



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

3 March 2012

Perth

Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard a reading from Quaker Faith and Practice 8.22 and 8.23 on the need for living and two-way communication between service undertaken through central committees, and local meetings.

Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome two attenders to this GM. We also welcome as a visitor Ian Shering from the United Free Church and our speaker Katie Frost from Friends House.

We will record the total numbers of all present and add them to these minutes.

East Scotland	11	
South East Scotland	11	
North Scotland	6	
West Scotland	<u>16</u>	
Total:	44	plus two visitors.

Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint John Phillips from South East Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask East Scotland AM to report on the next GM.

Min. 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting:

Ian Bonner-Evans (N)
Beverley Mathias (W)
Penny Lilley (W)
Hannah Theaker (W)
Duncan Wallace (SE)
Busa Cochrane-Muir (E)
Valerie Weir (N)
Ann Galbraith (N)
Ian Johnstone (N)
Alan Sayle (SE)

We record the following deaths:

Joan Basford (N)
Joan Tansley (SE)
Neil Anderson (W)
Agnes Coats (SE).

Min. 5 Dates and venues for 2013-14

We propose the following GM dates and venues for 2013-14:

West – 2 March 13 (already agreed)

South East – 8 June 13

East – 7 Sept 13

North – 16/17 Nov 13

West – 8 Mar 14

We ask AM Clerks to consider these dates and for GM to confirm them in June.

Min. 6 Tabular Statement 2011

We note the following numbers at 31 Dec 2011:

	2011	2010	2009	2008
East	106	108	113	109
West	228	224	224	223
North	118	123	128	126
South East	254	265	268	269
TOTAL:	706	720	733	727

Min. 7 The work of The Retreat

Constance Tonge, our representative to The Retreat General Meeting, has spoken of the work of this Quaker mental health hospital. Its original goal, from its foundation in 1792, was to treat the mentally ill with love and kindness rather than physical restraint. This remains a key part of its purpose. The strategic vision today includes “We see the people who use our services as whole people and are committed to meeting their spiritual needs as a key part of their mental health needs”.

Constance spoke about her work with the S-group, consisting of staff, directors, patients and members, which looks at aspects of spirituality within The Retreat.

As Quakers, we should all feel a sense of responsibility for the work that it does, firmly rooted in Quaker values. Constance has helped us to understand this more clearly. We thank her for her talk.

Min. 8 Meeting for Sufferings Report

Margaret Peacock has given us a report on the February Meeting for Sufferings. One item looked at the planning for Britain Yearly Meeting in May. Topics include economic justice, sustainability and what it means to be a Friend.

The question of radical resistance to the State was discussed in the context of the Occupy movement and Friends’ response to it. Making our voice heard in public life requires knowledge and experience. Advocacy can be exercised in a range of ways. This is seen as an aspect of work to which we should give a greater priority. Many staff in Quaker Peace and Social Witness engage in advocacy on a regular basis, and it would be beneficial for Friends locally to be more aware of and involved in this. The Action Alert network organised by the Quaker Centre for European Affairs gives an example of a way in which individual Friends can take action, supported by research from staff.

There was also consideration of whether and how to respond to the opportunity of making an Address to the Queen on the occasion of her Jubilee celebration in June.

Min. 9 ACTS Church and Society

Barbara Potter, our representative on ACTS Church and Society network, has spoken on the worsening situation facing asylum seekers in Glasgow. There has been an increase in the number of destitute asylum seekers and the length of time that they spend in this state. Some householders with a spare room are taking in destitute asylum seekers, and additional offers of support would be welcomed.

Barbara is preparing a presentation in collaboration with the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer to a network meeting in May or June about the current situation for asylum seekers, with recommendations for joint churches work that could follow from this. Following government cut backs the level of support for asylum seekers has been reduced; the housing contracts have changed from Glasgow City to Y People, and will change again this autumn to SERCO.

We support Barbara in this work, and suggest that she consult widely with organisations supporting refugees to gain the fullest information for the report.

Min. 10 Quakers and the Scottish Parliament

Further to GM Minute 8 of 10 September 2011, we have continued our reflection on how as Scottish Quakers we can best engage with the Scottish Parliament. Elizabeth Allen has reported on proposals from the Working Group on this matter, with an initial focus on criminal justice. We need to agree a process to discern policy areas we wish to address, how to make decisions on this, how to take action and formulate responses, and how to agree and submit our responses. Who should do this on our behalf?

Issues raised in discussion included the potential role of Friends House staff, the possible need to employ someone, the place of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer, and how as Scottish Friends we can be more proactive in our advocacy.

One proposal is that the views of the Recording Clerk should be sought on how BYM can support Scottish Friends in this area. We have discussed aspects of our existing Function Group structure.

We recognise the importance of this topic. We ask Elizabeth Allen, David Turner, Phil Lucas and Pamala McDougall to think further on these issues and bring forward recommendations on ways forward. Elizabeth will convene the first meeting. The group may co-opt others as desired.

Min.11 A new vision for ACTS

Leslie Stevenson has reported to us on discussions within ACTS following the decision to sell Scottish Churches House and Leighton House. Topics have included the relationship between decision-making by Members' Meeting and by Trustees, in terms of legal responsibility.

ACTS is asking its member churches to undertake a visioning process for its future work. There has been a fair bit of rather theoretical discussion, but not enough follow-through in actions. Leslie believes that there is opportunity for imaginative new forms of activity, for

example holding its meetings in a variety of venues, engaging with local churches as they travel around.

Friends are asked to feed back to Leslie (and our other reps on ACTS) their thoughts on what the future role of ACTS might be.

Min. 12 Appointments and Representatives

Nominations Function Group have brought forward the following proposals and we agree to these appointments and representatives:

Meeting for Sufferings BYM 2012 - BYM 2015

Representative Jane Pearn

Alternate Kevin Franz (to attend when representative is prevented)

Representative to Church of Scotland General Assembly 19 - 25 May 2012

Elizabeth Allen

Representative to the URC Annual Synod 16 - 18 March 2012

Alyson Buchan

ACTS Finance committee

We agree that membership of this committee will become part of the remit for GM Assistant Treasurer.

Convener of GM Nominations Function Group Jan 2013 – Dec 2015

We agree to appoint a search group to bring forward a nomination for this post to a future GM. The following names, proposed in today's Meeting, being acceptable to the Meeting, are hereby appointed to form the search group:

Kate Arnot (to convene the first meeting), Barbara Potter, Mary Dower.

Min. 13 Local Meetings and our central Quaker work

Our afternoon speaker, Katie Frost, has worked for the last four years as Community Fundraising Officer at Friends House. She has told us of the variety of spirit-led work being undertaken by local meetings, area meetings and at Yearly Meeting level. One example is the current work of the Quaker United Nations Office which is exploring the possibility of facilitating climate change negotiations, and is researching into the situation of children with a parent facing the death penalty.

Some central initiatives provide a means for the sharing of experience, and co-ordination of the work of area and local meetings - for example, the Quaker Refugee and Asylum Group. Work that Quakers support abroad includes the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel, which began as a Quaker pilot project, and programme work to bring about non-violent change in Kenya. There is much we should feel proud about.

Katie described how we can feel overwhelmed by the extent of needs and forget how much is already being done. We need to re-discover our energy and passion and resist too much introspection.

Friends are often reluctant to talk about money and can be over-reliant on their Treasurers. We are reluctant to face up to issues such as how much we should give, and how we should use constructively the funds available to the Meeting. "It is good to be challenged to contribute our gifts, it is a sign we belong." (YM Epistle 2010).

Britain Yearly Meeting has adopted a guideline for giving of £150 per Quaker, although Friends should give generously according to their own circumstances. We should not be embarrassed to appeal for funds to support the great variety of Quaker work in this country and abroad. We need to connect with other members of our Meeting, and with other area meetings and Yearly Meeting, to understand fully the needs and resources available within our membership, and what we can give individually in money, time, prayer and energy.

We thank Katie for her enthusiastic and inspiring presentation.

Min. 14 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to East Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again in Edinburgh on 9 June, when our speaker will be Judith Moran from Quaker Social Action.

Robin Waterston
Clerk