

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND
Minutes of the Meeting held in Dundee
9.9.2017

1 Opening worship

We began our meeting by a session of open worship during which Quaker Faith and Practice section 27.20 has been read.

2 Welcome

The Clerk has welcomed all present, especially our ecumenical visitor, Ian Boa, of Action of Churches Together in Scotland, and especially all those, members or attenders, for whom this may be their first time at our General Meeting. 7 attenders have been welcomed.

The numbers present have been as follows:

East 15

North 2

South East 7

West 7

Ecumenical visitor 1

3 Reporter

We appoint Jane Mitchell (West Scotland) to write a report of this meeting for The Scottish Friend and The Friend. We ask East Scotland Area Meeting to bring forward a name to report our November meeting.

4 Membership

Area Meetings have informed us by their minutes of the following deaths since our last meeting:

West - David Harper, 8.8.2017

Similarly we have heard of their welcoming the following into membership of our Society:

South East: Paul Slifer

West: Caroll Ewen, Donald Holmes, Elizabeth Holmes, Elspeth Smith

5 General Meeting date June 2018

We note that it has become necessary to move the date of the June General Meeting in 2018 to Saturday June 16th. We ask our administrator to inform Scottish Friends of this change.

6 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)

Ian Boa, Assistant General Secretary of Action of Churches Together in Scotland, has spoken to us in a lively and engaging manner, describing its origins and its work. He talked about Scottish Churches House, its having to be sold but energy and resources having been released for other activities. Working together involves worshipping together, studying together, serving together, and proclaiming together. Ian had a definition of mission - going into the community reaching out to find God's love and showing by example. We know the truth can be found in unexpected places, that the light can shine when we least expect it. ACTS does not as an organisation engage directly with other faith groups but can support individual churches who do this work, often at local level. We can find opportunity for dialogue and celebration as we walk alongside each other, regardless of destination. A suggestion was made that we look together at a recent Papal Encyclical*.

We look forward to continuing these discussions over lunch here in Dundee and then in our Local Meetings. We thank Ian very much for coming and energising us.

* Laudato Si”- on care for our common home, May 2015. <https://laudatosi.com>

7 Nominations (paper attached, circulated in advance)

Our Nominations Committee brings forward the names of the following who have asked to be released from their roles with immediate effect:

Alan Frith (South East) from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group;

Pamala McDougall (East) as Representative Friend;

Mike Nellis (West) from the Joint Faiths Board for Community Justice.

We release Megan Davis as our representative on the Retreat York General Meeting as that has now been laid down.

We thank these Friends for their service.

The Committee brings forward the following names to serve:

Examiner of Accounts, January to December 2018: Paul Kenny (South East)

Representative on Scottish Churches Housing Action, with immediate effect until December 2019: Alistair Trainor (West)

Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, with immediate effect until December 2019:

Ed Tyler (West)

These names being acceptable we appoint these Friends accordingly.

8 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report (paper attached, circulated in advance)

8.1 Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer (SPEO) post

We are pleased to hear from this report that from January 1 2018 the hours of our Parliamentary Engagement Officer post will increase from 2.5 days to 3.5 days per week. This follows the agreement at General Meeting (see minute 11, 10.6.2017) that half of the legacy left by Jenny Auld would be used to fund an extra half day a week of work by the SPEO and the subsequent agreement of Britain Yearly Meeting trustees to provide the extra funding.

Management Meeting (the management team at Friends House) has also confirmed that Mairi Campbell-Jack, the current postholder, has been awarded a permanent contract as from January 2018. We are delighted for her.

8.2 Current activities of the Group

Phil Lucas has spoken to the report. A Universal Basic Income is a key area for exploration. Three local authorities are prepared to run pilot projects and the Green Party and individual MSPs support the proposal. The Parliamentary Engagement Working Group wants to explore the idea of a Universal Basic Income further whilst acknowledging that it will not answer all needs in society. The journey is important and we can unite in exploring the idea. The Hexham Debates on Economic Justice have been very successful. A similar series is planned in Glasgow and Edinburgh from January 2018. We thank the group for its work.

8.3 Memorandum of Understanding between General Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting relating to the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer post

Our trustees have let us know that following the extension of the advocacy project for another three years, the Memorandum of Understanding between Yearly Meeting trustees and General Meeting trustees relating to the jointly funded post of Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer is being revised to take account of this and the way the project continues to develop.

9 Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 (Minute 38 attached, circulated in advance)

Yearly Meeting Gathering took place in Coventry at the University of Warwick from July 29 to August 5 this year. The Epistle from this meeting has been read in our local meetings, and minute 38, on "Living out our faith in the world: working with others to make a difference", has been distributed with the agenda in advance of our meeting today. We have shared our impressions - of listening in deep worshipful silence to a Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of a departed Friend, and of the experience of the final Epilogue with the reading of a poem about brokenness and the ministry of a young man who had just been diagnosed with leukaemia. Friends noted the richness of minute 38, and we were enjoined to go out and engage with others, to live out our faith by working with others.

10 Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Community Justice

Mike Nellis, whom we have just released from service on the Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Community Justice - see minute 7 above - has spoken to us of the Board's work and asked whether we wish to continue to be represented on it. There are lots of ways we are working in this area but do we have a focus, a genuine corporate concern? Do we know what needs to be done? Friends have a valued tradition in this field. Mike referred in particular to the work of David Turner (South East) over very many years and to whom we owe many thanks. Are we ready to address new challenges? If we wish to renew activity in this we need to do this collectively as a piece of work with which we all unite. Have we the resources and the will for this? Mike urged us to have a clear sense of purpose.

For many years membership of the Board was restricted to certain named churches and some other faith groups and a Friend served on the Board as one of the two ACTS representatives.. After General Meeting's request to the Board for Quaker representation, this was granted and Mike Nellis was appointed. The Board is now one of the programme groups of ACTS.

After opening the discussion to the Meeting, we discerned that we would ask our Nominations Committee to find a replacement if possible for Mike on the Board. We agreed to come back to the subject of community justice at our March 2018 General Meeting.

11 General Meeting 18.11.2017

General Meeting meets next in Elgin on 18.11.2017 when North Scotland Area Meeting will be our hosts. The agenda is not yet finalised but we hope to hear of North Scotland's activities, to receive the budget for 2018 that trustees will have agreed, with its list of proposed donations and grants, and to have Tim Gee, who gave the George Gorman lecture at Yearly Meeting, to talk about the sanctuary movement.

12 General Meeting 10.3.2018

South East Area Meeting will host General Meeting on 10.3.2018. This will be a time when we hope to review our priorities, “how the truth prospers amongst us”, with emphasis on our role in the Yearly Meeting, ecumenism, the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, community justice, and the use of legacy money. We ask Area and Local Meetings to make time to discern what is right for General Meeting at this juncture, and to send in minutes where appropriate.

13 George Lakey

We have been told of the visit to Scotland by George Lakey, author of “Viking economics”, as advertised in the agenda papers circulated in advance for this meeting. We urge Friends to publicise these opportunities as much as possible and not solely among Quakers.

14 Closing minute

We thank East Scotland for welcoming us today and being our hosts. We look forward to meeting again in Elgin on November 18th, as mentioned in minute 11 above.

Signed: Robin Davis, Clerk this time

**GM Nominations Group wish to bring forward the following names
to General Meeting in Dundee on 9th September 2017**

Requests for release

Pamala McDougall would like to be released as Representative Friend with immediate effect.

Alan Frith would like to be released from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group with immediate effect.

We release Megan Davis as our representative on the Retreat York General Meeting as that has now been laid down.

Mike Nellis would like to be released with immediate effect from the Joint Faiths Board for Community Justice.

Nominations

Examinor of Accounts

Paul Kenny

January 2018 to December 2018

Representative on Scottish Churches Housing Action

Alistair Trainor

immediate effect until December 2019

Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

Ed Tyler

immediate effect until December 2019

Appendix 4 Report from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group to General Meeting for Scotland to be held in Dundee on Saturday 9th September 2017 1.

Parliamentary Engagement Officer post: We were delighted to hear from Friends House staff that the hours of our Parliamentary Engagement Officer post would increase from 2.5 days to 3.5 days per week and that Mairi Campbell Jack will have a permanent contract from January 1st 2018. This follows the agreement at GM in June that half of the legacy left by Jenny Auld would be used to fund an extra half day a week of work by the PEO and the subsequent agreement of FH Management Committee to match this funding. 2.

Economic Justice: The main focus for the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group is taking forward our work on Economic Justice. Following the seminar in April we discerned three initiatives we could pursue. The first is looking in depth at the idea of a Universal Basic Income and we plan to set up a Cross Party Committee on UBI in the Scottish Parliament. We feel that this will have sufficient support across political parties and are speaking to a number of MSPs. Second, we plan to approach the Edinburgh Book Festival proposing a theme of Money and Economic justice for a future festival. UBI would be part of these sessions. The third idea is that of hosting a number of debates based on a model created by Hexham Quaker Meeting but with a focus on economic justice including UBI. We are keen to hear from Friends in Scotland about their views on the idea of UBI and Phil Lucas has written in the recent copy of Scottish Quaker urging Friends to learn more about Basic Income in order to contribute to the debate as it develops. Annie Miller, a retired economics academic and member of South East Scotland Area Meeting, has been working on the subject for years and has published a book this summer (THE BASIC INCOME HANDBOOK from Luath Press Ltd www.luath.co.uk). A very readable and already published introduction (which Annie also recommends) is Basic Income and How We Can Make It Happen by Guy Standing from Pelican £8.99. East Scotland Area Meeting discussed UBI at their last meeting and there was strong support for the idea of pursuing this. 3. White Poppies: a slightly amended version of the white poppy leaflet has been produced reflecting the request last year that it say something about where the money goes. We will again be sending white poppies and leaflets to all Scottish MPs, MSPs and Scottish MEPs. 4. Engagement with local meetings: the PEWG welcomes communication from local meetings and interested Friends so please do get in touch. A number of local meetings are pursuing the issue of militarism in schools and have asked for our help in doing this. We have also discussed opening some of our meetings to interested friends who wish to attend and also not having all the meetings in Edinburgh. Joyce Taylor (Convenor of the PEWG) 27th August 2017

Minute 38: Living out our faith in the world: working with others to make a difference.

What does it mean to live out our faith in the world, and to work with others to make a difference? We have been enlightened, inspired, and challenged to take heed of the promptings of love and truth in our hearts. It is love that draws us into the world and pulls us towards its brokenness. We have found it useful to consider the topic under the headings Heart, Head, Hands and Feet, through plenary sessions throughout the week, and in workshops, activities and conversation.

- Heart: the transforming leadings;
- Head: the need to use our intellect, intuition and reason to harness that passion and energy effectively;
- Hands: the tools and skills we bring to the work;
- Feet: the ways in which we can work with others.

What does God require of us?

We heard moving personal testimony of the experience of brokenness, of finding common ground with others in grief, and about receiving upholding and support from our meeting communities and from strangers. If we are able to live and love on the edge, we can start to overcome and move beyond the fears that hold us back, focusing not on outcomes but on intention. Let us not be too afraid. "Oh God, grant me the blessing that I may never hesitate to perform righteous deeds." (17th century Sikh prayer).

We may be called upon to take direct action, to be an accompanier, to be a placeholder who prepares the ground for others, or to be the one who finds someone else to act; but firstly we have to show up. Just being present is vital. It is exactly ourselves that we bring, with our own feelings and emotions. Moving towards the places where the hurt is deepest can be a great release into truth, and love. Listening to the hurt and anger builds trust.

Heart speaks to heart, and stillness enables the Spirit to speak in our hearts. God will provide us with reassurance, and with loving arms around us.

Jesus gives us an image of the "Strong One" (Mark 3: 27-28), the controlling power that takes us away from God, dehumanises and divides. The Strong One may need to be bound in order to turn the tide and change the power. In speaking Truth to Power, we may also need to offer a safety net or lifeline. But our understanding of Power is nuanced and multifaceted: the world is not divided into "them" and "us". With responsibility comes power that can be used or abused by each of us: we all need to be bound, and we all need to be liberated and transformed. When we act collectively we can speak out in and with power. Let us call forth the power that is at work in and through all of us: the true Power, the power of God in the world who is building this movement in and for us.

We have shared examples of activity we are already engaged with, including work on climate change, racism, the Living Wage, challenging militarisation, forced migration, tax justice and other work for equality. We have used these examples to draw out common tools and approaches to Quaker work with others. Sometimes prophetic witness or confrontation is required, sometimes the drip, drip of quiet activity over the longer term has most lasting impact, including working through the political systems. If we apply grit to the

things that we love we have the opportunity to change the world. The ministry of presence is of great value: we engage, we witness, we walk alongside. We may use story to get our message across, or a noisy presence to let people know they are not forgotten, as well as silence and stillness.

The way we work is an important witness in itself: let us acknowledge, celebrate and cherish it.

Working in partnership with others to build a movement can lead us to question our own practices, for only when we are also working on ourselves can we witness and speak beyond Friends. Can we recognise where we need to learn and to change? Getting to know one another deeply builds relational power and gives us strength, so that we can speak from lived experience, modelling to others how our faith guides our ministry.

In exploring a common purpose, and overcoming challenges with others, we often find common values such as truth, integrity, simplicity, and equality. We should ensure we also develop and share subtler values and practical understandings. Coming together with others, we can bring insights and learn from others, agree what needs to be done, and move forwards without having to compromise who we are or our motivations. Balance is key: balance does not mean never to wobble but comes from being able to find one's way back to centre once something has made one sway.

We are inspired, but we are also disquieted. How do our actions sit alongside our faith, how does our 'being' move into 'doing'? What is for individual activity and what will we do corporately? If we are inspired and upheld and supported in our identity and work as Quakers, is that enough? Or are we called to be more radical?

In 2011, Britain Yearly Meeting made a commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community (Minute 36, BYM 2011). That commitment succeeds or fails on our ability to live faithful lives, not giving way to guilt, fear or anger, but acting from nowhere but love. We have heard a sense of urgency over this concern. We will continue to work for climate justice in our lives and in our meetings, trying to do the more difficult things.

We have heard the call to examine our own diversity, particularly in our committee and organisational structure, locally and nationally. Diversity has several key dimensions and more may emerge in the future. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings, paying particular attention to race and age diversity and to keep Yearly Meeting informed in their annual report.

Surely we are led firstly to be open to the Spirit, waiting and listening in faithfulness for the way forward as we worship together week after week. The source of our strength comes from our worship and our Quaker community.