



GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

13 September 2014

Inverness

Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard read a poem *The Morning After* by Edinburgh Makar, Christine De Luca which speaks of the need for the people of Scotland to work together for a better society after the referendum on independence next week, whatever the outcome of the vote. Although the vote requires a simple yes or no, we recognise that there are complex issues and deeply felt convictions with which all of us will wrestle in reaching our own decision. We should not fear our differences of view. If sincerely and respectfully expressed, they can create an energy which may lead us all to look again at what we need to do to make Scotland a better place for all its people. We pray for wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity, amongst ourselves and in wider society, not just for the next week, but during the uncertain period which is likely to follow. Society is built on relationships, not on structures.

Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome 7 attenders to this GM plus Joy Croft from Norfolk and Waveney AM, Anne Ullathorne from Meeting for Sufferings and Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk.

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

East Scotland	3
North Scotland	23
South East Scotland	11
West Scotland	5
Total:	42

Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint 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 Correction to Min 5 of General Meeting of 14 June, 2014

We note that the agreed dates were correctly recorded, but the venues were incorrect. The minute should read:

We confirm the following GM dates and venues for 2015-16:

East – 7 March 15 (already agreed)
North – 6 June 15
West – 12 Sept 15
South East – 14/15 Nov 15
East – 5 Mar 16

Min. 5 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting:

Isobel Thomson (W)
Nuala Watt (W)

We record the following deaths:

Anders Gibson (W)
Jean Pilborough (W)

We also note one resignation:

James Bromley (N)

Min. 6 Report on Summer Shindig

Kascia and Erin Smith have given us a lively account of what it is like to attend Shindig, in Kascia's case this year as a junior staff member. Both have attended the Shindig from the age of 11. They have spoken of the opportunities for friendship and learning through shared activities, and of how great an influence it has been on their lives. We thank Kascia and Erin for their report.

Min. 7 Progress report on parliamentary engagement post

Elizabeth Allen and Robin Davis have told us that Trustees have been liaising with Friends House regarding the detailed arrangements to fill the post. It is currently being advertised as a three year fixed term appointment at 17.5 hours per week and interviews will be held in Edinburgh on 30th October. It is hoped that a formal memorandum of understanding regarding the respective roles of BYM Trustees and General Meeting Trustees with regard to the post will have been finalised by next GM in November. We are pleased to hear of this progress.

Min.8 Consultation on implementation of Marriage and Civil Partnership Act 2014

The Clerk has reported receipt of a letter from the Scottish Government asking whether we wished the Religious Society of Friends in Scotland to be prescribed under the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 as authorised to solemnise same sex marriages and civil partnerships, and whether we wished our existing authorisation to conduct opposite sex marriages to continue.

As a response was required by 5th September, Central Committee, in consultation with Friends House and Registering Officers, prepared and agreed a formal response which has been circulated with the agenda for information. We hope that as from 2015, we will be able to conduct Quaker marriages for same sex couples in Scotland on exactly the same basis as for opposite sex couples. In accordance with the decision taken by Meeting for

Sufferings, we have not sought authorisation to conduct civil partnership ceremonies, believing that marriage is the appropriate option to offer. We thank Central Committee for taking action on this matter.

Min.9 Proposed donation to Prisoners Week (Scotland) Trust

This matter was held over from GM in June. As David Turner is unable to be with us this time, he has written to suggest that GM make a regular annual donation to the Prisoners Week (Scotland) Trust, explaining his reasons for urging us to do so. We have heard that our Treasurer has suggested that an annual donation of £250 might be roughly in line with other donations that we make each year on behalf of Friends in Scotland. We agree to make an annual donation of £250 as suggested by our Treasurer.

Min. 10 Religious Leaders Forum (Interfaith Scotland) - Christine Davis

At GM in June, we noted that Nominations Function Group was still trying to find someone to represent Friends on the Religious Leaders Forum which operates under the auspices of Interfaith Scotland. Christine Davis, on our behalf, has submitted comments to the Forum on our views regarding provisions for recognition of religious faiths should a written constitution for Scotland be drawn up in the future. We thank Christine for making this contact.

Min. 11 Commemoration of response to 1916 Conscription Act

At GM in June we agreed to consider further how we might commemorate the Quaker response to the introduction of conscription in 1916. We feel this would best be carried forward by establishing a small working group to consider the matter and bring recommendations back to GM by June next year. We ask Nominations Function Group to bring forward the names of up to 5 Friends to serve on this group.

Min.12 Report on Meeting for Sufferings

Jane Pearn has reported on the most recent Meeting for Sufferings held last Saturday 6th September. A number of concerns from Area Meetings related to growing inequality in our society and issues of economic injustice. The theme for the next few Yearly Meetings will be *Living out our faith in the world*. We need continually to testify to the spiritual basis of our actions.

Other issues considered included development of the Long-Term Framework, which Jane hoped we might consider at a future GM, relationships with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the extensive range of work undertaken by QPSW, and preliminary work prior to a possible formal revision of the Book of Discipline. We thank Jane for her report.

Min. 13 Nominations matters

Adwoa Bittle was appointed to the Yearly Meeting Nominating Group at the Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath. She has asked for assistance in identifying Friends to serve on BYM Central Nominations Committee and Committee for Clerks.

We appoint Martin Burnell and Adwoa Bittle to attend the service of reconciliation to be held at St Giles, Edinburgh on Sunday 21st September.

We appoint Christine Davis as our representative on the Religious Leaders Forum (Interfaith Scotland) for the triennium to June 2017.

Min. 14 Meeting for Sufferings and its relationship to General Meeting and Area Meetings

Anne Ullathorne, Assistant Clerk to Sufferings and Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk led a session for information and engagement about Meeting for Sufferings. We were encouraged to discuss and think about how the relationship between Sufferings and Friends across the country works. We considered issues around geography, reports by MfS representatives and how they are heard, and the two way flow of information between MfS and Area Meetings and GM for Scotland and Meeting for Friends in Wales.

We explored many issues around workings and practicalities of MfS. We were stimulated to bring to the front of our minds the importance of the role of MfS and the Friends who serve on this body and indeed all who serve on our Central Committees. We thank Anne and Juliet for their informative and engaging session.

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 at our residential GM on November 15th/16th in Glasgow when Friends who attended the Yearly Meeting Gathering will share their varied experiences.

Martin Burnell
Clerk

Some Friends asked that the poem read during the opening meeting for worship should be circulated together with the minutes, although not as part of them.

The Morning After

Scotland, 19th September 2014

Let none wake despondent: one way
or another we have talked plainly,
tested ourselves, weighed up the sum
of our knowing, ta'en tent o scholars,
checked the balance sheet of risk and
fearlessness, of wisdom and of folly.

Was it about the powers we gain or how
we use them? We aim for more equality;
and for tomorrow to be more peaceful
than today; for fairness, opportunity,
the common weal; a hand stretched out
in ready hospitality.

It's those unseen things that bind us,
not flag or battle-weary turf or tartan.
There are dragons to slay whatever happens:
poverty, false pride, snobbery, sectarian
schisms still hovering. But there's
nothing broken that's not repairable.

We're a citizenry of bonnie fighters,
a gathered folk; a culture that imparts,
inspires, demands a rare devotion,
no back-tracking; that each should work
and play our several parts to bring about
the best in Scotland, an open heart.

Christine De Luca