



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

8 Sept 2012

Nairn

Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard a reading from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* on wisdom and the dawning of knowledge.

Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome 3 attenders to this GM. We also welcome as a visitor Alex Whiteford of the Church of Scotland, and our speaker Sandra Berry.

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

East Scotland	9
South East Scotland	7
North Scotland	15
West Scotland	<u>8</u>
Total:	39 plus two visitors.

Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint Pat and Phil Lucas from South 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:

Heather Smithson (W)
Mike Shilson (W)
Kirsty Shilson (W)
Margaret Wadsley (W)
Howard Bartlem (W)
Donna Morgan (E)
Andrew Phin (E)

We record the following deaths:

Beverley Mathias (W)
Joan Buchanan (W)
Luisa Piluso (W).

Min. 5 Meeting for Sufferings

Our representative, Jane Pearn, has reported on her impressions of Meeting for Sufferings in July. Friends House has been substantially refurbished in recent years, and more upgrading is planned. Meeting for Sufferings has changed significantly also, being smaller than before. The relationship with Trustees is still being worked out, with a need for a sense of mutual trust.

Jane was pleased that there was a wish to make space for more stillness and worship, and to conduct business without too much busy-ness. We look forward to hearing further reports as the new structure establishes itself.

Min. 6 Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

The Clerk, Robin Waterston, has reported on discussions that have taken place since last June. He has met with the Recording Clerk Paul Parker in London, and has had a phone conversation with Philip Bryers, Clerk of GM Trustees and Margaret Mortimer, a BYM Trustee. The purpose of these discussions has been to assist coordination of approach and resources relating to advocacy at the level of the UK and Scottish parliaments.

A new BYM post has been created, and Jane Dawson has been appointed to the post. It is envisaged that funding might be found, perhaps in part from GM for Scotland, for a part-time staff member, based in Edinburgh, to be appointed within the new framework.

Paul and Jane will be coming to Edinburgh on 29 October to meet with Robin and Philip, and hopefully the convenor of the new Function Group, to discuss this further.

We have discussed the draft remit for the new Parliamentary Liaison function Group, and agree to it as follows:

- 1) To monitor planned proceedings and consultations of the Scottish Parliament and Government, using primarily the service provided by the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, and identifying to Friends in Scotland issues where Friends may have relevant experience and concern;
- 2) To be aware of the centrally managed work of BYM carried out by Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Quaker Life, with the help of staff in Friends House;
- 3) To monitor the experience and interests of Friends in Scotland through the database maintained by the GM Administrator and through contact with the proceedings of General Meeting and its interest groups and networks;
- 4) To work with such interest groups and networks to facilitate their parliamentary advocacy work, working with the Parliamentary Adviser to draft responses, letters and suggested amendments;
- 5) To maintain contact with the Yearly Meeting Parliamentary Liaison Officer with regard to the work of the Westminster Parliament to ensure effective co-ordination;
- 6) To ensure that parliamentary advocacy is given adequate priority in the work of GM for Scotland and that GM's authority in this advocacy work is harnessed effectively, in right ordering and, when parliamentary deadlines have to be met, in timely manner.

We also agree that our representative on the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Advisory Group should be a member ex officio of the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group.

Min. 7 Same sex marriage

Phil Lucas has reported on the latest developments from the Scottish Government on this topic. Friends have been invited to meet with the relevant government Minister to consider drafting of legislation, and Phil will represent us in this along with John Phillips.

The Scottish Youth Parliament have been actively engaged with this issue through the Equality Network.

In our engagement with this topic, our main focus is on the principle of religious freedom, while safeguarding the position of those churches and individuals who do not wish to be involved with same sex marriage. We also wish to express our conviction that there is a fundamental issue of equality involved in this.

Further, we will wish to convey the experience gathered within the Religious Society of Friends that same sex relationships can have the same spiritual depth and commitment as opposite sex relationships.

We thank Phil and the working group for their prayerful work on our behalf, and uphold them in the discussions ahead.

Min. 8 Future of ACTS

Leslie Stevenson has reported to us on discussions that have been taking place regarding the future of Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS).

ACTS is supported by 9 member churches including ourselves. It has a substantial range of committees and networks. The decision to sell Scottish Churches House has been taken, but so far no buyer has been found.

The member churches are being asked to consider what their vision for the future purpose and structure of ACTS might be. Leslie has outlined some of the dilemmas involved in this. We have heard that Friends approaches and distinctiveness have always been recognised and appreciated in ACTS circles.

Min. 9 Appointments and Representatives

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

Rep to Church of Scotland Guild Annual Meeting 25 August (retrospective appointment)
Alison Burnley

Parliamentary Liaison Function Group Sept 2012 – August 2015
Elizabeth Allen (convenor)
Mark Bitel
Anna Mitchell
Phil Lucas

Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office Advisory Group Sept 2012 – Aug 2015
Alastair Reid

Appointments for January 2013

Faith In Community Scotland Action Fund Jan 2013 – Sept 2015
Lynne Barty

Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice Jan 2013 – Dec 2015
Mike Nellis

GM Assistant Treasurer Jan 2013 – Dec 2015
Duncan Wallace

Min. 10 GM Investment Account

The Assistant Treasurer, Pamela Brunt, has described the Quaker Social Housing Saver Account. This is an investment account within Triodos Bank. It was initiated by Quaker Housing Trust, and

arose from the dual concern of Friends about ethical investments and encouraging social housing projects in Britain.

Loans are made from the QSH Account for social housing projects having been recommended by QHT. The account gives a way of investing money ethically in an account targeted specifically for social housing needs. Pamela has raised the question of whether GM should move some or all of its reserves to QSH Saver Account at Triodos Bank. We ask Trustees to investigate this suggestion and bring back a recommendation.

Min. 11 The work of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

We have welcomed Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, to our afternoon session. Sandra joined Woodbrooke almost two years ago, having spent most of her working life with British Telecom. Woodbrooke's founders envisaged it as a permanent summer school. Today it aims to enrich individual lives, support communities and to respond to trends in society. It runs short courses, special programmes and *Woodbrooke on the Road*. It is also developing courses online, including *Quaker in Europe* which is delivered in nine different languages.

Society around us is changing and the Society of Friends is also changing - for example more people join as adults without any background in other churches. We have discussed what the barriers are to Friends in Scotland engaging with Woodbrooke. Friends seem to lead busier lives and have less time. Weekend courses involve travelling at expensive times and this is a particularly significant factor when distances are large.

Some Meetings are large enough to host *Woodbrooke on the Road*, but others are too small and scattered. Sandra described the programme being run in Wales which involves a series of linked sessions of *Woodbrooke on the Road* over three years, arranged in collaboration with local Friends. This requires sustained commitment at both ends.

Woodbrooke tries to meet a diversity of needs. Publicity for courses relies on correspondents or clerks passing on the information. When Meetings do not own their own premises, display of leaflets is more difficult. Occasional email bulletins are welcomed. There was a view that Woodbrooke could make greater efforts to publicise courses in Northern England, such as at Swarthmore Hall and Glenthorne.

Some of these barriers can be overcome by technology - for example video conferencing, but technology should assist learning processes, not dictate them. Some Meetings are considering investing in conferencing equipment which obviates the cost to individual Friends of acquiring or updating their own computers. More might be done to put learning resources online.

There have been some experiments in training local tutors to deliver courses in Scotland and this approach could be extended. A list of speakers within Scotland would be useful. Sandra is keen to continue this dialogue and welcomes further feedback. We thank Sandra for a stimulating session

Min. 12 Closing Minute

We record our thanks to North Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again in St. Andrews on 17/18 November when our speaker will be Philip Austin from Northern Friends Peace Board.

Robin Waterston
Clerk