

February 2020

Scottish Friend



Old Mill, near Strathpeffer.

Photo Oriole Hall.



Welcome Friends to the February edition of the Scottish Friend. A peaceful new year to all Friends. This coming year is going to be a better one I'm sure. Welcome to our new GM clerks Elizabeth and Nicola, also to our new admistator Sue Proudlove. Comments and suggestions would be welcomed. When sending in contributions, please note your LM.

In Friendship Sila

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Scottish Friend is distributed by Sue Proudlove

Please send articles as an **editable attachment** to silartist100@gmail.com or typed or hand-written to 27 Creag Dhubh Terrace, Inverness IV3 8QG to arrive five weeks before GM, i.e. by **9th May 2019**. If you submit **images**, please ensure that they are about 1Mb in size. Any captions provided with your images should be short!

Scottish Friend will be posted on the GM website and can be emailed to you 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 your new Administrator, Sue Proudlove, know. You are strongly encouraged to do this in view of escalating postage costs – and you get the photographs in colour as an incentive!

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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.

Calling for General Meeting for Scotland
Saturday, 7th March, 2020
Elizabeth Allen

Dear Friends,



Elizabeth

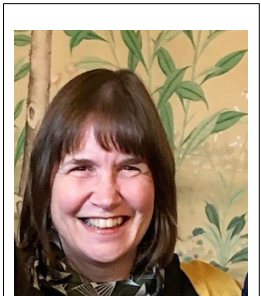
Greetings to you all! I am now your new clerk of General Meeting for Scotland, assisted by Nicola Maharg of Glasgow Meeting. General Meeting also has a new administrator, Sue Proudlove of Central Edinburgh Meeting. As your new team, we hope to serve you well.

The first General Meeting of 2020 will be on 7th March at the **Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL**. The Meeting House is within 20 minutes walk (uphill) of Waverley train station and it is

close to several local bus routes.

Tea and coffee will be available from 10.30am and our meeting will start with worship at 11.00am. Our hosts will kindly provide us with a vegetarian / vegan lunch of soup and sandwiches. If you have special dietary needs, please bring your own lunch. We hope to finish with tea and cake at 4.30 pm.

GM in March will focus on moving forward, taking action and implementing changes. In the morning, we will return to our discernment on what action General Meeting for Scotland is being led to take on the climate emergency. In the afternoon, we will hear from the group we set up to advise us on how to improve our communications and we will consider how to take their recommendations forward. We will also be updated on the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement post and our expression of interest in a Local Development Worker in Scotland.



Nicola

This is an opportunity to meet and share time with Friends from across Scotland: we usually have about 60 people at GM. We worship together and in a spirit of worship we attend to our church affairs concern the spiritual life and witness of Quakers in Scotland. Please do come! All are welcome.

For some time now, young people of Shindig age (11 and up) have been meeting alongside and with us. They often spend the morning contributing to the GM business meeting and do their own thing in the afternoon. **LM Clerks PLEASE pass this calling letter and the guidelines below, to young people and their parents in your Meeting**

Papers and the draft agenda will be circulated about a week prior to GM. if you do not receive them, please ask Sue Proudlove scotfriends@gmail.com for a copy. If you have any questions, please contact me, your clerk, by email essallen@msn.com or telephone 01620 894834.

Guidelines for YP involvement at GMS

1 Parents do not need to come to GM with their 11yrs+ YPs so long as they make arrangements for travel with a local Friend or with the clerk.

2 Parents need to agree that they are responsible for their YPs and discuss these guidelines with them.

3 YPs and their parents should set up their own check-in system for the day, either with another adult they know who will be at GM, or via the YP's own mobile as contact system. As a backup, a volunteer adult will give their mobile number to the YPs and take their numbers, for those who choose to go out round Edinburgh after lunch 1.30 - 4.00.

4 YPs will be invited/expected to be in GM session from 11 am until lunch after which they can have free time to explore the main areas of the city we are in. (The agenda will be set with YP involvement.)

5 They must stay in groups of no less than three. 11- and 12-year-olds must be in groups with older Yps

6 If the YPs do not wish to have free time out with GM in groups they must attend the GM session in the afternoon from 2 – 4:30. Please could they have books to read or something to draw quietly, if necessary. Not a screen.

LM Clerks PLEASE pass this on to young people and their parents in your Meeting. ■

Dates for Meetings at Faslane, 2020
Alison Burnley

The dates for this year's Meetings for Worship for Witness at Faslane are as follows:

15 March 19 April 17 May

21 June, with Northern Friends Peace Board

11 October 8 November

Remember to bring something to sit on, weather-proof clothing, and something to eat before returning home.

All meetings start at 11am

MQ Perth General Meeting 16 Nov 2019 Report Mary Dower, Aberdeen North.

“Our hope and our experience is that when we are faithful we shall be rightly led.” Ch 29 QF&P

This was the last GM to be clerked by Adwoa Bittle before she joins the teams of YM clerks in January 2020. Each clerk brings their own style to the task and we’ve enjoyed Adwoa’s service.

Because Adwoa was hosting several teenage Friends of her son they joined us for the morning. They had come to report on this summer’s Shindig and the Link weekend. In our opening worship we heard the introduction to Chapter 29 in Quaker Faith and Practice. Go on, read it again! It’s worth it. We recorded both a new member and sadly the death of Ellen Moxley.

We’re losing after great service both Mairi Campbell-Jack, our Parliamentary Engagement Officer and Marion Sharkey, our General Meeting Administrator. Mairi goes to a full-time post with the Green Party and Marion has steered through our new list of members, a big task at any time but huge in these days of data protection forms to be completed. We are grateful she is prepared to stay on until her replacement is appointed.

In March we had asked AMs to consider how we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness to the world.

We went into groups to discuss further on the how to improve our meetings, to witness and to work more effectively as a spirit led community. Our Young Friends played an active part in some groups which was appreciated. As a result of the feedback we decided we’d be wise to concentrate on three main ideas.

First, better communication, including using Zoom for business meetings so all island dwellers and others with difficulties being physically present could be take part. This also cuts down on travel. Secondly, providing training and support for role holders, particularly those like treasurers and trustees who may feel alone. We could perhaps do this through a buddy system. If we organised training GM-wide we could invite Woodbrooke to facilitate days or weekends. This itself would go some way towards our third intent which is to build community by shared meals, walks and other activities, including all age activities. Obviously some of our meetings are already doing some of these things but not all of us are doing all activities.

As usual GM provided an occasion to eat cake before we set off home, and Perth Friends had provided for this in full though we weren't quite as greedy as usual, speaking for myself, because the Station Hotel had provided an excellent vegetarian soup, so we'd asked for a second pot as their understanding of vegetarian sandwiches was less accurate. ■



Goldfinch in Apple Blossom (photo: Oriole Hall)

**Report of Link Weekend held in Edinburgh weekend of 11 - 13th
October 2019
Madeleine Harding**

Twenty or so young people gathered together on the weekend of 11 - 13th October to meet with friends, renew friendships and have fun together as well as some serious discussion.

Our theme for the weekend was political engagement. On Saturday morning we had four speakers who were invited to talk about their experiences of engaging with politics. They were Liam Kerr MSP, Roz Currie, who works for Tommy Shepherd MP, Pam Currie, who has much experience of working with unions, and Joyce Taylor, convenor of the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Group

The young people engaged well with discussion and had many thoughtful questions to ask each of the speakers.

In the afternoon we all went to the Scottish Parliament as the Festival of Politics was taking place. Some of us attended interesting talks including a discussion and questions with young people from the Scottish Youth Parliament.

The young people relaxed in the evening and had fun together with games and making pop-up cards. They joined 9.30 meeting for worship on Sunday, after which we all visited the Woodland Trust Garden down the road where we did cosy glows and feedback.

These weekends are very important to allow young people all over Scotland (and some from the North of England) to come together to re-affirm friendships – many made at Summer Shindig. We have a strong team of volunteers at present running the weekend but are always on the look-out for more help. ■

Remembrance Sunday in Milngavie Margaret Peacock, Milngavie West.

I represent Milngavie Friends on the local association of churches. As such I take my turn every eight years to lead the Remembrance Sunday service. I try to fit my own belief into prayers that church people might expect from a sermon. I have realised that the crowds attending are all remembering their relatives and friends, rather than resolving to win the next war.

Good morning, friends, and thank you for coming to maintain this annual ceremony.

We come together to support those who have personal memories, and to do honour to all the Milngavie people who lost their lives in war. Similar crowds are gathered round other memorials throughout the country.

Poppies grew among the battles and then the cemeteries of Flanders in World War One. So now we use poppies in remembrance of our dead, maimed and bereaved. From that Great War, there are 110 names on this memorial. Unfortunately we have needed poppies ever since. WW2 generated 49 names written here, and the Bearsden memorial has 148.

The deaths and tragedies seem never-ending. But let us now sing the Remembrance Day hymn, which puts the tragedies into perspective, comparing them with God's eternal presence and care. "O God our help in ages past".

Many perished in other ways than in battle. They are commemorated in the British Legion's National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. There are about 350 memorials

among 30.000 trees, to such as merchant navy, firefighters, nurses, children, and the WW1 teenage conscripts who could not cope and who were shot as deserters. Also there is the Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness, where every day the bugles mark the 2 minutes' silence.

The words in Ecclesiasticus are comforting. "And some there be which have no memorial. They are buried as though they had never been. Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore."

The world has many war cemeteries. Among them there is the one at Kohima in India, where the Japanese invasion was halted in 1944, and the now-famous epitaph is inscribed.

Let us now pray for God's loving care for all the victims of war and terrorism and for his inspiration and strength for all who grieve.

Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the peace that we enjoy, and for the hope which enriches our lives. We thank you for today's opportunity to remember the names and perhaps picture the faces of our relatives and friends who have perished. Today we bring before you the world's distress, which you surely share, at all the world's bereaved, from the wars that seem never-ending, and ask that all may experience your comfort and strength.

We are mindful of the words of Jesus, that even the death of a sparrow is important to you, so we know that you care about each of us and our friends and families both past and present.

We thank you for the inspiration of St. Paul, who wrote that neither death nor life nor anything in all creation will ever be able to separate us from your love – indeed our own love for deceased relatives and friends is but a branch of your universal

eternal love. For the strength and courage that this knowledge brings, we praise and thank you now. Amen.

At the beginning of WW1 men were eager to join up to win the short battle. But optimism died. Poets wrote. John McCrae noted how quickly the poppies sprang up on top of the recent graves. He wrote: "In Flanders Fields the poppies grow / between the crosses, row on row / that mark our place, and in the sky / the larks, still bravely singing, fly / scarce heard amid the guns below."

Laurence Binyon wrote "For the Fallen", and the middle verse starts the silence each year. Before it you might like to hear one of the preceding verses, which attempts a different perspective - a fleeting glimpse into a strange spirit world,

"Solemn the drums thrill, death august and royal / Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres / There is music in the midst of desolation / And a glory that shines upon our tears". - Well, I don't understand it either, but I thought you might be interested to hear it!

"They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning
We will remember them."

2 minutes' silence, then Kohima epitaph and wreath-laying.

"When you go home, tell them of us and say
For their tomorrow we gave our today."

Those of you who subscribe to Wordsmith will have received this quotation from Marie Curie, selected three days ago.

"You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the

individuals. To that end, each of us must work for his own improvement, and at the same time share a general responsibility for all humanity, our particular duty being to aid those to whom we think we can be most useful.”

We need the annual remembrance to remind us that apart from individual acts of heroism, war is never glorious and is not the answer to a dispute. War’s effects can spread over half the world and have unintended consequences for many years.

Let us pray. Loving heavenly father, we thank you for today’s reminder. We pray for your blessing and support for all those who have international power and influence, that they may discern constructive ways forward, and avoid escalating bloodshed. We pray also for national politicians, that they may respect their adversaries and work for the genuine good of their constituents.

We ask for your forgiveness for all our missed opportunities when we could have done or said a good thing - and did not. Give us the dedication and courage to live by our highest ideals. And now let us finish with the Lord’s prayer. Please join in ...

Finally, my favourite Old Testament blessing: The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord be gracious unto us and bless us. The Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace. Amen. ■

Ich kann nicht ander (I can do nothing else)
Roger H Quinn, Inverness Meeting

The above quotation has been ascribed to Martin Luther, who on the 31th October 1517 nailed his Ninety-five theses to the door of All Saint's Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Having been invited by the editor to update my earlier article, Quo Vadis Quaker, I offer the following thoughts.

Whither goest thou, Quaker?

This has been the result of many years of agonising over where the Society of Friends based at London Yearly Meeting is going. I joined the Society of Friends whilst working in Dublin in the 1960s. Fifty years ago, Churchtown Meeting was the home of some of Ireland's spiritual giants. It was within this context, Sunday after Sunday, that the Christian message of earlier Friends rang out. This was in contrast to the more humanist approach of those across the water.

Hugh Doncaster, a prominent Quaker, wrote of his concern in the article Our Corporate Commitment. This was meant to act as a wake-up call. Alas, when it reached General Meeting for Scotland it was thrown out, to the dismay of at least one Friend who was in tears and later resigned.

Coming from a staunchly Anglican family stretching back some three hundred years, one finds one-self at odds with the humanist philosophy. And being at odds helps to plead the Christian cause as understood by early Friends.

The first Friends had no doubts as to the reality of the spirit of the resurrected Christ. It was to them what the Pole Star was to the mariners of their day. That star, whose light has guided sailors over the "formless and empty, darkness over the surface of the deep" (Genesis 1:2) for millennia. It shows us the true north,

distinct from the more mobile magnetic north. Which in contemporary terms, amounted to the philosophy of John Bunyan's Mr. Worldly-wise Man.

George Fox's years in the wilderness gave him an insight into the divine which only comes through suffering. In this context I often wonder what he would think if he came back today. Might he say: "for what did I endure all those sufferings, that those who come after should say - where is thy God?"

Do we who come after have it too easy? In his letters to the early church, Paul has no hesitation in speaking of the trials and tribulations which he faced as an apostle of Jesus. Nor, more recently, did Bonhoeffer and other German pastors cease their preaching until silenced by the Reich. It is Bonhoeffer's writings from prison that should inspire us today. Here were men who physically "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death". Yet they were able to write letters of cheer to their families, parishioners and the world beyond *.

It was the living Jesus who inspired those men and women of yore and who continues to inspire all believers. For He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. This I believe: for I can do no other.

*Letters From Prison - German Pastors Bonhoeffer and Others.



**For SESAME: Book of Discipline Revision Committee – update
January 2020
Mary Woodward, Portobello & Musselburgh.**

Your Book of Discipline Revision Committee met four times last year, appeared at Yearly Meeting in a ‘meet your committee’ session, and hosted a conference at Woodbrooke in November entitled “Why have a Book of Discipline?”

I’ve previously reported to you on our meetings up to October, and some of you will have met us when we joined in all-age worship at Victoria Terrace on the Sunday of our October meeting. The weekend was made more colourful for the English members of the committee by lively pro-independence demonstrations on the Saturday...

More Friends, including Alison Burnley, were able to meet with us at Woodbrooke in November. She will be telling you about her experience of the weekend. I just want to say a little about it from the point of view of a committee member who was also part of the conference planning group.

Our committee weekends are intense, packed, exhilarating and exhausting in equal measure, and most of the time we are in our own little world. The Woodbrooke weekend was the first time I saw our committee’s work in the context of Friends from across the UK and truly understood that our task is being done on behalf of all of us. I greatly appreciated the interest shown in our work and Friends’ reactions to us as individuals and as a group. The highlight for me was the Friend who stood up during our closing session to announce that, having spent time with us, they were confident that we had our heads screwed on the right way and could be trusted to do the job.

Our December committee meeting was at Woodbrooke, and again we worked extremely hard. I was deemed to have been so good at helping plan the November conference that I was appointed to the planning group for our involvement with Yearly Meeting Gathering [YMG] in Bath this August...

The key messages from our weekend are:

In planning the shape of our work we have reflected on both the over-arching themes which express our understanding of what the new book is about, and the underlying threads which connect us to the divine, which run through all our work and which are the unity of Quakerism. We have explored the significance of these for our practical next steps.

In a meeting that involved much practical thinking and a lot of post-it notes we have been brought to a place of spiritual depth and experienced a sense of growing excitement in seeing the plan beginning to take shape, which feels like a key point in the gestation of our work.

Following the success of the Woodbrooke conference in November, we will continue to inform Friends of our progress by varied means, including at YMG. We are extending our use of social media to include Instagram as well as Facebook and Twitter. Our aim is that engagement in the process of revision will spread to all parts of BYM.

Our next committee meeting is at Friends House at the end of January. We will continue the work we began in December: reflecting on the shape of the book and beginning to plan the order in which things need to be done. We will also be using the knowledge gained from the Woodbrooke conference – in particular the Advices & Queries Friends created for us. We will ensure that Friends are kept informed of our work and, where possible, invited to be involved.

With this in mind, we are planning to hold various “special interest” sessions at YMG in Bath this August – I’m convenor of the planning group who worked very hard to get our requests for space and time on the YMG programme to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee by their deadline of 31 December. We will continue to plan our sessions at YMG with the intention of involving as many Friends as possible in a variety of ways.

If you are coming to YMG, do please come to one of the sessions: if not, please continue to uphold us prayerfully, especially me – quite literally, I can’t do this without your help! ■



COP26 comes to Glasgow: 7th – 21st November.
Ed Tyler, Argyll West

COP (Conference of the Parties) 26 is going to be a huge opportunity for Quakers in Scotland to support and share witness with people from all over the world who are directly affected by the imminent climate catastrophe. Around 30,000 people are expected to be there specifically for this event. It is about more than a change in our climate – it is about our right relationship with the planet and its inhabitants.

At its recent session in Glasgow, West Scotland Area Meeting (WSAM) was joined by Quaker staff based in London and Geneva. The following are extracts from the resultant Minute:

“BYM aims to have official observer status at the talks alongside the delegates and will be joining others to support grassroots activism. On behalf of all Friends in Scotland, our Meeting has already appointed a Hub Group to act as a communications hub and liaison group to facilitate Quaker action before, during and after the event.

COP26 affects more than just our Quaker witness. We bring our whole life to important relationships like this, so it not just the witness but about the way we live our lives. Right now, we are not in right relationship with the earth.

This UN Climate Summit will have peaks of hope and expectations, and troughs of disappointment. There are many people coming along to take part. Every one is a person. Whilst

we can become frustrated at the diplomats and those in power, we need to keep in mind the humanity of all involved.

There is a cycle to the summit. Every few years there is a specific agreement / effort (as for the Paris Agreement) and then a series of implementation years leading up to another peak of expectation, as will happen in Glasgow. Governments need the hot breath of activists breathing down their necks to keep them on the go and our role is to contribute to this in various ways.

As a faith group we are about deep change – not just working towards the necessary climate justice, but to changes towards an economy based on justice too, for an equal and just society. Therefore it is all about seeking change to the underlying inequality.

That helps us think about how we prepare. We will be pushing for United Kingdom leadership on climate justice, not just in cutting emissions, but ensuring green investment and building this more equal world.

Quakers are one group of many interfaith and other civil society groups coming to Glasgow from all over the world, many of whom won't be part of the formal proceedings. We have opportunity to engage with and support these global networks.

Lindsey Fielder Cook works for QUNO (Quaker United Nations Offices) which supports peace and justice efforts at the United Nations, including climate change. We are the only faith group on IPCC (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). What is missing in climate justice is political will, and it is our job to

challenge world leaders within the context of quiet diplomacy. Lindsey's work for COP, for example, has been in holding a series of dinners, bringing together delegates from countries from different negotiating areas where we provide a safe, confidential, space. This builds confidence and trust between decision makers. A priority in her work has also been with the local communities and indigenous people's platform, which is often the area less funded.

Whilst COP summits have high security related to the ethos of the host country and can be intimidating, we can work through this in Glasgow to reach out to all involved. There will be space for vigils outside as well as the delegates and civil society observers working inside. COP26 will be an intense process. Our Quaker contribution is to build up trust through engagement. The increasingly heard faith voice is also about accountability.”

Practical ways for Quakers across Scotland to get involved

Glasgow Meeting House will be block booked for the duration of the COP, except for our regular Sunday and Wednesday Meetings for Worship. As well as our large meeting room there will be smaller meeting rooms and office accommodation. **Volunteers will be needed at the Meeting House to offer pastoral care and orientation.** We also anticipate that some groups will be allowed to sleep on the floor overnight in the Meeting House and wardens will be required to be on duty overnight. We will also need the loan of beds, bedding, desks and chairs etc. If you are interested in helping in this area, please contact Ed Tyler by text – 07799 898369 – or email him on tyleward@gmail.com.

Many delegates especially those from indigenous communities who are not supported by their governments – but who are usually those mostly directly impacted by climate change – are often unable to pay for their travel. We will be working through FWCC and QUNO to identify Quaker activists from developing countries and supporting them in their visa applications and travel costs. **Can you contribute to a fund to support delegates who otherwise would not be able to come?** If so, please contact Jenny Brook – sandalwood891@gmail.com

Glasgow Quakers have a scheme for bed and breakfast accommodation for visiting Friends. This will be expanded to include all areas within 1 – 1½ hour travelling of Glasgow (e.g. Edinburgh, Stirling, Dunblane, Ayr, etc.). **If you have a spare room for an attendee from a developing country or a volunteer** or can help in organising an accommodation register, please contact Mary Alice Mansell – mamansell54@gmail.com

We will also need **volunteers to help in other areas such as publicity, logistics and communications.** Also we may need translators for Spanish and other languages. If you can help in any way let Martin Mansell (the Hub convenor) know at mamansell69@gmail.com.

We are planning to send out **regular briefing emails** – contact Martin if you would like to receive them. ■

This planet came with a set of instructions, but we seem to have misplaced them. Important rules like don't poison the water, soil, or air, don't let the earth get overcrowded, and don't touch the thermostat have been broken.
Paul Hawken, 2009

PHOTO GALLERY



The Highlands Support Refugees loading up for Chios



Extinction Rebellion in Inverness

Climate Change

Margaret Roy, Lanark-West.

Who are you kidding? On and on they go. Why don't they take it seriously? Why don't they do something about it? Who are THEY? What needs changing?

Can it be other than a Western-style addiction to economic growth and development? Keeping the plates up means more and more economic growth and development. More profit. To crawl to the top of the pile is OK when you can't see the face of whose back you are clambering over.

Economic growth = exploitation, of people and resources.

The tip of the pyramid is stable only depending on the solidity of the base – the little people. The fuel that support the development is the consumer. You and me. How do we collude?

We buy. We demand a lifestyle that is unrealistic. Are we prepared to have less? What! Quaker simplicity?

Fashion keeping up with the Joneses, more and often cheaper clothes, bulging wardrobes. The vast majority man-made fibres that support the petro-chemical industry.

Food – what is a staple diet? Grown with chemical, flown miles for diversity of taste. What about vitality?

Pleasure – what is a good life? It starts with warmth, energy consumption. Can we afford to be cold or to travel less?

Can Quakers lead the way with our ethos of simplicity?

Good God, then there is more.

Inequality, injustice. Who are the faceless ones? The poor doing the dirty jobs for peanuts? Women? Race?

Environmental justice is so much more than cuddly bunnies.
Thank you David Attenborough.

Dumping rubbish – where does it come from?

STOP! Are we cherry picking? Can we get to the bottom of it all?

Don't produce rubbish.

Don't eat food that is devitalised by travelling for miles.

Buy a woolly jumper and turn your heating down 2°.

Wash clothes less frequently.

And so, what is it all about? A pet concern? Or something more fundamental? Is it really all about greed fuelled by insecurity? One newspaper recently asked, citizen or consumer? The current system is basically and thoroughly unfeasible and now it has reached its ultimate conclusion in the destruction of our planet.

There is no point in mouthing the words: human dignity, equality and justice for all, peace in our time, etc., etc.. We need to live it and in order to do so we need to shrink the Ego to a size that allows us to learn to live co-operatively in community. We can't do that in global megaunits. Now we have the internet perhaps we should not fear parochialism in smaller communities where we can eyeball each other and be truly accountable AND supportive to a different set of values that cherish life and where we value what we have.

Can we take the risk, to let it all fall apart so we can rebuild?
Who will drop their gun first?

And start with Quakers, how do our structures reflect the alienation of the little people? Structures can liberate or confine.

■

History is full of stories of ancient tales of ghosts, spirits and folklore. I grew up in Ireland, when I was very young and heard many tales of this kind. I love writing stories, and have done so since I was young. I wrote this story of Caldena some time ago. She confronts evil and stands for justice and peace. This is an extract from it. As a member of XR who stand for non-violent action, peace and justice too, I've updated it with a modern edition. It's part of a work in progress.

Sila Collins-Walden, Inverness LM

Caldena, Guardian of the Forests and of Ancient Lands.

Caldena is a legend, she has been the guardian of the ancient lands and forests from the beginning of time and a saviour of the creatures that reside within them. She has rested for many years within her dark cocoon and will only arise when called upon. She has special powers, and a gossamer cloak, woven for her by the spiders of the ancient forest to protect her from those who wish to harm her. For this cloak when worn she will become invisible. It's made of bark spider silk. Bark spider silk is so strong that is said even an arrow cannot pierce it. It has protected her throughout time on her many missions and journeys as protector of forests and of ancient lands and peoples.

Caldena's mission however is not complete, she hears the cry of the earth, the ravaged earth, the cry of pain carried by the wind from around the far corners of the planet. She has arisen from her dark cocoon deep within the peaty earth where she has lain almost for many years, her years.

The earth is lamenting, it is crying out in anguish, the treasures of the ancient lands, forest and peoples are in danger. The greed of man is destroying the planet hastening to its demise. She hears of tsunamis, extreme weather, storms, raging storms! wild fires burning, **where are all the trees?** global warming, icebergs melting floods, sea levels rising an ocean of regret!!!!

Caldena is old weary and must return to her peaty resting place soon for she is only permitted a thousand years. That has almost passed. The cloak of gossamer is slowly disintegrating and the spiders are almost extinct.

Apart from the one who has remained with her for all time as her protector. Someone else must take on the mantle on behalf of the peoples and creatures of the all the nations. And lands.

But who?

She listens: and hears : She hears a sound, a call to action!

There came one from lands in the north on a mission, one who has crossed the land and sailed the sea with a message in which she – for it is a she – who will speak truth to power to the most powerful leaders in all nations and lands. She is wise, for she has seen the evidence of the ravaged earth: mans greed, excessive greed, for she knows the planet is in danger and she must speak with them.

They will castigate her, mock her and deride her “**she is but a child**” they will say. Yes, she is but a child, but a gifted one with knowledge, insight and wisdom and far wiser than those who mock her. **But they are of no concern to her!**

She will say to those powerful leaders of all nations and lands and to those who mock: The youth of all nations have risen up and we say to you all powerful leaders of all nations: You have little regard for the future of our planet, you have abused it for selfish purposes. You care not for our future, **because you won’t be here!!!**

You have neglected your duty, you have ignored the science the earth is suffercating **you must listen! you must listen! heed the warning!**

Mother Earth is weeping, she is weeping!!

Extinction!! Extinction!!.....extinction!!!!



**Canada young friends gathering Toronto 27th-29th December 2019
Hannah Sayles, living and working in Barrie, near Toronto.**

Having recently attended the young Quaker gathering in Toronto I wanted to reflect on my experience and to share my thoughts of the weekend. I came to Canada in September 2019 to start work at a nature-based daycare in Barrie and to experience and travel in Canada. Before I arrived I got in touch with Toronto meeting house to find any friendly Quakers in the area, I was given contacts of a Quaker couple in Barrie. Not having my own car here, they took me to meeting at Yonge street in Newmarket, a very old meeting house with wooden pews in a square formation and a modernised basement with a lift installed, separate kitchen, dining area and play room. The meeting house has an old Quaker graveyard next to it. They have a reasonably small group of around 15 attenders from the surrounding area. There I met Stephen and Zaley, two of the organisers of the event who happened to be there that day and told me about the gathering weekend. I was surprised and delighted at this very lucky set of circumstances that led me to be able to attend the weekend!

I was definitely a little anxious about attending, unsure of what to expect, as I hadn't been at a young Quaker event for many years, or in a different country! In Scotland I lived in a rural and quite remote area where there are few Quakers who are dispersed, there are not many opportunities to get together due to distances. I think I had lost touch a little with my Quaker roots since leaving the 18 – 25 age group. Once everyone arrived and we started getting to know one another all of my worries left and I felt so welcomed and amongst friends, a feeling I think unique to young Quaker gatherings. There was a beautiful diversity within the quite large group who attended throughout the weekend that I do not get to experience in my everyday life. I really enjoyed being able to ask questions and learn from people of different backgrounds and spiritual experiences.

The meeting house in Toronto is in a lovely quiet area of the city, it caters for anybody wanting to stay for a reasonable charge in shared dorms or smaller rooms and also has a separate library space and full time childcare centre operating from the building. The meeting room is a very large space with a heightened ceiling and one glass panelled wall looking out onto a small garden and pretty sound proof though the area is quiet anyway.

The organised sessions were both different and interesting and the communal music and singing in the evenings were lovely. Being the first event of this kind that had been arranged I was very grateful to be involved, to be able to continue my spiritual journey through thought provoking discussion, and silent worship in a trusting and welcoming community. I hope we all do our best to live through our faith in everyday life, treating each other with the same compassion and honesty that Quakers do for each other, it is needed more than ever in these difficult times.

Hannah belongs to North of Scotland meeting and is the daughter of Phyllida and Tom.

Link to picture and historical plaque of Yonge street meeting:
http://ontarioplaques.com/Plaques/Plaque_York16.html

Toronto meeting website:
<http://www.torontoquakermeeting.org/>



Quaker Nominations. Online Course at Woodbrooke. November / December 2019.
Sila Collins-Walden Inverness LM.

Tutors: Christine Habgood-Coote and Catherine Putz.
Two / Three hours per week. Six weeks.
Course goal: Ideas and principles upon which we base the nominations process.

What did I get from this course?

I didn't realize there was so much to know about Noms! I was given a briefing when I was nominated for the Scottish Friend and Noms, but I didn't just know how much work it involved. Embarking on this course helped me explore the practical aspects of nominations as well as the potential to learn more about why and how we do it the way we do.

Nominations are at the heart of the way we do things. We live together as Friends, but we don't always get to know each other well enough. So being on Noms committee is an opportunity to get to know Friends better . Nominations work is about matching gifts to roles / or the other way around. It's very challenging. We must listen faithfully to the spirit and discern when nominating for a particular role.

We don't advertise, not normally, or interview for roles, we have a preference for nominating rather than volunteering. Why? We have a different criteria, different objectives and a different view of the world. We don't always go looking for the best person for the role, we seek to discern spiritual gifts in Friends in order that the person in this role can grow in spirit and knowledge of how we do things. The person asked to serve is chosen out of worship and a sense of their gifts. When we find the right Friend we should ensure that they are given a role description so they know what the role entails.

The easiest way as a nominator is to choose someone for a role who already has the skills we are looking for. That can have problems, they may want to or be persuaded to stay in that role for longer than necessary. Why not give another Friend a chance to develop new skills and for them to reach their potential? They may have a “calling”. We don’t focus on gifts that people don’t have !! Quakers can hide their gifts under a bushel.

Much of the work of meetings for church affairs and committees are undertaken by Friends specially appointed by the meeting or committee responsible for the work. When focusing on a committee appointment, questions of age and gender balance are relevant. There is a procedure to follow on how the noms process is done. We may have too many Friends of the same gender!! We need to have to have a balance.

We start with a list of Friends: it can be daunting with a long list of roles to fill and with few Friends to fill them (some require membership which makes it a little more difficult). When we are asked to take on a role it’s usually for three years, only in exceptional circumstances will it be for longer. There are times when it’s not possible to find someone for an existing role. There are ways of getting around this: role sharing, shorter terms of office, team working, or dividing job into a series of tasks.

Quaker tradition in nominating rather than volunteering is that we work towards building a stronger community where everyone is valued for the gifts they already have or to help them develop newly discovered gifts / talents they didn’t know they had. ■

The First Snow of Winter
Alistair Simmons, Inverness LM

The first snow of winter
Is gold
Larch needles fell,
Silently in the night
Sharp frost
Cracking ice
Spiking leaves
On the briefest of days
Chilled piercing beauty
Glooming sky
Saturated with the urgent cries of geese
Look for the golden cloud in the west
In the vanishing light
The old Shetlander told me
And wait for
The first snow of winter

