

*West Scotland*  
**Quaker News**  
*February 2009*

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This newsletter is available  
in other formats.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of individuals. They do not necessarily represent the view of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

## From the Editor

I am very pleased to say that Bryan Bowes of Milngavie Meeting is now the Assistant Editor. We haven't entirely worked out yet how we will work together, but the plan is that he will take over as Editor next year. He has produced an illustrated piece and I thank him for proofreading this issue. The responsibility for any remaining errors is mine.

On another subject, the Area Meeting needs to cut costs. Please see the notice on page 13 about the distribution of this newsletter and minutes.

The deadline for the next edition of *West Scotland Quaker News* is  
Wednesday, 1 April.

Copy should be sent to the Editor, Jane Mitchell, either on paper or disk, by post to

Kirkokerry, Millhouse, Tighnabruaich, Argyll PA21 2BW,  
or in Word or plain text by email to: [wsqn@phoncoop.coop](mailto:wsqn@phoncoop.coop).  
Telephone 0845 345 7196 or 01700 811229.

*West Scotland Quaker News* is available online (in PDF format) at  
[www.quakerscotland.org/west](http://www.quakerscotland.org/west)

# Clerk's Letter

## Events which Inspire and Challenge

In my first clerk's mailing from Friends House there was information about several national conferences and events, to which we were being invited to send representatives. One was a joint Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) and Woodbrooke programme on *A Zero Growth Economy? What would it mean for us all?* This notice was of particular interest to me, as I was clerk of QPSW Central Committee when the decision was made to lay down QPSW Representative Council and replace it with a varied programme of events, aimed to engage a wide range of Friends in sharing information and learning about Quaker witness for peace and social justice in a way which inspires and challenges.

At our November Area Meeting we heard Alistair McIntosh talk about the links between the environment, the economy and our life styles. Alistair is one of the speakers at this conference. Much as good speakers can be inspirational, there is a fine line between being inspired and being entertained. Inspiration leads to action. Although the Friend attending the conference may choose to take personal action, the Meeting which sends them needs to consider how to take matters forward. I am pleased to see that there is an attempt to engage local meetings in the subject matter of this event by providing study material to facilitate reflection on the type of world we need to live in if we are to halt environmental degradation and specifically on the impact of our economic system on the environment.

Events such as this are part of what strengthens us as a gathered people. At this critical time I think we are being challenged to be a truly gathered community: to work together, locally, regionally and nationally. In acting together, as an expression of our faith, we engage our energy and our passion. We live out our Testimony. It therefore seems most appropriate to me that the theme of Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009 is *Creating Community: Creating Connections*. How can we build and strengthen our connections within West Scotland Area Meeting and beyond to our wider Quaker networks, to support us as we struggle to live authentically and witness faithfully?

Elizabeth Allen

# Reports

## Area Meeting (AM): Glasgow, 17 January A new Triennium *Report by Helen MacDonald*

After a long but easy drive it was good to arrive in Glasgow and have a very welcome coffee and piece of shortbread. It is so enjoyable seeing all the “weel kent” faces as well as some not so well known and exchanging news. There are always plenty of smiles and it is reassuring to feel as if I belong to a large and scattered family.

At the appointed time we all gathered in the large Meeting Room for our first Area Meeting of the new triennium with our new Clerk, Elizabeth Allan and Assistant Clerk, Anne Dunford. The first thing that I became aware of ... no computer! Our previous two clerks had brought us into the realms of new technology and although I know some were not too keen on this type of progress, I hadn't been bothered one way or the other. Seeing the clerks without the obstacle of the monitor in front of them, I realised that to me the computer had introduced a slight feeling of divisiveness; I must admit I enjoyed going back to the good old days of pen and paper. I am myself a reluctant computer user!

We managed to get through quite a few items before lunch, mostly normal AM business of reports and appointments plus the annual check of the Marriage Register; there was only one Quaker marriage in 2008. It had also been proposed that the letters of our previous clerk, Martin Mansell, which appeared in *West Scotland Quaker News*, should be put together and published. This was thought to be a good idea and Jane Mitchell has agreed to organise the production of a computer disc, as this will be a less costly method than printing a booklet. I enjoyed listening to Liz Anderton's report of her own experience on attending the Quaker Life Representative Council. She obviously found it a very worthwhile and deeply spiritual experience.

Lunchtime and delicious aromas enticed us downstairs. How could business meetings survive without the reviving bowl of hot nutritious soup? Thank you to all the soup makers everywhere. We couldn't do without you. Enjoying the company again, seeing more smiles, quiet faces,

hearing snatches of conversations both easy and serious, what a lovely and interesting mix of people we are. I did feel for those who had to attend the trustees' meeting during lunch. It seems a pity that because of distances and time, meetings have to take priority over the brief moments we have to socialise.

Energised by our food and company, we started on the afternoon session. Our trustees were still meeting, so the Clerk reorganised the items on the agenda to cope with this. AM had been asked to clarify the procedure for writing the reports on visiting applicants for membership. As decisions on this subject had been made at a Monthly Meeting some years ago, the Clerk proposed using "golden minutes". These would be extracted from the normal minutes and filed separately in order to make it easier to obtain the necessary information needed to deal with all types of on-going procedures. Once the trustees returned, we heard their report followed by our Treasurer's proposed budget for 2009. A lot of hard work had gone into compiling the draft budget and Margaret Morton is to be complimented. She had found it difficult to balance the figures

and has had to suggest ways of cutting expenditure and increasing income, which is not at all easy in this time of financial restraint. The last item for the day was regarding the new meeting house in Wigtown and it was exciting to inform the meeting that AM should own the building by 15 February at the latest. This is when planning permission for change of use of the building is expected to be approved. Needless to say, I am looking forward with great enthusiasm to having such an important asset for West Scotland.

It was a very long day and we managed to work through the whole agenda with the exception of only one item, which was pretty good going. Well done to the Clerk and her assistant at the start of their new duties.

After being sustained by some excellent sweet and savoury baking, we set off for the rather scary journey home. It was good to share the driving as the wind and rain were fierce and we also had a police diversion through some even narrower country roads around Maybole as, we discovered later, some trees had been blown across roads. Thankfully we arrived safely back in Wigtown to clear starry skies!

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## Meeting for Sufferings (MfS): 7 February, 2009 Can we say what we stand for?

### *Report by Peter Christy*

At Meeting for Sufferings I was reminded of the Guru who went up the Mountain and met up with God. After a long discussion he came down and told his students all about it and they immediately asked him to write it down, he refused saying that if he did it would become a 'Religion'.

In searching for confirmation of this tale I came across the following from the Sufi tradition: Rabia was asked, "Do you love God?" She answered "Yes." "Do you hate the devil?" She answered, "No, my love of God leaves me no time to hate the devil."

Both these relate to Sufferings' main topic this session which was consideration of the document *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. As I understand it, this is part of the process of attempting to make the Society more understandable to the other Christian Churches to facilitate increased joint ecumenical work. There were, however, many there who said that at a local level it would make no difference to the already excellent and effective working relations.

The World Council of Churches had asked a number of questions about our Church. Their questions

were clearly versed in "Christian Church" terms, thus the initial response from Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations tended to follow the same language, which to many Friends was like a red rag to a bull. The latest response was in a language much more recognizable to Friends and challenged the establishment with phrases such as: 'we try to draw our church together based on love rather than things such as the sacraments.' But the whole exercise demonstrated the difficulty of trying to set out beliefs of a group such as Quakers where there is no creed and, more controversially, a significant number of Friends are not necessarily Christian yet make perfectly good Friends.

A plenary session was held after the matter had been discussed in our home group. The discussion followed the all too usual Quaker process where the clerk first sensed one extreme and then another. From my comfortable seat in the back row, it was apparent that there was a small number of Friends who weren't going to be happy with any publication of this type, but the vast majority felt that, while there

were difficulties in the document, all the discussions in the world would not sort them out and, given the nature of the target audience, it would on balance be a very useful document. Young Friends present made it very clear that they already used the earlier drafts very effectively in outreach work, and look forward to the simplified document promised.

For those interested in making their own mind up, please go to [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) and go to the

Meeting for Sufferings page and search for “the nature and mission” and the document should appear.

One of the questions asked was where Friends stood on sin to which the Societies response was “Our witness has ever been less to the identification of sin, and more to finding that of God in those we encounter.” Isn’t there a lot of commonality across the traditions?

# West Scotland Area Meeting Tabular Statement at 31 December, 2008

	Members				Total Members		Attend-ers	
	m	w	b	g	2007	2008	ad	ch
<b>Local Meeting</b>								
Argyll	5	8	0	0	14	13	3	0
Ayrshire & Arran	2	10	0	0	12	12	9	1
Castle Douglas	4	7	0	0	9	11	2	7
Dumfries & Galloway	16	10	0	0	24	26	10	0
Dunblane	8	12	0	0	24	20	15	11
Glasgow	43	68	0	0	113	111	56	32
Lanark	4	6	0	1	9	11	5	7
Milngavie	3	5	0	0	8	8	5	0
Newton Stewart	3	8	0	0	12	11	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>58</b>

The number of Attenders may appear to have decreased since last year. This is because I have followed the guidelines and tried to include only those who actually attend Meeting for Worship fairly regularly.

There was a decrease of two in membership of the Area Meeting as shown below.

Mary Latham, Asstistant Clerk (Membership)

Changes in Membership			
	m	w	t
<b>Increase</b>			
Personal application	4	3	7
Transfer in	2	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Decrease</b>			
Resignation	3	0	2
Death	1	5	6
Transfer out	2	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>
Movement between meetings in West Scotland	2	2	4

## Abbreviations:

men m, women w, boys b, girls g. adults ad, children ch, total t

# Features

## “Quaking”

Am I alone in wondering where my fellow Friends stand on the old notion of Quaking? I was brought up in a family who had at least a peripheral involvement in the Society of Friends and the meaning of the word has always interested me. At first, I used to imagine George Fox visibly shaking when he spoke — how else could someone other than himself know that he was quaking? When, as a member myself, I was finally forced to my feet to speak, I began to understand that the feeling I had in my solar plexus could not be described as anything other than quaking. But how in the early days, did those who applied the word to us (my understanding is that we did not choose it) know that Quakers were feeling that feeling?

When I thought about it at all, I had always thought that I could recognise someone speaking driven by that shakiness inside, but how would I really know? I was in a Meeting once when a young man who had never been in a Meeting before rose to his feet and made a bald statement about his feelings. Because I knew him a little, and knew the circumstances that had brought this

forth, I was deeply moved, but afterwards someone asked us to get back to the spiritual meaning of our Meeting for Worship. I found it very hard to accept that anyone would not have recognised his young man’s spiritual leading, however briefly he had expressed it. The young man in question clearly thought something strange had happened to him. As he explained later, he had not meant to speak, did not know that he was going to say anything, but found himself on his feet and was now feeling quite trembly about the whole thing, which had really moved him. This has led me to wonder if my own belief that I should not speak unless I feel this “quaking” is merely a personal quirk of mine, or is it generally shared, but we don’t like to speak about it? It is hard to speak comfortably with others about feelings that you are not certain are shared or understood by them, and that you yourself do not understand logically yourself.

I once did hear someone speak, though haltingly, in public on this subject. Many years ago I was at Yearly Meeting when the Clerk tried to stop the Meeting at the due time, but when the matter of the Meeting had not been fully

completed. The feeling in Meeting was very strong, upset, angry and very unhappy. The Clerk later apologised for sticking to the time limit, explaining that he was used to speaking in public, but that he found, at any time, speaking in Meeting “awesome” and being the Clerk to Yearly Meeting much more so. He had felt responsible for the smooth running of the complicated agenda while recognising that the subject under consideration had still a long way to run. I felt upset for him and wondered how he would be able to face the rest of the programme, but I also realised that he had raised the issue for me of whether there really is a compulsion in us also that we have to speak out when we feel the “quaking”.

I have not spoken previously

about either of these two examples and I now wonder why. Is it because our responses to ministry are so personal, how some ministry speaks so clearly to us and some other hardly at all? Can we in actuality always recognise the depth from which someone’s ministry comes, or do we lose the possibility of such recognition if we become used to ministry which is superficial, almost debate, or if our meeting is used too often as therapy for our distress. Does this dull the edge of our perception? Maybe the problem is that we have been so trained in politeness and are so aware of not upsetting others or fear sounding as though we have prepared such ministry, that we avoid talking about it.

Joyce Minnis, Glasgow

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## Hymns and Society

Hymns are not often heard away from church services. So it comes as a surprise to listen to Gustav Holst’s *The Planets* when suddenly the music for the planet Jupiter launches into the tune of the hymn ‘I vow to thee my country’. The first verse is about our relation to our homeland, but the second is about God’s kingdom. It has the lovely lines: ‘and soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase, and her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace’.

Another hymn which evokes the community of God is the evening hymn ‘The day Thou gavest, Lord, has ended’. As the earth turns and we fall asleep the sun wakes ‘our brethren ’neath the western sky’, so that the voice of prayer never falls silent. In the hymn writer’s day the sun never set on the British Empire. But he wasn’t thinking narrowly of his own countrymen spread across the globe. His glorious last verse explains that although ‘earth’s proud empires’ will pass away, God’s Kingdom will grow forever.

The beautiful words and tunes of hymns such as these draw us out of ourselves when we become too focused on our own problems. Some hymns however don't have quite such clear messages. For example, there are the rather awkward lines about a servant 'who sweeps a room as for Thy laws makes that and the action fine.' I've always wondered whether they were written on behalf of hypocritical employers. A servant setting about drudgery perfectly as if for God would benefit any employer.

My cynical thoughts chime with Karl Marx's jibe that religion is the opium of the masses – it's a convenient device used by powerful people to keep others subdued and obedient. We shouldn't let his remark oppress us. 'Opium' implies a fuddled mind. In contrast, church services help us to think clearly about our roles in life as Christians.

This week I happened to be in London and took the opportunity to see the Royal Academy's exhibition of art works from the Byzantine Empire. The introductory information has maps showing how that empire grew around the Mediterranean. It began in 330, eventually shrinking gradually over centuries to end in 1453. Nowadays global power may not last a century and can melt in a matter of months if not weeks.

In 1990 it was the communist system advocated by Karl Marx that melted. Now capitalism has shuddered alarmingly. Just weeks ago money traders believed that they were masters of the universe; now they're revealed as foolish gamblers. Repercussions of this crisis are still to come and will affect us all, including vulnerable people in more fragile economies across our planet.

Surely the need for Christians to think clearly has never been greater. And what a blessing to experience the solidarity of meeting together in our church services that can not only give us peace of mind in a bewildering world, but also the clues to point us to our Christian way forward.

Margaret Gladden, Milngavie

*The above article was published in the 'Yours Faithfully' column of The Bearsden & Milngavie Herald in November 2008 before the full severity of the economic crisis was apparent. It was not written specifically for Quaker readers.*

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## Our nuclear Deterrent



Quakers in the rain at Faslane — Photo by Bryan Bowes

### Some encouraging news

Speaking on Radio 4's *The World Tonight* on 29 January General Jack Sheehan said:

“I think the UK is very close to saying we’re the first permanent member of the Security Council to do away with nuclear weapons. I think it is entirely possible that the British government, for a lot of good reasons, could do it and it would lead the world. ... All of a sudden you call into question why the French have such a system. ... It creates an impetus for the US and Russia to move away from this position they're currently in, to start a dialogue to build on.”

General Sheehan is former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic and was speaking in support of the stance recently taken by three retired senior UK military figures.

Bryan Bowes, Milngavie

Source: BBC website (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7859046.stm> or ask your browser for “bbc sheehan trident”).

# Notices

## WSQN and Minutes online? Please read!

For over a year, this newsletter has been published online at the address at the foot of page 2.

Some readers may like to receive the newsletter by accessing the website. This makes for the Area Meeting a saving on printing, packing and postage costs. If you do your reading online it also saves paper.

The Newsletter is created with the body text in 14-point font on A4 pages, and this is what is published on the website in pdf format. The printer reduces the pages to A5 for the usual paper edition. Software to read pdf format (Adobe Acrobat) is freely available.

At present Members receive printed copies of AM Minutes, and Glasgow Friends receive Glasgow LM Minutes in the same mailing. It is not appropriate to put these on a public website, but it is possible for them to be sent as attachments to an email message.

If you wish to change the way in which you receive these documents, please send me an email at [wsqn@phoncoop.coop](mailto:wsqn@phoncoop.coop). In it say whether you would like to have no further postal mailings. Whether you choose this option or not, please also let me know whether you would like

- (1) an email notification when the Newsletter is published on the web,
- (2) an email attachment in pdf format of the AM Minutes,
- (3) an email attachment in pdf format of Glasgow LM Minutes.

I know that many people receive the minutes directly from the clerks who produce them; such Friends may have no need to get them with the newsletter. On the other hand a printed copy may be very useful for those who participate in business meetings.

Editor

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# Middle East Festival of Spirituality & Peace in Edinburgh

## Main events 28 February–15 March

These include the following evening talks with forums afterwards.

### **Leena Nammari, 2 March**

*A Space to Breathe* (Scotland-Middle East Identity)

### **John Rogers, 3 March**

*Alternative Views to the Current Global Economy -  
the Impact of Spirituality, Psychology and Group Process*

### **Richard Holloway, 4 March**

*The Art of Resistance*

### **Ibrahim Issa, 9 March**

*Peace and Democratic Education at the Hope Flowers School, Bethlehem*

### **Stephen Wright, 11 March**

*The Waste Land — Spirituality, Health and Healing*

### **Alastair McIntosh, 13 March**

*Gilgamesh and Siduri's Wisdom:  
a Study of Climate Change and the Ancients.*

For details of chairmen, forum panellists, venues, times and bookings and for other events, please visit the website [www.mesp.org.uk](http://www.mesp.org.uk) or write to the address below.

## **Exhibitions & Displays**, various dates until 16 March

Edinburgh International Centre for Spirituality and Peace (or EICSP)  
4 William Black Place, South Queensferry, Edinburgh, EH30 9PZ  
Scottish Charity SC038996

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## Anthology in aid of SCHA

Scottish Churches Housing Action (SCHA) is a charity of which Quakers are a part. John Foster of South East Scotland Area Meeting is our representative on the management committee and Alastair Cameron (also of SE Scotland AM) is the Chief Executive. SCHA persuades and assists churches to redevelop redundant or over-large church buildings as affordable housing. It also facilitates and assists the development, throughout Scotland, of various initiatives to help all those in housing need or who are vulnerable in their first tenancies. Finally, it educates and lobbies with a view to supporting the Scottish Government in its policy to achieve settled housing for most homeless people by 2012. For more information, see their website on [www.churches-housing.org](http://www.churches-housing.org).

Currently I'm trying to raise money for SCHA and do myself a good turn into the bargain. Most of my adult life I've scribbled away at creative writing. Very occasionally bits have been published in obscure publications. I've finally made a start on gathering my efforts together and have just published the first fruits *Fragments of Love*. It is mostly poetry (or at least writing with very short lines!) interspersed with occasional pieces of prose. A4 in tasteful blue covers — a snip at £5, postage and packing free. The full £5 will be passed on to Scottish Churches Housing Action. Purchasers can't lose really. They contribute directly to a worthwhile charity, they get 32 sheets of A4 recycled paper (excellent for using as drafting paper!) AND they might just get engaged by the writing on the other side. This publication is entirely homemade, although I hope, well made. My brother-in-law says that homemade puddings are the best. Whether or not this might apply to collections of writings I leave to you to judge!

If you're interested and would like to contribute to a good cause, please make out a cheque for £5 to 'SCHA' and send it directly to me at 54 Edgehead Village, Pathhead, Midlothian, EH37 5RJ. Curious but don't want the hard copy? The full text is available free by email on request ([michaelperks@phoncoop.coop](mailto:michaelperks@phoncoop.coop)).

Mike Perks, Central Edinburgh

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## February Area Meeting

The meeting will be in the Meeting House in Glasgow at 11 for 11.30 on Saturday 28 February.

The next AM will be on 18 April also in Glasgow.

### More Dates for your diary for 2009 Faslane & Dundrennan

**Faslane:** 12 April, 7 June, 30 August, 27 September, 8 November

**Dundrennan:** 5 April, 7 June, 30 August, 20 September, 8 November

Meetings start at 11 am at both places.

For more information contact

Mary Alice Mansell 01506 842380 (Faslane)

or Martha Hatch 01465 841277 (Dundrennan).

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