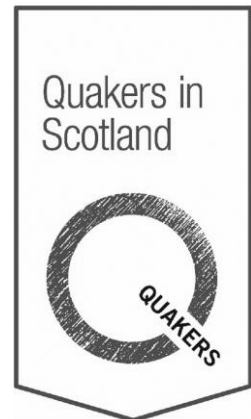


GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

At a blended Meeting held at Edinburgh Meeting House,
Victoria Terrace, and by video conference, on 9th March 2024



MINUTES

24/03/01 Opening worship

During our opening worship our assistant clerk has read section 23.48 from *Quaker faith & practice* in which Parker J. Palmer stresses that “God comes to us in the midst of human need, and the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response”. He reminds us of the true nature of that community.

24/03/02 Welcome to all present

We welcome all Friends who are with us today, both by Zoom and in Edinburgh. We are pleased to welcome the following as ecumenical visitors:

James Patron Bell of the Methodist Church in Scotland

Paul Goldfinch of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

We also welcome as visitors:

Lucy le Roux of Christian Aid Scotland (afternoon)

Lesley Richards (Worcester & Shropshire AM)

The numbers of those present for all or part of the meeting were:

East Scotland AM	10 (3 in Edinburgh, 7 on Zoom)
North Scotland AM	12 (4 in Edinburgh, 8 on Zoom)
South East Scotland AM	30 (21 in Edinburgh, 9 on Zoom)
West Scotland AM	19 (5 in Edinburgh, 14 on Zoom)
Visitors	4 (3 in Edinburgh, 1 on Zoom).

Total: 75, including 1 attender and 4 visitors

We thank the South East Scotland Area Meeting Friends acting as elders for us in Edinburgh: Marilyn Higgins and Elizabeth Allen. We ask West Scotland AM to provide Friends to act as elders for our next meeting.

24/03/03 Agenda

We adopt the agenda as circulated in advance.

24/03/04 Reporter to *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend*

We thank Robin Waterston for agreeing to report on this meeting for *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend*.

We ask South East Scotland Area Meeting to provide the name of a Friend to report on our next meeting.

24/03/05 New members, transfers and deaths

From Area Meeting minutes since General Meeting held 11th November, we record the following:

NEW MEMBERS

Angela Napuk	SESAM
Harsingar (Jane) Chisholm	SESAM
Liz Crichton	ESAM
Ros Robertson	SESAM
Stella Cranwell	ESAM
Ruth Webb	WSAM

TRANSFERS IN

Michael Nott	from Sussex West	to SESAM
Owen Claxton-Ingham	from Leeds AM	to WSAM
Rebecca Price	from Kingston & Wandsworth	to NSAM

TRANSFERS OUT

Ann MacInnes	from WSAM	to North Somerset AM
Gordon Ewart-Dean	from SESAM	to Wirral & Chester
Julia Prescott	from ESAM	to Brighouse West Yorkshire
Margery Toller	from WSAM	to Craven & Keighley AM

TRANSFERS WITHIN SCOTLAND

Bel Ingham	from SESAM	to ESAM
Chris Holmes	from ESAM	to WSAM
Huw Lloyd-Richards	from ESAM	to WSAM
Joyce Taylor	from ESAM	to WSAM
Liz Dennis	from ESAM	to WSAM

RESIGNATIONS

Angela Nunn	NSAM
Donna Morgan	ESAM
Geoffrey Mainprize	ESAM
Pete Kinnear	ESAM

TERMINATIONS

Joanne Coyle	ESAM
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DEATHS

Alan Anderson	WSAM	Died Nov 2023
Annette May	SESAM	Died 17/09/2023
Isobel Khan	SESAM	Died 22/11/2023
Sue Freshwater	SESAM	Died 06/12/2023

[ESAM = East Scotland Area Meeting; NSAM = North Scotland Area Meeting; SESAM = South East Scotland Area Meeting; and WSAM = West Scotland Area Meeting]

24/03/06 Tabular Statement summary

We note the following numbers of Members, Attenders and children in Scotland, combined from our four area meetings, as at 31 December 2023, with figures for 2022 and 2021 for comparison (Paper A). These figures comprise the Tabular Statement, the annual statistical table.

Tabular statement 2023

	2023			2022			2021		
	Members	Attenders (adults)	Attenders (children)	Members	Attenders (adults)	Attenders (children)	Members	Attenders (adults)	Attenders (children)
East	69	47	11	77	63	11	81	55	8
North	133	102	6	131	100	16	139	102	17
South East	237	223	58	240	215	49	239	200	61
West	231	181	24	228	197	20	228	193	22
Total	670	553	99	676	575	96	687	550	108

All members included above are adults (16 and over)

We have noted that numbers remain fairly stable, with some slight increases. The clerk will compile a list of annual numbers for a longer period, for trends to be seen.

24/03/07 Proposed dates and host meetings for GM in 2025/26

We suggest the following dates and host area meetings for 2025/26:

8 March 2025 - South East Scotland AM (already agreed)

7 June North Scotland AM

13 or 20 September - East Scotland AM

8 November – South East Scotland AM

7 March 2026 West Scotland AM

We expect these will be blended (hybrid) meetings. We ask each area meeting to confirm the acceptability of their proposed date and to inform the General Meeting clerk in time for the General Meeting to be held 8th June. Please could the Area Meeting clerks then book their local venue and ensure it is suitably equipped for a blended General Meeting.

24/03/08 Working with children & young people

Mary Troup, our children and young persons advocate, has spoken to us about arrangements for the Families Weekend to be held 3rd – 5th May 2024 in Pitlochry. There are thirty six places booked in at the Atholl Centre and in nearby bed and breakfasts. The theme of the weekend is ‘building community’, to nurture our children and young people and families. The programme will focus on democracy and children’s rights. We have heard how children and young people attending these events keep in touch with each other during the year.

We wish the Families Weekend every success and thank Mary and others involved in organising these vibrant events. We note that Summer Shindig will also take place 27th July to 3rd August at the Millport Field Centre.

24/03/09 GM Trustees annual report

Robin Waterston, clerk of GM Trustees, has spoken to paper B, the annual report of Trustees to the General Meeting, commenting on the sections of the written report which summarise the work of Trustees during the year. The safeguarding policy document approved by GM in March, has since been adopted by all Area Meetings. An online training event was provided in October, and further training is in prospect for 2024. Trustees were involved with the appointment of Sarah Komashko as our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer (a Britain Yearly Meeting [BYM] appointment) and also organised recruitment for the new GM Administrator, appointing Jane Booth.

As usual, Trustees supported the treasurer in preparing the annual accounts for 2022 and the budget for 2024. They compiled and approved the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts (TARA) for 2022 and submitted them to OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) and BYM. New Scottish legislation requires all owners of property to complete a process of signing up to a Register of Controlling Interest. There is a revised deadline of April 2024 for this, although there is a chance that this might be further postponed. Trustees are keeping a watching brief on this. A new requirement of BYM is that all AMs and GMs complete an annual return confirming compliance with the various legal and administrative responsibilities of Trustees. This has been done for GMS.

Regular liaison takes place between GM and AM trustee clerks, with our Local Development Worker, Zoe Prosser, included. Trustees pay attention to the appropriate archiving of their records. Work continues with our Administrator on prospective ways for the future in producing our Book of Members and Attenders, but this will not affect the book due early next year.

We note that Trustees remain below strength and that not all Area Meetings have a trustee amongst their membership. Nominations Committee is aware of this, but has continuing difficulty in finding Friends to serve. We thank trustees who ended service during 2023, for their work on our behalf, and Robin and other trustees for their careful stewardship.

24/03/10 Serving trustees 2024

We record our General Meeting Trustees serving in 2024 as follows: Andrew Blackadder, Malcolm Crosby, Katrina McCrea (*ex officio* as Treasurer) and Robin Waterston (Clerk).

24/03/11 Special General Meeting 6 April 2024: Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group

In order to allow Area Meetings time to respond to questions from the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group and to plan a resulting agenda, a Special General Meeting is proposed for Saturday 6 April online from 10am to 1pm. Minute 23/11/11 refers. We have had some discussion as to the value of having a meeting both in a physical location as well as online. The suggestion has been made that groups of Friends could well come together to take part in the online meeting. We encourage this practice for what otherwise will be an online meeting this time.

The Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group is holding two online information and discussion sessions on progress with work towards having a single body and charity for Quakers in Scotland, to help Friends prepare for the special General Meeting that will be considering this on Saturday April 6th.

- Monday March 18, 2pm: Zoom
link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84617860889?pwd=N29kRTI0QkRva0djU0VINFlsUmdBUT09>
Meeting ID: 846 1786 0889 Passcode: 160214
- Wednesday March 20, 6pm: Zoom
link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82226724888?pwd=bGxyNVNldzQranZ1VGw4YXB1dENodz09>
Meeting ID: 822 2672 4888 Passcode: 770905

A short preparatory paper is attached to this message, it should be helpful to read it in advance. Further information is available from <https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/qis-news>

24/03/12 Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group interim report

A report from the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group (Paper H) has been spoken to by Kate Philbrick and Mike Nellis.

Meeting for Sufferings, by its minute MfS/23/10/16, requested information from us on the situation in Scotland relating to the concern about those imprisoned for public protection sentences in England and Wales. The concern expressed and adopted was to end the practice. Our minute 23/11/13 refers. We asked our Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group to provide advice, and receive their report.

Scotland has a legal framework for managing high risk offenders which differs from that of England and Wales. As explained in the report, the nearest equivalent legislation here is that of the Order of Lifelong Restriction (OLR). The OLR is made up of a minimum period of imprisonment (the punishment part, calculated by a high court judge at the point of sentence) followed by lifelong risk management within the framework of a parole licence. Oversight of this risk management is undertaken by the Risk Management Authority, a specialist body which has no equivalent in England and Wales. At this stage the Working Group does not recommend that Scottish Quakers should prioritise the revocation of the OLR legalisation; we would align with other organisations highlighting operational or procedural issues with OLRs should these arise.

We accept this advice and see no need to align with the concern Meeting for Sufferings has recognised for England and Wales.

We send this section of this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

The Working Group and the Quaker Community Justice Network wish to bring to the attention of Scottish Friends an event on 13th April in Glasgow Meeting House and online entitled *Quakers and Prison Abolition - A Conversation* and Mike Nellis has told us about it. The event reflects the long standing concern Quakers have about the prison system in Scotland and the UK and the need to think about radical measures to address the problems, which include the almost impossible and frustrating job for prison officers, the lack of rehabilitation courses and the extremely high suicide rate among prisoners.

For those who want to understand more about the problems in our prisons we recommend viewing a recent 60 minute BBC Scotland TV documentary called 'Prisons on the Brink', mostly focussed in HMP Perth, which is available on <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001w5vl/disclosure-prisons-on-the-brink>

24/03/13 Meeting for Sufferings report

We receive the Meeting for Sufferings report (Paper C) from our representative, Ann Kerr, who has spoken to the meeting held 2nd December as in her written report. She will report on the 2nd March meeting in June. For December, the range of business is covered in the report, but a matter for us, and all Area Meetings, refers to the proposed changes from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to the making of the marriage declaration in Quaker marriage. Response to the proposals is being sought by Meeting for Sufferings by the end of August 2024. There are no differences required between Scotland and England Wales in relation to the marriage declaration. We hope that Area Meetings can comment on the proposals directly, minuting General Meeting if they feel further discussion is required at General Meeting.

The December meeting also followed up on the matter of attenders serving on central committees and agreed to trust the discernment of the nominations process.

We thank Ann for her report.

Afternoon

24/03/14 Appointments and Nominations Report

There have been three appointments and one nomination to another body made by between-meetings procedure since our last meeting:

ACTION OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SCOTLAND (ACTS)

Martin Burnell (SESAM South Edinburgh LM) nominated as an ACTS trustee to serve for one year as from 23 November 2023.

IONA COMMUNITY BOARD

Stella Cranwell (ESAM Perth LM) appointed 5th January 2024 to serve until the 31st December 2026 (1st triennium).

NORTHERN FRIENDS YOUTH EVENTS CHARITABLE TRUST TRUSTEE

Simon Harding's service was extended from the end of 2023 to the end of March 2024 to allow induction of new appointee.

Charlene Dalton (WSAM Ayrshire LM) appointed from 9th February 2024, to allow to her to attend meeting on 26 February. Service is until 31 December 2026 (1st triennium).

We note that James McLeod of Dumfries Local Meeting is now clerk to the Trustees.

THE SCOTTISH QUAKER COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKING GROUP

Joyce Guthrie (SESAM Kelso LM) appointed 5 January 2024 to serve until 31 December 2024 (1st triennium).

Nominations Committee has brought us the following nominations:

ASSISTANT CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS

Douglas Shaw (WSAM Lanark LM) to serve from appointment until 31st December 2026 (1st triennium).

TRUSTEE FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Nominated: Douglas Shaw (WSAM Lanark LM).

EVALUATION OF THE SCOTTISH QUAKER COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKING GROUP

To evaluate the working group for September 2024 GMS: Elizabeth Allen (SESAM East Lothian LM) and Mike Nellis (WSAM Glasgow LM).

Note: this working group was appointed for an initial three years and subject to evaluation before we decide whether it should continue or not. See GMS minute 21/03/11.

We appoint or nominate our Friends named accordingly.

Outstanding Nominations

The following Nominations are outstanding and Nominations Committee is seeking support from Friends and Meetings to fill these roles.

MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS REPRESENTATIVE AND ALTERNATE

Ann Kerr (WSAM Glasgow LM) is willing to be the Alternate if we can find a Representative.

PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

A vacancy exists for a Friend from ESAM.

GMS TRUSTEES

There are no trustees serving directly from SESAM and ESAM. GMS Nominations Committee are liaising with AM Nominations, but the group wanted to highlight this with GMS as these roles have not been filled for many months now.

We thank members of our Nominations Committee for their service.

24/03/15 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report

We receive the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) Report to General Meeting March 2024 (Paper E), and Carolyn Burch has spoken to it briefly and updated us on current activity.

We are pleased to see that the Time for Reflection which Lesley Morrison (Tweeddale LM) gave in Parliament last April has led to a presentation and discussion event, *Health and Climate*, with MSPs and guests at the Parliament arranged for 13th March 2024. A panel of people with medical knowledge and an active climate concern will talk briefly on how climate protection and human health protection measures overlap. We hope many Friends will have used the invitation draft Sarah Komashko provided, to encourage their MSPs to attend. After the event there will also be opportunities to make use of an associated resource pack.

PEWG has also responded to the Scottish Government's Heat in Buildings Bill Consultation; the response will be uploaded to the Quakers in Scotland website. PEWG previously met with the Minister for Business and Trade, Ivan McKee, about public funding to arms companies. PEWG hope for a follow-up meeting with Scottish Enterprise, about Human Rights and carbon footprint [military emissions] assessments/tests applied to funding decisions.

Other work continues on monitoring progress on parliamentary business that links with Quaker concerns, working with allies, particularly Christian Aid, and ensuring that we work in harmony with both GM and BYM in what we support and endorse. In 2024 PEWG aims to:

- 1 Focus on persistence in requesting truth-telling by our representatives
 - 2 Look for positives to support – courageous speaking by MSPs, strong work by allies
- Trying to keep things simple(r) is important:
- to preserve our own sense of focus and feel motivated rather than overwhelmed
 - to make the work intelligible to interested Friends
 - for succession: we hope to show that the work is accessible and relevant for potential PEWG members from any area or age-group within our community.

This year we have the context of a UK election. This has relevance for PEWG work even though it is not directly Scottish Parliament business. There will be opportunities to raise a Quaker voice and PEWG looks forward to sharing these.

We thank Carolyn and members of the working group for their service.

24/03/16 Christian Aid Scotland

We welcome Lucy le Roux, who is the Christian Aid Scotland Campaigns and Advocacy Coordinator, based in Edinburgh. Carolyn Burch has introduced her to us. Lucy engages with advocacy to the Scottish Parliament on issues such as climate change and debt; including through Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. She works with people in Scotland to help them understand issues of justice better and to equip them to contact policymakers and engage with campaigning. Lucy also works to develop Christian Aid's UK-wide campaigns and to implement them in Scotland. She works closely with the Quakers in Scotland on advocacy and campaigning, and with other Christian Aid staff, meets regularly with our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Local Development Worker, co-convenors of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group and GM clerks.

Lucy has given us an illustrated talk on Christian Aid's climate justice work, with a focus on loss and damage, as experienced particularly in Rwanda and now through a grant from the Scottish Government to be used in southern Ethiopia. Loss and damage is the devastating harm to people, their property and their infrastructure from the extreme weather events caused by climate change, and is acutely felt in countries in the Global South. Christian Aid and Quakers are joining with others to call on polluters to pay for the loss damage they have done. Climate justice is intimately linked to debt justice and to racial justice.

Lucy reminded us that, as well as doing all we can as churches and individuals to limit our own impact on the climate, *climate justice is more than this* as we need systemic change, we need to advocate for changes to our national and international political and economic systems to make them fairer. Our common engagement helps this process. Christian Aid is looking for schools to take part in Creative for Climate Justice, which is an arts and social justice project for schools to take part in learning around climate justice, then create artworks and display in a local exhibition inviting their local decision makers, then submit for our exhibition at the Scottish Parliament. If we know of schools that could take part, inform Christian Aid. We can also use Christian Aid resources to write to MSPs to champion climate justice and engage similarly with current prospective MPs during the upcoming UK General Election.

Lucy has responded to our questions and comments. We are encouraged to contact our elected representatives in engaging with the Scottish Government's climate change plan.

We are very grateful to Lucy for coming to be with us today and to hear how her personal faith leads her to advocacy for climate justice and to support people affected by loss and damage around the world.

We will include a copy of her inspiring talk, with the links to resources and events, with our minutes.

24/03/17 Ecumenical & Interfaith Engagement

We have received reports (Paper F) from our Interfaith and Ecumenical representatives which give a clear sense of the nature of the work which has practical elements as well as dialogue. We are grateful to our Friends for the time that they give to this work - their enthusiasm and commitment is evident from what they have written. Last year we hoped to have a meeting of ecumenical and interfaith representatives and link Friends, and others interested, to share experience (minute 23/03/21(c)). This has not yet been possible.

This year we have heard from:

Interfaith Scotland where Kate Arnot reports on the two meetings a year where the different faiths share the concerns they have in common covering topics including eco congregations, refugees, university chaplains and truth and integrity.

Faith in Communities Scotland provides small grants to faith based refugee projects and Kate's role is to assess which ones to fund.

World Day of Prayer Kate Arnot's report and Mary Woodward's reflections give an insight into the planning that goes into this annual event both locally and internationally.

Ecumenical Officers Forum Mary Woodward is our Ecumenical Officer and has built firm friendships with her fellow members of the forum through all the meetings and activities she attends. Clashes in the calendars of GM and events of the various churches mean that she can't cover everything. The transmutation of ACTS [Action Together of Churches in Scotland] into the Scottish Christian Forum [SCF] continues, and has taken much of the EOF's time. We will be returning to consider progress on this at GM in June.

Interfaith Domestic Abuse Margaret Roy recently took over this role which links well with her WSAM concern for Gender based violence. She was able to make links to Christian Aid's 'Side by side for gender justice action' over the UN 16 days action on Violence against Women last November. In her report Margaret asks us to think about root causes and asks us to consider Is gender-based violence a Quaker concern?

We have heard from Kate Arnot on plans for the Religious Leaders' Forum, the last meeting of which was cancelled, and she has given reflections on other aspects of her work. Mary Woodward has also given us her joy at being able to give service in this way. Nigel Dower is our representative on the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) and has told us that the committee is restructuring and has formed three working groups for which Friends are sought to serve.

We thank our representatives for their continuing service on our behalf.

24/03/18 Minute from North Scotland AM on Ecocide

Further to minute 23/11/14, we note that there is now an Ecocide Network that has been set up and is supported by a member of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) staff.

The Meeting for Sufferings papers for March 2024 included:

“Perhaps the most significant piece of work in this area was a consideration of whether to join the campaign to make ecocide a crime under international law. While Meeting for Sufferings concluded that we would not participate at the national level, the exercise of considering how we might be involved in such work was valuable. It also offered an opportunity for Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee to explore how it might work to support area meetings to pursue a concern that is not part of centrally managed work.”

We ask our clerk to write to the QPSW staff member for advice.

24/03/19 Correspondence and other business

a) Open Letter on Tax to all Holyrood Party Leaders

On the 8 December 2023, the clerk signed an open letter on reforming the tax system in Scotland, sent to all party leaders at the Scottish Parliament. The letter was drafted through OXFAM with Stop Climate Change Scotland and advice to sign came from Sarah Komashko, Parliamentary engagement Officer, and the convenors of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group.

b) Middle East situation

Further to minute 23/11/17 (c), the clerk signed, on 8th December 2023, a second ‘church leaders’ statement to the UK Government calling for an immediate ceasefire in Israel/Palestine.

c) Stopping arms flow to Israel / Palestine

Having been alerted to the opportunity by Cath Dyer (SESAM), the clerk, on 29th January, signed an Open Call letter to all UN Member States to stop fuelling the crisis in Gaza and avert further humanitarian catastrophe and loss of civilian life by the transfer of arms.

d) East African Crude Oil Pipeline

On 15th February, the clerk signed the follow up letter to insurers on behalf of Quakers. This was in the campaign asking insurers to stop insuring new fossil fuel projects, particularly the East African Crude Oil Pipeline. The request to sign came from Anna Lewis, Campaigns Coordinator, Britain Yearly Meeting.

24/03/20 Upcoming business

On 8th June, depending on the time required for other business, we hope to consider of our nominations process and how it is fundamental to our understanding of Quaker community and action. Other wise this topic may come later in the year. We

will expect further business from the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group, receipt of the GM Annual Report and Accounts for 2023, and a review of ongoing work on social witness and community justice. Also, to consider anything we might wish to say to the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee in September on potential topics for YM in 2025. We will confirm dates and venues for GM in 2025/6.

24/03/21 Concluding Minute

We record our thanks to South East Scotland Area Meeting Friends for being our hosts today, for all the arrangements for our venue in Edinburgh and their hospitality that enabled this blended meeting. We also thank our Zoom host for this General Meeting.

There being no further business to bring before General Meeting, we conclude, intending to meet next for a special meeting online on 6th April, followed by a blended meeting in Glasgow and online on 8th June 2024, if nothing occurs to prevent.

Michael J. Hutchinson,
Clerk

Susan Mitchell,
Assistant Clerk