

The Northern Quaker

Summer Autumn 2022

North Scotland Area Meeting

RESTORE

RECOGNISE
Recognition of what's happened and that our experiences during lockdown have all been different, life-changing for many and significant for us all. How do we encourage everyone to share their story of the pandemic so far?

EMPATHISE
Empathy for the mix of emotions that we have in response to events at home, in our Quaker communities and in the wider world. How can we respond with empathy and compassion to ourselves and to others?

SAFETY
How do we build a sense of safety, both physical and emotional, so that all Friends are able to worship and all are able to feel part of our community? How do we help those who may have felt unsafe whilst they've been away from meeting, feel safe again?

TRAUMA
Reflecting on the trauma of the pandemic, how does our Quaker community process this? How do we support people who have experienced very particular traumas during lockdown or who are facing an even more uncertain future?

OPPORTUNITIES
We have an opportunity to change what needs to be changed, to reflect on what matters to us and if we'd like to do anything differently. How do we learn from this experience, knowing we can question even seemingly fixed aspects of Quaker worship, community and faith in action?

RELATIONSHIPS
How do we reconnect, and (re-)build inclusive, responsive relationships at all levels in our communities? How are our children and young people being supported to meet together, alone and as part of our all-age community?

ENGAGEMENT
Engagement in our own spiritual health and living out our Quakerism in the wider world with the issues that affect us: How do we foster a community that engages with the challenges faced by Britain Yearly Meeting as it looks at becoming an anti-racist, diverse community facing a world in a climate emergency.

RESTORE framework used by Local Development Workers to support meetings to rebuild and look towards an exciting future

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Welcome back (again)

Welcome to the Summer/ Autumn edition of the Northern Quaker.

This year marked a welcome return to our residential AM at Pluscarden, with communal meals (thanks again Ruth) and some Friends staying in either St Scholastica's or the St Benedict's.

The main speaker on Saturday was Philip Austin from Northern Friends Peace Board, and the main focus was the war in Ukraine. The subsequent discussion provided a variety of views, and this led me to ponder the nature of truth, a concept which has featured so much throughout the ages, not least in religions and theological circles.

My own (personal and simplistic) conclusion is that there are bare facts which can be verified ("Russian armed forces crossed the Ukrainian internationally recognised borders in February 2022"), and mis/information promulgated by all parties ("this was an unprovoked act of aggression" / "Russia showed restraint, but was forced to act" etc.). Somewhere in the midst of all this lies the so-called and elusive "truth".

It brought to mind three aphorisms:

The widely cited "the first casualty of war is truth"

The second was Churchill's statement in relation to the massive efforts put into deception and subterfuge, particularly to conceal the site and time of the 1944 invasion of Europe* "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

However, I have always been attracted to the third aphorism from Bertolt Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle which I think captures truth's elusiveness; *"Truth is a black cat in a windowless room at midnight."*

It also says something that the titles of the Russian newspaper "Pravda", and the online Pravda.ru translate as "the Truth". Similarly, ex-president Trump's has named his new social media platform "Truth Social".....

As before, this edition is in digital format, but I am seeking a cost-effective printer.

As always, we are grateful to everyone for their contributions. However, we always welcome more "copy", so if you have read a book, watched a play, attended a meeting, or anything that you think might be of interest to others, please send contributions for future editions in any form to myself.

Harry harryDhorsley@gmail.com (please note the "D" in the middle).

* see Ben Macintyre's "Double Cross" for a very readable account of this.

Notices [back to top^](#)

Area Meeting Healing Group

The AM healing group meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 6.45pm for about an hour. It follows the principles of the Friends Fellowship of Healing, holding the needs of meetings, individual members and their families, and world situations in the loving re-creative power of God, to be a channel for healing and so deepen the spiritual life of our meetings. All are welcome. Please contact oriolehall@hotmail.com to send in names to be included

Mfangano

Following AM on 7th May, when we heard from David Bale about Friends School Mfangano (FSM) in Kenya, he has written that if you have questions, please contact him on: d.bale@live.com or text 07928 313446.

The school is still in need of financial support and until completion of memorandums of understanding with both Friends United Meeting (FUM) (Richmond Indiana) and Bware Yearly Meeting, which is part of FUM (Kenya), it is not yet straightforward to make donations to FSM.

In the short term, anyone who would like to support FSM financially, there are two ways to donate through a charity account called 'Friends of Mfangano Island'. The most pressing need is for the school's feeding programme and a regular standing order would be the most helpful.

The other appeal is for purchasing the land adjoining the school that will be used as a sports field and the site of a future camp on the island for international volunteers.

The banking details for this charity account are: Lloyds Bank Friends of Mfangano Island
Sort Code 30-94-47 Account no. 03283385

Alternatively, donations may be sent to the St Neots Local Quaker Meeting
Lloyds Bank St Neots Local Quaker Meeting Sort Code 30-94-47 Account No. 50116860

Or by post to St Neots Quaker Meeting, Old Court Room, St Neots Museum, 8 New Street, St Neots, PE19 1AE

Adventurous outreach grants Do you have an idea for a creative or innovative outreach activity? You could apply for an adventurous outreach grant to make it happen! For more details visit the Quakers in Britain Outreach page: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/outreach>

Inter Faith Week Inter Faith Week, 13-20 November, aims to strengthen good interfaith relations at all levels and now is a good time to start planning. Visit the

websites of Inter Faith Week <https://www.interfaithweek.org> and Scottish Inter Faith Week <https://scottishinterfaithweek.org/> for ideas and activities.

Adult Education Grants Applications are open for Adult Education Grants for 2022-23. The grants are particularly aimed at members and attenders gaining further or higher education to equip themselves to serve society and/or Quakers in Britain. You should be a mature student or graduate and be either a member or attender. Full details of this grant can be found at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/grant-making/adult-education>.

Quakers and their meeting houses Having recently published a book about Quakers and their meeting houses, Chris Skidmore describes the experience of writing it (see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/quakers-and-their-meeting-houses>).

Ukraine Meetings for Worship: Kyiv Quakers hold two Meetings every Sunday on Zoom. The current details are as shown below. However, they tend to change and you SC017958 3 might wish to check their Facebook page for up-to-date links (see <https://www.facebook.com/QuakersKyivUkraine>)

Ukraine: Faithfully maintaining our testimony against war '...our long established testimony against war is a clear vision of the world we want to see, the divine commonwealth that God is calling us to live in.' Oliver Robertson addresses Meeting for Sufferings. A new page at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/ukraine> outlines Quakers in Britain's response to the war in Ukraine and gives links to our partners' resources.

Fundraising for Quaker work to support Ukrainian refugees The Europe and Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation have in partnership with the British Friends of the Quaker Council for European Affairs and the Central European Gathering (of Quakers) set up a mechanism for Friends to donate money for Quaker work with Ukrainians. You can find more information about it at <https://fwccemes.org/news/quaker-support-for-ukraine>

Quakers in Russia hold weekly worship on Saturdays in Moscow and by arrangement in St Petersburg and on the first, third and fifth Sundays online. More details about and links to all the above can be found at <https://fwccemes.org/news/quaker-attention-on-peace-and-ukraine>.

Citizen diplomacy with Russian people The Quaker citizen diplomacy initiative was featured on BBC Radio Four's *Sunday* programme. There was an interview with Russian Quaker Sergei Nikitin, who talked about ways Quakers have built friendship and peace with Russian people. You can find out more about the Quakers in Britain citizen diplomacy initiative at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/ukraine/citizendiplomacy>. [The recording of the *Sunday* programme is on BBC Sounds at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0017csx>

Deaths & memorials [back to top^](#)

Michael and Dilys Otter (Inverness/Caithness). Michael died on 5th April 2022 and Dilys on April 24th. They are buried at Shiegra Cemetery, Kinlochbervie and donations to Assynt Mountain Rescue in memory of Michael and Dilys will be welcome.

Dreda Cook (Aberdeen) died a few years ago but her death was only recorded by AM in August 2021

Mari Wright, a faithful attender of Lochaber Meeting for many years, who died in September 2021. She never joined the Society of Friends but contributed generously to the Society and to the life of the Meeting.

Margaret Correia (Forres) died on 15th June 2022. Her Church of Scotland funeral (she loved the music) on the 24th June was attended by several Friends from Forres Meeting.

William Rutherford (Forres & Nairn) died on June 17th 2022. William shared his very enquiring mind, and his deafness, with Friends for a good number of years. He was a keen seeker of truth and explored a number of Christian churches. He is buried at Clovenside cemetery, Forres. A number of Friends from Forres & Nairn attended his graveside funeral on the 15th July 2022.



Alan Parker 09/02/1959 - 10/07/2021

Alan was born in Aberdeen Maternity Hospital, growing into a typical mischievous lad, loving to cycle and taking his dog, Glen, with him, on his paper round. He received an Honours degree in Social Sciences from Salford University, going on to receive BA honours from Trinity College, London.

He loved hillwalking, cycling, dancing, travelling and learning new skills. Alan was a qualified scuba diver, held a blackbelt in karate and an HGV licence qualified to transport dangerous goods. As a member of AA he sponsored many

addicts who all speak very highly of him.

Alan started attending Aberdeen Local meeting in the early 1990's and after a few years applied for membership. He was a very private man and few local Friends got to know him well, but those who did found him engaging in discussions on various issues. Other Friends were well aware of him because of his slightly eccentric

habits, such as often arriving at meeting at the last minute, writing notes in Meeting and then leaving very promptly.

He was very involved with the care of his mother, often carrying out errands for her. Alan was a friendly person with a warm smile and also very kind, as when he drove a Friend and her husband, who had come to Meeting without a car that Sunday, to the hospital after she had fainted in Meeting. Alan was also involved with the Thursday evening Meeting for Worship in Aberdeen, opening the Meeting House and welcoming Friends.

Alan met his wife Sandra in 2008 and soon had her climbing hills, dancing and cycling. They travelled the world having great adventures until Alan was sadly diagnosed with cancer in 2019. Alan and Sandra moved to Edinburgh with Alan transferring his Membership from North Scotland to South East Scotland on 28 November 2020. Despite his diagnosis Alan continued to walk, cycle and travel until Thursday 8th July 2021, when he was admitted to The Western General Hospital, where he passed away peacefully on Saturday 10th July 2021, with Sandra by his side. According to his wishes, there was a private funeral at Seafield Crematorium on 19th July 2021.

Anna Phillips, Nigel Dower (Aberdeen Local Meeting) and Alan's wife, Sandra (Memorial Minute for Alexander Alan Parker 09/02/1959 - 10/07/2021)

Mary Barnes. Fond memories from Lochaber and Lorn Friends [back to top^](#)

Mary was born into the Morland family, members of Street Meeting, Somerset

As a birth-right Friend Mary attended Street Meeting and remembers her grandfather looking sternly down at her from the elders' bench. As Mary was a lively child, perhaps he had cause to look stern!

Mary's Quaker identity was part of her bloodstream. We learned so much from her about being Friends. The Quaker way of life came naturally to her. She deeply believed in the power of the Light to guide a person's thinking and actions. She had a questioning mind and did not hesitate to challenge people's assumptions. I remember her once questioning the idea of Quaker testimonies, whether they had become more like a creed rather than helpful guidance for an individual's quest for the Truth.

She was interested in so many things. This always made for good conversations as during our rides to Area Meeting. When she stayed at Glencruitten House, she loved getting to know people, I remember someone saying, 'Oh Mary, you ask so many questions!' She was enthusiastic about painting, an accomplished water-colourist; and music, playing the cello and supporting the Mull Music Festival.

Her family's visits to Oban began with a holiday home in North Connel. She moved to Oban permanently with her husband David who was the art teacher at the High School. Janet and Geoff's (Fairbairn) memories below speak of her invaluable contribution to our local meeting. My memory of Mary is that she was undaunted. Life was an adventure to be appreciated and lived to the full. Even latterly, when receiving respite care at a residential facility in Strontian, she would write interesting letters about the people she had met there. The last time I saw her was at the residential home in 'Benderloch, where we had a conversation about spiritual sustenance in times of adversity.

Mary attended Meeting faithfully. It was a round trip of 100 miles from Drimnin to Appin, largely on single track roads and a ferry crossing at Corran. When in her 80s, she was advised not to continue driving and the journey took on epic proportions! Although Drimnin is only 30 miles from Oban as the crow flies, Mary would start on the Saturday with a 12 mile lift down the narrow road from Drimnin to Lochaline, then a ferry across to Fishnish on Mull, then a bus journey from Fishnish to Craignure and a further ferry from Craignure to Oban. She would then stay with us on the Saturday and Sunday nights and make her return journey on Monday.

On one occasion, she was slow to get off the ferry at Fishnish and the bus went without her. There's not much sign of habitation at Fishnish and it was getting dark, but she managed to find someone to take her to Craignure and she caught her ferry. When she arrived in Oban, she seemed to treat the whole thing as a great adventure.

What a Friend, we miss her.

David James, Glencruitten, Oban.

We first met Mary and her husband David about 30 years ago. We had a shared interest in art, working together in exhibitions in Oban and Appin. At that time Mary and David attended the Lochgilphead meeting while we were part of the Lochaber meeting in Fort William. For a short time, there were small Meetings in both Oban and at a residential home at North Connel to accommodate an elderly friend there and a local couple in Oban.

Meanwhile the Lochaber Meeting relocated to Appin, Mary and David became an integral part of that the Meeting. Sadly, David died unexpectedly while they were planning a move to Drimnin to support their son and wife. Mary continued to attend the Meeting even after she had moved to Drimnin. This involved a drive of 50 miles plus a ferry journey for Mary, accompanied by her elderly dog Nannie.

Mary was a birthright Quaker from the Morlands family. She served as an Elder and was also treasurer for the Lochaber and Lorn meeting for many years. She was a rock of support and steadying influence for us all and was very positive in the face of illness and loss, she saw the best in people and in situations. She enjoyed

travelling and meeting people, representing Lochaber and Lorn Meeting at various Quaker events in Scotland.

Later, as travelling became more difficult and she was unable to drive we had the occasional Meeting in her home in Drimnin and when she was having respite care herself in Strontian, Oban or Benderloch, we and other members of the Meeting were able to spend time with her there.

After moving permanently into residential care, she was transferred to Penrith to be nearer family members. Lockdown ruled out visits, but we and other members were able to make contact by phone.

We remember Mary with great fondness and as a person of many interests; music, playing her cello, painting, weaving, and as an inspirational Quaker

Janet and Geoff Fairbairn, Appin

I first met Mary when she came to Meeting in Oban. She and her husband lived in North Connel then. Her husband died but she moved to Drimnin near Lochaline to be near her son. She would still come to Meeting (not each month but when she could). By that time our Meeting had moved to Port Appin. She might stay over with friends, as it was a long journey and ferry ride to get to Port Appin from Drimnin. It was lovely to meet her when she came with her sheep dog as company. We always had a shared lunch after Meeting, and she was very strict about having a silence before we ate. Eventually she went to a care home in Penrith to be cared for and we lost contact a bit. It was from them that we learnt of her death.

She and I got on very well and we understood one another.

Midge Gourley, Port Appin

Elsie Gwenllian Taylor 24/4/1922- 25/5/2022. A celebration of her life[back to top^](#)

A long and purposeful life Elsie was born in and grew up in Glynrhondda Street, Cardiff. Her mother's family was Welsh and her Scottish father was a lecturer in mathematics.

In Cardiff Elsie obtained a degree in mathematics and an education diploma. After teaching for a short time mid 1940s at the Mount School in York she moved to Edinburgh in 1946 to gain a Batchelor's in Education. A short stint in Brighton College of Education was followed in 1949 - 1956 by a move into educational statistics and she worked as a researcher and lecturer at Moray House in Edinburgh and was also warden of Playfair Hall, a hall of residence for Edinburgh University students. In this period (1952/53), she won a Fulbright Scholarship to Princeton, USA for a year. It was during this time that she developed an interest in statistics and psychology. Laterally 1964-1982, she became Secretary of the new CSE

Examining Board in Newcastle.



Elsie retired at 60 to Orkney, where she had spent holidays with the Skene family for many years, having met Christian Skene when they both had their first teaching jobs at the Quaker School in York. Elsie really enjoyed Orkney and took an active part in many aspects of Orkney life - the Quaker group of Friends were a mainstay. Yoga and Tai Chi were also central parts of her weekly activities. Her purposeful daily walks into Stromness, until a fall late in life, were familiar with townsfolk.

Elsie was admirably organised and liked to keep things simple and streamlined. She valued solitude, but very much enjoyed hearing latest news from her family, friends the community and the world. Elsie took a keen, in-depth interest in many things spanning spiritual, social and the technical. She also had an indomitable spirit and nothing was too much of a challenge Her inventiveness was also inspiring always finding new ways round any issue or problem and her humour was always dry, sharp and very amusing! She would also be quietly proud to be thought of as having a dose of good Welsh hywl.



At 95, and with reduced mobility, Elsie still showed that indomitable spirit, amazing neighbours, nursing and caring staff with her determination - they said they'd never seen anyone quite like her! As she

became more reliant on others, a role Elsie accepted graciously, she was very appreciative of the skilled and friendly care of all friends, helpers and staff.

Elsie Gwenllian Taylor - 100 years, 1 month and 1 day - had a long and purposeful life. She was loved upon this earth and will be remembered with respect and great fondness.

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## Article of faith a worshipful introduction on Ukraine [back to top^](#)

Friends, let us hold in the Light the people of Ukraine. Let us hold in the Light the people of Russia. Let us hold in the Light the people of Afghanistan. Let us hold in the Light the people of Ethiopia. Let us hold in the Light the people of Myanmar. Let us hold in the Light those affected by conflicts we have forgotten or have never even heard of, because the consequences of war will scar lives just as they are doing in Kyiv. Let us hold in the Light the people working for peace. Let us hold in the Light the people who are not.

Prayer can be a great comfort, and a powerful spur to action. But what will comfort us and what will comfort others may be very different. We need to hear the voices of people affected by today's wars, so that their lived experience can help us better understand how God is leading us in that situation. But whose voices are we hearing? Pay attention to the news you notice and the events that move you, as it can be a window into your priorities and your prejudices.

So how do we connect with people living close to armed conflict? During worship last weekend, one meeting put up on their walls the names of Russian and Ukrainian peacemakers. Many Friends have joined the online meetings for worship of Quakers in Kyiv, and of Friends House Moscow, which has been quietly building peace since the end of the Cold War. Whose voices should we be raising up? Which stories should we be challenging?

Oftentimes taking a pacifist stance, of faithfully maintaining 'our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ', is itself a challenge to a dominant narrative. Its value is often to remind people that there is another way, that even when war may seem the only answer there is still a choice and an alternative.

That alternative is not passivity. Friends and others have long experience of nonviolent resistance. People may non-violently demonstrate, as thousands of Russians have been this past week, and being arrested for it – including children. People may refuse to support occupiers, both passively – such as not going to work – and actively – such as damaging the weapons they are forced to make. Many of the most powerful acts of nonviolent resistance manage to both challenge the oppressive action and assert the humanity of everyone involved. When Syrian protestors gave flowers and water to soldiers, it showed both that they were not a threat (so making it harder to shoot them) and meant that the soldiers could see them as people like themselves. Such actions are not about victory over an enemy, but about turning an enemy into a friend.

One of the ways Quakers have often acted on our conviction that we are all God's children, that everyone has value and worth, is to support the people shunned by others. This can be about practical support, and it can also be about reminding the

rest of the world that these are people too.

When I think of the people who may be shunned, I think of conscientious objectors. It will take some considerable courage to be a conscientious objector to military service today in Russia and in Ukraine, though for different reasons. Quakers have long upheld the right to refuse to kill; how can we support those who are holding firm to that stance even in the most trying circumstances? Would we support COs who come to Britain? If we didn't, are we confident others would?

When I think of people being shunned, I think of those people fleeing Ukraine who are not white. People of colour in Ukraine, students from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, have been reported to have been hampered or attacked as they tried to flee, denied support and accommodation in Ukraine and neighbouring countries because they are not Ukrainian. How can we support them, and in so doing uphold the notion that all refugees should be treated equally?

And when I think of people being shunned, I think of Russians around the world. It's probably very lonely being a Russian in a lot of countries right now. Are we helping to ensure that any outrage over the Russian government's actions does not turn into hatred of all Russians, those with no links to the government, no influence over its actions?

Many of us may be feeling, that's all well and good, sharing stories and holding in the Light and so on, but what can we actually DO? How can we stop the bloodshed or at least mitigate its impacts?

We may be able to give money, to give time, to offer hospitality, to undertake relief work, to use our resources and our riches as individuals and as communities. But the reality is that the role we can play from here in Britain, at this time of war, may be more limited than we would like. Friends may be familiar with the hourglass model of peace work, where there is space before war and after war to carry out many actions for peace, but at the time of conflict itself, where the hourglass pinches in the middle, there is very little opportunity.

There can sometimes be a temptation to think of what great thing we can do, on a par with the times past when Quakers organised the Kindertransport or advised the Russian Tsar. But those things could only happen because of groundwork being done, relationships being built, for years beforehand. Have we built the foundations we need for such work today? Has someone else, so that our role is to support? We aren't necessarily called to be amazing. We are called to be faithful.

One of the things we can get from our faith and our long-established testimony against war is a clear vision of the world we want to see, the divine commonwealth that God is calling us to live in. Some of the greatest strides towards that world have come after very dark times. What are the changes that are needed? What work do we need to do now to clear the way for such changes to happen? What

are the existing institutions and practices that need to be celebrated and maintained, even if they are imperfect? What would need to happen for Russia’s neighbours not to see it as a threat? What would need to happen for a military alliance in Europe to feel unnecessary?

As Paul Parker was quoted last month, “war today is the failure of yesterday that leads to unimaginable human suffering on all sides. Imagine what could happen if we were willing to invest as much in peace as we currently do in preparing for war.”

Just imagine Friends. Then let us get to work.

Prepared ministry from Oliver Robertson, Head of Worship and Witness at BYM

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North Scotland Area Meetings [back to top^](#)

Area Meeting Summaries

Below is an attempt to summarise the salient points of AM minutes over the last 11 months. They do not pretend to be a full picture, and please accept my apologies if there are omissions which Friends feel should have been included. The full minutes can be viewed at <https://www.quakerscotland.org/minutes/20>

21st August 2021

Membership;

Anne Hitchen accepted into Inverness Meeting

Pat & Phil Instone transferred from Stafford Area Meeting to Shetland Meeting

Robert Wilson transferred from Orkney to Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting

Properties; see separate article below

Inclusion & Diversity; AM endorsed Yearly Meeting’s commitment to be an actively anti-racist faith community and to lovingly acknowledge and affirm the trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming Friends in our communities.

6th November 2021

Properties; see separate article below

19th November 2021

Membership;

Ian Bonner Evans (Inverness/Forres) has resigned his membership

Michael Ashman transferred from Sheffield and Balby to North Scotland (Lochaber & Lorn)

Nominations; for a full list, see [2021-07 NSAQM minute 211119 \(quakerscotland.org\)](#)

10th December 2021

Treasurer reports and funding issues; for full details, see [2021-08 NSAQM minute 211210.pdf \(quakerscotland.org\)](#)

10th January 2022

Nominations, appointments & planning; for a full list, see [AM Planning Group 210110 minutes and notes \(quakerscotland.org\)](#)

5th February 2022

Quaker Life Representative Council:

Lynden and Zoe in a varied workshop enabled participants to explore Quaker Life's October focus on reflecting on the impacts of the last 2 years and how we move ahead with our commitments from Yearly Meeting 2021, using the RESTORE framework. The RESTORE framework evolved from a tool used in schools, to understand what we have lived through, what we are facing now and how we might go forward. For a full account, see [2022_01 NSAQM minute 220205.pdf \(quakerscotland.org\)](#)

20th August 2022 (Pluscarden residential) – see also following articles

Membership; application for membership received from Derek Young. Derek lives in Nethybridge and has been attending Forres Meeting (in person when he can, and online) for several years.

Northern Quaker; In a poll, to which 16 responded, virtually all wanted the Northern Quaker to continue and would like it to appear twice a year. Most Friends would like to receive it online but a significant minority would prefer to receive paper copies. The default position would appear to be that it is sent to Friends online unless they specifically indicate that they wish to receive a paper copy, so sufficient copies for these Friends plus a few spares should be printed.

Local Development Worker priorities; Zoe Prosser presented an update on her current workload and priorities; see separate article by Zoe

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“Choose the way that leads to light... choose the way that leads to life.”

After a two-year gap due to the pandemic, fifty Quakers of all ages gathered once again in the peace and tranquillity of Pluscarden Abbey for a weekend of talking and silence; sharing tasty and nutritious food; worship, learning and community. We were joined by Phillip Austin from Northern Friends Peace Board and Zoe Prosser, the Local Development Worker for Scotland. The overall theme of the weekend could be summed up as finding ways to peace in troubled times, and there was also a focus on inclusion.

On Friday night, some of us went to the Abbey for Compline, while others held a worship-sharing on the war in Ukraine and how it may challenge our peace testimony. I joined this after Compline, and had a sense that people had engaged deeply with the issues. While Friends made bedtime drinks, I went outside to meet someone who was due to arrive. I stood on the bridge over the river, watching the evening sky as the first stars appeared. A bat swooped over my head again and again, seeming to commune with me, and I could hear owls calling up and down the valley. It brought to mind Kenneth Steven’s poem, written during his weekend with us a few years ago.

The next morning was our Meeting for Worship for Business. The minutes from this are available elsewhere, but I was struck by the quote that I’ve written at the start of this article. The words were advice given by a Friend who has recently died and will be sadly missed, on how to make good decisions.

Meanwhile, there was an outdoor workshop for the children and young people in the nearby woods. They plaited grasses, whittled wood, learned to light a fire from a spark, and then cooked their own lunch. They spent the day together, and came back full of enthusiasm.

In the afternoon, Philip told us about the work of Northern Friends Peace Board, which has covered the area from Shetland down to Nottingham and Derby ever since it started in 1913. At that time there was real concern about the growth of militarisation and international tensions, a situation worryingly resonant with today. Philip led us in a discussion, asking where we could see possibilities for action for peace where we are, and what support we would need. One suggestion, which could apply to any interaction, was that we listen carefully to what the other person is saying before wading in with answers. Then there can be some hope of reaching understanding and moving forward together.

There were Epilogues on Friday and Saturday nights, with inspiring poetry. On Sunday morning we looked at Quaker Life Rep. Council (see separate article). Zoe explained the new Quaker Life structure to us, and we did a shortened version of the Inclusion exercise. We reflected on a series of questions about cultural norms

which can make it hard to be inclusive, for example, a belief that there is only one “right” way to do things. Friends wrote their thoughts and aims, then read them out to the group as they stuck them onto posters. When I looked at these afterwards, I was struck by the wealth of ideas and wisdom expressed. I’ve grouped them into subject areas, hopefully the ones the writers intended! (Ed; a compilation of the responses is included at the end of this report)

Our Meeting for Worship in the village hall was joined by Inverness Meeting and Friends from the Highlands and Islands, by Zoom. There was inspiring ministry. I was aware that at the same time, other meetings were taking place in person elsewhere in North Scotland.

It’s an interesting thought that no two people will have had the same experience of this weekend. Friends camped, stayed in a campervan, or had a room in the Abbey or in St. Scholastica’s. Others stayed in B&B or went home at the end of each day. Still others joined us online. People came for the whole weekend, for a day, or a morning. For sure, no two people will have eaten the same meals. There was a diverse range of lovingly made food, some produced in the kitchen by our warm-hearted cook and her team of helpers, and some generously brought by Friends. For many of us, the social time was as important as the formal sessions; the walk up and down the valley, finding our way across the fields together, or sharing a pot of tea or a meal. The opportunity to talk, or simply to share the moment with Friends we hadn’t seen for three years or more – all this brought a long-awaited and much-appreciated sense of our diverse and welcoming community. If I try to sum up the approach that we all brought to this weekend - the openness to each other, the flexibility - I would say that we were warmly inclusive. I’m already looking forward to next year’s residential weekend.

Lynden Easterbrook, Forres LM

**Friends’ Responses to Inclusion Questions**      **21st August 2022**[back to top^](#)

In a world where little appreciation is expressed, how can we develop a culture of appreciation?

- Say “thank you” at least once every day.
- Appreciation modelling – Drafting flowcharts which work back through the inputs which created success.
- By naming the different gifts and affirming them.
- Be grateful for contributions that differ from your own.
- Thank people for little things. Project a culture of gratitude.
- Celebrate things with joy and recognition.

In a world where there is perfectionism, how can we recognise that it doesn't improve things, and contributes to low morale?

- Forgive myself (as well as others). Say "I forgive you."
- Our imperfections (and we all have them) make us unique and essential and we accept all as ourselves.
- Be satisfied with "good enough"
- Treat yourself as you would treat a loved friend.
- Love thy neighbour as thyself. Not in a conceited showing way but gentle or caring.
- Feedback? Relaxation. Mindfulness, as opposed to self-criticism.
- Take rests and appreciate what you have achieved.
- By celebrating completed activities.
- Be modest but focussed about what you are trying to do.
- Don't take it all on our shoulders – realism and humour. Have courage to think it through step by step.

In a world where there is a continued sense of urgency, how can we create realistic work plans that allow time to be inclusive?

- Go for a walk/take a break to allow decisions/ideas to form slowly.
- Take time.
- Add in breathing space.
- Scheduling time for inclusive practice.

In a world where there is a belief that there is only one "right" way, how can we accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal?

- Remember there is no one magic solution. Humility.
- Ask "what is helpful to the group at this stage?" rather than "what can I do to get my way?"
- Focus more on others' needs than our own "rights".
- Separate goals/basic values from diversity of means.
- Recognise difference – others' views are important.
- Be still. Listen.
- Try to get to know a little bit of my/your surroundings/community.
- By building in flexibility from the outset.
- Encourage frequent face-to-face small discussions/dialogue.
- Set an example of deep listening (not thinking about what I want to say).
- Make sure everyone has a chance to speak. Limit time "max 2 minutes – I will stop you."

- Sharing/rotation/observation.

In a world where the written word is valued above all other ways of communicating, how can we find other ways to document things, and value all contributions?

- Photography/video.

In a world where we believe we have a right to emotional and psychological comfort, and scapegoat those who make us feel uncomfortable, how can we develop a culture of growth and learning, and not take it personally?

- We need to feel safe to feel uncomfortable – work on safety within that discomfort.
- Work with children.
- See clearly that pain/discomfort x harm/damage (Plato)
- Speak to the things we see with kindness.
- Overwhelming/overwhelmed.
- Continually question, look and honour difference.
- See discomfort as just a point on a timeline. It's not the end point – we just don't know what that will be.

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I was at Pluscarden 2022...this is not a report! [back to top^](#)

Nettles? You made string from Nettles?" And they whittled wood to make a keyring ornament to hang on it; and they built fires and they cooked sausages and marshmallows out there in the woods. How can I qualify to be a Young Person next year? It sounds so much more my sort of thing than all that sitting.

What was my sort of thing was all the lovely people: blethering, sitting cosily with; catching up on the last 3 years; getting to know new people; walking with them between St. Scholasticas and the village hall. I was also accompanied for my bedtime stroll on Saturday. Owls too.

I was very happy to meet Zoe Prosser, our Sottish Local Development worker. Her clarity was a delight. I could hear every word and now have a good understanding of what her work is and how she goes about it, not daunted by the huge area Scotland is. She is a lovely person too!

As always I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about Quaker Life Rep council, and enthusiastically joined in the activity we were given to do. Using pens and sticky notes we were asked to respond to questions which related broadly to the theme of being inclusive. These questions were each read twice, by both a man and a

woman. I was intrigued how they could sound different in the two voices. One question I remember was asking how we could make sure everybody's voice is heard...Towards the end we were asked if we would pick one we had written and, if we wished, go out front and read it out. These and the others (one each) we stuck on one of the 2 charts where we felt it to be most appropriate.

No street lights; what a gift, just moon owl dark; a beautiful, quiet, velvety dark. This did lead me to a first night total confusion when I woke with absolutely no idea where I was. As I slowly remembered I was unable at first to work out how to get off my bed, and then to find the door.

There was a seemingly endless procession of lorries and tractors trundling loudly past on the road outside the hall. Though challenging our hearing, it did, the first day, bring some interesting ministry about harvest.

Throughout the week-end there was frequent voicing of the delight of being together again and what a wonderful atmosphere there was. A really representative group, ages ranging from 5 to nearly 91, included 4 families, 2 of which had representatives of 3 generations.

Quakerism in the North of Scotland is alive and well.

Diana Brockbank, Forres LM

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**The View from the Kitchen.... the other side of Pluscarden** [back to top^](#)

I drive over the little bridge at Pluscarden. There are some new welcome signs... look left – the gates still say PAX – peace... turn right for Saint Scholastica's – note the new car park.

I turn the key in the door and after two years' absence I'm greeted by a wonderful familiarity... and evidence of the last, recently departed Pilgrim - half a bottle of milk, still in date and good to use, some cheese and eggs. A basket of washing needs hanging on the line. I'm sure a Friend will volunteer.

In just a few short hours this reverential silence will buzz with hungry Quakers and Pluscarden 2022 will begin. In reality, the planning for Pluscarden starts almost a year beforehand, but until just a few weeks ago I had forgotten that I had said yes to catering this year!! But no panic, I have a box of notes and a spreadsheet of shopping from previous years that mean I no longer have to worry about how many cups of tea 50 Quakers will drink over the course of a weekend?? - (for those who like the answers, that's 2 boxes of 100 tea bags; 6 bags of fresh coffee and about 24 pints of milk! And

someone will want decaf and peppermint tea..... and can we have some camomile...)

This year had an additional twist – after two years away, how many would come? A couple of weeks before the event numbers are finalised and I start planning meals and shopping lists are drawn up. Dry goods are purchased, soups are made and frozen, and the day before, all the fresh goods are bought.

I often get asked, is this what I do for a job? The answer is no, I just like cooking and liked being quartermaster for guide camps. Mainly I liked the campfire, but the ovens at Pluscarden will have to do for the weekend. I do love the fact that you all assist so willingly – from chopping veg and making sandwiches, to washing up and hoovering. For two days the kitchen becomes a place of industry and conversation. *Do we have any more jam.....?*  
*If we make the structures lighter will all the work get done...?*

One change we brought in a few years back was that the Friday night meal was catered. Friends had travelled a long way and some were a little older and so it seemed friendlier to start by sharing a meal. So as 6pm approaches the noise level rises, the dining room is prepared and food arrives.

Rice with Mushrooms, Vegan Muffin, lentil loaf and salad... with strawberries and fantastic chocolate cakes to follow.

In that moment, as we come together over a meal, sharing food and our stories... in that moment, the Spirit is also present and we become a community.

Ruth Jeffries, Forres LM

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At Pluscarden Abbey (by Kenneth Steven, forwarded by Lynden Easterbrook*)

Only once have I stood beneath a tree holding my breath to hear an owl. Its voice was ragged; tattered at the edges - a call that carried wide across the woods in the still blue warmth that August dusk. And everywhere along the valley's edge came callings of other owls until I thought they talked to one another, voices almost like strange lamps strung out into the night over a darkened sea. I held my breath and heard their woven calls as the moon rose whole and huge above the hills.

* Kenneth Steven kindly gave permission for us to reproduce this when he joined us at Pluscarden in 2018. It's now published in his book "Out of the Ordinary", published by St. Andrew Press, ISBN 978 1 80083 005 9.

Aberdeen Friends Reflect on the threat of Environmental Breakdown [back to top^](#)

Inspired by 'The Loving Earth Project' (www.lovingearth.org) a group of us Aberdeen Quakers created a display of textile panels reflecting our environmental concerns. We wanted to add our voice to those demanding more climate action. Some of our Meeting were protesting in Glasgow during COP26 but not all of us could do that. This was a public expression of our varied concerns and the different things we are doing to reduce the harms to our planet. A total of eight panels were completed using preloved fabrics and rejuvenated sewing and collage skills. We started by meditating on what the effect the climate crisis was likely to have (or already had) on something we loved. We then thought about actions we could take to reduce our personal impact on the planet. Next, we made sketches and worked on notes for statements about our panels. Our concerns were wide ranging:



- Islands disappearing under increasing sea levels;
- Making better choices in transport and shopping;
- Living sustainably: supporting bees, trees and using bicycles;
- Just transition to green hydrogen and renewable energy;
- My carbon footprint;
- Trees for Life;
- Melting of the 'Third Pole' (Tibetan Glacier); and the
- Insect Apocalypse.

Despite the most horrendous weather and incredibly short daylight hours, Penny, Helen, and myself managed to hang the finished panels on the remains of the old

Virginia Creeper on the side wall of 100 Crown Street. We were just in time; it was the Sunday before the COP26 conference began in earnest. Even more incredibly, the panels stayed pretty intact for the whole period of the conference, with just the odd straightening required from time to time. Finally, conference over, we were able to bring them indoors where they had an opportunity to dry off and be examined in greater detail by Friends and Attenders. It was fun to be making and creating in community with other Quakers.

Lesley Reynolds Aberdeen LM

Pilgrimage for COP22 [back to top^](#)

Pilgrimage for COP22 was a walk and learning journey from Dunbar (following the John Muir trail) to Glasgow to reflect on the climate and ecological crises in anticipation of the United Nations global summit which took place in Glasgow.

Above all, the journey showed the transformative power of doing something(s) together for a common purpose. None of which would have happened if Jonathan Baxter had not had the inspiration and energy to orchestrate it. Jonathan got his original inspiration from the mural painted round the Music Hall wall by Phoebe Anna Traquair, adjacent to St Mary's Episcopalian cathedral in Edinburgh. Her mural depicted a contemporary (i.e. 1890's) version of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

We were showered with blessings all along our route; seascapes, skyscrapers,

seabuckthorn in abundance, food provided by all manner of folk in churches, halls, a mosque and Gudwara, and beds for the night or church hall floors.



Regaled by a choir singing "Enough is enough" in the pouring rain, a preview of the amazing blankets in "stitches for survival". 500 silk pennant flags, more than

6 feet tall on the beach at Portobello, which had travelled up from East Anglia (see Ali Pretty Beach of Dreams)

Amazing, inspirational people around every corner, thanking us for what we were doing for them. What were we doing? A tea trolley and homemade biscuits popped up in a field at Lauriston Farm. And, of course, the sombre experience of walking through Grangemouth and its petro-chemical complex.

A visit to Prestongrange museum – one of the first industrial sites in Scotland, circa 12th century, connected to the monks from nearby Newbattle Abbey who first mined for coal in the area. At the Falkirk Wheel, where our pilgrimage “bumped” into pilgrims from Sweden (2000km), and Munchen (1500kms), and Belgian Grandparents for the Climate.



Our final meal together was at the Glasgow Sikh Gudwara on Friday 29th October. On the Pilgrim's Procession the following day we followed other pilgrims from Glasgow Green to George Square, led by folk from the Minga Indigena, a grouping of collectives, organisations and communities from diverse Indigenous nations throughout the American continent.

36 pilgrims carried a huge “Serpent of Capitalism” inflated black monster, which was summarily deflated when we arrived in George Square.

And so our journeys continue, ever onward, ever forward.

Gillian Siddens, Aberdeen LM

Meeting for Sufferings 4th December 2021 Online [back to top^](#)

...when Newton's apple fell towards the earth, the earth, ever so slightly, fell toward the apple as well...

In our opening worship, as an elder read from 'The world has need of you' by Ellen Bass, I was reminded of lines from a beautiful walking meditation by the Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn, whose death, by coincidence, was announced as I finalised the report you are now reading

With each step I greet the earth

With each step the earth greets me.

This imperative - to bring a spiritual dimension to each and every task we undertake - was a strong theme running through the whole of December's Meeting for Sufferings.

The day was mostly spent with contributions from various groups. I'll mention a selection and full details of all that was covered can be found on the Sufferings website (see below)

The Book of Discipline Revision Committee brought Sufferings their second report. I was encouraged to hear from the clerks Rosie Carnell and Catherine Brewer how Friends are moving slowly, prayerfully forward, focusing on what can be done given the pandemic's impositions on ways of working, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the pandemic has also brought new and unforeseen dimensions, for example its impact on our ways of worship. Consideration of the language we use to describe our spiritual experience, and other tender and challenging topics, will await the return of extended in person meetings. This realism and trust gave a sense that the work of the committee is in safe hands, and before too long we will be asked to begin looking at draft material they have prepared.

The Quaker World Relations Committee and the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations also brought us significant reports on their ongoing work, speaking honestly about the challenges they had faced and sharing plans for the future, both groups putting a religious concern for the earth's sustainability at the heart of what they do, alongside addressing racial injustice and gender diversity.

Whilst we didn't devote time to discuss in detail reports from 26 other European Yearly Meetings, these are included in full in the preparative material and are well worth looking at on the Sufferings website. Friends will find there a report from Joyce Taylor, St Andrews, who attended online the annual meeting of Quakers in France, its theme being Let action follow hard on the heels of conviction.

The Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, and Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship, had been invited to bring their reflections on attending the COP 26 Climate Conference in Glasgow, and it was for me their soul-searching offerings that provided a deeply moving heart to the business of the day. Our Friends spoke of despair and hope, of the power of working in partnership with others, of the vigils, of the contradictions (we can say it was both good and bad), and of the great tide of prayers and people joining together to bear witness.

We were drawn once again to reflect on Britain Yearly Meeting's statement ahead of COP26, A Quaker Call for Climate Justice, with its opening words

We are at a point of crisis for humanity and for the living world. Climate breakdown, poverty, oppression, forced migration and violent conflict are deeply connected. They are driven by an economic system based on exploiting people and nature to extract profit for a few.

We must act now to transform our economy and society for a just and peaceful future. We must demand change through political action, and enact change in our

communities.

Barbara Davey, St Andrews LM

For more detailed information, see [Papers and minutes | Quakers in Britain](#) (Ed. reproduced from Tayside Quaker Vol 47 No 1 January 2022, by kind permission of the author Barbara Davey, and editor Peter Cheer)

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**Meeting for Sufferings 4th-6th March 2022 at Friends House & online** [back to top^](#)

God comes to us in the midst of human need, and the most pressing needs of our time demand community in response. Quaker faith & practice 23.48

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) took place over three days in March with around 40 Friends, including myself, attending in person and the remaining representatives attending online. At Sufferings in December, we'd been reminded of how living in community is a vital part of our spiritual lives, and our March Meeting was an opportunity to sense more of the spiritual heart of this new Sufferings community that I was now a part of. Undoubtedly, the blending of online and in person attendance poses particular demands, especially in terms of the online Friends not simply being onlookers, and there sometimes seemed a disparity between the two presences. One of the most dynamic elements of the weekend for me were the small Saturday afternoon discussion groups when Friends spoke refreshingly and deeply, exploring together how we might make MfS simpler, more inclusive and more sustainable.

Much of this meeting's business focused on developing church structures fit for the next generation, and on how we organise ourselves as a worshipping community: we heard from our Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, and from the Trustees working on simplification, as well as from the group reviewing Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gathering (YM/YMG). In this consideration there was a strong theme of ensuring that there was good coordination between all of these and of course, with the revision of Quaker Faith and Practice. It was agreed that the remit and membership of the group looking at YM/YMG should be expanded to include the review of MfS, addressing issues of accountability and transparency, with an aim of reporting to YM in 2023.

When we look at our past we can see the length of time needed for transformation. We are a small church with the pretensions to change the world. But first we have to let God change us – to empower us to be better Friends, and more active in our own work. We should not be creating structures to work for us, but empowering each other to do the work laid on each of us. However we plan ... the Spirit is unchanging and will always lead us... All is interconnected, worship with action, wisdom with love.

We must look to our meetings, to our love for each other, and our corporate discipline. We must look to ourselves, to speak of our lives and to let our lives speak. Above all we must look to the Truth. We have an Inward Teacher who teaches, guides and commands us. When we know what we have to do, how to do it will come. Q f&p 29.02

We'd heard this passage read in our Friday evening opening worship, and certainly throughout the weekend there was a heartfelt desire expressed in ministry that we make more time for discernment through worship, for listening to an Inward Teacher.

One specific matter came up for Area Meetings (AMs) to address - in response to our growing understanding of the hurt felt from the historical connotations of hierarchy and oppression, we have all been encouraged to experiment with alternative terms to 'overseer'. AMs are asked to send minutes with details of the progress made on this by the end of the year, within the wider context of our responding to racism, which is a key theme for Quakers in Britain.

We met at a time when major armed conflict has arisen again in Europe, and the agenda was changed at short notice to allow Friends to reflect on the crisis in the Ukraine. During Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning we heard prepared ministry from Oliver Robertson, Head of Worship and Witness at Friends House, and his offering is printed in full in TQ. The worship that followed bubbled over with contributions from Friends near and far, until an elder thankfully asked us to pause and join together in holding the silence.

Barbara Davey, St Andrews LM

Friends are referred to the BYM website: [Papers and minutes | Quakers in Britain](#) (Ed. reproduced from Tayside Quaker Vol 47 No 2 April 2022, by kind permission of the author Barbara Davey, and editor Peter Cheer)

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RESTORE, Role Holder Networks and Christian Aid. Your Local Development



Worker's Wrap up of her work in the first Quarter of 2022 [back to top^](#)

Hello, my name is Zoe Prosser. I am almost at a year's anniversary of starting my work as Local Development Worker for Quakers in Scotland.

In that year I have moved house twice, settled my children in their new school and got to know some amazing Friends.

It is hard to reach everyone in my work, so I am

starting a quarterly report, to give you a taster of some of what I have been doing. I will also sneak in a few of my future plans, so you have some idea of what to look out for next.

I also have a request from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group at the end of this newsletter – so please keep an eye out for that!

Christian Aid

At the beginning of this year Christian Aid in Scotland asked us to support them in creating a podcast for Lent. Following our amazing work at COP26 they asked us to create something that would include the Quaker call for climate Justice. I worked with Olivia Hanks from Quaker Peace and Social Witness at Britain Yearly Meeting, and some amazing Friends to create material that Christian Aid cut down to fit into their schedule. They were so impressed with the discussion between Janey Andrews (West Scotland AM) and Phil Chandler (Lancashire Central & North Area Meeting) that they created an additional podcast to share the discussion further.

RESTORE

RESTORE is a series of workshops that Local Development Workers have put together to support meetings to rebuild and look towards an exciting future. I have had the pleasure of running RESTORE workshops with Area Meetings, Local Meetings and residentials, and feedback has been amazing.

“I have never felt so included in the whole meeting as I did today”

“Very clear, accessible and thought provoking”

This is something that I can and have adapted to the needs of the meeting inviting me. To find out more, please go to <https://quakerscotland.org/our-work/support-for-meetings/restore>

Role Holder Networks

I accompanied the Options for Quakers in Scotland Group in their work (the group appointed by General Meeting for Scotland to consider potential changes in structure of the AM and GM to strengthen our Quaker community in Scotland and ensure that we are well governed). One of the suggestions that the group laid before GM was to create and maintain Role Holder Networks across Scotland, to allow Friends to share their experience, new ways of working and challenges. This already happens with the clerks of the GM and AMs in Scotland and Trustees and Treasurers.

I have been working on helping to start some of those networks. So far I have set up a network for Elders, Overseers and The Pastoral Care Teams across Scotland

and I am working on setting up a network for Nominations committee members. I am planning a network for clerks of Local Meetings. Please let me know if you have a suggestion for another network that I should consider setting up.

Challenges and support

I have been approached by area and local meetings to support them with challenges, either within the meeting or external. This has been an incredibly rewarding part of my role and a huge learning process for me, as I learn more about the histories within your communities. Perhaps it would be useful to know that I have been asked a lot about blended meetings. There are meetings (like some of the Friends in the Western Coastal cluster, and North Scotland AM) that have found online meetings empowering, enriching and joyful. For some of these Friends, it is the first time that they have been able to access consistent weekly worship in a very long time. For others there is worry about fragmentation into two separate parts, online and in person meetings. I have run sessions to explore this and to try and overcome some of the challenges inherent in blended meetings. There is still thinking to be done, but our online worship (and community building) is clearly invaluable to some Friends who our part of our worshipping communities.

Meet your Local Development Worker

I have had the opportunity to meet some amazing Friends over the last few months. To be more available and meet more of you I am setting up drop in sessions (via Zoom) where you can pop in, have a chat or ask me a question. There are drop in sessions in the morning, afternoon and evening. Please go to the end of the document for drop in times and zoom details. If you are interested in finding out more about me I have a webpage and interview video on our Quakers in Scotland website. These reports will also be available online. To visit the page, please go to <https://quakerscotland.org/our-work/support-for-meetings>

Request from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

Please share your stories of your meeting's work with supporting asylum seekers and refugees. Friends across Scotland are involved in this work, we hope that by exchanging ideas and encouragement we will strengthen our sense of unity and shared purpose. We are planning a new page on the Quakers in Scotland website as a first step. If your meeting is active in this area, and you would like to share brief information for the new page, please contact Carolyn Burch (NSAM, Parliamentary Engagement Working Group) who will collate and upload it with the help of our website editor. Carolyn's email : ecarolynburch@gmail.com

Zoom Meeting Details:

Scotland Drop Ins - Mornings	Oct 25, 2022 10:30 Jan 26, 2023 10:30	Join Zoom Meeting https://quaker.zoom.us/j/84957113031 Meeting ID: 849 5711 3031
Scotland Drop Ins - Afternoons	Nov 16, 2022 14:30 Feb 15, 2023 14:30	Join Zoom Meeting https://quaker.zoom.us/j/82907091250 Meeting ID: 829 0709 1250
Scotland Drop Ins - Evening	Dec 13, 2022 18:30 Mar 14, 2023 18:30	Join Zoom Meeting https://quaker.zoom.us/j/82150494485 Meeting ID: 821 5049 4485

~~~~~ Visit to Aberdeen Meeting by Emily Provence, an American Quaker travelling in the ministry. [back to top^](#)



Emily Provance (spelled with an ‘a’) is a member of 15th Street Meeting in New York City. For the last 2 years she has been ‘on the road’ travelling in the ministry. She still serves as elder/overseer for her meeting, which she is able to do through making good use of digital technologies. In fact, this was the thrust of her workshop offering – listening and supporting Meetings as they come to terms with the realities of Blended Meetings and the challenges brought technically, emotionally

and spiritually. Each of these have been the source of concern for Friends in Aberdeen Meeting.

Emily is both resilient and determined. Her gentle manner belies her powerful listening, ministry and action. It turned out that she had an hour or so to spare in Aberdeen between trains and that was enough for her to offer to at least meet with us. I was fortunate not to be working that day and was able to participate in person, although there was an online link available too. Perhaps a dozen of us turned up to greet her and were entertained by some of her personal and other stories.

She concluded that for blended meetings there were three areas of learning that had to happen:

1. Technical – cameras, audio, computer operating systems etc
2. Clerk/Elders – needed to know how to set everything up
3. Worshipping Group as a whole – ‘how I behave can make things easier’.

This last note to myself seems a bit odd now I write it out, however I think it may refer to for example remembering to speak to the online folk both by using microphones (which may be part of a mobile phone or integral to a laptop) appropriately and not forgetting the online folk are there.

Emily told us a bit about her own meeting, 15th Street Meeting and how it shared both buildings and committees with Manhattan Quaker Meeting who hold a programmed or semi-programmed style of worship. On returning home and reflecting on the session, I felt quite inspired and wondered whether programmed worship was something which could speak to Friends and perhaps even attract attendance by some unfamiliar with Friends. Not that our traditional silent worship would be in anyway altered, but rather perhaps there was an opportunity to hold an occasional additional semi programmed meeting with music and readings (biblical or otherwise). I know that certainly worshipful singing (& recorder playing) and poetry is much enjoyed by at least some members of Aberdeen Meeting!

Emily was generous spirited and helpful and at least some of us hope she can return some day. Meanwhile I would heartily recommend having a read of her online blog at <https://quakeremily.wordpress.com/>

Lesley Reynolds Aberdeen LM

~~~~~ Woodbrooke 1: Courses and Workshops. [back to top^](#)

Just recently I was asked speak at NSAM (via zoom) along with another Friend, Pam from Inverness LM, about Woodbrooke and the various courses and workshops that we had attended both in person and online. This was to hopefully encourage Friends to take up the offer of the many varieties of courses and workshops Woodbrook has available. We spoke of the courses and workshops we have attended and the benefits that we have gained in learning over a number of years.

I know Woodbrooke pretty well, having served as a FiR (Friend in Residence) on a number of occasions. I have been sent on a number of training courses, paid for by NSAM. I have engaged in numerous workshops and courses both short and more in depth. I have even taken holidays at Woodbroke! The food is great and the company at Woodbroke is enjoyable too!

Friends, in the past you may remember we have had many Workshops with

Woodbrooke on the Road. (Now known as Woodbrooke Where you Are) with Tim Peat Ashworth, Andy Stoller and Mary Meeks and other tutors. Our Friend John Melling of Inverness LM took on the responsibility for arranging them in the past. I organized the last one with Tim Peat Ashworth which took place a couple of years ago at the L'Arche Community Centre.



The aim of Woodbrooke is to encourage Friends to engage in learning in order to define our understanding of our Quaker faith. The learning programme provided by Woodbrooke is to explore our spirituality to support and inspire our

community and hopefully change the world! Because we engage in many campaigns in the world for various reasons we must go prepared for it!

Friends are known as a society for their penchant for learning and for wanting to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world around us. Because we serve in a variety of roles we need to be informed, to arm ourselves with knowledge and understanding of the roles we take on, trustees, clerks, treasurers and other roles. It's not just about roles – there are courses on the arts, creative writing, meeting for worship, through dance with Robin Bowles and Ann Bettys – yes, It can be done via zoom! – and so many more opportunities for learning, so many topics of discovery. I certainly have become more knowledgeable as a result of engaging in the many courses provided by Woodbrooke.

For Friends who may not know this, Woodbrooke was founded in 1903. It was a vision that George Cadbury and John Wilhelm Rowntree had for a permanent settlement with a mission to “foster a vital Friends ministry and learning facility.” Woodbrooke has grown and evolved over time and the Quaker way of learning has changed, but the vision remains the same. The Quaker approach to learning is expressed through our ministry and to prepare us to communicate to the rest of the world, preparing us to serve in various Quaker roles.

Some of the workshops and courses I have attended online and in person and

gained much from them:

QPSW at Swanwick: Turning the Tide workshop.

Radical Spirituality with Ben Pink Dandelion.

Mother's of Israel with Stuart Masters.

Roots of the Quaker Way with Stuart Masters.

Voices of the Earth – A mixture of Poetry and Visual Art with Zelig and Philp Gross.

Friends, I do hope you will look at the Woodbrooke website, and see what's available in workshops and courses. Woodbrooke is there to support you and hopefully you will support Woodbrooke too.

There are bursaries available also pay as led courses (pay what you can afford). No one need be prevented from engaging in learning because of lack of funds. Links to courses and workshops: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>
<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/woodbrooke-where-you-are/>

Sila Collins-Walden Inverness LM.

~~~~~ **Woodbrooke 2:The Quaker Renaissance** [back to top^](#)

I have recently completed a 6 week online course offered by Woodbrooke that explored the development of Quakers in Britain from the move away from C19th evangelicalism through the emergence of Liberal Quakerism (roughly the 1860s to the 1930s). It touched on the history of events like the 1895 Manchester Conference, people like John Wilhelm Rowntree, Edward Grubb and Rufus Jones, and theological ideas. These last provoked strong feelings and uncomfortable language, yet out of it came the vigorous response to 2 world wars through conscientious objection and relief work - a period that brought a huge amount of positive energy to Quakers in Britain. It was a period that has become known as the 'Quaker Renaissance.'

I found it surprising that, compared to the period of early Quakerism, this period has had very little attention, which means that there is probably much more to be learned as researchers explore individuals, localised activity and the set piece moments like Yearly Meeting. It wasn't hard to be uncovering details that were not known to the experts which I found quite exciting.

So from an historical perspective I learned a lot and realised the potential to be part of learning more. It was also instructive theologically. Some of these ideas and discussions could be fascinating, yet I could not help but feel there is a certain irony in humans, with all our limitations and frailties, exerting huge amounts of energy in what I see as largely speculative intellectual constructions. All too often that energy

focuses on what divides us rather than what unifies. I came away affirmed in a simple faith which is rooted in my experience and tested by the spiritual wisdom of those around me and who have come before.

Brian Ashley, Shetland LM

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**Woodbrooke 3** [back to top^](#)

The following is an update from Woodbrooke about how the pandemic has changed their activities. The email supplied for making contact is: trustees@woodbrooke.org.uk (Ed.)

“We have already successfully navigated many unexpected challenges during the pandemic, thanks to the support of our many friends. We have moved from running a handful of courses online to offering a large programme of learning and opportunities for online worship in this way. This has meant our learning has become more accessible and more inclusive for many people. We are keen to continue our focus on online learning, but we are looking forward to delivering some of our learning in person around Britain, working closely with the Local Development Workers, and possibly holding a few courses and retreats at the Woodbrooke Centre too.”

“While the Woodbrooke Centre has remained open for most of the last two years, the business model that the centre was operating before the pandemic is no longer viable. For example, many people have asked when we are reopening for Bed and Breakfast, and the answer is we simply can’t afford to do so. B&B was only ever intended to fill in the gaps when we had spare bedrooms from residential courses and conferences, and it doesn’t work economically if you have too few residential events, as the gaps are just too big to fill. We have seen good uptake of our self-catering flat. We are not currently able to offer individual stays at the Woodbrooke Centre beyond this self-catering offer; however we do have some weekends available to book for your Meeting or group to hold a residential event. We can offer tailored teaching for these events.”

“Trustees are taking time to consider Woodbrooke as a place and explore its purpose and how it fulfils our ministry. Please continue to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities Woodbrooke offers and do not hesitate to be in touch to share your thoughts.”

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Shetland Quakers - scattered Friends [back to top^](#)

It's a curiosity of Shetland Quakers that only a couple of us live in Lerwick, by far the largest community. Most of us are scattered far and wide across Mainland and the outer islands. We meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month in a community centre and it can take us between 10 minutes and over 2 hours (including ferries) to get there. For some it is just too far. So, on the last Sunday we try to meet in one of our homes around Shetland, which can mean Meeting for Worship can be in distractingly beautiful surroundings. Last Sunday we were in a half finished building but still with stunning views and soothing sounds of the wind in the scaffolding (almost like whale song).

During Covid it was far easier to join the North Scotland Zoom Meeting for Worship than to set up our own, and that allowed some Friends to attend for the first time for months, or even years. We keep in touch with a mix of weekly emails from the Clerk, sociable phone calls and visits and a WhatsApp group that comes to life when needed. All of this means that we are as simple as you can get - no premises, and accounts that record barely half a dozen transactions.

We can be 2 or 3 at Meeting, or numbers can swell as high as 15, especially if we have visitors. It's not easy to build community in these circumstances, but we have a shared spirit which binds us, and which can spin out into witness at times about things like militarisation in schools and climate justice.

Brian Ashley, Shetland LM

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**Acquisition of Alexander Jaffray manuscript** [back to top^](#)

Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Archives have recently bought an unpublished manuscript by the Scottish politician and Quaker leader Alexander Jaffray.

Aberdeen City Archivist Phil Astley points out that 2023 will be the 350th anniversary of Alexander Jaffray's death and thinks that the date would be a good opportunity to undertake some publicity around the document and the Quaker community in the city, both past and present. The Testament is available to view at Aberdeen Town House office. For a booking form and visitor information, see [Visitor Information & Contact Details | Aberdeen City Council](#)



The

following is taken from the manuscript's description in the catalogue of the Antiquarian Booksellers Bernard Quaritch Ltd.

"Evidently transcribed shortly after Jaffray's death in May 1673 – a unique witness to the theological position of a leading light in the early history of the Quakers in Scotland, set down amid increasing persecution and designed for the edification of his followers.

Born into a notable Aberdeen family (his father was provost of the city), Jaffray (1614-73) was raised and schooled there and at Pittodrie, but studied law in Edinburgh and spent some time in England and France before returning to his native city to set up a household in 1636 – he had married young in 1632.

He joined with the Covenanters in 1638 and endured capture and imprisonment by royalist forces in 1644 (during which time his wife died). From 1644 to 1650 he represented Aberdeen in Parliament, and in 1649 was sent to the Netherlands to represent the Covenanters in negotiation with the exiled Charles II at Breda. After he was wounded and captured at the battle of Dunbar in 1650, he spent his second imprisonment in frequent conversation with both Cromwell and the theologian John Owen.

After his release he moved away from the Covenanter cause, and was appointed director of the Chancellery of Scotland. During a further spell in prison upon the

Restoration, he found himself increasingly drawn towards the Quakers, converting to the cause during William Dewsbury's second visit to Scotland in 1662-3. 'The winning of a convert of this calibre to the Quaker fold caused something of a sensation, especially in Aberdeen and the North-East where he was so widely known and esteemed.

He had served his Country with honour and his City with distinction; and he steadily brought the full weight of his personal influence, of his wealth, and of his pen, to the increase of the new Faith. Sensation gave place to consternation, and consternation to bitter hostility ... He lost all his magisterial and civic posts, and in the civil and ecclesiastical persecution that was imminent, Jaffray was the centre of the storm' (George B. Burnet, *The Story of Quakerism in Scotland 1650-1850*, 1952).

Numerous arrests of Aberdeen Quakers followed Jaffray's conversion in 1663-4 and in 1665 'Jaffray was cited before Sharpe's Court of High Commission of forty-four members, where he defended his faith with such calm ability and fearlessness that the Archbishop could score no points in argument. Jaffray was sentenced to be confined to his own house [at Kingswells] and was forbidden to hold any meetings there or elsewhere' (ibid.) After further imprisonment in 1668 for holding illegal conventicles, Jaffray's already poor health deteriorated further. 'Exactly two months after the capitulation of the King in 1673, Alexander Jaffray died at his mansion at Kingswells.

The 'Testimony' is a dense and lengthy text, divided into eight chapters, covering Christ as mediator of creation and redemption; the 'absolute need' of such a mediator; Christ's divine and human existence; the work of grace; the 'distinct and united operation' of grace; the seed or principle of divine life; the image of god in man; and the sufferings of Christ. "

#### Aberdeen Properties; an update [back to top^](#)

A Threshing Meeting facilitated by Jonathan Carmichael and Michael Hutchinson, was held on Zoom on 23 October 2021 and was attended by around 36 Friends. The following is from the minute as recorded in NSAM 38/21

"We have listened to one another about advantages and disadvantages of owning Aberdeen Meeting House. We have spoken of feelings we have about there being differences of view, of perhaps the growing pains in the relationships between our meetings, and how we can help heal those feelings. We have listened, and we hope we understand better. And we have heard a hope of moving forward to somewhere new. We hope this will be a helpful part of the process of moving towards unity regarding the area meeting's properties in Aberdeen, and unity of the area meeting as a family of meetings."

**100 Crown Street**

This building is currently let to a long standing tenant, and has provided Area Meeting with a substantial income over many years, although latterly this income has declined because of the factors outlined in the marketing and building valuation (below). For the purposes of forward planning, NSAM Minute 39/21 raised two queries related to 100 Crown Street;

- to understand more fully the financial value of 100 Crown St
- invite suggestions from Aberdeen Premises Committee and others as to alternative uses

Accordingly, Trustees commissioned a marketing and building valuation from an Aberdeen commercial property consultancy. The report was received in February 2022, and suggests that Aberdeen office rents have declined 40% since 2015, influenced by several factors, including the oil price crash in 2015 which significantly reduced demand for office space, and the recent Covid Pandemic which exacerbated this lack of demand when working from home became usual.

The report also highlighted that retaining access to the basement and/or car park would potentially restrict the number of interested parties. Consequently, placing the property on the market might result in it remaining empty for some considerable time whilst nonetheless incurring maintenance and other expenses.

With regard to suggestions for alternative uses, a small working group is currently is at an early stage of exploring the feasibility of converting the property into a Home of Multiple Occupation (HMO), for use by asylum seekers or other vulnerable groups, and will report to Trustees.

**Aberdeen Meeting House (98 Crown Street)**

NSAM minute 40/2: “The Meeting agreed that the strategic vision for the Meeting House (98 Crown St) is that it will be retained, for as long as Friends in Aberdeen are able to care for and use the building, hopefully extending its use by the local community and retaining sufficient access to parking for when the Meeting House is in use.”

**Burial grounds**

Aberdeenshire Council are not willing to take responsibility for the Kinmuck Burial Ground, however Aberdeen City Council will take responsibility for the Kingswells burial ground if they can take ownership of the site, to be maintained as a historic burial ground and managed accordingly.

Harry Horsley, Aberdeen LM

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Book of Discipline Revision Committee updates [back to top^](#)

We have completed more draft text of topic areas and will begin to undertake work on further aspects. Pieces we complete are banked until we are ready to undertake further development in the future.

We continue to liaise with the various review groups of BYM central governance, so as to inform our relevant church government text.

We are developing the ‘voice of the book’. There are some sections where we need to show unity of practice and others where we want to represent diversity of experience.

We have looked at all of the 750 plus submissions sent by Friends so far to understand the range of contributions, and thank everyone who has made suggestions. There’s still plenty of time to send more ideas and you can do this here <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/> (or email qfp@quaker.org.uk)

We have discussed our use of quotations, and will continue to develop our understanding of their place and importance in the new publication.

We continue to develop the practical processes and structures which play a significant part in supporting our work

In collaboration with the BYM publications team, we are exploring the possibilities that can be brought by accessible formats for the new book in addition to traditional formats.

We welcome new invitations from Friends across Britain to visit their meetings in order to share progress and listen to suggestions. Thank you for your interest in our work, and your prayerful support without which the task would be so much harder.

Mary Woodward

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**Quaker Life Representative Council April 2022: Moving Forward Together** [back to top^](#)

This was the fifth Rep Council to be held on Zoom - we’ve now reached the point where some Reps have never experienced this inspiring event in person. Collectively, we tried to make it as vibrant as possible. We started with an icebreaker, to find three things we had in common (apart from being a Quaker) with another randomly chosen person. It sounded hard... I should have realised it would be easy. My person and I talked about a love of colour, of crafts and of gardening. Others found different and wide-ranging commonalities.

Then we heard about recent changes to Quaker Life staffing. Many of the Local Development Workers (LDWs) are now in post, and the staffing structure has been simplified. Rachel Matthews is Head of Supporting Quaker Communities, and five

team leaders work with a group of LDWs or youth workers. The team leaders each have a specialism – Youth, Children and Families (Jude Acton), Spiritual Nurture (Sophie Smith), Quaker Community (Alistair Fuller), Witness and Collaboration (Naomi Major), and Local and Area Meeting Governance (Oliver Waterhouse).

Alison Richard, the deputy head of learning and research at Woodbrooke, told us about changes there. There has been a huge increase in online workshops and worship opportunities and there are several retreats on various themes at Woodbrooke. Online courses include Quaker roles, the climate crisis, peace and social justice, the Bible, and workshops for those new to Quakers.

We met in Home Groups to discuss ways in which our meetings had grown in the last few months, and what had been difficult. Alistair Fuller suggested that we think of the people around us as our teachers and ask ourselves what we are teaching them in return, as a way of listening to each other's needs with compassion. This could apply to conversations in our Quaker communities as well as in these Home Group sessions. It was apparent from our discussions that some meetings had a sense that they were moving forward together, while others felt drained or fractured from difficulties and losses during the pandemic. Resuming meeting in person, or having blended meetings, could also be a cause of friction. We were reminded that Local Development Workers can offer help, including using the Restore process with groups.

We began the afternoon with 'time together, apart'. With the aim of helping people to feel less exhausted by screen time, everyone was asked to participate in offline activities, such as walking, writing, drawing, or sitting in worship, while maintaining a mindful connection to the gathering. I went for a walk, and I was surprised how connected I still felt to the group.

The main workshop looked at our commitment as a Yearly Meeting to being a radically inclusive Quaker community, a commitment made at a time when many meetings felt at a low ebb. The session was led by Helen Oldridge, the Local Development Worker for Wales and the Southern Marches. She based it on the work of Tema Okun on Dismantling Racism. It was an intriguing session, not least because we didn't tackle the subject of racism head-on. Instead, Helen used Tema's work to concentrate on norms in our society that we barely notice, that can make it hard to change, and hard to act in an inclusive way. These cultural norms can insidiously close doors.

Helen led us in a relaxation, then she and Alistair read out six questions, each focussing on one of the norms. The areas they covered were:

Not expressing **appreciation**, or only to the same few people every time.

**Perfectionism.**

Having a **sense of urgency** that doesn't allow time to be thoughtful and inclusive in how we do things.

Believing there is only **one right way** to do things, and anyone who thinks differently is wrong.

**Valuing the written word** above other ways of communicating.

A belief that we have a **right to emotional and psychological comfort**, and a tendency to scapegoat anyone who challenges us.

People were asked to concentrate on the area that had the greatest impact on them. The session was simple, yet profound. In worship sharing, Friends spoke about wanting to be thoughtful, appreciative and forgiving. They voiced a willingness to face discomfort and look at new ways of doing things in order to be more inclusive.

We ended this Rep Council with many Friends expressing a wish to meet in person this October - and at the time that looked like a real possibility. Sadly, it has proved impractical because Woodbrooke no longer has the capacity to host us, and there has been enormous pressure on staff time, so the October event will be online. Hopefully it will be possible to meet in person next spring.

Lynden Easterbrook, Forres LM

**And finally.....** [back to top^](#)

When I put out a call (one of several) for contributions earlier this year, Marian Burrell sent the following which I thought deserved to be included; thanks Marian.

#### THE RETURN OF THE NORTHERN QUAKER'

Here comes the Northern Quaker,

Striding through the heather.

In his old leather breeches and his shaggy, shaggy locks,

( And a new leather kilt for special occasions -- BYM and so on.)

He won't have a claymore –

He'll have beaten it into a lovely ploughshare.

But finds he gets criticised these days for

Ploughing up peatbogs.

The simple life gets more and more complicated!