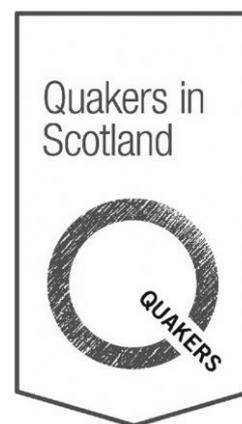


GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

31st October, 2020
Held by Zoom



20/10/01 Worship

We have spent time together in worship sharing, during which we considered the question, 'How has the truth prospered amongst us?'

20/10/02 Welcome to all present

We welcome all Friends who are with us today, to General Meeting for Scotland, held by Zoom.

We regret that to comply with Covid19 restrictions, we were prevented from meeting in person in Dunblane.

The total numbers of those present will be added to these minutes.

East Scotland	14
South East Scotland	27
North Scotland	10
West Scotland	18

Total: 70, including 6 attenders and 1 visitor.

20/10/03 Elders for this meeting

We are grateful to Friends present who have offered to serve as Elders for this meeting. Their duties are listed on the back of the agenda. Names of those serving for today have been noted. We remind Friends that all of us share the duties of oversight and spiritual care of our Meetings, not just those appointed to carry them out.

20/10/04 Reporter of this Meeting

We appoint Robin Waterston from East Scotland Area Meeting to report on this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask West Scotland Area Meeting to report on General Meeting on 6th March, 2021.

20/10/05 New members, transfers and deaths

From Area Meeting minutes since General Meeting on 12th September, we record the following death:

West Scotland Area Meeting

Tim Bennison, 22nd September, 2020

20/10/06 Nominations

Release from service

Mary Cox is no longer able to act as our contact with Scottish Churches Housing Action. We release Mary from this service with immediate effect and thank her for the work she has done on our behalf.

We ask our Nominations Committee to search for a Friend willing to take on this role.

20/10/07 Minute from North Scotland Area Meeting

We note the following minute from North Scotland Area Meeting, received by our clerk on 28th October, 2020. We will return to it at our March General Meeting. The minutes referred to from Inverness Local Meeting will be circulated with the papers for GM in March.

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting: ¹⁷~~17~~_{SEP} 19th October 2020,

Minute 53/20

This Meeting was arranged to consider the minute from Inverness Local Meeting on 8th October 2020 that adopted the Minute from the Meeting for Clearness held on 6th October 2020 (attached)

There was unity amongst us and North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting accepts the minutes and forwards them on to General Meeting.

We do not have answers as to what greater cooperation looks like. We have welcomed the cooperation to date that has involved Trustees working together on various policies (health & safety, finance, safeguarding, data-protection, to name a few) and we hope that further efficiencies can be made in the future. A single legal body for Scotland might be an option that can be considered whilst acknowledging that any new structure must recognise our local and regional experience in regard to organising social and spiritual events.

Piers Voysey
Clerk

Andrew Collins
Assistant Clerk

20/10/08 Update on the Scottish Advocacy Job

Further to minutes 20/06/12 and 20/09/09, Andrew Tomlinson was appointed as our Parliamentary Engagement Officer. Previously he was Associate Secretary of the Church of Scotland Faith Impact Forum (formerly the Church and Society Council).

We are very pleased to welcome Andrew, who has been in post since 5th October, and has attended his first meeting of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group.

20/10/09 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report

The report of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) was circulated in advance of this meeting, as Paper A. Joyce Taylor has updated the report and answered our questions.

We note that the PEWG has been involved in the following activities on the climate emergency, with partner organisations:

- The group contributed to the redraft of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) manifesto for the Holyrood election 2021. The work of SCCS, including their communication with politicians has been positively reviewed but there is room for improvement in future communication with supporters and organisations in the coalition.
- Along with 80 organisations led by Friends of the Earth Scotland, the PEWG pressed for a Just and Green Recovery, which would shift priorities from economic growth to wellbeing and sustainability. A week of action is planned from 4th to 11th November and details are on the quakerscotland.org website and our Facebook page.
- The Scottish Climate Assembly will meet for the first time on 8th November.

There are many climate change organisations and our Parliamentary Engagement Officer will prepare a paper mapping them out.

The Scottish Quaker website and our Facebook page are used by the PEWG to alert Friends to opportunities for action on climate emergency issues, and support available. Friends will also find information on advocacy matters on the website.

Rebecca Woo, BYM Campaigns and Advocacy Co-ordinator for Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) Economics and Sustainability Team,

has asked the PEWG if they would be willing to appoint a Friend to join a small group exploring the links between QPSW work and the Build Back Better Campaign, of which Britain Yearly Meeting is a member. Carolyn Burch will join this group.

On behalf of Quakers in Scotland, the PEWG has submitted a response to the question in the Scottish Government consultation on the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill”, about relevant equalities and human rights issues which should be addressed in the Bill. They pressed for children’s rights in relation to military visits to schools to be covered. They also contributed to the Together Scotland submission. See the quakerscotland.org website for details of the PEWG’s submissions. We note that children and young people are encouraged to respond to the consultation.

We have heard that the PEWG is going to prepare a statement of the spiritual basis of its work.

We thank Joyce for her report and the group for its work.

20/10/10 GM Budget 2021

Our Treasurer Nigel Dower, has presented the GM budget for 2021, which was approved by GM Trustees at their meeting on 13th October, 2020. The budget projects an income of £31,330.00, expenditure of £29,955.00, giving a small surplus of £1,375.00.

We note the following points:

- With Covid 19 restrictions on public gatherings, all our meetings have been held online and this has resulted in a significant reduction in GM expenditure for 2020. Trustees have agreed to hand back £3000 to Area Meetings, apportioned according to their pro-rata payments to GM.
- £10,000 was budgeted for the Parliamentary Engagement Officer’s post in 2020: £6000 from Area Meetings and £4000, the final payment from the Jenny Auld Legacy. As the vacancy which arose in this post at the end of 2019 was not filled until October 2020, only £2500 of the £10,000 budgeted will be spent this year. The remaining £7500 will be vired across to 2021. GM will pay £2500 to top this up to £10,000 for 2021.
- The current model for financing Special Events, including the Enquirers’ Day, is that they are expected to break even, with GM making up any deficit. This has been operational for several years and it is time to consider if it is what we want now. GM trustees will

discuss this matter at their February meeting and it will come to GM in March.

Donations and Affiliations

As Shindig 2020 was held online, there was no cost. The £2000 GM paid towards the event, will be held by the Northern Friends Youth Events Trust (NFYET) to cover GM's contribution to the 2021 Shindig. GM has budgeted an additional £1000 to support NFYET.

AVP Scotland is not on our list of donations, as it has been absorbed into AVP Britain.

Through our donations and affiliations, we extend and expand the work and witness of GM in four broad areas: ecumenical and interfaith work; social witness; climate justice; peace witness. From 2021, at each GM we will focus on one of these themes and receive reports relevant to it.

We accept the budget, a copy of which will be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

We thank Nigel for his work as our treasurer.

20/10/11 Appointment of Independent Examiner

On the recommendation of GM Trustees, we appoint Gordon Mackay to act as Independent Examiner for the 2020 accounts.

20/10/12 Meeting for Sufferings report

Ann Kerr has provided us with a written update on Meeting for Sufferings held by Zoom over the three days from 2nd to 4th October, with a Zoom session on the work of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, a week earlier. Her written report was circulated as Paper B. Ann has summarised the main themes addressed at Meeting for Sufferings.

Simple Church

There have been moves towards a simpler church, with QPSW focusing on two main areas: peace and peace-building; sustainability and climate justice.

Sustainability

The Sustainability Monitoring Group reported that throughout Britain Yearly Meeting there is an increased commitment to work on sustainability and tackling the climate crisis, including Quaker Peace and Social Witness preparation for COP26.

Finance

The Covid pandemic has cut BYM income. To meet costs of staff and of the company responsible for hospitality at Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall, BYM Trustees have made a loan to the Quiet Company.

Racial justice

Aspects of racism were explored in small groups and notes of the discussions were collected. Friends noted that the signage outside the William Penn Room in Friends House has been modified, to give a broader overview of his life and acknowledge his role in slavery.

We thank Ann for her report.

20/10/13 Communications Update

Minutes 20/03/12, 20/06/14 and 20/06/17 are applicable.

Joyce Taylor has spoken to us about the potential use of technology by Quaker Meetings in Scotland in the future, and she has drawn our attention to the stories on the BYM website of how Friends are using technology just now.

The website link is:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/coronavirus-advice-for-quaker-meetings>

*You then have to scroll down to, 'What alternatives are there to in-person meeting for worship indoors?' and then to the heading, 'Blended online and in-person', below which is a PDF updated 7th October 2020, '**Blended worship stories and equipment**'.*

We anticipate that Quakers in Scotland will use different kinds of 'blended meetings', after the pandemic. To enable this we will need to invest in equipment for Meeting Houses and when renting rooms, make sure they are suitably equipped.

We have heard that in preparation for these changes Friends in several Area Meetings are in conversation with each other, while they explore the merit and costs of different communication systems and to what extent the technology available might meet our needs but this technology is changing very rapidly.

Options for licences and licence holders are also being considered.

We agree to set up a special meeting to further our discernment about how we use technology in the future. We hope our young Friends can join us in our discussions.

We thank Joyce for her update.

20/10/14 Local Development Worker in Scotland

Minutes 20/09/07 and 20/06/11 are applicable to this item.

On behalf of the working group preparing for the Local Development Worker (LDW) in Scotland, Alastair Cameron, South East Scotland Area Meeting Clerk, has spoken to us about the job and preparations for it. He emphasised that this is meeting centred work and we do not want to be too prescriptive about what the LDW will do, at this stage.

We have spent time in facilitated breakout groups discussing, “***What support does my local meeting need in order to help us thrive?***”

The following are notes from our groups, collated by our clerk.

Context

The pandemic has accentuated our awareness of rapid social change going on around us and it is in this context that the LDW will need to work, helping with the cracks that have appeared in our organisation and communities, but hopefully helping us too to exploit the opportunities opening up for us.

What does a thriving meeting look like?

It is welcoming. Meeting for Worship is deep, with as-led ministry leading to a gathered Meeting.

Friends are diverse in terms of race, culture and social background. It is all age. Friends are well informed and understand what it means to be a Quaker. There is broad involvement in activities within the meeting and outside the meeting.

Each Meeting has its own identity. The people who come value it greatly. The balance between spiritual nurturing and pastoral care varies, depending on needs. Its not fixed.

Some LMs are thriving. Some are thriving in part. Others are struggling to keep their community together during the pandemic.

What do our Local Meetings need in order to help us thrive?

Worship

Meeting for Worship is at the core of our lives and witness. The gathered Meeting is the basis of all we do. If it works, folk come and stay. If there are any issues within our LM, they will have a negative impact on our worship, and we need to talk about them.

Friends need an opportunity for spiritual development, “knowing one another in that which is eternal”, to help them grow in confidence as Quakers, so they can reach out to others. A spiritual review might help.

Friends have different views on what is ‘real’ worship. These have come to the fore with holding Meetings for Worship by Zoom. We are split on this and need to work our way through our differences.

We need to support the worship of children and young people. There was a feeling that children need ‘real-life’ meetings, not Zoom. If blended meetings are to be used, primary school age children might be encouraged to participate.

Support in setting up and holding worship groups, is needed by newer Friends.

Community

We need to actively build and look after our Quaker community, as well as draw support from it. Zoom has enabled small meetings to link up but not everyone is engaging by Zoom and we need to keep in touch with those who are not taking part.

We need to learn from each other about ways of bringing new people into our Quaker community and encouraging them to become involved. If our community lacks diversity, we need to ask ourselves why and what we can do to be more inclusive. Most meetings are not attracting people under 50, particularly families with children. Why? What needs to change?

Modern life-styles might exclude some from being based in one place or belonging to one Meeting, given this we need to respond and reconsider our traditional concept of community.

Looking at the balance of members and attenders in our meeting, we need to understand why attenders don’t become members.

Communication

It is essential for us to find ways of reaching across the vastness of Scotland so we feel together and involved. Without swamping them with the written word, Friends need to be informed about relevant matters, to enable them to be active participants, and they need personal contact with one another.

Particularly for rural meetings and those with a wide catchment, Zoom has made it possible to bring people together, without the need to travel. Experience of Zoom differs and those who are struggling might be helped to learn from those who are finding it more productive. All Meetings would

benefit from knowing what other Meetings are doing, and learning opportunities to help us improve our skills with Zoom would allow us to make full use of its potential. With increased use of technology, meetings need to ensure that they don't exclude some Friends, for instance people living in care homes, and those without access to the technology.

Blended meetings are being explored but as some Friends do not like them, there is concern that if introduced, they will create a split in the meeting. Friends are not sure how to handle this and help is needed.

Energy/ Vitality

We need something to energise us, there's a lot of weariness in the Zoom meetings.

There is also weariness among our role holders, who are over busy and for them, this strain can detract from what meeting is about. Worrying about unfilled roles drains energy. If meetings are in a stuck place, they need help to review the situation, learn of other ways of doing things, and consider their options.

Do we need a simpler organisation? Meetings might learn from the experience of those who have gone some way down the path of simplifying their life.

Growing and Learning Together

How can we help newer meetings learn our Quaker practices and why we do things this way? We need to share learning between ourselves in our meeting and also between meetings, particularly where roles are concerned.

Woodbrooke sessions about our spiritual roots would help deepen community.

The grandparents within a local meeting are a good resource for communicating Quaker life and practices. Perhaps they could be helped to find ways of engaging with the children and young people in meeting and in the community.

Engaging with the World

We need to stop being inward looking and complacent, and identify how our Meeting might engage with the world. A day with Paul Parker on the topic, 'What is your ministry?' would give time to reflect and might help identify our purpose both inwards and outwards.

We need to work at raising the profile of Quakers in the community, letting the world know we exist: post on Facebook; share advices and queries;

embrace technology. We might consider outreach to schools offering an alternative to military visits. How might Friends in our meeting get involved in social action?

We thank Alastair for speaking to us today and the group for its work.

20/10/15 Correspondence and other business

Letter from Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network

We have received the following letter from the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network, which our clerk has read to us. It suggests that there is currently no faith voice in community justice matters in Scotland and proposes that the SQCJN could fulfil this role. To do so it needs the authority of General Meeting to speak in its name, where circumstances require. The group has requested that GM consider how they might best serve the interests of Quakers in Scotland with regard to Community Justice.

We will respond to this letter at our General Meeting in March. To help us in our discernment, we ask our Nominations Committee to find 3 Friends to serve on an advisory group, which will report in time for our March meeting. We ask that these appointments be made by the between-meetings process.

To: the Clerk of General Meeting for Scotland GM)

From: the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network (SQCJN)

28th October 2020

Dear Elizabeth

The Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network is a longstanding assembly of Friends in Scotland broadly concerned with penal issues. It was reconvened in May (on Zoom), with some new participants, to reappraise its potential and direction. The immediate pretext was the closing down of the Joint Faiths Board for Community Justice by its parent body, Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS). This has left faith communities in Scotland without a standing body to reflect and comment on pressing penal questions. Revitalising SQCJN, but with a broader remit than before, and the formal authority of GM behind it, could be a way of redressing this. We would like GM to consider how this matter might be taken forward.

“Community Justice” encompasses the traditional Quaker concern with penal reform but switches the emphasis to the kinds of values, practices and services which communities need to possess if harmful behaviour is to be minimised, prison used much less and former prisoners successfully reintegrated back into them. It builds on, and

extends, established Quaker interest in restorative justice and alternatives to violence. It considers the impact of poverty and inequality on the way that criminal justice currently operates and questions misplaced confidence in punishment and imprisonment as means of righting wrongs. As such it gives expression to abiding Quaker testimonies on Peace, Equality and Truth. On a practical level the term unites Friends who are variously involved in sentencing, social work, healthcare and third sector organisations supporting offenders, victims and their families, as well as with chaplaincies and prisoners themselves.

Over the course of six meetings – during which our numbers have grown to 17 - it has become clear that among Friends in Scotland deep concern about “community justice” remains. We have formed the view that our network has within it the capability to undertake, over time, four needful things. Firstly, thinking about new approaches to work with victims, offenders and communities. Secondly, seeking influence in relevant policy debates. Thirdly, collaborating supportively with other Scottish organisations who work in this field. Fourthly, providing mutual support and shared learning opportunities for Scottish Friends who already engage, or wish to engage, in practical work in community justice.

These aspirations go beyond those of the original SQCJN but accord with traditional ways in which Friends in Britain have given expression to this enduring concern. Progressive penal reform is something with which Quakers have long been publicly associated, and concern about it in the Society of Friends has never been wholly eclipsed by our other, equally pressing, concerns, simply because moral progress in penal matters is rarely won fully, or forever. Resistance to it is constant, setbacks occur, and momentum falters - as is now the case in Scotland. Decade-old plans to significantly reduce the prison population have not been realised. Current plans to limit the use of under 12 month custodial sentences remain more controversial than they ought to be. Under-resourced community sanctions are not living up to their potential. Restorative justice is largely unimplemented. This list is not exhaustive. We recognise and celebrate some instances of good practice in Scottish community justice, sustained by dedicated staff but, overall, progress has stalled.

To bring an informed and respected Quaker witness to bear on such matters, and to be seen by others as an ally worth having, the SQCJN needs the authority that GM can bestow on it, so that we can act and speak in its name when circumstances require. We envisage SQCJN collaborating on occasion with the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, whilst recognising that its priorities are a matter for GM. We think a strong case can be made for Scottish Quakers having an authoritative, national voice on community justice, rather than deferring

to the Social Justice Committee in Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). We value liaison with this Committee, but given the devolution of almost all areas of criminal and community justice to Scotland we believe a separate witness based on principles and practices established in BYM should be formulated in Scotland. Whilst seeking the authoritative support of GM we would nonetheless like participation in the network to remain as open as it has always been so that a diversity of interests and ideas can be drawn on and learned from, and due consideration given to any Friend whose preoccupations fall within its remit.

We commend our concern to GM for your consideration.

Signed by all current members of the SQCJN.

Kate Aspinwall, Margaret Boland, Alastair Cameron, Ren Clark, Pete Clarke, Jennifer Copsey, Stella Cranwell, Anneke Kraakman, Mary Kennedy, Peter Kennedy, Bob Mandeville, Martin Mansell, Jenny Meade, Mike Nellis, Kate Philbrick, Margaret Roy

20/10/16 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to the Friends who set up and hosted this GM by Zoom.

There being no further business to bring before General Meeting, we conclude, intending to meet next on 6th March, 2021, if nothing occurs to prevent.

Elizabeth Allen,
Clerk