



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

16-17 Nov 2013
Aberdeen

Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard a reading from speeches by Martin Luther King Jr on the inter-relationship of racism, economic exploitation and war.

Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome 2 attenders to this GM. We also welcome as a visitor Stephen Smyth, General Secretary of Action of Churches Together in Scotland, our speakers Suzanne Ismail of Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Val Brown of Christian Aid Glasgow, and Kate Green of the Fair Penny Campaign.

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

East Scotland	7
South East Scotland	10
North Scotland	15
West Scotland	<u>8</u>
Total:	40 plus 3 visitors

Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint Adwoa Bittle and Pam Brunt from East Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask North Scotland AM to report on the next GM.

Min. 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting:

Jennifer Wilson (SE)
Eleanor Koeplinger (W)

We record the following deaths:

Marion Morton (SE)
Islay Dow (SE)
John Fleming (SE)
Peter Pond (W)
Avis Swarbrick (SE)
Peter McCaffery (N)

Min. 5 Report on proposed Advocacy post

Phil Lucas has reported from the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group on the proposed Scottish Advocacy post. They have prepared a vision statement regarding the post and a draft job description. They believe, as do Trustees, that there is a need for discussion and discernment at AM level. They offer the services of members of the Function Group to attend each AM on request.

They are also in discussion with staff at Friends House on clarifying the funding position and the relation with the advocacy team at BYM level.

We are clear that we need more information on likely costs, and we have heard from our treasurer John Phillips. It is the intention of trustees to issue a discussion document giving a possible scenario for

considering the financial implications. They see it as important that Friends throughout Scotland think as deeply as possible about this before a decision is taken.

We ask AMs to engage with this question and to forward the results of their discernment to GM. We hope to return to this matter at our June meeting (*or March meeting if possible*).

Min. 6 Budget for 2014

John Phillips has presented budget proposals for 2014. He has also presented a list of proposed donations for 2014, following a very similar pattern to 2013. We agree to increase the grant to the Scottish Interfaith Council from £75 to £200, and to Scotland's for Peace from £180 to £200. We agree to reduce the grant to Scottish Churches China Group from £250 to £150, and to the Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group from £350 to £250 on the basis that they no longer employ a project worker.

With these changes, John projects an expenditure of £19,220 with projected income of £17,950. This will result in a reduction in our reserves of £1,270 to about £19,000. The budget incorporates holding the AM quotas at their current levels.

We accept the budget and the proposed donations, with the above changes, and will attach them to these Minutes. We ask that reports from our representatives on Faiths in Scotland Community Action Group and the Interfaith Group on Domestic Abuse be presented at a future GM.

We ask Trustees to review the mileage rate.

Min. 7 Report from Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

Phil Lucas has reported on the response to our letter on Trident replacement to MPs and MSPs. So far we have received responses from 25 MSPs and 3 MPs of which 19 were supportive. If individual Friends or LMs have had correspondence on this topic, the Function Group would be pleased to hear about it.

Phil updated us on recent activities of the Function Group including a meeting with Roseanne Cunningham MSP on social action work by Quakers in Scotland.

Min. 8 Meeting for Sufferings

Jane Pearn has reported to us on the work of Meeting for Sufferings. On the boycott of Israeli settlement goods, the Meeting agreed not to extend the boycott to all Israeli produce.

There was consideration of investment policy regarding companies with involvement in fossil fuels, and it was agreed to ask BYM Trustees to consider disinvesting from such companies as part of our commitment to sustainability.

The Meeting also considered how Quakers across the country are reacting to the changes in welfare provision. They are hoping that a single project will emerge around which we can focus resources to support those most affected.

Min. 9 ACTS Faith Studies Network

Christine Davis has reported on the work of the ACTS Faith Studies Network. This is a forum in which Church representatives discuss together their understanding of faith. It is difficult and challenging work, but Christine has found it very rewarding. The deliberations have been open and honest. The network has recently been studying a paper from WCC which contains innovative and imaginative theological reflections.

ACTS are reviewing their structures, and as a result all the networks are to be laid down, to be replaced by time-limited project groups to help focus their available resources. Stephen Smyth has helped us to

understand the wider context of these changes, and encouraged us to continue our valued involvement with ACTS and its processes.

Min. 10 Appointments

Nominations Function Group has brought forward the following names, and we appoint them:

GM Assistant Clerk: Adwoa Bittle January 2014 to December 2016

GM Trustee (replacing Martin Burnell): Jacqueline Noltingk January 2014 to December 2016.

Min. 11 Taking Action for Economic Justice

We have welcomed to our first session this afternoon Val Brown, the Church manager for Christian Aid Scotland. Christian Aid is one of the largest organisations undertaking long-term development projects worldwide, providing humanitarian assistance and campaigning to alleviate poverty and economic injustice.

Val gave as an example the work being undertaken with the organisation Physicians for Human Rights (Israel) and went on to speak in more detail of Christian Aid's campaign for tax justice. It focuses on tax avoidance by international companies, which deprives many developing countries of income. There is a need for new accounting rules to ensure transparent reporting of profits in different countries. We analysed in groups the dilemmas faced by developing countries which struggle to raise tax when profits can be disguised, and the consequences for the effectiveness of government and the democratic process. Val concluded by enabling us in groups to study in depth the Biblical exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees on payment of taxes.

In our second session we heard from Kate Green on the Fair Penny Campaign. This is a unique Quaker online petition. Many Quaker campaigns have started with petitions and Kate has felt moved to initiate this one. It says "I'd pay an extra penny per pound in income tax to protect the most vulnerable from austerity cuts". The testimony to equality is central to this campaign. It is about justice not charity. It makes paying tax a positive action rather than an unwanted imposition. She encourages all of us to sign the petition on www.thefairpenny.org.uk and to get involved in promoting it.

Suzanne Ismail of Quaker Peace and Social Witness has described her work with the Economics, Sustainability and Peace Sub-Committee. The work is anchored in Minutes 36 and 23 of BYM in 2011. One aspect is ending fossil fuel dependency, and the committee lobbies and informs decision makers on the importance of reducing our carbon emissions.

With a coalition of churches, they have developed a website "Your faith, your finance" to help with understanding issues of economic justice. They campaign for greater regulation of corporate businesses on employment practices to help reduce exploitation and slavery. They are also building links with other organisations working on alternative economic models.

Suzanne has focussed our attention on issues around UK poverty and social security starting with false perceptions among many people of the extent of abuses within the system.

She told us that actions by Friends include the well-established Quaker Housing Trust, participation in the Tax Justice Campaign, and lobbying with other bodies to the Prime Minister and other politicians. We can all get involved in this work to some degree.

A threshing meeting to consider what more can be done by Friends was held at Woodbrooke recently, and Suzanne was inspired by hearing of the wide range of actions by Meetings and individuals across Britain. Meeting for Sufferings has discussed the question, and will return to it in December. Increasing inequality across society is a challenge to Quakers as a community of faith.

We thank Val Brown, Kate Green and Suzanne Ismail for stimulating our thinking on this.

Min. 12 Minute from SE Scotland AM

We have received Minute 2013/10/04 (a) of SE Scotland AM held on 26 October 2013. It contains a request that GM send the following letter to the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland:

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Scotland always appreciated the strong support of the peace movement expressed by Cardinal O'Brien, and we understand that he was equally appreciative of the Quaker commitment to our peace testimony. This shared concern to work for a more humane and peaceful world transcended our radical differences on some other issues. We know that the Catholic Church in Scotland has for many years supported nuclear disarmament, and Cardinal O'Brien's powerful advocacy for nuclear disarmament will be missed. We recognise the pain that events surrounding the Cardinal's departure from office have caused within the Catholic community, and that time is needed for healing. We earnestly hope that the Church will do its best to meet the challenges involved. We look forward to working together with the Bishops' Conference, clergy and laity in the quest for alternatives to war and violence. We trust that momentum will not be lost in the Catholic voice speaking within and on behalf of the peace movement, in particular for the abolition of Trident.

We have some difficulties with the text and see it as awkward to amend this in an adequate timeframe. We uphold all our Catholic colleagues in their witness for peace and pray that the difficulties of the past year do not distract them from attention to those things that build peace.

(Minute taken by Christine Davis, acting Assistant Clerk)

Min. 13 Quaker Housing Trust

Bob Williamson, a trustee of the Quaker Housing Trust, has described projects in Scotland which have been given support by the Trust. They are Durness Development Group, turning a former council house into affordable homes for local young couples and families, and Helmsdale Community Association, building two bungalows and two family houses for the community. A third project is under consideration.

Min. 14 Independence Referendum

We have looked ahead to our session next year on the Independence referendum. The following points have been put forward:

- the importance of encouraging full participation
- the need for a process of reconciliation after the poll
- the value of giving ourselves opportunity to reflect together on what kind of Scotland we would like to live in, and recognising the international context.

There may be an opportunity to conduct our session in a different and creative way, including worship sharing. We hope that the session can take place in March.

Min. 15 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to North Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again in Glasgow on 8 March 2014.

Robin Waterston
Clerk