

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

(Scottish Charity Number SC 012281)

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st December 2017

OFFICE BEARERS (during 2017)

Adwoa Bittle (Clerk)
Robin Davis (Assistant Clerk)
Pamala McDougall (Representative Friend)
Nigel Dower (Treasurer)
Duncan Wallace (Assistant Treasurer)

ADMINISTRATOR AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE

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

Telephone 01382 730 842
Email ScotFriends@gmail.com
Website www.quakerscotland.org

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF THE ACCOUNTS

Paul Kenny,
Cavers Garden Farm, Denholm,
Hawick, TD9 8LN.

BANKERS

The Co-operative Bank
Triodos Bank
Bank of Scotland

TRUSTEES (during 2017 and at the time of signing of this report)

Catherine Brown
Martin Burnell (Clerk to the Trustees from 1st January 2017)
Nigel Dower (Treasurer from 1st January 2017)
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 five office bearers: Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Representative Friend (for Action for Churches Together in Scotland), 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. 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.

The Nominations Committee brings forward nominations for various posts and the General Meeting makes the appointments. The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group helps the General Meeting express Quaker beliefs within political and social contexts, 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.

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 2017

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 40% of the overall cost.

Support for the main work of General Meeting continued to be funded through two grants, of £6967.62 from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) towards the tasks laid upon it in Section 5.03 of *Quaker Faith & Practice* and £1,400 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 2017 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 from Jenny Auld has enabled the GM to commit to funding the PEO post for another three years 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 2017 the largest was £1,700 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 (though for many the meeting in Elgin proved to be de facto residential) 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.

Three 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. One grant was made during 2017. (iii) A General Meeting Economic Justice fund: a grant received from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust for supporting a symposium held in Edinburgh in October 2016 was partially unspent at the year end, with the residue of the grant being carried forward to pay for associated activity during 2017 or for return to the original donor. Part of that residue was spent on a second meeting in April in Edinburgh and the rest was returned to the donor.

Putting on one side the Legacy received at the end of October, there was an overall deficit of around £2,500 incurred within the General Fund during 2017, drawing down a further portion of the General Meeting's accumulated reserves. This had been authorised at the end of 2014 as a planned contribution towards the expenses of employing a Parliamentary Engagement Officer.

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).

5. Review of Activities during the year

We held four business meetings during 2017 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) hearing an inspirational presentation from Gretchen Castle who is the general secretary to the Friends World Committee for Consultation on what is at the core of Quaker experience; (June) concerns about Quaker approaches to sexuality led by Zen Moffat, which showed how difficult and sensitive these issues remain for many Friends; (September) a presentation by the General Secretary of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) which was helpful for our understanding of a key organisation in Scotland with which we are associated and (November) an in-depth focus on how a number of members of one Area Meeting (North of Scotland) see being a Quaker.

A Quaker teenager link weekend was held in Edinburgh in July 2017 and a residential Families Weekend was arranged at Pitlochry Youth Hostel in October 2017. 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 half-time post during 2017. 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 major project initiated during 2015 on the increasing militarisation that is being seen within Scottish schools was taken forward during 2016 and 2017 with a public petition to the Scottish Parliament.

In April 2017 The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group arranged a seminar with around thirty invited guests to discuss how to take forward their work on Economic Justice, This followed on from the public meeting on the theme of "Creating a Just Scotland" in association with the Edinburgh Radical Book Fair held on 29th October 2016. Both were supported by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. The theme of social justice and economic inequality was taken up as a major priority, and plans were made for a meeting in 2018 on the idea of Citizen's Income. Other work undertaken by the Parliamentary Engagement Officer included producing briefing papers for local meetings for use at both the General

Election and local elections; responding to Scottish Government consultations on “Destitution and Asylum Seekers” and “Fracking in Scotland.”

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, but arrangements were made during 2017 for holding a national enquirers' event in September which was a day event held in Dunblane Cathedral Hall. 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. Our GM Representative Pamala McDougall attended the Church of Scotland General Assembly and Sue Lycett who had been appointed to take over from Pamala in 2018, the Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

6. Future Intentions

The main new work anticipated for 2018 is expected to be further development of the General Meeting's work on parliamentary engagement. A decision was made, as noted earlier in this Report, by GM Trustees and BYM Trustees about how the work of the Engagement Officer post should be developed for the future. Another significant task before GM will be to determine within the context of a general review of GM's priorities to be started at the GM in March 2018, 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 20 February 2018; it was signed on their behalf by Martin Burnell, clerk to the trustees:

Martin Burnell

This Report and the Statement of Accounts for 2016 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: 10 March 2018