure that transition goes smoothly. We need to do this better.

Bob Mandeville, Helen Minnis, Kieran Wild, Gisela Creed and I have set off on a journey, focusing on those teenage years. The habits formed during the teenage years have long thick tails (the life style chosen during this time in our lives have long lasting implications). While there appears to be a great deal of support from the likes Mother Teresa, Jimmy Reid and the Association of MBAs (who gave me the 2005 AMBA 'Student of the Year' for using my MBA to try and solve this issue), every one of the 50+ high schools across 6 local authorities in the West Coast of Scotland that I've worked in have unanimously said that they are meeting the needs of their communities. I'm not sure. Let's look at the problem through the eyes of John Pelo, a local 17 year old who is now in custody for attempted murder.

After a cross country session, I asked John why not just stop drinking, smoking and taking drugs (he was 14 at the time). He let out an condescending sigh, 'They are in every aspect of my life' he explained, 'everyone I know uses them all the time; maybe I could work on reducing one, but all three? No way'. I asked how old he was when he started smoking. He said 4-5? When asked who gave him a cigarette at that age, he told a story of being naughty so his father wanted him to act like an adult and gave him the cigarette.

After getting my MBA, I started working on pulling together many local community teams in many different activities (softball, dodgeball, badminton, frisbee, flag football, running, etc) to play against one another. In 2007, I got Possil, Cadder, Milton and the Wyndford (all socially deprived parts of Glasgow) set up in a wee community league. That was the first time I had met Sean (John's older brother). I had to clean up their local pitch that was not used for decades and had a match against Milton. The riot squad was there at half time as there had been trouble the previous weekend, but the boys just played the match, shook hands then

went home. I ran this league for five years, but managing, coaching and officiating four teams was too big of a job for one person: I simply could not continue without help.

However, John, who was too young to play in 2007, kept pestering me about coming back and doing up his pitch. I met up with some Syrian Refugees who were keen to do some volunteering and we restored the pitch. John was very happy in 2014 when we got the AA (Alcoholic Anonymous) out to have matches on a Saturday Morning. We also organised a half dozen 5km runs that started on the pitch, ran along side the canal, around Possil lock and ended back on the pitch (John won the final!). Unfortunately, the local janitor put a stop to it as he wanted us to pay to the use of the pitch that had open access and had no impact on him at all.

It took a year to get the permission from the education department. With permission secured, the pitch needed to be cleaned up again and I put all the litter beside the school gate so that when the gates were open, the rubbish would be behind the gate. The janitor was very upset, was verbally abusive and I did not feel comfortable continuing under these conditions.

Quakers' have a long proud history of leading social change. We have the unique culture of looking past sound bits and dealing with the root of the problem. Too often we are criticised for living in our five bed room detached houses bleating on about our social ideas. This is has a simple, elegant solution, that we all must play a role in solving.

Right now, I believe the best way to deal with the alienation loneliness issue to build connected, happier communities. To do this, we are building a website called communityteams.com that will be a tool for community leaders to use to make better face-to-face connection with community members. If you might be interested in helping to solve this massive social issue, get in touch to advise me on how to create this web based tool.

Stephen Koepplinger, Glasgow

Lord of the Myth

Derek Read, Glasgow

Gandalf fell into the abyss
And by long wrought magic
Returned as Gandalf the White
Shedding the Grey Raiment
Of his dispensation
As Saruman stained the calling
Of his Sepulchral Light

Christ bitter and broken
Bones racked with pain
Held the world in his broken hands
Crying to his Lord and Master
The forsakenness of the damned
Rolled the stones away
On the third day

Each takes his or her myth and oblation
The example of story and well-trod paths
To sacrifice and virtue, unquestioning allegiance,
The blindness of unseeing hands and hearts
And yet these stones and stories
Bones and beatitudes
Stubborn attitudes
Long-held delusions, tricks of the Light
Point to something beyond the call of mind
Cold intellect, scientific analysis
Chrysalis, wings stuck with pins to boards and labeled
The molten wax of dusty volumes set on fire

I know not what jots and tittles I believe
What tests of faith I would endure to defend my truths
In sooth, though, I know this and know it true
There's more to me and you,
Thee and thou, countless lives, downright lies, Holy Cows
More to you and me and this fragile body
Fragile mind and bonds between our different lives
In the invisible lines of Time and Space

BOOK REVIEW – *Through Us, Not From Us, vocal ministry and Quaker worship* Abstract or review? Margaret Rov

Published in 2015, this is the latest from the Kindlers. Booklet 11 contains 4 essays from Rex Ambler, Alex Davison, Janet Scott and Michael Wright on the theme of ministry and worship. It originates in talks given to the 19th Quaker Dialogue Between London Quakers and the Quaker Universalist Group. ‘The key question was *What is spirit-led ministry? Where does it come from? Is it Truth or ego or . . . ?*’ The introduction quoted two pieces on ministry from Quaker Faith & Practice – 2.55 and 2.60.

Rex Ambler, initiator of Experiment with Light, began that speaking out of silence is an experience unique to Quakers. He quotes Fox as telling intellectuals that: *Now you must die in silence, die from the wisdom, die from the knowledge, die from the reason, and die from the understanding.* Once, sitting in silence was even thought to be subversive especially in the early days. And, he challenges us: is Meeting more than an egalitarian gathering where all can speak; it is more than a ‘break from our busy lives’ giving an opportunity to ‘reflect in a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere’. Back to Fox and the difference between thinking and feeling – ‘*Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God turn thy mind to the Lord God*’. Ambler has studied Fox in depth and written several books about him.

His emphasis is on insight, a sense beyond thought, saying we know experientially a reality beyond our egos that touches the mystery of life. Then he tries to explain the difficulties of taking this state of consciousness into Meeting where we bring so much from outside yet are urged ‘*to go through a process of opening out to the Friends who are present*’. He explains the link between ‘*feeling his own spirit, here it is*’ and ‘*seeing where others stand*’, of being consciously part of the Meeting. In openness of spirit, we enter into that ‘other state’ called ‘*waiting in the light*’. However, he speaks also of the tension between silence and the spoken word. How does the word come out of silence?

This is his clear exposition of the experience of earlier Friends that is well worth the read to new Friends. It could be subtitled, *Opening the Heart*. And, he raises the issue that we no longer have a common language amongst Quakers in the Society of Friends!

Janet Scott gave the Swarthmore Lecture in 1980 *What canst Thou Say? Towards a Quaker Theology*. For a long time she was clerk to Meeting for Suffering.

She sees silence as a tool, ‘*to enable us to reach that state of stillness and putting aside of selves and our own thoughts that enables us to hear the Word*’ so vocal ministry is ‘more of a meditation on the Word of God, with . . . some attention to how we recognise the Word of God and distinguish it from *the devices and desires of our own hearts*’. She quotes Quaker Faith & Practice 29.17, from the 1985 Epistle of the world conference of

Young Friends: *Our priority is to be receptive and responsive to the life-giving Word of God, whether it comes through the written word . . . or the Inward Word of God in our hearts which is available to each of us who seek the Truth.*

There are two types of Word, creative and prophetic. In one, God speaks us into being, so it is our reconnection with that speaking which continues to make us more fully who we are created to be. The quote from Isaiah 43 is: *I have called you by name, you are mine.* The prophetic Word comes when God breathes his own spirit into us in Genesis and it is reiterated in Acts at Pentecost. When we speak this Word it can surprise us as it speaks through us. And, it may be unwelcome to hearers, including ourselves!

Secondly, in the gospel of John, we hear of the Incarnate Word, Jesus who speaks of 3 things in particular: the Kingdom that brings new life to the lost and broken; the way of the cross by which we put aside ourselves so *'the word we speak is not our word but the given word'*; and thirdly, we are called . . . to live in the same way as Jesus, not just in words but in deeds, as living epistles (2Cor.3:2-3). In ministry, we are *'speaking the words God has written in our hearts and in our lives'*. . . God knows that we are amongst the lost and broken, needing finding and healing. *'In Meeting for Worship we help each other by affirming when we sense that vocal ministry comes from that deep place'*.

Michael Wright was appointed clerk of Nontheist Friends Network in 2014. 'Self-taught by osmosis', he finds little in Quaker Faith & Practice that reflects his experience, except perhaps 2.66. where Maggie Ross writes of silence as *'restoring the flow between deep mind and self-consciousness, relocating the dominant centre from which the person draws his or her primary energy from self-conscious mind to deep mind'*. He values *'the exploration of silent worship, waiting in hope, seeking the experience of that deep mind. I cherish the Quaker method of discernment and prayer through gathering in silence, listening to a wisdom that is greater than the insight of each individual, and finding inner resources for taking action in hope.*

As his approach is more psychological he examines his condition, Advice & Queries 11, and carries a pebble or worry beads in his pocket to remind himself. When there is not enough silence during the week, his ministry *'was largely what was on my mind rather than on my 'soul'. 'It came largely from the busyness of everyday'*. His ministry comes from *'items that I have heard or read, things I have seen or done, people I have met, situations I have brought about, together with my current thoughts, feelings and emotions.'* The Jesus of the Gospels *'invites, challenges, encourages and motivates'* in so many aspects of his life but it is from the many little silences during the week *'along with my busyness that any ministry I may have to offer, will come'*. ACTS, Adoration, Confession. Thanksgiving and Supplication for him become Awe, Concern, Thanksgiving and Self-examination. He reflects on concerns and is aware of the power of thoughts, positive and negative. He no longer prays as it is our responsibility to make

change. *'I have lost any sense of a divine power intervening in human affairs'*. Yet in silence he finds himself engaging with 'some source' from which he draws strength but . . . *the God I first learned about in my youth is too small for me now; the metaphor, vitiated by anthropomorphisms, no longer speaks to my condition'*. He speaks for many in a scientific age where we want our beliefs backed up by concrete evidence.

Alec Davidson is secretary to the Children and Young People's department at Friends House and has worked for 13 years with the Leaveners.

His piece is called *Making Words Nourishing*. He starts by saying we are not Trappists bound to silence but *'a priesthood of all believers where every one of us, elder and newcomer, woman and man, young and old, is encouraged to share the deep experience of what we find universally in our hearts – our centre – evidence of which we have called the Light, or the Seed, or Spirit, or Power, or Life Force, or Psyche: even God'*. As channels of Spirit, we are also receivers, *speakers as well as listeners so our way is dialogue. Celebrators of the glory and wonder of life we are also teachers and learners – 'for our faith was developing on the hoof'*.

He sees early Quakers as *fresh thinkers and people of vision* so much needed in our diseased world today. As we look around the world for issues here is a problem in *'our lack of commitment to nurturing the Spirit: our choosing a way of life that fails to nourish the grace and potential that are our gifts'*. Our vocal ministry as impoverished, teetering into the *would-be therapeutic* or political, *too often head-stuff and soul-less*. yet if the Meeting is totally silent, *we learn nothing about each other, nor are able to be taught, or learn, or be inspired*. He focuses on the needs of the newcomer, what they bring and what we offer, and he finds us lacking although we offer much through such as Woodbrooke, Quaker Life, the Arts, Experiment with Light, Quaker Quest. These all reinvigorate the Meeting but do they answer the Seeker? He speaks of the initiative of The Kindlers in their booklets and Kindlers-on-the-Road, creating dialogue, listening participation, and interaction. Is this a way to *renew and re-vision our spiritual life?*

The Kindlers have two *visionary challenges*. A pilot programme started in Leeds to train 'Spiritual Animateurs', a latter day Valiant Sixty. 'Laboratories of the Spirit' could be set up in Local Meetings, as a six year experiment following *'a nationally planned programme of spiritual exploration in a variety of enactive styles'* in the first ½ hour, followed by a Meeting for Worship lasting ¾ hour. This would use 'trained Kindlers'. Apparently this follows the model of Quaker Quest so there is 12 years' experience. Is this as the start of programmed worship? He reminds that we have faced change before, e.g in dress, in theeing and thouing. His concern is that the Society should not dwindle, that *'we should speak to the condition of newcomers and young adults who will become responsible for the Quaker way in the next decades'*.

'Wild Geese in the West' – Westerly Friends Annual Gathering, Crianlarich

Last year, the first of the Crianlarich West Scotland meetings (the other three being in Inverary) a friend recalled in meeting for worship of seeing several geese journeying vociferously overhead on his way to the hostel. On our journey this year we also saw them too. It brought to mind that friends & attenders all journey from their remote corners to one central gathering place to lessen the distances between each other. To strengthen the bonds.

With some of those present being young friends, the youngest being six and a half (the half being ever so very important) it could be said that with their wild excitement, enthusiasm and energy that we are all together allows us to be called 'wild geese in the west'. A den was made in the nearby woods and a ditch was jumped, legs and dogs were walked whilst there was conversation, food, music, yoga, spiritual discussion and, of course, silence back at the hostel.

We thank all those who worked hard to organise the weekend, and weekends past, all who provided excellent nutrition. Woodbrooke on the road tutors Rachel and Wendy who also provide such excellent nutrition of a different sort, this year: 'Discovering our spiritual gifts'. Thanks to Fate and Peter who provided so much fun for the smallest ones and also, simply, to those who attend - their wisdom and warmth. Our thoughts also were with those who couldn't make this year's event. Here's to next year!...

Here is a short piece from Sonny Scott 11 years (and seven months!) who has attended all of the annual gatherings:

"I love going to Quakers weekends!!! even though I don't know some people I can talk to them like they are my best friend because every Quaker I have met is kind. This last time I went, Woodbrooke on the Road came and were talking about our gifts, this inspired me and my friends to write a song about it. I had brought a guitar and played a few chords and we wrote the lyrics. If I was at school or something I would not have performed the song but because we were at Quakers weekend we performed it and everyone clapped. I hope other people will come to Quakers because it is really fun meeting new people and every time I have been I have met new people." by Sonny Scott

Noah Scott, 6 years (& 1/2), Argyll

"I love this place"

Inverness

News from Meetings

Two sets of changes for Inverness.

Clerk: Clunie Conochie (07850658921) clunieconochie@gmail.com

Ass. Clerk Oriole Hall (01349864086) oriolehall@hotmail.com

Correspondence: Clunie Conochie at Glen Tarra, Corry Road, Muir of Ord,
Ross-shire, IV6 7TL

Change of venue 1st Sundays, 1st May, 5th June, 3rd July, 7th August

L'Arche workshop (off Island Bank Road)

13, Drummond Crescent

IV2 4QR

Children Welcome

Contact Kathleen Quinn 01463 831 364 for further details.

Milngavie

We found that a local church was collecting for a Food Bank and after a discussion we visited the church where they explained how the scheme is operated. We decided that on the last Sunday of each month we will all contribute some products and take this to the church. This has been operating very successfully.

Glasgow

The **Vision Group** met in February 2016 to “consider *and review progress towards the vision which Glasgow Local Meeting discerned in November 2012, and which encompasses all aspects of Meeting life through our worship, community, learning, space, and ways of organizing our business.*”

The vision group considered the vision, our aspirations and developments since February 2015 looking at the six priorities identified in the visioning process concerning: *fellowship and spiritual growth, learning and involvement in the meeting, support to live out our testimonies, building a strong collective witness in the Glasgow and interfaith communities, creating a space which works for us and rebalancing our roles and responsibilities to meet our spiritual and practical needs.* The developments overall made heartening reading, and represented contributions from many friends and attenders in supporting the life and work of

the meeting for which we are grateful. Our detailed report to the March 2016 Glasgow Local Meeting detailed progress across the different themes since February 2015, noting that the vision is not static, and continually evolving. We recognized the need to maximize and coordinate our use of different forms of communication.

Dumfries

On the second Sunday in March Sarah Booth spoke to the meeting about Human Rights, not so new as you might think as 18th/19th century philosopher Jeremy Bentham spoke about human (natural) rights. Sarah illustrated her talk with four cases, one of a Muslim woman student banned from wearing her headscarf and another of an air hostess pulled up for wearing a crucifix.

We had a lively discussion!

Castle Douglas

This meeting is now organizing the vigils outside Dundrennan Range. Meet outside the gates at 11am on 3rd July and 13th November.

Argyll

There will be a cluster meeting on 19th June in Skipness Village Hall for members of Argyll, Arran and thereabouts. For further details contact Edward Tyler 01583 421 275 or edtyler@bioengineering.com.

West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Street, Glasgow G2 4PS. Telephone 0141 248 84 93

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

**The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 1st July
Copy should be send in Word to the editors Bryan Bowes or Margaret Roy**