

West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

November 2017

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Clerk's Letter

The first time I plucked up courage to attend my local Quaker Meeting I aimed to be a couple of minutes earlier than the stated time for the start. Inside the meeting house found a doorkeeper by the open door of the meeting room and, nervously, I said a 'good morning' very loudly as I went in, not expecting a room already mainly full and silent. Since then I've tried to be a bit quieter!

You always have to pick up the unwritten ways of a new group and Quakers are quite good at not always telling you how things work. This despite all the leaflets we give you! So this is an explanation for 'what actually happens number 1'.

We generally advertise our meetings for worship as beginning at 10:30, or 11:00, or whenever. They don't. They start when the first person sits down. In my meeting, with its meeting house and separate lobby, this is usually about a quarter of an hour before the meeting is scheduled to 'start'. By the time it reaches 11, the scheduled 'start', a large number are already present and those able to be earlier have helped 'settle' the meeting and provide a stillness to enter. In other meetings, especially in a hired room, there may not be a lobby so this is more difficult, but Friends are often wise to this and try to ensure some stillness in the room before the appointed time.

Quaker faith & practice (Qfp) 2.41 uses Alexander Parker from 1660 to describe this settling:

The first that enters into the place of your meeting ... turn in thy mind to the light, and wait upon God singly, as if none were present but the Lord; and here thou art strong. Then the next that comes in, let them in simplicity of heart sit down and turn in to the same light, and wait in the spirit; and so all the rest coming in, in the fear of the Lord, sit down in pure stillness and silence of all flesh, and wait in the light... Those who are brought to a pure still waiting upon God in the spirit, are come nearer to the Lord than words are; for God is a spirit, and in the spirit is he worshipped... In such a meeting there will be an unwillingness to part asunder, being ready to say in yourselves, it is good to be here: and this is the end of all words and writings to bring people to the eternal living Word.

So meeting for worship is a process in which we all take part, even if we can't all get there early. My old friend and mentor, Tom Bodine, describes the end result in Qfp 2.47: *As a meeting 'gathers', as each individual 'centres down', there gradually develops a feeling of belonging to a group who are together seeking a sense of the Presence. The 'T*

in us begins to feel like 'we'. At some point – it may be early in the meeting or it may be later, or it may never occur at all – we suddenly feel a sense of unity, a sense of togetherness with one another and with that something outside ourselves that we call God.

Michael Hutchinson, 20th October 2017

Report of Area Meeting, Tarbert, 26th August

We went to Tarbert again this year for our Area Meeting at the end of August, I find going on a bus through the lovely countryside of Western Scotland really interesting, however often I have been previously. It is a long journey, but with good friends to travel with and good food when we get there and a good place to stay overnight, it feels like a short holiday. The small Meeting in Argyll are welcoming and the Area Meeting is well organised, so that it is a pleasure to be there.

Area Meeting was positive. The first business started with thoughts about the outcome of the last three years consideration of 'How we live out our Faith', the exercise initiated at Yearly Meeting three years ago. Not having been able to be at Yearly Meeting this time, it was interesting to hear Friends discussing what it had meant to them, and continuing to express what their attendance at this Yearly Meeting had felt like. The enthusiasm of Friends who had been there for the first time was encouraging.

There was quite a bit of business which went on longer than had been expected. For me it was exciting to hear of the two Attenders who had applied for membership, one of whom I know well. Each one of us there will have our own memorable items to remember, but having rightly spent most of the time on the first two discussions, there was still a good bit of business to be dealt with quickly later on. It is frustrating for clerks to realise that there should still be business to deal with when the time has gone in which to do it, but our clerk this time had carefully worked out how

to get through the main part so that there was not too much to have to carry over until next time.

I think we all from Glasgow got a lift home with someone else who was there. We certainly had a quicker drive than coming with the bus and of course our driver did not have the stops to make that the bus did, but she did have to do the taking each one of us closer home than he did. For me it was a happy day spent with good company, good clerking and positive business achieved.

Joyce Minnis, Glasgow

Report on Area Meeting, Dunblane, 14th October

For me, and several others, this was an AM where travel and worship featured most. A perfect autumn day with glorious colours on trees in and around Dunblane. The railway line is being electrified and the bridge at Dunblane is being raised to facilitate the work. The result for the faithful on Saturday morning was scenic diversions, as well as some frustration.

The Meeting for Worship is at the core of our being and organisation. Without that we are just a group of people who sit quietly once a week, and chat over coffee afterwards. But we ARE a worshipping community and this AM we spent more time than usual focusing on the experience of worship. We considered the question "What is important for good worship?" I found the experience stimulating as we Worship Shared. We heard what works well for some Friends, what works not so well. How we prepare for worship: the time ahead of Meeting for Worship, how to focus better so as to hold the quiet space and not allow serious disruption. Study or Reading Groups are a very useful vehicle for deepening ones spiritual life, and are enjoyed by all the many participants of the recent Groups. There is a leaflet from FH which is well worth reading and contemplating. and is also available at Glasgow MH or on-line.

After the delicious lunch provided by Dunblane Friends, we heard reports from the treasurer, the clerk and the nominations for the new triennium beginning on 1st January 2018. (This is the 3-year period for which appointments are made for Friends to serve the AM) The visit of George Lakey, the American Friend, best known for his

peace work and writing, was very popular across the UK, with more than 50 Friends and others attending his Glasgow presentation. Another interesting event was hosted by Ayrshire Friends for Quaker Week, with a theme of Peace.

Something that struck me again was the variety of work undertaken by Friends, both locally and nationally, in the name of Quakers, and how much time and money are invested in the work. We are always pleased to hear about this work, often feeling proud when we hear of this in the mass media, but I realised again how much it costs. From the early days of Quakerism investment was made in the individual Friend's spiritual development, as well as the social development and care of communities, and society in general. (Joseph Rowntree being the name most familiar to non-Friends.) We have a budget of £25,000 for the coming year but our income is declining. We were reminded that the price of a cup of coffee donated each week to AM, by each member/attender, would be enough to cover AM expenses.

Margaret Morton, Glasgow

(477words.)



George Lakey: Campaigning and the Quaker Faith

Alastair McIntosh

George Lakey cut a sprightly octogenarian figure as he spoke in Glasgow Meeting on Sunday 8th October about his recent book, *Viking Economics*. He opened by describing how his wife is Norwegian, but they chose to move to his native America because Norway was too much of a sorted society to give vent to the campaigning activism with which they wished to live their lives' witness. As the years went on, he came to ask himself more and more what it was about the economies of "Viking" nations – specifically, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland – that led to their consistently high ranking on measurements of national happiness. Ergo, *Viking Economics*, the title being deliberately chosen to grab attention.

The bottom line, as he discovered from studying political science, is that national happiness varies in direct proportion with equality. Nordic societies have chosen paths of socio-economic development that have promoted relatively low differentials between rich and poor. This results in fewer social stresses. Readers of *The Spirit Level* will be familiar with this argument.

However, as a life long campaigner for peace and social justice his question went further. Nordic societies had not always had such healthy national profiles. In the early to mid-20th century they also had fascist leanings. What had they done that has marked them out from many other parts of Europe and, especially, from the United States of America? His conclusion is that they have developed an approach to society and economics that places the emphasis on people more than capital. Throughout the 20th century, Nordic people have actively campaigned for social justice. “Campaigning” is the operative word. George is convinced that what is needed is not one-off actions, but sustained and carefully strategised campaigns, such as Saul Alinsky advocated in his book, *Rules for Radicals*. The Nordics came up with a vision for a fair society and they worked consistently and methodically to realise it, targeting their attention right where the power lay, including the individuals with whom power lay, such as the now-imprisoned Icelandic bankers.

Quite where that vision first came from he did not get round to explaining. George’s style of presentation had us laughing so much, with many funny anecdotes and such a grandfatherly storyteller’s style, that our critical faculties were perhaps suspended. After all, the marauding Vikings were hardly paragons of social justice. Was it something in their predominantly Lutheran faith background? Is it something about small nations on the periphery, of which Scotland is also an example? Or something about societies not far removed from their rural roots? We didn’t quite get round to asking those questions.

We didn’t, because much of the lecture was taken up with George’s fascinating account of how a group of Quakers whose organisation he co-founded – Earth Quaker Action – had campaigned on mountaintop removal as a method of extracting coal in the USA. 500 mountains have been blown up by corporations to take the coal out without the need to mine. The result is local environmental devastation in areas such as Appalachia, that are already poor.

I would have appreciated deeper spiritual insight at this point in the discussion. My question to George was how they communicated a Quaker understanding to

activists who might not be Quakers. How was the spiritual ground held, so that it didn't become just another form of political activism? He said that the Spirit achieved this. He gave an example of an action where one young man stilled the whole gathering with his ministry, even to the point where the police officer turned off his chattering radio out of respect.

I would like to have heard much more on that theme. Do the roots of our nonviolence not press us to go more deeply into the spiritual foundation and dynamics of action for a transforming world? As the preamble to the chapter on the peace testimony in *Quaker Faith and Practice* has it, our testimony's "roots lie in the personal experience of the love and power of Christ which marked the founders of the Quaker movement." Have we fully understood this? George Lakey mentioned "Spirit", but I don't think he spoke at all of God, let alone the nonviolent example and teachings of Christ. It may be that such an approach is passé. It may be something to be edited out in the next revision of what was once called our book of discipline, or discipleship – that which we follow. But do we really understand what is found there? Do we understand what it means to follow something that goes beyond the ego domain of human reason? And if we do not, can we, with integrity, claim to be ready to move on from it whether passively, by not speaking of it, or more actively abandoning ship?

As I listened to George, I thought how much we need not just the strategic skills in campaigning that he so aptly addressed. We also need a sustained explicit grounding, a shared practice and literacy, in those "sources eternal" that are of the Spirit.

George said that for him it is not about kindness, it is about "tough love". I get that. But there's also much more that could be said, and needs to be said, about how we do that. Winning a campaign is one thing. Winning over ones erstwhile enemies is quite another, and it is not always as impossible as it might sound. George emphasised that we must campaign, campaign, campaign. I couldn't help feeling that while confrontation is important, it must also be about transformation, and had time permitted I should have loved to have heard more from him about that theme. Such is what can distinguish Quaker activism, or spiritual activism, from the activism that any other group for social justice can do with only a materialistic basis.

I must be careful here. It is not that these things were not implicit in what George said. I just think we need live in times when we need to find the courage

to turn the inside out, to show how and why the spiritual is crucial. George's lecture was witty and inspirational. Perhaps it is a token of its richness that it raised many questions, some of which were only partly answered and others, perhaps, unanswerable. His presence both in what he emphasised, and what was underemphasised, widens the window on what it can mean to be a Quaker in today's world. His visit to our Meeting was a blessing and I am thankful to whoever made it possible.

Alastair McIntosh, Glasgow

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has been awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize

This happened just a matter of weeks after the UN opened its new Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) for signature and ratification. This new Treaty stands with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in importance, and by speaking about the humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons and including the perspective of states which do not have nuclear weapons, it addresses the shortcomings of both of those treaties. It will come into force as soon as fifty states have ratified it through making it part of their national legislation. One of the incredible things about the Nobel award and the UN TPNW, is the recognition of the work done by ICAN's 400 partner organisations in 100 UN member states. We are the drops of water in the ocean of light flowing over the ocean of darkness, we are the grains of sand that will change the course of the river.

Of course four ICAN partner organisations are in Scotland - Scottish CND, Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, Medact and UN House, but Scotland didn't send diplomats to the negotiations at UN because Scotland is NOT a member state and the UK, shamefully, is having nothing to do with it. Scotland has been represented at all the TPNW negotiations through its partners, and our First Minister sent a strong message of support. Her position in supporting the TPNW and in opposition to Trident is the majority view supported through the Scottish ballot box over a few years now, irrespective of who is representing us at Westminster. I was very pleased that I was able to deliver a message to the initial working group and present a briefing about the Scottish position at the negotiating conference; both documents are part of the UN record.

The TPNW absolutely prohibits not only ownership, use and stockpiling and storing as one might expect, but also sharing, assisting another state, or threat of use. There are

positive obligations as well; to recognise, for instance, the disproportionate impact on women and girls, and to remediate the effects on victims and the environment, so it will undermine the position of the nuclear armed states and make it difficult for them even if they do not sign up.

In the Vatican's presentation to the UN working group that called for the conference to negotiate the treaty, it is made clear that peace can not be achieved through a balance of power between enemies, but requires a profound respect for strengthening mutual trust amongst all nations.

ICAN understood the need for the participation of civil society organisations in the negotiations and campaigned for that. It also appreciated the need for the evidence of environmental and scientific experts, as well as the testimony of the Hibakusha and other victims which was fundamental to the success of the conference.

Accelerating climate change and environmental degradation endanger us through resource shortages and conflict, and human migration in turn increases the urgency. But all of the efforts made to project the likely impacts of climate change and find ways to reduce escalation would count for nothing in the event of any use of nuclear weapons. The Faith Groups delegation at the negotiations understood this, and underscored “the duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for current and future generations” in their written presentation.

The TPNW will enter into force as soon as it has been signed and then ratified by 50 UN member states. We have enough signatures already so only a matter of months is needed for states to ratify by ensuring that the TPNW enters their national legislation. It is now incumbent on us to do all we can to encourage Westminster to understand that it is Scotland – the country where all their nuclear weapons are based – that has the right end of the stick, along with the majority of world states, and Westminster which is holding fast to an antiquated and deranged idea that nuclear weapons are not a danger to everyone on the planet and an indiscriminate and inhumane system of mass murder that could catapult the world into irreversible global warming.

Parliamentarians should be encouraged to email info@icanw.org and state their support for the TPNW and a commitment to challenging the UK Government to support the Treaty and scrap Trident.

Janet Fenton *October 2017 Parliamentary Liaison Scottish WILPF*

I attended the negotiations over the last few years with support from WILPF, SCND, NFPB, Trident Ploughshares and others see nuclearban.scot and icanw.org for more information

News from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) welcomed Ed Tyler from Argyll who recently joined the group (and took part by Skype at our last meeting).

PEWG has focussed on the concept of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) as the most practical way of taking forward our concern about economic inequality. However, we recognise that not all Quakers in Scotland are fully behind the idea and so we are planning a meeting early next year which is provisionally titled 'UBI – friend or foe to economic justice?' which we hope will give Friends the opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of UBI.

Joyce Taylor (PEWG Clerk) and Mairi Campbell Jack (the Parliamentary Engagement Officer) attended the SNP conference in Glasgow on 9th October. The motion brought by Young Scots for Independence, calling for the age of military recruitment to be raised from 16 yrs to 18 yrs for all roles requiring combat training, was overwhelmingly carried by Conference. Meetings were also held with Ivan Mckee MSP for Glasgow Govan, John Mason MSP for Glasgow Shettleston and Angela Constance, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities who were sympathetic to our concerns about militarism in schools and the principle of Universal Basic Income. However, they questioned our idea of creating a Cross Party Group on the subject and suggested looking for an existing CPG where the UBI agenda could fit.

Martin Mansell, Glasgow

NEW BOOKS IN GLASGOW MEETING LIBRARY

Quaker Social Action *150 years of Quaker Social Action*. QSA [2017] 29p. S/QUA
Britain Yearly Meeting *Epistles and testimonies*. BYM2017 98p. O/BRI
Miller, Annie *A basic income handbook*. Luath Press 2017 303p. S.MIL
Pearn, Jane *The language of leadings: a reflection on faith, action and concern*.
Quaker Books 2017 94p. Q/PEA

Librarian, Paul Burton will send books at cost of postage. paulfburton@btinternet.com

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

16 days action 25th November – 10th December.

A group of Quaker women have come together to highlight these 16 days of action around the abuse and violence against women in our immediate and global communities. As women of faith, it is felt prayer and action are both necessary.

Kate Arnot, Mary Kennedy and Margaret Roy amongst others.

We have organized a programme of events and workshops which will be informative and based on women's lived experience. *See poster overleaf.*

Aims

We hope to engage the participants to find areas in their own lives where they can progress as women and engage with other women in their families, friendship networks and wider communities towards activism against gender-based violence.

We would like no one to leave any of our events without feeling unable to speak out (when safe to do so).

We would like women to know where they can go for support, for themselves & others. We would like to see participants pledging to whatever level of activism they are ready for.

Why should Quakers support this concern?

There is gender inequality everywhere. It feeds on poverty and creates a cycle of ignorance that underpins war and conflict. Attitudinal changes in a society are very difficult to assess never mind deal with but as Quakers we are uniquely positioned in the ways we can explore this and hold it in the Light.

There is gender inequality everywhere and this is not good....gender-based violence is totally unacceptable and requires action to end it.

What follows are book reviews and articles in response to this - Ed.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

16 days of action
25th November – 10th December

INFORMING

This is an on-going action much needed when ‘ *Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. In many countries there is a culture of impunity for those who carry out this kind of violence. It is seen as normal, acceptable, and even Christian churches very often hide, tolerate, perpetuate and even practice violence against women*’ – Kathy Galloway writing for *Side by Side*.

Talks and Workshops and Vigils

28th November on FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

with **Hilary Burrage** (author and member of Global Media Campaign to end FGM),
and **Wura Ogunrotimi** of KWISA (African Women in Scotland)

1st December on WOMEN AND POWER –

with **Clare Phillips** of Castle Douglas Meeting, who stood for the Green
Party in Holyrood elections,
and **Helen Minnis** of Glasgow Meeting consultant paediatric psychiatrist in the NHS.

Both if the above at Glasgow Quaker Meeting House, 38, Elmbank Crescent,
6.30 food sharing then 7pm talks and interaction.

5th December UNDERAGE MARRIAGE

With Judy Wasige and Juliet from KWISA
at 39 Napiershall Street, Glasgow
6.30 food sharing then 7pm talks and interaction.

Vigils – Thursdays in Black

30th November & 7th December 12.30 – 1pm at Donald Dewar Statue

Towards a world without rape and violence.

Wearing black on Thursdays shows others that you are tired of putting up with violence and calls for communities where we can all walk safely without fear.

Follow-on Workshop – Alternatives to Violence

16th December 2pm Held at Glasgow Quaker Meeting House.

For more details contact: marykennedyfacilitation@gmail.com or margaret.roy@btinternet.com

Book Reviews: Headscarves and hymans , Why the Middle East needs a sexual revolution Mona Eltahawy 2015, Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Mona Eltahawy is Egyptian but spent some time growing up in the UK, partly in Glasgow. She moved to Dubai when she was 15 years old. Currently she lives in Cairo and New York. As a journalist she travels widely talking on Arab and Muslim issues (CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera). Newsweek named her one of its 150 fearless women of 2012. The book is well illustrated with cases of people she has met on her travels but her priorities may come as a shock to those who feel we have moved on from the early days of Women's Lib. For those who have never come across the polemic it is a challenge. Much comes from her own experience. She first came across feminism when a lecturer pointed out books in the library of her college in Dubai.

The first chapter is entitled *Why they hate us*. The discrimination is more than institutional or even cultural. She says it is nourished at a deep psychological level by religion so woman's body is to be feared and controlled. She describes the ordinary in a way that pulls you up. It challenges your reality of what is normal. *'The clerical obsession with women's organs continues today. My favourite recent howler: driving will damage your ovaries'*. Some of it would be hilarious if it wasn't real, or if it didn't remind you that your mum wasn't allowed to wear trousers or go out to work, and had to have dad's meal on the table at the right time. But, my father was civilised: he never beat mum and we did do things as a family, sometimes, and he supported my education. One of the first actions of the Taliban was to close girl's schools. As a woman, the author could only sit in the back two rows of the bus – *'What does that remind you of? Segregation is the only way to describe it.'*

She speaks out strongly regarding the Arab Spring. . . *'But for women, there have always been two revolutions to undertake: one fought with men against regimes that oppress everyone, and a second against the misogyny that pervades the region'*. In 2013 Thomson Reuters Foundation labelled Egypt as *the single worst country for women's rights, scoring badly in almost every category, including gender violence, reproductive rights, treatment of women in the family and female inclusion in politics and the economy*. There are plenty of statistics in the book. There are the horror stories of 'virginity tests', of FGM, rape, underage marriage and Shira law. One eight year old dies of internal bleeding on her wedding night to a 40 year old man – the family sold their daughter because of poverty. Then, to escape the shame to the family, Filala and Tamira were forced to marry their rapists – *'trapped in a state of perpetual victimhood as the wife of your rapist, where is the chance to heal, to mourn, to grieve over what*

happened to you, to overcome and overpower the trauma, when your rapist is there with you every day?’ They both committed suicide. She puts you in touch with the personal but not as a voyeur. Your heart is deeply touched. However, I don't think we westerners can understand a culture in which even a 51 year old widow has to ask permission of her 11 year old son to remarry. A woman's body may be even the property of her baby – in UAE . . . according to a law passed in 2014, a mother's breasts are her child's property. A clause that is part of the child's rights law makes it mandatory for a mother to breastfeed her child for two years . . .

Whilst laws to ameliorate women's circumstances are on the statute book, the means of carrying them out do not exist realistically. How can a woman complain of abuse when she has to go to the police station under the ‘protection’ of a male guardian, often the abuser, her husband or father for example. The laws are often made under the pressure of the West.

This book gives a detailed insight into life as a woman in the Middle East, mainly in the Arab countries. However she has sharp words for Western liberals who prefer to hide the misogyny as ‘culture’. She challenges that Western governments, the UN, etc. fail to see the ‘reforms’ as in word only. She talks of the irony that men confined to house arrest do not realise that women are always under house arrest, of the patriarchy outside the house and another within it.

Review: Living Doll, the return of sexism, Natasha Walter, Hatchette Digital, 2010

It may be easy to look at other countries then congratulate ourselves for how far we have moved on. Indeed one commenter on the Violence Against Women project said we had gone beyond the blame culture and angst to try to understand how violence arises. So, after all these years of feminism, what is the current status of women? This book challenges so many of our assumptions and describes the price women pay in our society for ‘liberation’.

Can we really assume that Women's Lib pioneered a society in which women are free to follow a career outside the home, to earn equal pay to men, to be free to have sex without fear of pregnancy, to have better consideration of the needs of childcare in the work environment? The recent increase in sexual violence and more recently attention given to sexual language used in argument and debate even towards female MPs are themes current in the media which is beginning to take note that there is something unacceptable but how did we arrive at this state? Something is changing. The author

contends that women are even more sexually exploited. It is not only your granny that tuts at some of the on-goings in today's society. I bet you have indulged yourself. Two words leap out of the author's argument: *hypersexualisation* and *unindividualism*. They are not in the dictionary yet!

The book states that sexual freedom has not led to a milieu in which women can explore their sexuality more openly, but for most women it is the opposite. The *'book makes a disturbing, passionate and compelling case for revisiting our notions of equality'*. It is not pleasant reading as she exposes the brutality behind the sex industry's *'increasingly sophisticated façade'*. Pole dancing might be fun (don't you have one in your bedroom?) but . . . as she visits clubs to observe, it is not fun she finds – men demand the girl to take off more and more of her clothes, to strike sexually explicit poses, etc, jeering and shouting obscenities. The women she interviews find it degrading and humiliating but they see the *'glamour modelling'* as a quick way to fame and fortune. She states that it exploits poverty, poor education opportunities and poor career possibilities. And yes, she deals with the educated, 'middle class' girl who says, why not? She looks at the glamorisation of prostitution in modern film and literature. She smashes the idea that there is 'choice'.

The living doll title comes from the view that girls no longer only play with dolls but are expected to model themselves on Barbie & co - *the brilliant marketing strategies of these brands are managing to fuse the doll and the real girl in a way that would have been unthinkable a generation ago*. Ever tried to buy a present for a girl that is not in pink or does not have a motif of a Disney princess? And what about the playboy logo on little girls' lunch boxes? And little girls' clothes?

Her concern that the sex industry has moved from the margins to mainstream changes the way we see women. Dealing with the increased availability and use of pornography, she speaks of sex without intimacy or emotion and the increasing brutalisation of women by men who see them as objects. This leads to the breakdown of relationships because of unrealistic expectations. Above all, she talks of the pressure on young girls to conform to new stereotypes, even to having plastic surgery to reshape their bodies to 'modern expectations'. Sex dolls now come with 11 different choices of vagina, different breast sizes and different heads and personalities!

This is the first part of the book. The second part looks more at statistics and experiments. What is male and female? Do little girls really go for pink when before WW1 it was the preserve of little boys?

Her arguments are challenging. Her prose is a bit long-winded but full of examples, personal interviews and comments on social research projects. Alas, I did not get to the end of the book as I found it too challenging, but it raised the question for me as to where the real war is today and how our truth and integrity can apply to social attitudes.

Margaret Roy, Lanark

Poem from *She who dwells within., A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism*

In this book by Lynn Gottlieb, a rabbi, she captures the glimpses of women in the Bible then uses the myths of the Middle East to rediscover the feminine spirituality in Judaism. Here is one of the poems to the Shekinah, the female counterpart of the Judean god.

Wise Woman Psalm

Shanu hachamot
Our elders taught us at the gate
Shekinah is present
When we sit and study Torah,
When we assemble in prayer,
when we teach our children to be kind.

Shanu hachamot
Our elders taught us at the crossroads
Shekinah is present
When we visit the sick,
Attend the dead to their graves,
Celebrate at weddings,
Receive guests into our homes,
Give assistance to the poor,
And care for the earth.

Shanu hachamot
Our elders taught us in the marketplaces
Shekinah walks with us
when we bring justice into the world.

They say: As Shekinah walks
so you shall walk, following in Her
footsteps.

They say: Justice, justice you shall
pursue.

Shanu hachomot
Our elders taught
Bloodshed, rape, and economic crimes
cause Shekinah to weep.
Lashon HaRah and bearing false witness
Cause Shekinah to depart.
She does not dwell where She receives
no welcome.

Shanu hachamot
Our elders taught
that to which you cleave will come to
reset upon you.
One who cleaves to Shekinah,
upon you will She rest.

MARGARET FELL, 1614 -1702 Mother of Quakerism

Born in Marsh Grange near Dalton, she moved a few miles to Swarthmoor Hall on her marriage to Judge Thomas Fell. There she welcomed the itinerant Quaker preacher George Fox. Many other Quakers visited so it became a centre of the new movement. Margaret herself became a Quaker spending several years in prison for her beliefs.

Her grasp of the Quaker vision captured 'the very essence of the message of George Fox, a pristine distillation of all that was most important.' * Lewis Benson: *Unlike Penn, Barclay and Pennington, Margaret Fell was not an apologist for Quakerism. Like Howgill and Crisp she belongs to an era of prophetic proclamation. Launching the early Quaker movement would have been difficult without her help.*

She is cited as being one of the first women to write espousing women's spiritual equality with men, as being a timeless promoter of the establishment of Women's Meetings, in which women were responsible for their own business affairs within the body of believers'.

Here are some of her words:

Therefore all people who desire to know the living God . . . turn your minds within to the Light . . . this will rip you open and lye you open and make all things manifest.

The Truth is one and the same always, and though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and power and spirit of the living

God endures forever, and is the same and never changes.

We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife, and wars, and contentions that come from the lusts that was in the members, that war in the soul, which we wait for, and watch for in all people, and love and desire the good of all . . . Treason, treachery, and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising, or plotting against any creature upon the face of the earth, and speak the truth in plainness, and singleness of heart.

And God hath said that his *daughters* should prophesy as well as his sons; and where he hath poured forth his Spirit upon them, they *must* prophesy, though blind priests say to the contrary, and will not permit holy women to speak.

Margaret Fell, Mother of Quakerism Isobel Ross 1949 William Sessions Ltd., York

*A Sincere and Constant Love Terry S Wallace 1992 Friends United Press

Undaunted Zeal, the letters of Margaret Fell Elsa F. Glines 2003 Friends United Press

Women Speaking Justified booklet edited by Christine Trevett 1989 Quaker Home Service

Women Against War

In 1962, A group of Swiss women gathered at the UN in Geneva , with babies in prams, and a banner, “We have had enough”. This in response to an accident at the French underground nuclear test in the Algerian Sahara on 1stMay 1962 when a hundred soldiers and officials were irradiated. If they'd had enough in 1962, they must be beyond patience at this stage. Increased health risk for pregnant women and children is one reason for women to be active against nuclear weapons and power, even if their actions are forgotten.

Powerful readiness for military action or wielding a weapon are recognised masculine behaviours. Wanting to talk, put the weapons down, or abolish them altogether is seen as weak, feminine and ineffective. Gendered perspectives which equate effectiveness with military spending and dominance exclude women from authoritative roles in addressing threats or offering any solutions.

Women evacuees from Fukushima, and Korean nuclear survivors tell of gender discrimination. To add insult to nuclear injury, they are considered not marriageable, damaged goods, a liability, poisonous or even a threat to stable marriages. This is a democratic deficit that beggars belief in a modern world with technology that can put people on the moon and transplant the human heart.

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) contributed to establishing United Nations and its first resolution, for nuclear disarmament. It has two main UN programmes. Reaching Critical Will works for an end to the legitimacy of the use of weapons and force as a response to conflict. Peace Women works for including women’s voices in conflict resolution and upholding women's human rights. Both programmes aim for women's’ direct experience of conflict to be authentically articulated at the highest diplomatic level.

Militarised response to crisis usually creates, rather than resolves conflict. Military expenditure is rising so fast that governments cannot meet the needs of their people or provide resources to tackle climate change, a major cause of resource shortages and conflict. Women are referenced as vulnerable victims, grouped with children and the elderly which reinforces the idea that gender based violence is not about social constructs. It confirms women as inherently vulnerable victims of male violence that is unchangeable or capable of deconstruction. Military expenditure by the US per day would fund the UN’s programme for women for seven years. This must change for real progress to be made.

Janet Fenton, *Scottish WILPF Parliamentary Liaison*, *Vice Chair Scottish CND*

Some Modern Quaker Women

Meg Beresford

Meg serves as Elder and Overseer at Lanark Meeting where she sets the tone with flowers from her polytunnel, often also welcoming us with a roaring fire on cold days. During the summer she walked from Edinburgh to Wiston creating a 'bee tunnel' raising awareness of the plight of bees.

She started attending Quaker Meetings while being involved in the Peace Movement. "I felt I needed something to ground me." Her first involvement in the peace movement was as part of *Campaign Atom* – an antinuclear a group campaigning in Oxford against cruise missiles which were originally intended to be based at Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire. Following a visit from CND, Campaign Atom organized a 15 mile march of round 1000 people from Oxford to Upper Heyford, ending with speeches.

When it was decided to site the cruise missiles instead at Greenham Common, in 1980, a group from Campaign Atom spent between Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days, August 6th to 9th, outside the gates of Greenham Common base, and were joined by a group of monks from the Peace Pagoda at Milton Keynes. Many of those outside Greenham were women. This same summer, a group of women set off to walk to Greenham from Carmarthenshire in South Wales. When they arrived they set up the Greenham Common peace camp. Over time, the peace camp grew and increased, spreading to all the gates of the base. A number of women gave up everything, leaving jobs and families. The camp was supported by women from Oxford and Newbury Quaker Meetings. In the years following, the peace camp was joined by large demonstrations like Embrace the Base in which thousands of woman linked hands round the whole site. A mixed gender peace camp was established later at Molesworth, the second cruise missile site.

Following this Meg worked for European Nuclear Disarmament – a campaign both anti-nuclear and designed to break down the opposing blocs. Started by E.P.Thompson, END was supported by Peggy Duff a founder of CND and Mary Kaldor. After this Meg became General Secretary of CND for 5 years - Bruce Kent replaced her in the role. At the end of this period, Helen Stevens invited her to a conference at the Iona Community in the West of Scotland. There, sitting outside the Abbey, she heard the sound sheep make eating grass, and remembered she was a country woman, so why was she living and working in London? A week later a telephone call from a friend said the Iona Community was advertising for a gardener; She part-shared this role until she took over as Staff Co-ordinator for another two

years. There, she sometimes led the silent grace at mealtimes but found that for many of the guests even a minute of silence was difficult. On Sunday evenings, sometimes she and others, mostly Quakers, led a fifteen minute silent worship in the Abbey.

Her next move was to Wiston Lodge where she worked initially with Jean Oliver and Donald Scott, a Church of Scotland minister. It was not much used at the time, few groups visited, so they had to build up a new set of user groups. Significantly, this included setting up activity weeks designed for young people from homeless hostels – the brain child of Gil Gillies who had also come from Iona and before that as a volunteer with the Corrymeela Community. At this time Meg made contacts with local Quakers, Elizabeth and Ian Allen, and Margaret and Peter Whyman.

When YMCA Scotland decided to sell Wiston Lodge, a small group set up an independent charity, Wiston Lodge, which has now been running for 10 years. The centre now flourishes as “a place to grow” for those with disadvantaged backgrounds, and of course there are also regular visits from Quaker Meetings, music and arts workshops such as The Tinto Summer Schools, and Buddhist and Sufi retreats, and residential weekends for Quaker Meetings from Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Meg was brought up in a pacifist religious community. When the war broke out, her father was working for the BBC. As a conscientious objector, he was given the choice of prison, or work in ambulance, mines or agriculture. He decided on farming instead of going to war. Her grandfather was a novelist, who was involved in the formation of the Peace Pledge Union.

Ironically she married a serving officer the RAF – another very different kind of community – but within time, and after having two sons, she realised she was not cut out to be a service wife. At the start of her married life they spent two years in Libya close to Tobruk where she observed the position of women in society. Much later, and after her marriage ended, she took a degree in Comparative American Studies at the University of Warwick. This included studies of “Women in the family” and the black power movement – all political wake-up subjects which led naturally to the involvement in the peace movement. During this time she met a number of feminist thinkers including Sheila Rowbottom, Joan Smith and Mo Mowlam – all later involved in END and CND. She has strong feelings that women such as Mo Mowlam are not given the credit for their roles in political and public life. In reality it was Mo Mowlam who pioneered the breakthrough in Northern Ireland politics (accredited to Tony Blair).

As a student of history, she has strong feelings about the revisions of Quaker Church Government from the traditional functions and roles of Preparative and Monthly

Meeting to the current practice of Local Business Meetings and Area Meeting. Is this where we lost our roots back to George Fox? It is important to keep the historical perspective alive as through this we develop our thoughts of what Quakers are about. Today there is a different spiritual significance: is it run more on a business model.

For Meg, taking the long view, it is deeply significant that the early Quakers grew up in times of great political turmoil, just as Thich Nhat Hanh did during the Vietnam War. And today, Meg can't separate Quakerism and Meditation . Together they keep her grounded. When she looks at the Engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh and the Community of Interbeing, she draws great parallels with spiritual needs today.

Nuala Watts Being a Quaker (Disabled) Woman

I was recently asked to write about any difficulties I have experienced as a woman and to relate these experiences to Quaker values. My first response was that most challenges have been caused less by being a woman than by having multiple disabilities, visible and invisible. I'm not convinced it's sensible to focus on a single characteristic when we live all of our aspects at once.

There is a common assumption that disabled people must be asexual and/or childlike. This shields disabled women from some, though not all, sexual harassment. Instead it can lead to silly questions – 'Where's Mummy? Are you dying?' Both those questions came from adults. Children are much more accepting.

I am now very obviously pregnant. In biological terms this is a purely female experience. To my delight the silly comments have almost vanished. Pregnancy is stronger than disability. People like talking about it and they know how to react. It acts as a protective charm against some of the harassment I generally receive. It encourages equality. It is true that some maternity staff infantilise pregnant women but they do that to everyone.

One aspect of pregnancy that has shocked me is the profound inequality that underlies prenatal testing, especially for non-fatal conditions such as Downs Syndrome. When I was seven weeks pregnant I received a 58-page booklet on screening. Of course some conditions are dangerous or life-limiting and should be screened for. But the eugenic aspect of this troubles me. I chose to undergo the first, non-invasive test because it would help us to know and prepare. In the interests of honesty I must admit that I was hugely relieved when the test showed low risk. Admitting this later to a roomful of disability activists was hard.

I was relieved because disability lags behind other protected characteristics in terms of equality. It's not an experience I want for my child, though of course they will experience it second hand. It complicates life on many levels, because society is poor at accepting non-standard perspectives. If you are disabled you will experience challenges related to at least some of the following: education, employment, poverty, toilets, roads, attitudes and sometimes, if your disability is perceptible before birth, to simply staying alive. We have a long, long, way to go compared to non-disabled women.

The lives and value of disabled people have been insufficiently imagined. We are all unique and precious, regardless of ability or medical status. As an activist I aspire to a society that fully acknowledges this in practical as well as theoretical terms. In a more accessible world the problems caused by disability would diminish. No more crawling into buildings or squinting at unreadable pregnancy tests. True equality will take a long time to appear and may never come, but I think as a Quaker it's a reasonable goal.

Nuala and Alastair's baby arrived safely at 9.51 on 2nd November weighing 7lbs. 8oz. Welcome Isabelle Grace McIver .

KENOSIS – GETTING READY FOR SILENCE

25TH November 10.30 for 11am
Glasgow Quaker Meeting House

We will listen to recordings of Alastair McIntosh and Cynthia Bourgeault on the subject.

Lots of Silence and Discussion.

A bit of chanting: embodiment and release of the spirit.

Celebration of Joy with Bob Mandeville.

For more details contact margaret.roy@btinternet or lorrainemcfaden59@yahoo.com



WOODBROOKE

What Can We Do With What We've Got?

Woodbrooke on the Road course on Saturday 9th December at
Glasgow Quaker Meeting House 10:30am to 4pm

- Do you find it hard to fulfil all your responsibilities as a meeting?
- Are you looking to reinvigorate your life as a spiritual community?
- Are you thriving as a meeting but looking to share your Quaker experience or engage in the world?

This day is an opportunity for us to reflect on our practical and spiritual resources; consider what our ministry might be; think through different possibilities; explore what new expressions of Quaker community might be possible for us, as a meeting and as individuals, and discover creative solutions through a supportive facilitative process.

We are lucky to have Simon Best leading this one day course. Simon is Woodbrooke's Head of Learning, and is passionate about creating opportunities for Quakers to learn and grow individually and together

Please come to this course whether you are from a large or a small meeting. It is being closely tailored to the needs of our Local Meetings and our Area Meeting and the cost is being met by Area Meeting funds. Support for travel costs is available.

Although Elders and Overseers have discussed a range of areas we would like to see covered, Friends are encouraged to send in suggestions as soon as possible to either Phillida Ball (clerk of overseers phillida.ball@yahoo.co.uk) or Alastair Reid (clerk of elders alastairreid@gmail.com).

The unexamined life is not worth living - Socrates

The Story of Inanna

Inanna was a very powerful queen, loved and feared by many, worshipped many, especially women who saw the all-powerful goddess as protecting them in so many ways, including granting them children in a world where barrenness was to be despised.

Alas, Inanna had a regret. She had let down her sister. Ereshkigel was raped and kidnapped then descended to Hell on her marriage. She was the dark side of Inanna.

Eventually, Inanna decided to meet up with her sister. To do this, she herself descended into darkness. She had to pass through many obstacles each of which cost her dear. At each of these gates, a layer was peeled off until she was exposed, raw and naked. It was in this vulnerable condition that she faced her sister who killed her and hung her up on the wall.

Thank goodness, she had taken precautions. Before she left on her journey she had left instructions with a friend, Ninhursag who now reached out to rescue Inanna. Contacting Enki her father, he send out little spirit helpers that were so small they could sneak past the seven big gates. In Hell, they found Ereshkigel in the process of giving birth, in the pains of creation. When they eased her pain Ereshkigel granted them a wish. They choose the remains of Inanna that they took back to the light, to the upper world where she was revived and invigorated.

Moral: Don't despair in your darkness. The Light will find you.

How do we rehumanise men and women when we are so dehumanized by patriarchy? How do we help people dialogue with their inner teacher? How do we help people reconnect with the Inward Light?

Verene Nicolas, Glasgow

News from Meetings

Milngavie

Faithful witness

Life for Milngavie meeting has continued in the familiar pattern of meetings on second and last Sunday each month. We have welcomed visitors to our circle of around 12 worshippers on several occasions, always good to hear their news. On last Sunday of the month we take our contributions to the local food bank. They are now recognising that we are regular contributors, which raises the Quaker profile. We also take our turn to contribute to the "Yours Faithfully" column in the Milngavie Herald on a rota basis. White Poppies were sold at meeting in October, ready for Remembrance Day. Barbara brings us back news of Quaker Housing Trust, where she is a Trustee. Recently QHT have funded two projects in Scotland a flat in Glasgow for Street Connect who support people with addictions. The flat is for those who have completed rehab, to learn or relearn homemaking and tenancy skills. The second is a flat in Glenrothes where the YMCA have bought an empty flat which they refurbished for a homeless family.

Dunblane

Cairns along the way

In his book "The Old Ways" Robert McFarlane refers to the thousands of footpaths in the Western Isles which are defined by "intervisible cairns or standing stones." These cairns were guidelines especially for children who marked their moment of coming of age by finding their way to the family shieling on their own. My "coming of age", my path into Quakerism, was through the Dunblane meeting, which I joined in 1986. Looking back, I can identify a number of "cairns" that were waymarks on that pathway.

I joined the Dunblane meeting in 1986, but knew of its existence from the beginning. When we moved into Tannahill Terrace in 1967 we were welcomed with great kindness by the neighbours opposite at no. 6, Bill and Betsy Aitken. I became aware of groups getting together in their home for worship, and learned that it was a Quaker group. So when almost 20 years later I was looking for a new spiritual home I felt drawn to explore Quakerism. I felt immediately at home in the quietness and relished the freedom of belief and acceptance



I found in my local meeting at Dunblane. The more I learned of the emphasis on that of God in every human being, the more I tried to put behind me the damaging emphasis on sin and guilt within the evangelical church. I had started a life-saving journey towards spiritual growth and self-acceptance.

A high point on my Quaker path was reached in 1994, when, along with my husband Jim, I set off as a representative of Britain Yearly Meeting to teach English at the West China University of Medical Sciences in Chengdu! Links had been kept with a small group of Quakers there who had been persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. Their courageous faith stands still as a beacon of light to the power of the human spirit when imbued with the Divine. One of our students commented that if he hadn't been a Communist he would have become a Quaker!

Cairns as well as marking high points can be memorials to losses too. My new found confidence was shattered on March 13th 1996 with the tragic events at Dunblane Primary School. My main memories of Dunblane meeting a few days later are of hugging 6 year old Debbie Garner and listening to Bill Aitken's ministry on hope. Several of the meeting were heavily involved for many years after, trying to support the bereaved families. Within the meeting itself, the years 2007-2016 were particularly difficult, with tragic accidents, terminal illness and death hitting us hard. Times spent at Woodbrooke College where I was able to share the heartbreak helped a lot, and on one occasion I found in a little notebook in the gazebo the following lines:

When you come to the edge of all that you know
You must believe in one of two things

There will be earth on which to stand
Or you will be given wings.

Dunblane Meeting over the last thirty-one years has remained the foundation stone of my spiritual life. I have had different roles within meeting and served on varying groups within the Society of Friends which greatly enriched my life, especially in the realms of friendship and mental stimulus. To my great astonishment along with Richard Thomson quoted below I found myself leading a day of spiritual enrichment in Worthing in 2006. My basic nervousness has not gone away but the encouragement and compliments I have received from Friends have helped me to believe in my personal qualities and skills.

As well as a foundation stone, is the meeting perhaps also like a gathering stone for those who believe that “truth is the daughter of experience, not of authority”ⁱ and that “everyone is born lovable, sociable and non-violent”?ⁱⁱ In a recent talk at Glasgow Meeting House, Alastair Macintosh asserted that “at our best, meeting for worship is where we magnify our community together.” This strengthening of bonds of community and friendship is perhaps, as Richard Thomson has said, the only hope for the future.ⁱⁱⁱ The Quaker meeting has contributed much to the life of Dunblane over the last fifty years; as the meeting faces the challenges of the present and of the future, could the communal life developed within it perhaps serve as a cairn pointing the way ahead for the wider community as a whole?

Margaret Munro, Dunblane



Dates for your diary

18th November GENERAL MEETING in Elgin.

25th November KENOSIS Thomas Group/Bible Study Mini-Conference

25th Nov – 10th Dec Action on Violence Against Women

4th December AREA MEETING by telephone.

9th December Woodbrooke on the Road – what can we do with what we've got

12th January AREA MEETING in Glasgow.

HOLD IN THE LIGHT

Muriel Robertson who continues to be restricted to her home with arthritis.

Jean Oliver who has recently lost another member of her family, her sister.

Marion Fairweather who has recently lost her father.

Support for Friends World Committee for Consultation

Representatives serving on Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) ask for your prayerful upholding and financial support of FWCC's work. Quaker concerns cross continents and varied ways of worship and theology. We hope you can help support FWCC as it continues to connect Friends in our work, our worship and our lives.

Marleen Schepers, 020 7663 1143, marleens@quaker.org.uk

www.quaker.org.uk/qwrc

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The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 31st December

Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair McIver or

Margaret Roy at margaret.roy@btinternet.com

ⁱ Bertolt Brecht, *Life of Galileo*.

ⁱⁱ James Naylor Foundation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Richard Thomson, *Fear and Reciprocity at the Brink*, John Macmurray Fellowship Newsletter, Spring 2017.