



## GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

12th September 2015

Glasgow

### Min. 1 Reading

During Meeting for Worship we heard a reading from Quaker Faith and Practice 20.20 on the need for our Quaker beliefs to be integral with the way we live.

### Min. 2 Welcome

We welcome one attender to this GM.

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

East Scotland	5
North Scotland	1
South East Scotland	9
West Scotland	13
<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</b>

### Min. 3 Reporter

We appoint Mary Dower from North Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask West Scotland AM to report on the next GM.

### Min. 4 New members and deaths

We record the following new members since our last meeting:

Max Marnau (SE)  
Susan Campbell (W)

We record the following deaths:

Grace Allen (E)  
Arnold Warren (E)  
Mima Crosbie (W)  
Margaret Giles (W)  
Jean Laurie (W)  
Norman Peacock (W)

### Min. 5 Relocation of ACTS office from Alloa to Stirling

In a letter dated 13th August, the Convener of ACTS Trustees sought our views on the possible relocation of the ACTS office from Alloa to a site adjacent to Stirling station. This would give improved access by public transport, availability of meeting rooms (a facility withdrawn in Alloa) and would not cost more than the present offices. A reply was required by the end of August. The clerk, having consulted the Central Committee, replied supporting the proposals. The move will take place on 19th October 2015. Telephone numbers and email addresses remain unchanged.

### **Min. 6 Young Friends Summer Shindig**

Sarah Bibb and Sam Koeplinger have spoken of their experience of attending the Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig held at Ackworth School from 25th July - 1st August. Ackworth is a popular venue with young Friends with many activities including drama, sport, swimming, excursions, family groups, talks, discussions and free time. The worship and epilogue are an important part of each day. Each year two Palestinian students attend.

Both Sarah and Sam felt that they had gained a lot from the experience of attending and had found the atmosphere very supportive, particularly in relation to discussions on gender identity and sexual orientation. We thank Sarah and Sam for their report.

### **Min. 7 Children and Young People's Function Group**

Madeleine Harding has reported (through the Clerk) that plans are well advanced for the Family Weekend to be held at Pitlochry Youth Hostel from 9th - 11th October, There are some places still available. The Link Weekend has been postponed from October to February 2016.

### **Min. 8 Parliamentary Liaison Function Group**

Phil Lucas has reported on the recent work of the Group and of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. The main work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, has been on militarisation of our society, particularly within the education system. Mairi was a speaker at the *Just Festival* and is working closely with Forces Watch. Together they have contacted the youth wings of all political parties, gaining support from the youth wings of the SNP and Green parties. She has also arranged to meet the Children's Commissioner. We are concerned to learn that the military are now visiting primary schools.

A further initiative has been to promote the use of white poppies on Remembrance Day, including the sending of white poppies to every MSP. This is being done in conjunction with the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and a letter and accompanying leaflet have been drafted.

The letters which we agreed at last General Meeting to send to newly-elected Scottish MPs seeking their views on Trident renewal and to MSPs urging that they take steps to ensure their pension fund invested ethically, have not yet been sent due to difficulties resolving the wording with Friends House staff. We are disappointed to hear this and ask the Clerk to progress the matter.

The Parliamentary Liaison Function Group is also planning to produce a Quaker manifesto to be used during the run-up to the next Scottish elections.

We welcome the energy that the Parliamentary Engagement Officer has brought to the work of the Function Group, although we have some reservations about the use of the term 'Quaker Manifesto'. We thank Phil Lucas for his report.

### **Min. 9 Representations re recognition of non-Scottish civil partnerships.**

Following our response to a Scottish Government consultation on proposals to permit the recognition of civil partnerships which were registered outwith Scotland as marriages under Scottish law, a further letter was received seeking comments on a draft order to put the proposals into effect. There is now provision for the backdating of the marriage to the original date of the civil partnership in the same way as applies to the conversion of civil partnerships registered in Scotland. This was something we had asked for and welcome.

It would, however, appear that there is some doubt as to whether non-Scottish civil partnerships which have been converted to marriages within Scotland will be recognised as marriages by the law of England and Wales. The UK government appear to wish to leave this to be determined by case law, which seems unfair to the individuals affected.

Secondly there is no equivalent provision in English law that would allow a couple in a civil partnership originally registered in Scotland to have that converted to a marriage in England or Wales. Only civil partnerships originally registered in England or Wales can be converted to marriages in England or Wales. This disadvantages a couple who have moved from Scotland to England or Wales who would have to return to Scotland to have their partnership converted and could not therefore do so within their current Quaker Meeting.

We agree to forward to Meeting for Sufferings our concern regarding this discriminatory state of affairs under English law, urging them to make representations to the UK Government on the matter.

### **Min. 10 Report on the Episcopal Church Synod**

Margaret Roy attended this year's Episcopal Church Synod as our representative. She found it an interesting experience - very hierarchical, and with a mass of paperwork similar to Yearly Meeting. Many of the matters debated overlapped concerns of Quakers. There were several motions regarding same-sex marriage, which is still controversial within the Church.

Margaret was struck by Black Thursdays in which members of the congregation wear black in support of people suffering from gender violence in war. She also highlighted the Church's concern with climate change and prayers on the 24th of each month for the conflict in Israel/Palestine.

### **Min. 11 Report on the World Day of Prayer**

Margaret Roy is our representative on the Scottish Committee of the World Day of Prayer. The Women's World Day of Prayer is an international organisation which supports women - particularly in developing countries. The role of the Scottish Committee is to adapt material produced by a chosen country for use in Scotland. The Scottish Committee is greatly supported by the Church of Scotland and Women's Guilds. Margaret has encouraged the use of silence within the services and has worked on a leaflet explaining the work of the Committee.

We thank Margaret for both her reports.

### **Min. 12 Report on Meeting for Sufferings**

Jane Pearn has reported on Meeting for Sufferings held on 5th September. It was a good, deep and focused day. Jane highlighted the public statement issued on the refugee crisis, which Meeting for Sufferings asked to be strengthened, drawing particular attention to the responsibilities of the UK government.

She also mentioned the Vibrancy in Meetings project which has led to a pilot for the next three years in specific areas, funded by legacy income; the proposed memorial to innocent victims of war at the National Arboretum; and the proposals to replace the current Long Term Framework, initially by a short document entitled *Our Faith in the Future*.

### **Min. 13 Convenor of Nominations Committee**

The convenor of our Nominations Function Group will complete her first triennium on 31st December of this year. We appoint Bronwen Currie, Pat Lucas and Adwoa Bittle to bring forward the name of a Friend to our General Meeting in November to serve for the triennium commencing 1st January 2016.

### **Min. 14 Appointments**

Nominations Function Group have brought forward the following names and we agree to appoint them:

#### **GM Trustee (West)**

Michael Hutchinson (1<sup>st</sup> triennium)

January 2016 to December 2018

#### **Website Development Steering Group**

January 2016 (until job done)

to give support to the Web Manager while a new GM website is being developed

Chris Booth (South East)

Heather Burns (West)

Martin McCaffery (East)

Clive Potter (North)

GM Administrator (ex-officio)

### **Min. 15 Afternoon Session**

Our guest speaker, Richard Murphy, was unfortunately prevented at relatively short notice from attending GM. Some of us left to attend the vigil being held in George Square to draw attention to the plight of Syrian refugees. The remainder have gathered in an hour of worship, aware of the many events around us which are troubling and disturbing, but believing in the power of prayer and hope.

### **Min. 16 Closing Minute**

We record our thanks to West Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again at our residential gathering in Edinburgh on 14/15 November when the topic in our afternoon session will be end of life matters.

Martin Burnell

Clerk