

**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS):
GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND**

(Scottish Charity Number SC 012281)

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st December 2018

OFFICE BEARERS (during 2018)

Adwoa Bittle (Clerk)
Robin Davis (Assistant Clerk)
Nigel Dower (Treasurer)
Duncan Wallace (Assistant Treasurer)

ADMINISTRATOR AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE

Marion Sharkey,
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Broughty Ferry, Dundee, DD5 3JD.

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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF THE ACCOUNTS

Gordon MacKay,
90 Hammerfield Avenue,
Aberdeen AB10 7FE.

BANKERS

The Co-operative Bank
Triodos Bank
Bank of Scotland

TRUSTEES (during 2018 and at the time of signing of this report)

Catherine Brown
Martin Burnell
Nigel Dower
Michael Hutchinson
Derek McLean
Jacqueline Noltingk

NOTE 1: *This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).*

NOTE 2: *In this report "the General Meeting" means General Meeting for Scotland, "the Society" means the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and "the Yearly Meeting" means the Yearly Meeting of the Society in Britain (Britain Yearly Meeting). "Attenders" are persons who are associated with a Local Meeting for Worship, but who are not in formal membership of the Society.*

1. The Organisation of the General Meeting

The General Meeting is a constituent part of Britain Yearly Meeting which is the governing body of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. The Membership of the General Meeting consists of those having Membership in the four Scottish Area Meetings of the Society. The Area Meeting is the basic business unit in the Society, dealing with membership, marriages, pastoral care and property. The General Meeting normally meets four times each year in different parts of Scotland.

2. The Objectives of the General Meeting

The General Meeting shares the basic aims of the Society as a church, promoting its spiritual insights and looking after the interests and welfare of its members. It provides both a policy-making forum for the Society in Scotland and a focus for the consideration of topics of current importance to the Society in Scotland.

The General Meeting represents the Society of Friends in Scotland among the other Churches and other faiths, among Scottish organisations and to the Scottish Government.

3. Administration

Foundation There is no known founding document. The General Meeting was probably established in the latter part of the 17th century when the Society was first organised, after its beginning as a popular religious movement under the inspiration of George Fox. Following periods of persecution the Society has been recognised as one of the non-conformist churches. Its operation is governed by "*Quaker Faith and Practice*", its Book of Discipline. As described there, the General Meeting is at all times subject to the discipline of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Governing Document Following changes to charities legislation in Scotland, a Governing Document was approved by the General Meeting on 10th March 2007.

Office bearers Those who serve the General Meeting are normally appointed for (renewable) three-year periods. There are four office bearers: Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. The first four, together with the Convenors of the Nominations Committee and the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, the Newsletter Editor, the Children and Young People representative and several others with specific roles, form the General Meeting Committee which acts as an executive and arrangements committee.

The Nominations Committee brings forward nominations for various posts and the General Meeting makes the appointments. The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group attends to the GM's engagement with political issues, with the main focus being on providing guidance for the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. The Children and Young People representative coordinates activities involving Children and Young People, and this includes weekends for teenagers and families.

Six trustees, including the General Meeting treasurer *ex officio*, serve the General Meeting. Trustees receive no remuneration.

Up to the beginning of 2017 GM had had a rather more complex structure with Function Groups but it agreed at its March meeting to adopt the structure as indicated above. This appears to have been working well.

Business Method The Society regards its meetings for business as being held under the guidance of God. It believes that, when the meeting takes place in a spirit of worship, God's will for the meeting can be discerned without the need for divisive voting. The Clerk presents each item of business to the meeting and, after Friends have been heard, and when it seems likely that the meeting has reached unity, the Clerk presents a draft minute. This may be accepted at once or can be amended until all present can unite with it. The minutes are thus approved by the meeting at which they are made.

4. Financial Review of 2018

The main income of the General Meeting is contributed by its member Area Meetings through a quota system. Quotas were increased by 60% in 2015 in order to fund our contribution towards the salary and other costs associated with employing the Parliamentary Engagement Officer (Mairi Campbell-Jack). She is employed by Britain Yearly Meeting with General Meeting contributing around 30% of the overall cost.

Support for the main work of General Meeting continued to be funded through two grants, of £7176.65 from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) towards the tasks laid upon it in Section 5.03 of *Quaker Faith & Practice* and £1400 from the Francis Camfield Trust towards the travelling expenses of General Meeting representatives. The latter is particularly appreciated as it enables us to support the engagement of Friends from distant communities in our work and worship.

Expenditure in 2018 was roughly similar to that in the previous two years, the most significant feature being expenditure related to the parliamentary work. This has been partly supported by a direct quota imposed on our four Area Meetings, and partly from drawing down some of the General Meeting's financial reserves. This draw-down would have meant that by the end of 2017 we would have reached a point where reserves should not go lower. However a legacy of £24933.70 which we received during 2017 from Jenny Auld has enabled the GM to commit to funding the PEO post for another three years (£12000 over the three years 2018-2020) with BYM contributing and indeed increasing its contribution to the post, thus enabling it to be increased from January 2108 from 2 ½ days per week to 3 ½ days per week.

The work of the General Meeting has been ably supported by our part-time Administrative Officer, Marion Sharkey, since May 2015, with a salary paid from the General Meeting's funds.

General Meeting for Scotland does not have a primary role as a grant-making organisation, yet it exists both to support Quaker initiatives and to facilitate Quaker participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities in Scotland. One session of General Meeting in 2016 was devoted to revising our guidelines for making financial contributions to external organisations and to considering how we monitor their work through our participation. Our policy remains to offer support primarily to organisations with which we have some direct involvement via appointed representatives.

The actual grants paid out each year are reviewed by members at a General Meeting held in November. Among the grants made during 2018 the largest was (£2000) (increased from £1,700 in previous years) for the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust. This organises an annual summer school for Young Friends from northern Britain.

General Meeting did not, as it had in earlier years, have a residential meeting. The decision was taken in November 2016 to discontinue holding such meetings on a regular basis in future. Our printed list of Members and Attenders is produced in alternate years, so one was produced at the beginning of 2017, with the next version planned for distribution early in 2019.

Two funds are currently maintained by the General Meeting treasurer as restricted funds. These are (i) Quaker Link Weekends for teenagers (administered by the General Meeting's administrator and previously known as the "QTAA" fund; QTAA is the Quaker Teenager Activity Account). (ii) A General Meeting Fund for Healing, established when the Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) was wound up during 2012. Grants may be made from this fund to support healing of individuals in the broadest sense. Following a decision by the trustees, recommendations are currently brought forward by the trustees of the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust, appointed by South East Scotland Area Meeting. No grant was made during 2018.

There was a planned overall deficit incurred within the General Fund during 2018, drawing down, as decided in 2017, part of the Auld Legacy. The deficit was in fact just under £3,000, slightly less than had been anticipated..

The General Meeting last reviewed its reserves policy in 2011. It was agreed that, in general, reserves should be equivalent to not less than 6 months expenditure. During the period 2015-2017 there has been a reduction of our reserves, but within the general framework that was agreed in 2014. The financial situation was further reviewed during 2017 at the time that the future of the Parliamentary Engagement project was under consideration following the conclusion of its initial three-year pilot phase, in December 2017. As a result of the independent review, the GM agreed to continue support for the PEO post and the GM Trustees and BYM Trustees entered into a formal agreement for its continuation for three years.

There were several discussions at GM concerning the Auld Legacy, and apart from the commitment to use £12000 of it over three years, as noted above, it was agreed that at future meetings in which there will be a general review of GM priorities, it will be decided how the legacy will be used for special initiatives. This is therefore a designated fund (there being no conditions in the bequest that makes it restricted). No further use of the Legacy occurred in 2018.

5. Review of Activities during the year

We held four business meetings during 2018 in different venues across Scotland. Regular business items include reports and discussion concerning a large variety of charitable endeavours within Scotland, especially those with which the General Meeting has a special relationship (for example, through an appointed trustee or other representative).

Each meeting included detailed reflection on a special topic. These covered: (March) ecumenical and interfaith issues and links (resulting in a meeting in October in Edinburgh specifically on ecumenical and interfaith issues); (June) the future of the book of discipline which will be undergoing revision and the trustees issue in Scotland (the latter leading to a well attended meeting in early September on the issue with Paul Parker BYM recording clerk leading us); (September) a presentation by young Friends of their experiences of the shindig and a presentation on land reform; and (November) an in-depth focus on the future of ACTS and on PEWG'S concerns including the issue of climate change responses in the light of the latest IPCC report.

A Quaker teenager link weekend was held in Edinburgh in July 2018 and a residential Families Weekend was arranged at the Atholl Baptist Centre, Pitlochry in October 2018. Young Friends from Scotland participated in the annual Summer Shindig held at Ackworth School in August (organised by the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust).

Our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, continued to serve in her part-time post during 2018. She is employed as a member of the advocacy team of Britain Yearly Meeting, but she works within Scotland, assisted in her work by members of General Meeting's Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, formerly called the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group. The work on militarisation within Scottish schools continued through the public petition committee which produced a report that is now requiring a final response from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. Mairi produced a number of briefings for MSPs and engaged with Quaker Young People in responding to two Government consultations on mainstreaming children's rights in Scotland and on the Children (equal protection from assault) Bill. Early in 2018 a threshing event was held to consider Universal Basic Income and from this it was decided in the first instance that land reform and land value tax should be the focus of our work on creating a fair economy. Following discernment by General Meeting climate change was added as a priority for parliamentary engagement work.

Marion Sharkey continues to serve as administrator for General Meeting, being employed for eight hours a week to support the work of office-holders and Scottish Friends generally. We have reached the decision that outreach work is best conducted at local or Area Meeting level. There was no national enquirers' event in 2018, but it is planned to have another one in 2019. In addition, various activities were organized by local Meetings in Scotland during October to mark National Quaker Week.

We continued to support representatives on a variety of Scottish bodies including ACTS, the Faiths in Scotland Community Action Fund, Scottish Churches Housing Action, the Joint Faiths Board on Community Justice, the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust, the Alternatives to Violence Project (Scotland), the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and others. Following a decision on 2017 we no longer have one 'representative friend': the role is now shared amongst Friends. However Huw Lloyd-Richards was our representative on ACTS. He has been playing an active role in thinking through the future of ACTS which is now undergoing radical reconstruction.

6. Future Intentions

The main new work anticipated for 2019 is expected to be further development of the General Meeting's work on parliamentary engagement. A decision was made in 2017, as noted earlier in this Report, by GM Trustees and BYM Trustees about how the work of the Engagement Officer post should be continued and developed for the future. Another significant task before GM will be to determine within the context of a general review of GM's priorities how best to use the balance of the Legacy (nearly £13000). Our work currently focussed on the furtherance of economic justice, sustainability and peace in the world will be continued.

7. Connected Bodies and Transactions between them

Apart from the constituent Quaker Meetings and Britain Yearly Meeting, there is no other connected body.

8. Approval of Report and authority to Sign

This Report was approved by the trustees on 26th February 2019; it was signed on their behalf by Martin Burnell, clerk to the trustees:

This Report and the Statement of Accounts for 2018 were presented to a General Meeting held in Edinburgh and the Clerk of the General Meeting was authorised to sign them.

Signed:

Adwoa Bittle
Clerk of General Meeting

Date: 8th June 2019