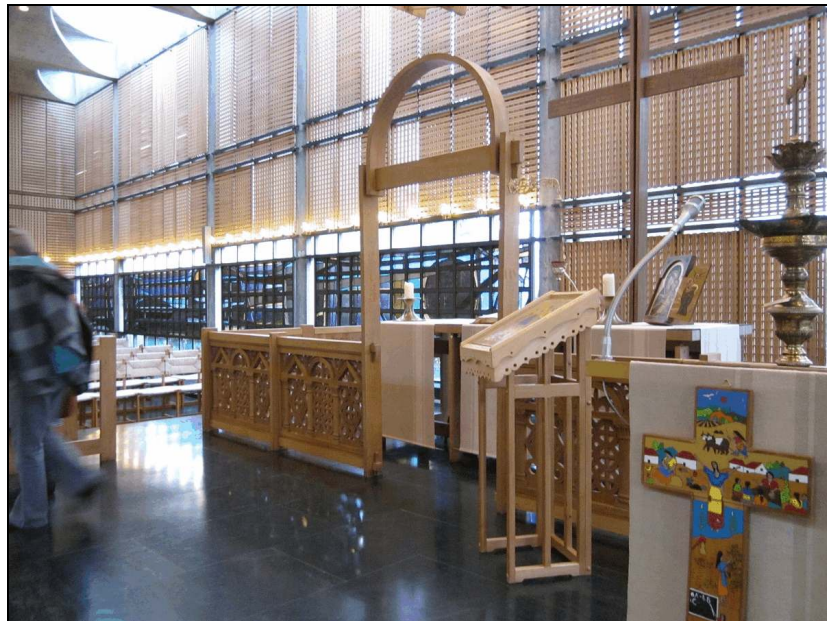




February
2012

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Scottish Friend



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Orthodox churches agreed the compromise
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Please send material for next *Scottish Friend* by 1st April to Margaret Peacock, 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk.

For the front cover I like to publish photographs of your meeting places. Please go on sending me news, reports, thoughts and pictures. Many thanks to all who have made suggestions.

Scottish Friend will be posted on the GM website at the same time as it goes to the printer. If you would like an email copy instead of a paper one, please email scotfriends@gmail.com, to let Bronwen Currie know. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain or elsewhere.

JOHN WIGHAM (ENJOYMENT) TRUST

We are in the happy situation of having a modest legacy to disburse. John Wigham directed that grants should be made to 'deserving persons resident in Scotland who owing to straitened circumstances are unable to enjoy the usual pleasures of life, the purpose of such grants being to provide the recipients with some additional comfort or pleasure of an exceptional nature over and above the usual necessities of life'.

We welcome applications from Quakers and non-Quakers resident anywhere in Scotland, for grants large or small. £500 will normally be the maximum. Applicants may obtain an application form and further information from :

Annie Miller, 15 Morningside Park, Edinburgh EH10 5HD
Phone 0131 447 3268, Email: anniemiller1@tiscali.co.uk

The completed form should be passed to a Quaker of long standing who is well known to their meeting, who will countersign it and forward it to the address above to arrive by 31 March or 30 September. Applicants will normally hear the results of their application within 8 weeks of these deadlines.

From a beneficiary of the John Wigham Trust

London Visit

I lived in London for fifteen years, from 1982 until 1997, and I love going back to enjoy the city and see my many friends there. But going back is becoming increasingly difficult on a minimal pension and I was delighted when the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust awarded me a grant to visit London again last April.

On my first day there I met an old friend whom I had worked with in the education department of Pentonville Prison. We met in beautiful Paternoster Square and wandered round Tate Britain, but spent more time talking than looking at the paintings!

Over the next four days, I visited my elderly aunt in New Milton and an old friend in Brighton. He has had cancer for the last ten years and, although he's in remission now, he still has heavy chemotherapy treatment every year. I also met up with another ex-colleague from my Pentonville days and I went with her to see a wonderful exhibition in the V&A about the Aesthetic movement.

I also went back to the flats that I'd lived in while I was in London and visited one of my neighbours. It was good to get all her news but I was sad to hear that my next-door neighbour, a Ghanaian woman whom I was very fond of, had died of cancer.

On Sunday, my last day in London, I turned up at the Meeting House in Euston Road at 9am, hoping they would have an early morning meeting as we do in Edinburgh, but no luck! As I'd already arranged to visit my friend, Tessa, for the day, I couldn't wait for the 11am meeting but took the Northern Line as far as it would go.

Tessa met me from High Barnet and drove me to her rural retreat in Hertfordshire. She's a stained glass artist who had windows in at least two churches and in the Royal Marsden Hospital but, much more importantly, she is a wonderful, open and natural person and I love her dearly. I've known her for the last fifteen years. Tessa is a very warm and positive person and, as with my other friends, I always enjoy spending time with her.

It was wonderful to have a chance to visit London again and catch up with friends and family. I'm extremely grateful to the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust for making it possible.

What are Quakers doing to end discrimination against the Travelling Community in Scotland?

Seonag Robertson

'A Report on the Churches' attitude to the Travelling Community in Scotland' was completed by the Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group (SCRJG) in early 2011 and passed to Member Churches in Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) for consideration.

In a nutshell the report lays out examples of hardship and discrimination faced by perhaps as many as 20,000 Gypsy/ Travellers in Scotland. Problems include reduced access to traditional sites, inadequate provision of council sites, problems in accessing education, difficulties in opening bank accounts and in registering to vote. Negative media coverage compounds the problem of discrimination by reinforcing stereotypes held by society at large.

The Reports sets out 10 recommendations for ACTS Member Churches to consider:

1. Support the Scottish Government in recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group.
2. Note that the past treatment of the Traveller Community by Government, wider Society and the Churches has intentionally and unintentionally been discriminatory.
3. Encourage the Scottish Government & local authorities to afford Travellers protection against discrimination.
4. Encourage the Scottish Government, in conjunction with local authorities, to take steps to improve the provision of services to Traveller, recognise the distinct culture & lifestyle of the Travelling Community.
5. Encourage the Scottish Government to take steps to ensure that

members of the Travelling Community are enabled to vote.

6. Explore opportunities to celebrate with the Travelling Community the richness of its culture.
7. Seek ways ecumenically through which spiritual needs of the Travelling Community can be met.
8. Explore the theology of welcome and hospitality as it relates to the relationship between the Travelling Community and those outwith the Travelling Community.
9. Enter into a dialogue with representatives of broadcasters and the print media about promoting more positive images of the Travelling Community.
10. Encourage Church bodies and individual church members to speak out against instances of negative and abusive portrayal of the Travelling Community in the media.

I urge Friends to read the report in full at

<http://www.acts-scotland.org/images/stories/pdf/travellersfinal.pdf>

while bearing in mind the testimony,

Quakers recognise the equal worth and unique nature of every person. This means working to change the systems that cause injustice and inequality and hinder the development of true communities.

Injustice and inequality clearly exists here - will we simply look the other way?

How to do your pension ethically?

A personal experience of trying to ensure all finance is ethically grounded.

Duncan Wallace

In today's world of the ongoing financial crisis that seems to be affecting all of us, I have been encouraged to write this article to share my experience of what I've been doing to clean up my own finances over the last ten years away from the stock market.

In my opinion the stock market certainly seems to be part of the root cause of global uncertainty and exploitation. This can be looked at in a few ways. One is to analyse the accountability mechanisms for money held on our behalf in pension funds. Although I am not an expert on this, I think pension pots account for 75% of stock market transactions, so the financial power, in that area of the free movement of capital market is phenomenal. Yet the accountability of this market towards people and planet ethics and values is very weak – perhaps even weaker than the accountability of banks!

So where do I start? It is my own story that I have been encouraged to share. About four years ago I went independent/freelance as an organisational consultant, seeking to help all sorts of organisations to be more effective in creating a more just world. I therefore needed to think about what pension I might have for my own future that would be acceptable to the Chancellor in terms of my tax return, so that I don't get taxed on it. I didn't want to have a pension linked to the stock market. My experience, even of 'ethical' investment providers and pensions (which is an area I've been a fan of for 25 years), is that they are actually - if not more - driven by the pension managers/ investment managers keeping an eye on the % return, than by the ethical benefits.

As well as this, the best the pensions do on ethics is negative screening of companies. So they say who and where they won't invest in - arms trade, tobacco etc. Most banks are the same; even the Cooperative Bank

is based only on negative screening. It can be done on a positive screening basis. If you look at the huge difference between Triodos Bank and the others, it is that it goes out and positively seeks the right sort of companies and opportunities that fit the declared ethics. Triodos looks for wind farms, organic producers and social enterprises that need capital, and enters into pro-active banking risk relationships to help facilitate the growth of that part of the economy. Our capital is then the fuel that is at their disposal.

One of the truths that I felt was coming through our discernment process was that I wanted all my finance to be closer in relationship to me than the stock market based pensions would offer. One of the problems that I think is in the system is that our capital money is very often traded and invested by people three or many more steps removed from us. How can they really know our ethics at such a distance? The closest they get is knowing Duncan Wallace as an investor wants a 5 or 7 % return and they keep their eye on performing to the % return much more vigorously than conforming to my ethics.

So I wanted to do something similar for my pension, a pro-active relational approach that isn't too distant from myself. It is after all my capital; I have significant responsibility for where and how it is used. If I'm lucky enough, privileged enough to have some capital then I believe I need to rise to the responsibility that comes with having some capital.

It boils down to that I simply don't trust anyone three or more steps removed from me, to follow my ethical standards. Not with all the other forces and factors that those who are connected - however loosely - to the stock market have to contend with to make their living.

I searched around, did a lot of connecting to people I knew who do some serious discernment in this area and came up blanks. Eventually I was put in touch with a tiny green investment firm down in Devon, that has been trying to advise on ethical and planetary just investments since the 1980s. Barchester Green Investments really provided advice for free, because

they totally got my ethical parameters but there wasn't much they could sell me. What they advised me was that the way to do it is to use the mechanism that is mainly used by the rich, Self Invested Personal Pensions (SIPP's). This is a route that costs a bit more, where the individual in effect becomes their own pension provider. You put your money in a SIPP wrapper, through an intermediary (of which there are many and most charge a 2% management fee, which is why it costs more), and then you can direct where that capital is invested. So I can then choose when Triodos Renewables is raising capital by limited share issue, or the Phone Coop, or Traidcraft, or x y z green energy company, then as long as it fits my ethics and isn't on the stock market, I get my pension pot to buy a share under the terms and conditions of the release. In fact it is incredibly easy. It is nowadays all done on the internet 24/7, and because my ethics aren't that interested in moving my money around or playing of one percentage point off another, then it only takes a few hours a year.

There are lots of other parts of the market our pensions could be investing in other than the stock market. Depending what your ethics are you could be taking out investments in social housing providers' capital raising, or in commercial property, or bonds, or government capital raising issues or directly in individual businesses.

That's my story. I think what is important about sharing it, is that I really want to encourage us all to seriously think about how can we collaborate individually or collectively in order to change these financial instruments that are wielding so much un-ethically-accountable power in the financial markets. Thus our many many individuals, churches, partners, client organisations, institutions of faith can start to make some serious decisions about their pension pots being managed for pro-active good, and invest in things that are closer in relation to their own ethical purpose. We continue to see lots of ethically purposeful organisations which have a significant blind side on this area – feeling powerless to do anything.

Via the Craighead Institute and others, we have people who can help to facilitate in this area of financial governance and trustees' understanding

of charitable primary and secondary purpose. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who knows other pieces of this story and getting some dialogue going about what we can do.

For the odd car usage and unfortunately for our house we have to buy in to insurance products which are stockmarket based!! That will be another story.

www.triodos.org.uk

www.barchestergreen.co.uk

N.B. I am technically advised that virtually all potential pension investments are traded on the stock market. It is illegal for IFAs to make formal recommendations for anyone to invest in holdings which don't qualify for this, because the Financial Services Authority (FSA) who manage the finances believe that non-traded holdings are more risky than the alternative.

Moreover, it is virtually impossible to invest in non-traded holdings within pensions. Things as low risk as ethical corporate bonds (which are loans made to relevant companies) will offer a regular return but their trading price will go up and down because of how market traders are anticipating what's going to happen and how they can make money. The only way you can get into non-traded holdings is by investing directly into them or occasionally via organisations such as Triodos



This year's shorter Autumn seminar of one day began with the query which was placed on everyone's chair, and which is always the important opening of each event' that encourages participation from all attending. It was put like this:-

*Opening query:-
The KINGDOM
(that of God)
The WORLD
and ME
?*

This initially produced a puzzled silence as much thought was being mulled upon! These are the shortened answers/reactions of some of those present:- "I see it all as one", "Two versions of the Lord's prayer", "in the Gospel of Thomas the Kingdom is in your centre and is about you", "Harmony balance, the laws of nature", "Kingdom/Spirit is all pervasive", "We are within the Spirit I feel", "Internal Kingdom-physical-liberation".

A good hour was spent discussing this, after which a 'Presentation' on Logion 3 was given for further discussion. The subtitle of this 'Presentation' being Logion 3 as implicit poetry. This was a deeply thought out and interesting personal view by one who is a poet. The next Logion to be discussed was number 18:-

***The disciples said to Jesus:
Tell us in what way our end will be.
Jesus said:
Have you therefore discovered the beginning
Since you seek the end?***

***For in the Place where the beginning is,
There will be the end.
Happy is he who will stand boldly at the beginning,
He shall Know the end,
And shall find Life independent of death.***

This engendered a further deep contemplation of life and death as personally experienced by each, and produced a wide variety of response amongst us. None of the logia presented at this seminar have parallels within the New Testament and these sayings recalled by Jesus disciple Thomas were originally the spoken teachings of Jesus- therefore open to widely differing interpretations by all who listened to Jesus.

It is the same today, as each one of us, according to his experience, gives a personal rendering/understanding of this saying. Also, their understanding of any of these logia/sayings will alter/evolve the longer they are dwelt upon.

This is the way of the inspired teachings of Jesus to be found in the Gospel of Thomas.

The final 'Presentation' offered for discussion, also without parallels in the New Testament, was the two logia, numbers 70 and 80. This brought together the two words that formed the title of the programme for the seminar- 'The Kingdom and the World'.

Both logia 70 and 80 point to something that is within each of us, but which only very gradually becomes part of our consciousness. Much of what is recorded in the Gospel of Thomas is at first very obscure, and we are very fortunate in this age to have these important sayings in written form, in order to be able to ponder them and to slowly comprehend these profound teachings that Jesus was trying to portray to us.

Meeting for Sufferings 3rd December 2011

Peter Kennedy

Among the issues discussed was the triennial report from the Retreat in York. Those presenting the report described its ways of working, and its concern to maintain a Quaker ethos in its community. Friends were pleased to hear of the emphasis on meeting the spiritual needs of patients as part of psychiatric treatment. Mention was also made of the sterling work of Bronwen Gray, the Resident Friend, and also of the changed role of the former Quaker Governors, who are now constituted as members of the "Friends of the Retreat General Meeting". General Meeting for Scotland is represented at this Members' Meeting by our Friends, Constance Tonge (Perth LM) and Penny Holland (Central Edinburgh LM).

Some members of the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations spoke to us about making connections – interfaith and interchurch. They reminded all Friends and Local Meetings that they are available to give advice and support on interfaith and interchurch work. They can be contacted via Marigold Bentley, marigoldb@quaker.org.uk who serves as QCCIR Secretary, in addition to her role as an Assistant General Secretary to Quaker Peace and Social Witness.

The budget for 2012 for the Centrally Managed Work was presented and it seems that many individual Friends are not contributing the suggested average figure of £150 per annum for funding the centrally managed work of the Yearly Meeting. This hampers the work that is done in our name. If we want to live our corporate testimony and meet the commitments set out in A Framework for Action, we need to dig deeper into our pockets; we cannot rely solely on the commercial successes of renting out rooms in Friends House.

As well as giving of our finances we were told about the challenge our Recording Clerk, Paul Parker has set the Quaker Life Network - he would like the Network to have a membership of 2000 by the end of 2012. The Quaker Life Network is a network of Friends who voluntarily offer

ministry in the form of work to Friends and Meetings. It is constantly being developed to help deepen the spiritual life and experience of all Friends. Being a member might include work on any of the following: Publications - proof reading, editorial, design, content; Events - facilitation, planning, speakers, workshops, review and report; Children and Young People - attracting young people to attend Meeting; Facilitate events; Engage young Friends in the life of your Meeting; Spiritual renewal - managing conflict; Meetings for Clearness; Physical and mental ill-health in Meetings; Supporting wardens; Finding Friends for roles; Energise and revitalise - outreach, accessing knowledge and experience across the Yearly Meeting; discovering your hidden talents; re-igniting the flame!

All Friends are encouraged to join the Quaker Life Network by contacting Oliver Waterhouse on 020 7663 1007 oliverw@quaker.org.uk www.quaker.org.uk/glnetwork Let's make Paul's desire a reality. Come on Friends, It's what love of Quakerism commands of you!

Sustainability At Yearly Meeting Gathering in Canterbury in July 2011, by Minute 36 which is reproduced in part below, Friends agreed the following:-

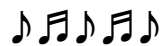
"... We need to arrive at a place in which we all take personal responsibility ... we need to pledge ourselves to corporate action... This action must flow from nowhere but love... we will need to be accountable to one another, but we will also need to be tender with one another, and to support one another through the grief and fear that radical change will provoke."

Quaker Peace and Social Witness has supported this work by the production of a Sustainability Toolkit, a copy of which has been sent to all Local Meetings; further copies are available from the Quaker Bookshop. The Toolkit contains "check ups" and Carbon Impact Calculators, together with a DVD of Pam Lunn's spoken 2011 Swarthmore Lecture - "Costing not more than everything" and has been sent to every

Local Meeting. Chase up your Clerk if you can't find it in your LM library.

We agreed as a Meeting to set up a "Minute 36 Commitment Group" to monitor and advise our progress in achieving Friends' stated aims in Minute 36. Remember, that as Local Meetings, we are asked to provide evidence of progress to the Recording Clerk's Office by 31st March 2012 for onward reporting to Yearly Meeting in May 2012. Friends are also encouraged to send in sustainability stories, both to celebrate our successes and to assist and encourage others to learn from them. These stories should be sent to Sunniva Taylor in Quaker Peace and Social Witness at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ or via email at sunnivat@quaker.org.uk

Our next Meeting is on Saturday 4th February 2012 when we hope to consider Advocacy on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting, and also to return to some aspects of "Radical Resistance and the State".



The Society of Friends and the development of allotments during the Depression.

L M H Barbenel and E M Stewart.

In 1928 the Society of Friends, concerned that the tragedy of unemployment led to physical, moral and spiritual depression, set up a special committee, the Coalfields Distress Committee to encourage men to help themselves by growing food to feed their families.

The Committee's work started in the Welsh Coalfields area where men without work who wanted an allotment were encouraged to form themselves into a Society. Over 200 such Societies were formed in a very short time.

With support from Local Authorities, Directors of Agriculture and local Allotment Associations, land was sought and leased for allotments by the Committee, who also provided seed potatoes, vegetable seeds, fertiliser and tools at greatly reduced prices.

The value of the self-help approach was soon recognised and the work of seeking, leasing land and supporting plottolders was extended fairly rapidly to areas in England and then in Scotland.

In 1930 the Committee was renamed the Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings and later became the Allotments Committee of the Society of Friends, which continued to seek and lease land throughout the 1930s. Since then until a few years ago, it made grants to poor plottolders to help with the purchase of seeds.

In November 1931 the Society of Friends Allotments Committee formed a Joint Committee with the Scottish National Union of Allotment Holders to help develop the Scheme in Scotland. In 1932 they launched an appeal to the Scottish Public to raise a sum of £3000 to provide funds to carry on the Scheme and enable 6000 to 7000 Scottish Unemployed to be assisted.

This Joint Committee continued to operate for many years, later working in conjunction with the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society. The Scheme was modified and expanded to suit the prevailing social and economic conditions of the times so that old age pensioners and, post war, ex-service men and their wives were also eligible for assistance.

Demands on the fund were greatly diminished in the post-war years when there was little unemployment. By 1951 very few, mainly old age pensioners, were being assisted and the Joint Committee decided that there was little justification to continue operating the Scottish Scheme in its present form. The Joint Committee, however, remained in being and agreed to give support and financial contribution to the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society to make it possible for the work to be continued.

Ecumenical visit to the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

Margaret Peacock

Every so often the Church of Scotland, jointly with ACTS, organises this ecumenical visit. As a trustee of ACTS, rather than as a Friend, I took part. There were thirteen of us, from seven churches, several being ecumenical officers. Unlike them, I had time to be green as directed by YM, and went by train. This was much more fun because finally I had two hours to be a tourist: I sat in the park by the lake and watched the fountain and the people passing. There were many cyclists, several riding without hands and one even texting!

Our first introduction to WCC was morning prayer, in the huge impressive ecumenical chapel. (Quite spoilt by a man taking flash photographs all the time, even during the prayers.) The organ was given from East Berlin at the time when they were not allowed to give money. The altar was enclosed by a decorated railing with an open archway - a compromise with the Orthodox arrangement of a sanctuary closed to public eyes. The small floor tiles were arranged in wavy lines to remind us of Christ's descent into the Jordan for baptism; there were even narrow "spillways" at the sides of the entrance steps!

After morning prayers we had a short tour of the building and its many artefacts from all over the world, and were shown the display of all the 350 member churches. (I'd never heard of the Mar Thoma church, St. Thomas' foundation in India.) In the garden is a section of the Berlin wall, a gift to acknowledge the contribution of churches to its removal.

After a concentrated programme of hour-long presentations by cosmopolitan heads of departments I was able to change my perception of WCC from "that faraway waste-of-time organisation in Geneva", to "that worldwide organisation of dedicated diplomats with powerful ideas". I was reminded that "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" and "Decade to Overcome Violence", as well as "Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel" were WCC

initiatives, and that it is not only global corporations but also the global alliances of churches that can make a difference in the world. It was a large scale demonstration of the power that can be wielded by ecumenical partnerships.

To follow the DOV, the next campaign - for a Just Peace - is now being organised. It started from the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, which gathered 1000 delegates in Kingston, Jamaica last May. We heard from the organiser that it was a tremendous success. The occasion was very green, having all the flights offset for carbon, and planting trees every day. They started with a preliminary 24-page manifesto, realised it was too long, and reduced it to 4 pages, which were unanimously accepted. Under the heading "Glory to God", the themes are:- Peace on earth, Peace with earth, Peace in the market place, and Peace with other peoples. A practical manual will be available in the New Year - I suppose Friends these days would call it a toolkit!

In the "Faith and Order" presentation the idea of pre-agreement, or "convergence" appealed to me - learning to discuss doctrine and practice respectfully, noting the places nearest to agreement - and perhaps even discovering actual agreement, "If we agree, it's nice to become aware of it". But I still regard trying to make a big common statement on "The Nature and Mission of the Church" as a waste of time, centrally and for all the churches - as Friends will remember.

The Ecumenical Institute at the beautiful Château de Bossey a few miles up the lake is WCC's academic department, running courses up to PhD standard, accredited by the university of Geneva. They run courses in "ecumenical formation" in which pastors from all kinds of Christian churches live together and learn to arrange services together, accommodating their incompatible liturgies. They also instruct in eco-farming for pastors who need to educate parishioners or supplement their stipend. They find that all the students can understand teaching in "ecumenical English", except for the Americans and British! This saves the expense of translation.

oing my preparation for the trip from the website I became impressed by the extent and variety of WCC's programmes, but we only heard about them after EAPPI on the last morning, from a man whose "ecumenical English" I couldn't understand well. I should like to have had a longer opportunity on these subjects. As it was, there was almost no point in asking about, say, their United Nations Liaison Office in New York, in the short time for "any questions". Topics of interest would have been their work on:- preparation for the climate change conference in Durban; enforced migration due to climate change or persecution; dalits; nuclear disarmament; human rights; eco-justice; and Ecumenical Water Network - whatever that is!

During the first lunch break I organised for us to visit QUNO and hear about its work. They gave us a very nice lunch, as if we were diplomats, and our group expressed appreciation. Oddly enough, QUNO Geneva was at Bossey the next day at the same time as us - I think for a planning meeting with QUNO New York.

I am very glad I went and had my respect for worldwide ecumenical enterprise so immensely expanded. And many thanks to ACTS for the travelling expenses.



ACTS 21st ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.. 26/10/2011

Pamala McDougall

What a joy it is to be with my ecumenical friends and be part of the celebrations! I've been asked to speak about my own ecumenical journey with a Quaker perspective.

Friends – or Quakers as we are known - have been involved in the modern ecumenical movement since its beginning. Our booklet of Advices and Queries number 6 reads

'Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating the bonds of friendship'

ACTS has encouraged and facilitated this.

Records show that we have been exploring and wrestling with ecumenism since 1892. Prior to our acceptance into membership of CTBI, we struggled and debated and were exercised with theological WORDS with which we had difficulty in meeting the criteria for membership. Eventually an exception was made to accommodate our Society and in 1989 at our Yearly Meeting in Aberdeen the decision to apply for membership of CTBI was made and so could allow Friends in Scotland to apply for membership of ACTS.

Our minute at the time read -

'With humility and faith in the possibilities ahead, we are encouraged to respond positively to the welcome embrace that is being offered to us, and to respond with warmth and acceptance in the understanding that while words may divide the Spirit unites'

At the ecumenical conference in 2005 held jointly by the Kirk and ACTS, Alison Elliot who was then the convenor of ACTS Forum, described ecumenism as a 'fixing of institutions in order to be able to use resources

better'. This is often seen in terms of demolition – a taking down of walls- but walls can create a sheltering, creative space where differences can be aired and similarities acknowledged.

My own experiences in ACTS have shown that learning a new theological language and accepting there are times to use that theological language, is often a way forward in understanding and in Grace.

There are other times, when moved to gently challenge a word or phrase or action, has proved fruitful for all.

It was so helpful to be invited to contribute to the ACTS booklet 'What Mission Means' It meant we had to go away and think about what mission means to us, and then we clarified our own thoughts which resulted in our own booklet 'Quakers and the Ecumenical Agenda' which is available to all.

Our closer involvement with ACTS in terms of time, commitment and finances has not always met with universal approval! Some even consider our limited resources and energies should be directed in other ways, and I would not be surprised if this was not the case with other congregations. However, I agree with Cardinal Mercier who, in 1920 observed that - 'In order to unite with one another we must love one another, in order to love one another we must know one another, in order to know one another we must meet one another'.

What I can say is that as a result of personal contacts through ACTS, my spiritual life has been enriched by the insights, traditions and friendships, of the member churches, and that the way in which they have reached out to us in love and acceptance has had an effect within the Religious Society of Friends. We have appreciated the care and sensitivity in which our particular perception of Truth and the Light, which is not enshrined in credal statements, has been received.

Having gracefully retired (somewhat reluctantly I have to say!) from mainstream ecumenical life, I was touched and honoured to be asked

to contribute to the celebrations this evening.

I thought about sharing my own personal recollections and highlights – but so many!

I could remind you that I was part of the 'seek and appoint' group for the new General Secretary after our Friend Kevin Franz left, so you could thank me for helping to land you with Stephen Smyth - sorry, gifted with Stephen! Did you know he is a poet? I once famously went past the station where I had left my car on the way back from an ACTS meeting late at night having been immersed in one of his poetry books! Not too popular with my husband that night.

I could tell you of my involvement with the Scottish Government through ACTS – the anti sectarian meetings, the delegation to discuss Human Trafficking, both very worthwhile. Then there were the meetings with the First Minister – first Jack McConnell then Alex Salmond. The first time I met Alex Salmond he went down the line and greeted everyone in the ACTS delegation, but walked right past me! Having no clerical collar and the only woman, he thought I was an admin. person! I put him right of course and he has never forgotten me since! But I was glad when Lily Twist from the Methodists joined us and a womanly camaraderie was quickly established.

Then there was the meeting when I was asked to introduce the item on end of life issues and palliative care when the same First Minister said 'now let's move on to Pamala and the end of life'.

So many highlights and memories. The Seeds of Hope gathering in Perth, and the anti slavery bi-centenary in 2007 when I was privileged to sign a pledge of commitment at the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre to work alongside my fellow ACTS members towards the eradication of present day slavery

I could go on about being the ACTS representative to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland – a week of fascinating debate and

meetings. When I finally plucked up courage to speak it was to welcome the new Church of Scotland interfaith officer – and to warn the delegates after hours of sitting in the chamber the result may not be momentous decisions but deep venous thrombosis!

I could enlarge on my appointment as ACTS Trustee on CTBI – the journeys up and down to London, the lengthy meetings, the reams of paperwork in preparation. I only got to grips with the dozens of acronyms when I was leaving! I have fond memories of Bob Fyffe, Steven Smyth and Alan Dixon of the Salvation Army instilling in me the finer points of how Wales, England, Ireland and Scotland work together in CTBI, and how, when Bob was appointed in June 2006, he had to identify where £175,000 worth of cuts were to be made in the CTBI budget. I soon learned about ‘common pots’, ‘new models of working’ and ‘moving forward’. Interesting times indeed and I was part of all that for ACTS and reporting back to ACTS Forum with my fellow Trustees. I think we made a positive difference during a time of great change at CTBI – together.

I could tell you about my pinnacle ecumenical experience of Geneva 2008 being the First Quaker to join ACTS in its annual pilgrimage to the WCC, Bossey ecumenical centre, and even managed to include a visit to the Quaker UN office - and I became more familiar with John Knox and so much more. But don't encourage Stephen to expand on some very unquakerly but friendly meals out – he tends to exaggerate!

I could describe the ecumenical conference in Aviemore in November 2009 ‘Christianity, Conflict and the Soul of the Nation and its follow up gathering to address conflict in and between the churches – but you should really follow this up for yourselves. For me there was a recognition of the problems and possible ways of working in an ecumenical way.

And finally I could tell you lots more about my annual appearance with the ACTS Rural group at the Royal Highland Show. I've attended for

several years now and will have to have loss and bereavement counseling when I stop going! The Rural group are doing a fantastic job of outreach to the farming community and beyond - and firmly putting the churches on the rural map. I love meeting up with my ACTS colleagues, lobbying MSPs and talking to the public who have never heard of ACTS and telling them all about us. How could I forget milking a model cow with Cardinal Keith O'Brian or sitting at lunch with the richest and biggest egg producer in Scotland and asking 'Have you got happy hens? And his reply NO. End of conversation! This year we had the wonderful opportunity of signing the Pilgrimage Today pledge, thanks to the ACTS Rural group initiative.

Yes, so many more memories, and more memories still to be made. ACTS should never underestimate the work it does and its witness to Christian life and values, so much needed at this time in Scotland's history. Our deep appreciation and thanks go to the ACTS staff, past and present for their dedication and hard work, their imaginative initiatives and being loyal servants despite all the ups and downs. On our journey together the words of the Quaker Isaac Penington written in 1667 still ring clear and true.

“Our life is love and peace and tenderness and bearing one with another and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another, but praying for one another and helping one another with a tender hand.”

Happy 21st birthday, ACTS, and may you be blessed with many more to come.



Young People's Link Weekend October 21st to 23rd 2011

Madeleine Harding

Twenty young people aged 13 to 17 gathered together in Glasgow Meeting House for a weekend when we considered our theme of "creating community - creating connections". We thought about the importance of community including the various communities we belong to, what connects us, and the support we get from our Quaker community.

On Saturday morning Justin Kenrick and Jamie Auldsmith facilitated sessions about how community connects us, and how these connections provide a supportive network. They looked at other communities and how they function, the similarities and diversity of community life.

Susie Reade continued the theme by thinking about our individual first steps to building community and guided the young people into making beautiful books that illustrated these first steps (see the pictures, below).

Saturday evening started with a special evening meal including Mary Jane's delicious sticky toffee pudding as a treat, which we later worked off with some rather active fun and games for all.

On Sunday we joined Glasgow Friends for Meeting for Worship (there was just about space for everyone!). Then it was lunchtime and goodbyes until next time.

Link weekends provide a valuable opportunity for young people from all over Scotland to be part of a Quaker community and to understand better what it means to be a Quaker, as well as getting to know each other better and renewing old friendships.

We had a good, strong group of adult helpers to plan and run the weekend and without them these weekends would not happen. If you are interested to help at any level do please get in touch with Madeleine Harding. The more help the better and we may even be able to offer more than one link weekend a year. It is fun for all - staff and young people alike!

Finally, a big thank you to Glasgow Friends for welcoming us into their Meeting House and providing a homely and safe environment. We hope to see you again before too long.



Could - and should - Quakers seek to enable more openness in Scotland about dying, death and bereavement?

Graham Morton

Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief is an alliance of individuals and organisations working to make Scotland a place where there is more openness about death, dying and bereavement so that:

People are aware of ways to live with death, dying and bereavement;

People feel better equipped to support each other through the difficult times that can come with death, dying and bereavement.

It was launched in November by a “2-course lunch with conversation menu” to illustrate some of the alliance’s principles.

I was thrilled to be contacted by Bronwen in early October, asking whether I would be interested in representing Quakers in Scotland at it. Earlier in the year I had made mention, via the Register of Skills and Experience, of my interest in meeting the spiritual needs of those approaching the end of their lives.

One of the persistent messages I heard at the event was that many people in Scotland are very ill at ease considering such matters. We heard from a number of people who had found that some friends – including ones of long standing – tended to drift away once it became known that they or one of their loved ones was terminally ill or had died.

What part, if any, does “religion” play in this? It was suggested that the decline of religious frameworks within Scotland means that in the early 21st century far fewer people have the emotional and practical skills to cope with such situations – skills that previous generations took for granted.

Impassioned comments at the launch by Makar Liz Lochhead made

immediate front page coverage. Liz referred to the insensitivity of an NHS surgeon when informing her and her husband Tom Logan in 2010 that he was terminally ill. Tom died a month later. Before the launch event, those behind the alliance (established and hosted by the Scottish Partnership for Palliative care) had found that some news media were - initially at least - far from persuaded that their readers/viewers would want any coverage of such “morbid” issues.

Another message, from speakers who have lost loved ones in the fairly recent past, was that being able to talk openly and honestly about such matters can be very helpful. And in “learning to live alongside” their bereavement, many felt particularly supported by conversation with others who were, or had been, in the same situation.

What can – or should – Quakers in Scotland do in the light of this? What follows is a far-from-exhaustive list of suggestions.

1. Could we build on the discussion at General Meeting in March 2011 and take further our consideration of end of life issues? Some organisations have developed resources to enable groups of people to consider matters such as living wills (statements expressing our views on how we would or would not like to be treated if, at the relevant time, we should be unable to make decisions about our future).
2. Could we (perhaps in conjunction with others, such as interfaith groups or local councils of churches) encourage more openness about such matters within our home communities? This could be by arranging and publicising meetings open to the public for reflecting on such issues. Is there scope to erode the boundaries between our local communities and hospices or care homes (through, for example, the provision of a cafe)?
3. We could (as Meetings and individuals) become members of *Good*

Life, Good Death, Good Grief and express support for it via its page on Facebook. Membership is free. For more information see: <http://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk>

4. Can we do more to support those (in and beyond our local meetings) coping with terminal illness or bereavement?



Preparing for Death and the Afterlife

Isobel Bracewell

We all need to take time to consider the physical and spiritual realities of death, ideally before our soul's life journey on this earth prepares to go through the sacred threshold to its real home. The time is known alone to God. I love the saying of Radinbranath Tagore who is a Hindu:- "Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come."

The Quaker Advice says:- 'Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death we are able to live life more fully.'

"Birth is the death of the life we have known; death the birth of the life we have yet to live."
Anon

The great mystery is that we are unable to foresee a real existence with different experiences when we return to the heavens from which we were born.

Many of us facing the journey of life as it nears its end will have some time when doubts and fears can take hold, shaking faith to its foundations. Jesus himself had his own 'wilderness experience.' For 40 days he knew the Lenten desert was real.

Having been close to death on several occasions I know what it is like to feel a sense of disconnection with the past and with no hope of a future. I did not know what to think, what to feel, what to do. There was a feeling of dislocation having no signpost to guide me across a frightening wasteland. It is the process of the journey to death which frightens most of us both physically and spiritually even when we believe that our eternal selves will continue after death. We all fear pain and helplessness. There are no ready answers. What we do need are companions on our journey who can wait, watch with us and take time to listen to us. To me this is more important than anything else. I have also found that the ongoing prayers of others give great comfort.

On three occasions I have had wonderful 'out of body experiences' in hospital when to the Doctors, Nurses and once when Michael my husband was present I appeared to be unconscious. How difficult it is to judge what happens to the person who is still said to be alive but who appears to be totally unconscious. Not a state any one of us would choose. Yet, on these occasions I have found that my soul being had an expanded consciousness, the real 'I' could see all that was happening and I referred to 'my body' not me lying on the bed in the ward and in the accident and emergency department. How different was my experience to that of those at my bedside who thought I was near to death.

When I came back into my body I was disappointed, and on the last occasion angry and sorry that the time for the next stage of the new spiritual adventure was being denied me. Yet I did not want to leave Michael behind. My time had not yet come.

I fully respect people's rights not to choose an assisted death, but for those, including myself, if palliative care does not and could never address all of my suffering at the end of life, I would not wish anyone to

make decisions on my behalf.

It is my body and my dying which is important. To know that others would have compassion, acknowledge my fundamental right to refuse medical treatment if the situation arose, this would give me great comfort and would improve the quality of the life left. The time has to come when those assisting us to have a good death, which I don't regard as suicide, will not be prosecuted. 'The best person to look after someone who's dying is someone who loves them'

QFP 21.54 Death is not an end, but a beginning. It is but an incident in the 'life of the ages', which is God's gift to us now. It is the escape of the spirit from its old limitations and its freeing for a larger and more glorious career.

William Littleboy, 1917

Quaker Council for European Affairs

What's really going on in Brussels?

Why do the European institutions matter?

Come and find out! - QCEA is arranging a Study Tour from 14 to 21 April 2012, involving visits to European institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg, workshops and interactive debates on the EU, QCEA's involvement and that of other NGOs in peace, economic justice, human rights and sustainable energy security.

General Meeting is offering a subsidy of about £200 to support a Friend to attend the Study Tour.

For information contact the Treasurer, John Phillips.

For more information on the study tour go to <http://www.qcea.org/home/events/study-tours/> or contact Margaret Munro, 01259 760 853.

General Meeting for Scotland 12 November 2011

Christine Davis

It was good to get to GM again, after having had clashing diary commitments earlier in the year, and what a GM it was! We had visitors:- Tony Weekes from Ireland YM who was one of the speakers; Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk; and Michael Hutchinson, the Assistant Recording Clerk, technically a visitor though he has recently come to live in Glasgow. We had a session of needful business in the morning which was well attended and thoughtful.

It's always a sign of a healthy organisation when a discussion of financial policy and the budget leads to intelligent exchange. We cheerfully increased our support of Scottish Churches' Housing Action by 50% and other donations by 20% given the austerity of the times. We also heard from Jenny Brierley of the work of the Quaker Housing Trust which hopes to expand its work in Scotland. Check it out on the web! www.qht.org.uk

We welcomed the work done for us by a small group preparing a response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Same Sex Marriage. We made some minor textual amendments before agreeing to submit the response. It is good when we can express our testimony in this way.

In the afternoon, and with expanded numbers - it was good to see so many Friends enthusiastically at GM - we started our consideration of economics by hearing from Tony Weekes about his work on *Economics and the Quaker Way*. Tony emphasised that economics is a human construct, and therefore amenable to human alteration; it is not immutable. We should look at economics from a human and humane perspective, not at humanity from an economic perspective! This was most refreshing in a time when politicians often dispense doom, gloom and despair around economics and imply that we have

no choices but to follow their prescriptions. Human well being, rather than growth, should be the objective of our political economy.

We then heard from Annie Miller about the impact of growing inequality in the last decades and the possibilities of addressing aspects of this through the use of Citizen's Income - see www.citizensincome.org for more detail. This stimulated a lively discussion, which in the usual Friendly fashion, ranged widely, taking in not just macroeconomics and politics, but housing on brownfield sites, second homes in times of homelessness, local cooperatives and credit unions, and ways we can work to promote economics with a human face.

I left on the Saturday immensely cheered by the vision and energy of the meeting and the Friends present. As ever, it was good to see and greet each other. But that is not all we do when we meet - this occasion was a reminder of all we can do in service to our communities when we work together in this focused and worshipful way. Are we taking the thoughts and stimulating ideas home to our Area and Local Meetings?



Watch out for the Elders and Overseers training day: -
Saturday 16 June, Glasgow Meeting House.

Residential General Meeting 12-13 November 2011

Magaret Boland

I arrived at GM about 5pm on the Saturday, to a crowded room which had a feeling of a buzz about it as members took part in a question and answer session. I was pleasantly surprised to see members of my local meeting who do not come regularly to GM.

The afternoon session was followed by a scrumptious supper for those who stayed on for the evening entertainment. Enough stayed on to make it a very enjoyable evening. We kicked off with a questionnaire that had us going around finding out quirky things about each other, such as who was born furthest from where they now lived or who had the most snow last winter - a tie we decided between Aberdeenshire and Dunblane

We were then well entertained by Edinburgh friends and even enticed into participating in group ploys, one of which had us roaming the room with our eyes shut trying to link up with the particular other folk who were responding appropriately to our own animal moo, woof or quack! The evening was a pleasant reminder to me of large family gatherings in the distant past.

Sunday morning had us reflecting on Economics and the Quaker way to see what aspects or elements we could promote and unite behind. As minute 12 says:

Seeking to understand how the principles of our Quaker faith should lead us to contribute through testimony and personal action to the reformation of our current economic system. We note that Britain Yearly Meeting is supporting the campaign to introduce a tax on financial transactions, the Tobin Tax. We have identified a number of contributions we can make individually, bearing witness to a less

materialist lifestyle and ensuring that our savings are put to productive use.

Within the debate which is taking place in our wider society, including the Occupy demonstrations, we see the need to uphold a non-violent approach and to work in a constructive way with other faiths and like-minded groups. We see the increasing inequality in our society and the growth of unemployment as a challenge both to our Quaker principles and to social stability.

We are called to go into the silent worship of our Meetings, to listen for God's guidance, to discern how best each of us can respond to this great challenge of our time, and how, by being ourselves transformed, we can contribute to the transformation of our world.

This was followed by a very moving All Age Meeting for Worship with Central Edinburgh Friends on the theme of peace - it being Remembrance Sunday.

There was a final opportunity for fellowship over a very nice lunch. I returned to Dunblane by two buses via Glasgow as the bus gets me to my road end whereas the train leaves me with a half hour uphill walk. It also meant I had company for the first part.

Faslane Meetings for Worship in 2012
11 March, 13 May, 24 June, 12 August, 12 October, 11
November
Bring your food, your chair and your waterproofs
Leave Edinburgh 8-30 am

Alison Burnley

Scottish Quakers and the Scottish Parliament

Elizabeth Allen, for GM working group

In September, 2011 General Meeting for Scotland (GM) appointed a working group to bring forward proposals for how GM, on behalf of Quakers in Scotland, might engage with the Scottish Parliament. Here are the proposals for your consideration. They will come to General Meeting in March.

Premise

To move forward on this, GM needs to agree a system for:

Making the necessary decisions

Taking the agreed action

Agreeing and submitting the response

In drawing up the proposals, the working group tried to work within existing GM structures, drafting in specialist help when needed.

Selecting Policy Areas

The volume of material issuing from the Scottish Parliament is considerable and we need to filter through this and select the policy areas Quakers in Scotland wish to address.

The working group's proposals focus on criminal justice, but the group understands that Quakers in Scotland may wish to enter the debate on other issues too.

Within the criminal justice field, there are many possibilities for engagement and we need to select what is appropriate for Scottish Quakers to work on. In practice this will be a small number of really important concerns. So who will be responsible for making these decisions and how will they make them?

Making Decisions - the discernment process

The Quaker discernment process should be at the core of our decision-making. Those involved need to be informed about the Scottish criminal

justice debate and Quaker criminal justice work. Although the working group does not anticipate General Meeting as a whole being involved in the discernment process, those who are engaged in it need to be accountable to General Meeting.

As GM Communications and Outreach Functions Group has as part of its remit,

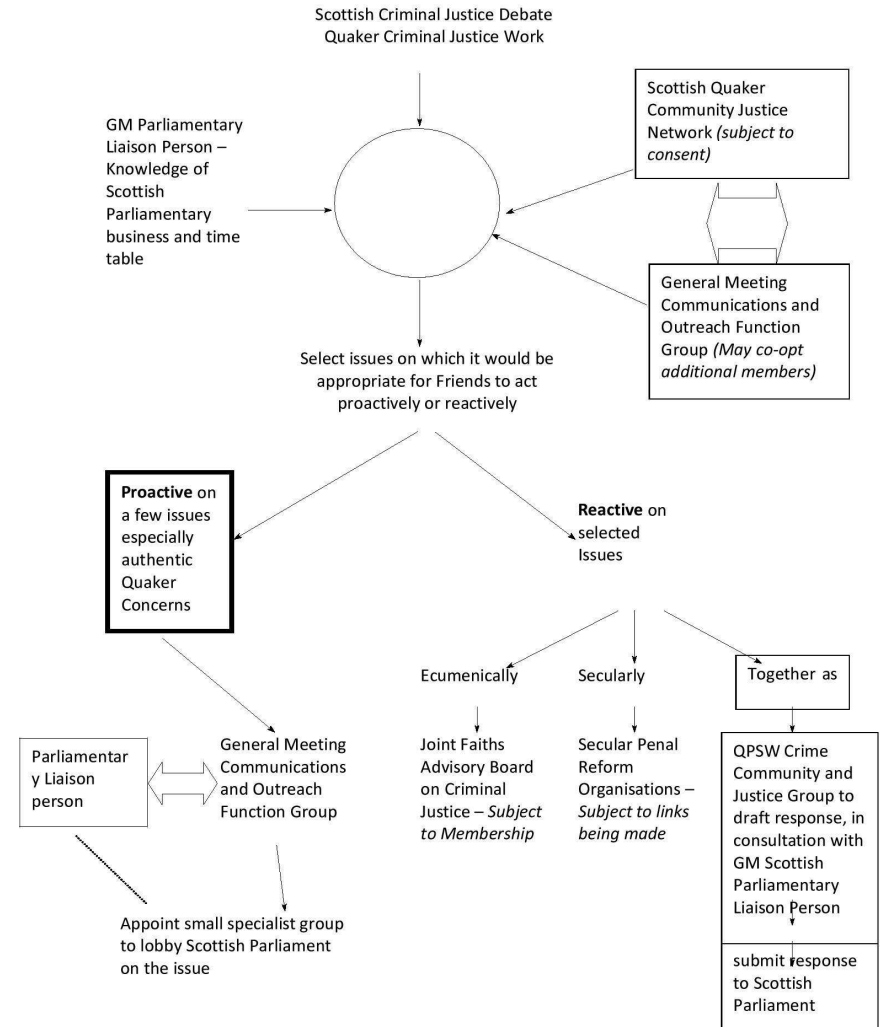
“Identify opportunities for GM to engage with the current media and political agenda (eg. Scottish Government consultations)”

The working group suggests that this is the appropriate body for selecting the issues on which Friends should focus. The GM Parliamentary Liaison Person, who is a member of this Group, is familiar with Scottish Parliamentary business and its time-table and will be a key person in this process. Apart from the Parliamentary Liaison Person, the Group may consider that its present composition is not sufficiently specialised for making this decision and GM might want to consider co-opting a few Friends with knowledge of criminal justice matters and of Quaker work on the issue, on to the Function Group, in an advisory capacity. GM may also wish to involve the Scottish Quaker Criminal Justice Network (subject to consent) in the decision making process but as this is an ad-hoc group, its involvement may not be practical.

Taking action

The working group suggests that it would be appropriate to handle a few authentic Quaker concerns proactively. To do this GM Communications and Outreach Group might appoint a small specialist group to lobby the Scottish Parliament on the concern, in conjunction with the GM Parliamentary Liaison Person. For selected other issues, it would be more appropriate to be reactive, responding to Scottish Government consultations, either as Quakers or with other like-minded bodies such as the Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice (subject to membership) and secular penal reform organisations.

Scottish Quakers and the Scottish Parliament Draft proposals from the GM working group, based on Criminal Justice



Who would draft a Quaker response?

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Crime Community and Justice Group has already accepted that it is within its remit to draft responses to proposed criminal justice legislation in Scotland. As this is the body responsible for BYM corporate work on criminal justice and as it already draws up responses to Government consultations on criminal justice in England & Wales, the working group thinks that GM would do well to benefit from its expertise on these matters. It would be desirable to have Scottish input in the drafting process. Might the GM Scottish Parliamentary Liaison Person be willing to be involved in preparing the draft?

Agreeing the response and submitting it to the Scottish Parliament
The final draft of any Quaker response would need to be agreed by an appointed and therefore accountable Quaker body. This could be the QPSW Crime Community and Justice Group or the GM Communications and Outreach Function Group. Given that a response to a criminal justice consultation is likely to be fairly specialised and that it may have to be made fairly quickly, is there any need for GM to seek general comments on the response before it is agreed?

Once agreed, the Quaker response should be submitted to the Scottish Parliament by the GM clerks.



How to get to St. Matthew's church, Tay Street, Perth., PH1 5TF

You can search for it on Google Maps by name or postcode.

Tay Street runs alongside the Tay. St Matthew's is the church with a spire situated between the two road bridges. It has a very few parking spaces. Please book one of these in advance, if needed, by contacting Philip and Felicity Bryers (01738 560 250)

For most people the nearest likely parking is at the South Inch, a 5-10 minute walk away along Tay Street.

If arriving by train, turn right out of the main station entrance, go under the railway bridge and walk down Marshall Place, with the South Inch on your right, to the roundabout at Tay Street. Turn left and continue past the Queens Bridge to the church. (10-15 minutes walk)

General Meeting for Scotland
St. Matthew's church, Perth

3 March 2012
11am until about 4pm.

"Our shared experience of waiting for God's guidance in our meetings for worship and for church affairs, together with careful listening and gentleness of heart, forms the basis on which we can live out a life of love with and for each other and for those outside our community."

Quaker Faith and Practice 10.03

Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

Our special topic for this GM is the theme of the relationship between our work and commitments as Friends in our local Meetings and the work carried out on our behalf by staff in Friends House. We will be reflecting on the links and communications between local Meetings and centrally-managed work, including financial support. It will be introduced by Katie Frost, community fundraiser for BYM.

We will also discuss a variety of business items including a report on the work of the Retreat in York, and further consideration of how best to engage with the Scottish Parliament on issues of concern to Friends including criminal justice.

Please join us in Perth, keep up to date with Scottish Quaker work, meet Friends from across the country and uphold our business method, depending as it does on good participation from as many of us as possible.

Refreshments will be available from 10.30 am onwards. See inside for directions to the church.

Robin Waterston, Clerk