

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

(Scottish Charity Number SC 012281)

Report for the year ended 31st December 2021

OFFICE BEARERS

During 2021:

Elizabeth Allen (Clerk)
Nicola Maharg (Assistant Clerk) until June 2021
Michael Hutchinson (Assistant Clerk) from June 2021
Adwoa Bittle (Second Assistant Clerk from March 2021)
Nigel Dower (Treasurer)
Pamela Brunt (Assistant Treasurer)

At the time of the report:

Elizabeth Allen (Clerk)
Michael Hutchinson (Assistant Clerk)
Adwoa Bittle (Second Assistant Clerk)
Nigel Dower (Treasurer)
Pamela Brunt (Assistant Treasurer)

ADMINISTRATOR AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE

During 2021 and at the time of the report:

Sue Proudlove,
Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House,
7, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2JL
Telephone 0131 225 4825
Email ScotFriends@gmail.com
Website www.quakerscotland.org

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF THE ACCOUNTS

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

BANKERS

The Co-operative Bank
Triodos Bank

TRUSTEES

During 2021:

Catherine Brown
Martin Burnell
Nigel Dower
Michael Hutchinson
Derek McLean

Margaret Mortimer from March 2021
Jacqueline Noltingk until March 2021

At the time of the report:

Martin Burnell
Nigel Dower
Michael Hutchinson
Margaret Mortimer
Robin Waterston

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, but during 2021 has been meeting using video-conferencing because of the covid pandemic, though its last meeting in November was a blended meeting based on Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House.

2. The Objectives of the General Meeting

The General Meeting has national responsibilities on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting to represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Scotland. 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 issues of concern and 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. During 2021 it was revised since some terminology and procedures were out-of-date and provision for video-conferencing and blended meetings needed to be made.

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 three, 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. In June a new Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group started its work, and a short-term working group was also set up to consider 'options' for simplifying the organisation of Quaker activity in Scotland to report back to GM in March 2022.

Six trustees, including the General Meeting treasurer *ex officio*, serve the General Meeting. Trustees receive no remuneration. Trustees serve renewable three-year terms and are appointed by the whole General Meeting upon nomination by the Nominations Committee.

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 2021

A major source of the 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 was employed by Britain Yearly Meeting with General Meeting contributing towards the overall cost. In November 2019 she resigned to take up another post. During 2020 steps were taken to refill the post and in October 2020 Andrew Tomlinson was appointed. Three quarters of the money from AMs was vired across to 2021 to support the post in that year and AMs were not asked for further contribution in 2021 for the post. Because of the reduced level of activity due to the pandemic AMs were only expected to pay 2/3rd of the normal general quota (£6666 of £10,000).

Support for the main work of General Meeting continued to be funded through two grants, of £7900 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 and Friends attending GM and other ways of enabling Friends to be more connected. The Trust had indicated it was happy see its grant used to support meetings through video-conferencing as well. The latter grant is particularly appreciated as it enables us to support the engagement of Friends from distant communities in our work and worship, though this did not happen as much as had been expected because of the continuing pandemic.

Expenditure in 2021 was significantly reduced compared with that of normal pre-pandemic years.

The funding of the PEO post in 2021 (partly drawn from the extra AM quota vired from 2020 (see above) and partly funded by the Jenny Auld Legacy) was the third (deferred) year of GM's commitment to supporting the PEO post under an agreement with BYM to continue the post from 2018 to 2020 for a further three years, with BYM contributing and indeed increasing its contribution to the post, thus enabling it to be increased from January 2018 from 2 ½ days per week to 3 ½ days per week. In 2021 BYM decided to make the post from 2022 permanent and fully funded by BYM, and a new funding model for support from Friends in Scotland for this is being developed.

The work of the General Meeting has continued to be ably supported by our part-time Administrative Officer, Sue Proudlove, who took up her post at the beginning of 2020, 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. In 2019 GM decided to add three more organisations which it wished to support that year and in future years.

The actual grants paid out each year are reviewed by members at a General Meeting held in November. Among the grants made during 2021 the largest was £1000 for the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust. This organises an annual summer school for Young Friends from northern Britain. The event had to be cancelled as a face-to-face summer school in 2020 because of the pandemic (and was held very successfully online), but it was agreed with the NFYET that they would retain the money (£2000) and put it towards the event in 2021. However on the recommendation of GM Trustees, GM decided to add a further £1000 in 2021 to help with extra costs.

Our printed list of Members and Attenders is produced in alternate years, so one was produced early in 2021.

Two funds are currently maintained by the General Meeting treasurer as restricted funds. These are (i) Quaker Link Weekends for teenagers (the funds for this were previously administered by the General Meeting's administrator and held in a separate Bank of Scotland account known as the "QTAA" fund; in January 2020 the funds were transferred to the Coop account to be administered by the GM Treasurer from then on); (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 2020. Neither fund was called on in 2021.

Although the accounts show a significant deficit (since they operate on a 'payments and receipts' basis) if adjustment are made because of significant sums vired from the previous year, there was in fact a significant surplus.

The Auld Legacy is a fund that can be used at the General Meeting's discretion as there are no conditions in the bequest that restrict its use. In 2017 we agreed to use £12,000 from the fund over three years to 2021 to support the PEO post. Apart from this, there has been no other commitment of these legacy funds. GM agreed that at future meetings it will review its priorities and agree how the legacy can best be used to support special initiatives.

Income during the year was £19,405.18 and expenditure £24,695.11. Although the accounts show therefore a significant deficit of £5,289.93 (since they operate on a 'payments and receipts' basis), if adjustments are made because of significant sums vired/transferred from the previous year, there was in fact a significant surplus of c. £3,300.

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. Since our overall balance was at the end of the year £37,695, our general reserves, quite apart from the remainder of the Jenny Auld Legacy (c. £13,000) and restricted funds (c. £2280), at c £20,000 are well in excess of what our reserve policy requires (c. £12,000).

5. Review of Activities during the year

(a) Meetings of General Meeting itself

We held four business meetings during 2021, and an extra one in February 2021 to consider the implications of having meetings by video-conferencing (e.g. ZOOM) and blended meetings. The first three business meetings occurred by ZOOM and the last was in Edinburgh and was a blended meeting.

Most meetings included a focus on one of two topics in more detail. These covered: (March) consideration concerning the setting up of a Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group and its remit (to which Friends were appointed in June); (June) Introduction of Zoe Prosser the newly appointed Local Development Worker; (September) consideration of 'Quakers in Scotland and COP 26' together with a presentation from Andrew Tomlinson the new Parliamentary Engagement Officer; and (November) consideration of feedback on Quaker involvement in COP 26 and a consideration of the meaning of Eldership.

Through our donations and affiliations to a variety of charitable endeavours within Scotland, we extend and expand the work and witness of General Meeting in four broad areas: ecumenical and interfaith work; social witness; climate justice; peace witness. At each business meeting we hear reports on one area of work from the Friends acting as GM links with these organisations. .

(b) Other meetings of Scottish Friends organised by GM

A Quaker teenager link weekend occurred by ZOOM, but the very popular residential Families Weekend had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. Young Friends from Scotland participated in the annual Summer Shindig which unlike the previous year was a normal face-to-face meeting (organised by the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust). An Enquirers' Day was arranged and took place by ZOOM in April.

(c) Parliamentary Engagement Work

The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) has three areas of focus: the climate and ecological emergency; peacebuilding; and economic justice and land reform. The Group, supported and advised by our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, aims to build relationships with MSPs and the Scottish Government in order to influence policy in a direction in tune with Quaker testimonies in areas where Quakers hold clear views. This work is often undertaken alongside other groups in civil society who hold similar ambitions. For example, our work on the climate emergency is largely achieved working in partnership with and through our membership of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS), a coalition of some 60 organisations campaigning in this field.

Highlights of our work in 2021 were:

- a) Scottish Elections May 2021: providing Scottish Quakers with guidance to hold local hustings events and to ask questions of their local MSP candidates in the run-up to the election.
- b) Peacebuilding: meeting with the relevant Government Minister to discuss Scottish Enterprise funding provided to arms manufacturers based in Scotland whose products are components of weapons being used in the war in Yemen and are, therefore, likely to be linked to human rights abuses in that conflict. We hope to continue this dialogue in 2022.
- c) Climate Emergency and COP26: through SCCS we pressed for the voices of nations already suffering great hardship due to climate change to be heard by Government. We were delighted that the Scottish Government supported this work through the "Glasgow Dialogues" at COP26 and subsequently with the establishment of a Climate Justice Fund.

The Group and the Parliamentary Engagement Officer aim to support Quakers in Scotland engage with their elected representatives on matters of concern to them. Examples of this in 2021 were dialogue with the Community Justice Network of Quakers in Scotland and also a Local Meeting which gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee in relation to a petition calling for a ban on the provision or promotion of LGBT+ conversion therapy in Scotland.

By its nature, little of this work is "one-off"; these dialogues aim to build influence over a period of years, responding to developments over time as they occur. The Group's priorities are set by Scottish Quakers via General Meeting for Scotland every three years or so. The next review is due towards the end of 2022.

(d) Committee work

Some of the work of Committees was done already online or by telephone conferencing before COVID 19 but COVID 19 has led to a dramatic rise on energy-saving ZOOM and other online conferencing. We have come to recognise that the use of video conferencing has led to wider participation from Friends, especially those living in remote areas, and that in the future when we will be able to attend meetings face-to-face, the use of blended meetings will be an important element to this, both continuing to enable Friends to attend who would otherwise not do so and contributing to greater sustainability.

(e) Administrative support

Sue Proudlove, who had taken over from Marion Sharkey in January 2020 to serve as administrator for General Meeting, continued to be employed for eight hours a week to support the work of office-holders and Scottish Friends generally.

(f) Representation on other bodies

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 Northern Friends Youth Events Trust, the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and others, but the amount of engagement has been limited during 2021 because of the pandemic and such engagement has mainly been by ZOOM and other forms of remote communication. Following a decision in 2017 we no longer have one 'representative friend': the role is now shared amongst Friends. Adwoa Bittle was appointed in November 2019 to be our representative on ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland)/SCF (Scottish Christian Forum) and continued to serve in that role during 2021.

6. Future Intentions

The main new work anticipated for 2022 is expected to be further development of the General Meeting's work on parliamentary engagement, which if possible and appropriate is done with others. Promoting peace education in Scotland is a new focus which is being taken forward. Throughout 2022 we will work to ensure that our witness and advocacy on climate justice issues is maintained in the follow-up to COP 26 in Glasgow, in November 2021. The Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group set up in 2021 will help us increase our understanding of and engagement with community justice issues,

In 2022, we anticipate making our meetings more accessible by increased use of 'blended meetings', where some Friends are present in person and others join the meeting remotely. However, blended meetings and online meetings are challenging for building and sustaining our Quaker communities. We are searching for creative ways of being together.

From May 2021, we have had a Local Development Worker in Scotland, Zoe Prosser, employed by Britain Yearly Meeting. She will continue to assist in growing and strengthening our community of Quakers in Scotland and to produce a regular bulletin to tell Friends what she is doing. We are a DIY church and the service given by our role holders is necessary for us to function. To support them, Zoe is setting up new networks of role holders.

We will implement suggested steps to address the main issues for Quakers in Scotland, and to strengthen our Quaker Community in keeping with the vision expressed in BYM's 'Our Faith in the Future', and we have set up a new working group to continue our exploration of more radical options for simplifying our meetings and the way we work.

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 Jenny Auld Legacy (nearly £13,000).

More generally GM's role continues to be to put together the big picture of what Quakers in Scotland are doing and to let Friends and others know, and to inform, inspire and support them. GM also continues its role in providing an internal forum for sharing and discussing Quaker actions.

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 9th May 2022; it was signed on their behalf by Martin Burnell, clerk to the trustees:

This Report and the Statement of Accounts for 2021 were presented to a General Meeting held in Glasgow and by ZOOM in June 2022 and the Clerk of the General Meeting was authorised to sign them.

Signed: **(Elizabeth Allen)**

Elizabeth Allen
Clerk of General Meeting

Date: 11th June 2022