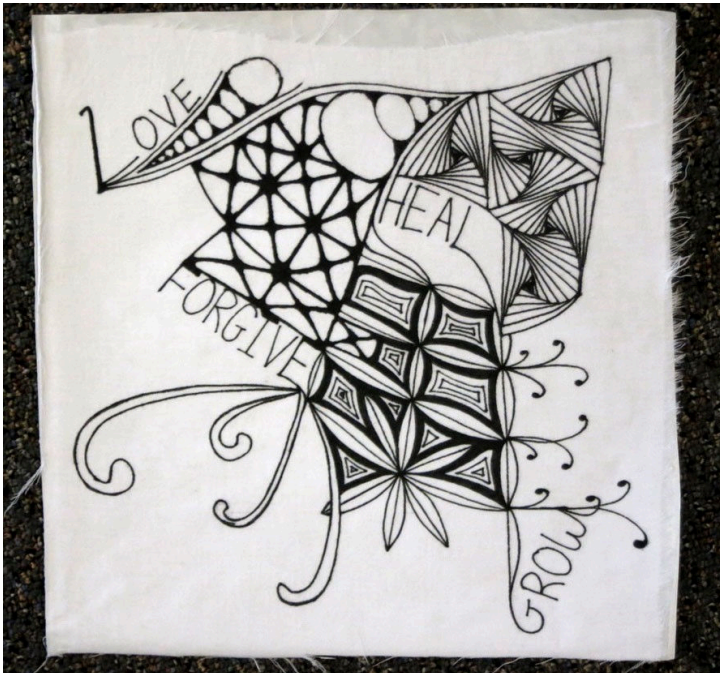




May 2018

Scottish Friend



Prayer Flag

Sadelle Wiltshire



Welcome to the May edition of the Scottish Friend. I managed to complete the first issue. So here's the second! Comments and suggestions would be welcomed. When sending in contributions, please note your LM.

In Friendship
Sila

Editor, Scottish Friend: Sila Collins-Walden, Inverness LM
Editor's Gofer: Brian Walden

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 **11 August 2018**. 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 Marion Sharkey know. You are strongly encouraged to do this, in view of escalating postage costs – and you get the photographs in colour as an incentive!

*Published by Quakers in Scotland, 01382 730 842
quakerscotland.org.uk (British website: quaker.org.uk).
Printed on recycled paper by
Print Force, Milngavie, 0141 956 1052.*

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<p>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.</p>
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Report of General Meeting for Scotland, Edinburgh, 10/3/2018.

Juli Salt, Forres LM

Fifty-six Friends met from all over Scotland, the furthest this time coming from Orkney. My journey by comparison is quite short. It is a mere 5 hours door to door with the most amazing scenery en route, travelling through the Grampians and the Drumochter Pass, reaching Perth and the south of Scotland. I then stay with my son in Leith. In discussion below about GM representatives and younger Friends' involvement, it is worth remembering that many of us do travel a long way to arrive! In my case I regard the whole journey as an enjoyable part of GM.

Our Clerk, Adwoa Bittle, always opens by explaining carefully, in depth, with sincerity, and yet somehow with humour, just how a MfW for business should be conducted. Advice for those who may not know and a reminder for those who may need reminding! So the scene is set.

GM was also challenged on how not only to make the day interesting, but how to make it interesting to young people. We were delighted that 9 young Friends joined us, ages 9 – 18, going off for their own Business meeting following our agenda and coming back at the end of the day with their own minute.

Our considerations turned to Ecumenical and Interfaith links, and the thought to bring all faiths, whether Christian-rooted or other under the umbrella heading of "Interfaith". Yet would that cause our contacts who have worked for so long in ecumenical work to feel less valued by us? It became very apparent that many of us go informally to other faith and interfaith meetings because of our own interest. We do not go to represent Quakers but by being present end up doing so. We were all encouraged to report back in whatever way we can when we go to such events / meetings via newsletters, web site etc. The idea then came

forward that a small group will work together to create a form to invite Friends to join an Interfaith email group. This sub-group will ask people interested about their areas of concern, availability, travel possibilities and more. We will end up with a two-tier system. One group of Friends who can attend formal appointments (when someone may need to speak on behalf of Scottish Quakers) and one group of Friends who can attend more informal events that just require interest. These two lists may have some of the same names on both.

We expect that those who attend any event on behalf of GM can claim expenses as required.

We also agree that the GM Clerk's role will now encompass receiving invitations to events and disseminating them. She gets a lot! We are content that the proposal to create a clear bank of people who are willing and interested and who are able to attend events on our behalf and the formalisation of GM Clerk receiving and dissemination invitations means that the concept of GM Representative Friend has been developed.

You might be able to tell I found this interesting. Since becoming part of my small local interfaith group I have so enjoyed becoming friends with those of other faiths and attending their services. I see this as a basic part of peace building. I love it !

Next came **Our Logo** – new idea to show both that we are Scottish, and that we are part of BYM. We had 3 choices in front of us. The clerk said she wanted to complete this in 10 minutes. How can it take that long I thought – honestly how naïve!! Our clerk minuted “*This is a highly emotive issue that we hope we*

can keep in perspective.” Isn’t our Quaker-speak wonderful. It was agreed that all 3 versions would be tried out.

Inevitably there wasn’t time to hear all the reports, so the excellent (Scottish) Parliamentary Engagement Working Group and Sufferings report which had been circulated were not able to be discussed. I felt for those who had done so much work both in those meetings and writing their reports. Still it can’t all be done.

And so full circle back to our younger Friends who had had their own very fruitful business session and reported back so clearly and efficiently.

“We are glad that there is a feeling that from now they will meet when GM meets and in conversation with clerks decide which parts they would like to be part of and at which points they would like free time. We ask that they are involved in the agenda setting and for this new venture to not just be a token gesture. We ask they use social media to alert each other to travel plans etc. We hope this is the beginning of some very real links of involvement and sharing.”

I do commend reading the minutes of GM, and even better that if you haven’t been before you do come. Maybe at times the item is difficult but rarely dry, always resolved with caring and best Quaker Practice.

As I said above my journey to GM gives me many opportunities. After GM my son collected me and took me to see the statue of Greyfriar’s Bobby – which he hadn’t seen either. We ended up in Princes Street Gardens looking at a statue of a dog called “BUM” – I will leave you to your own research! ■

Meeting for Sufferings Report for GM, 10/3/2018

Alyson Buchan

The substantive issue on our agenda was the strategic plan for Quaker Life Work 2018 to 2022. Quaker Life Central Committee had worked hard to produce a list of six priorities, but with limited resources wanted us to identify the three main priorities.

The statement is structured in six sections, matching the six sections in Our Faith in the Future. The six sections are:

1. Meeting for Worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker.
2. Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age.
3. All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline.
4. Quaker values are active in the world.
5. Quakers work collaboratively.
6. Quakers are well known and widely understood.

Under each of these headings they have listed several aims *e.g. Meetings are more joyful, confident, dynamic and welcoming* and several 'indicators of success' which, if found to be true, would suggest the aim was (at least) being achieved in part *e.g. More Local Meetings are large enough to be vibrant and sustainable*

Jocelyn Burnell introduced the report and then we moved in Home Groups to consider the questions. QLCC had identified 1,2 and 6 as their main focus. Scotland goes with Friends in Wales. Friends in Wales includes the Southern Marches – the Welsh Borders which is where I come from. As a native of Herefordshire I know that I was never considered to be Welsh by those across the border and this grouping must make it difficult for Welsh Friends to have a relationship with the Welsh Assembly. It made me realise how lucky we are in Scotland to have a specific identity.

When we came back together, we heard that meeting for worship remains central to everything we do as Quakers and we wanted to include 4. as a main focus of Quaker Life because knowing and understanding our Quaker discipline also needs to be a priority. There was also a brief report of Quaker Life work in 2017, which included

- The consideration of non-binary gender issues , a learning process which may take some time.
- work on good practice with vulnerable adult friends, which will be circulated soon.
- The limited use being made of Being Friends together which now has free access
- A conscious effort to strengthen relations with other Quaker bodies like Swarthmoor, Woodbrooke, Vibrancy, Quaker Peace and Social Witness.

An item that surprised me was that in March Cadbury's chocolate eggs and their omission of the word 'Easter' was in the news. There was then a Cadbury relative on the Friends House staff whose contribution to the debate raised the Quaker profile and put Quakers (briefly) in the media more than usual. Quaker Life saw a sharp peak in the demand for Enquirer's Packs that month. This prompted a contribution from a younger Friend (50ish) for us to embrace modern technology. He reminded us that Facebook is 'old hat' to young Quakers who are more likely to communicate using Buzzfeed, Twitterfeed, Quelfie and other things I've never heard of. Young Quakers do not come to our Business Meetings. If we want to involve them and pass things to the next generation, we must follow their lead, rather than vice versa. We are called to think as well as live adventurously.

Other matters considered by Meeting for Sufferings in February were:

- A request that Meeting for Sufferings carry out a review of YM Committee on Clerk's manner of work and include how to nurture potential Clerks and Treasurers and the relationship between Central Nominations Committee and the Committee on Clerks.
- Progress of the Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group set up in response to Yearly Meeting Gathering at Canterbury in 2011. Area Meetings were encouraged to sign the interfaith climate statement at <http://www.interfaithclimatestatement.org>
- If we are not going to Britain Yearly Meeting, some of it will be live-streamed and social media will be used to keep us informed. Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee was urged to continue embracing the use of technology in sharing in the participation in Yearly Meeting.
- The prison and court register – update on three of the six Friends arrested during a meeting for worship outside the Arms Fair organised by Defence and Security Equipment International in London.

I recommend the documents in advance and minutes which can be found at www.quaker.org.uk/mfs. ■

Young General Meeting for Scotland, Edinburgh, 10/3/2018

Maddie Orr

With an agenda that mirrored the adult's meeting upstairs, young Friends from across Scotland met to bring a fresh perspective to the discussions on the relationship between Quakers and members of other religions, the relationship between Quakers and our government, and what young people mean and can bring to General Meeting.

Discussing interfaith links, we explored the different religions and cultures of our peers, and what they mean in terms of our interactions with them as people with differing points of view and opinions. We also explored the label of being "Christian" and whether this is something we embrace or reject. We came to a general conclusion that, as ever-evolving people in an increasingly secular age, the label of "Christian" doesn't sit well with us. Whilst we recognize this may not be the case for all young Friends, we seemed to feel that we connect with the parts of Faith and Practice, and Quakerism as a whole that move away from weighted words like "Lord", "Jesus", and an involved omnipotent male God.

When discussing the Parliamentary Engagement Group, we focused solely on education. We expressed an intense desire for more support, appreciation, and opportunity for the subjects that aren't in the STEM group. To clarify, the subjects that fall under science, technology, engineering, and maths are very heavily emphasized in schools, with subjects like the humanities and arts, and others are almost an afterthought. This is in both primary and secondary schools, and there are many government-funded/supported initiatives for the STEM subjects, and little left over for the others, in both terms of time, funding, resources, and appreciation.

We also wanted to come up with a scheme which covers basic everyday skills such as money management, public speaking and interview skills, etc where people from the age of 14 onward are given information and advice on things that, we feel, we're just expected to know.

The final discussion was on children and young Friends in General Meeting and how we want to proceed in the future. We felt as if there were many benefits to being invited to such events - the social and the "political" aspect. This being, we greatly enjoy reconnecting with people we have met at other events and are unlikely to see outwith Quaker meetings, and we also enjoy being involved and listened to in the make-up and running of General Meeting. We feel that, whether it's us just becoming older and more aware of things, or whether Quakers have started a new chapter wherein children and young adults are at the forefront of the organisation, our voices are being heard and valued just as those of adults. ■

A different ending?

Hilary Patrick

One thing which has concerned Scottish Friends over the years has been the cost of funerals. For a person of moderate means the cost of the average funeral, around £3000, is a significant outlay. For some people the cost may be prohibitive. Others may think that their money could be better spent elsewhere, on a donation to a charity of their choice, for example.

There is now an alternative, which may appeal to some people. A so-called "direct cremation" can reduce costs significantly. The cremation takes place at a time and place of the funeral director's

choosing and friends and relatives do not attend. This means that the costs of undertakers, cars, flowers, and room hire can be reduced. The cremation can take place during anti-social hours, first early in the morning or late at night, for example, thus meaning that the crematorium can charge a better rate. All this means that the cost of the cremation can be reduced to around £1000.

One of our family, an accountant, was very attracted to balancing his final budget in this way. While some of us were sad that they could not be present to say their goodbyes, for most of us this felt a dignified and private way to bid him on his way. Some families, we were told, held a farewell ceremony when the ashes are returned to them. We did not find this necessary and instead held a very joyous celebration of his long and happy life.

Now a new social enterprise has been set up to offer direct cremations in Scotland. Caledonia Cremations, www.caledoniacremation.org.uk, is Scotland's first non-for-profit funeral directors. Set up by the Scottish Community Renewal Trust, which works with some of the poorest communities in Scotland, it offers a simple, direct cremation for £995.

There is more information on its website.

This option will not work for everyone, or indeed for many people. (It is not available to people living on the Scottish Islands, as yet.) However there may be Friends who like the simplicity of the direct cremation, or who find the financial considerations compelling. Others may be attracted by the idea of a funeral director who ploughs any profits back into helping families coping with funeral poverty. For them the offer from Caledonia Cremations may be of interest. ■

Interfaith Work in Scotland

Lynne Barty.

For the past five years I have represented Quakers on the committee of Faiths in Scotland Community Action Fund (FiSCAF) which is part of the umbrella organisation Faith in Community Scotland (FICS). This is mostly funded by the Church of Scotland but receives grants from other faith-based organisations including Scottish Quakers.

A recent report from FICS describes their work and ethos: “Over the past twelve years we have worked with faith groups and individuals in Scotland’s poorest communities, supporting them to tackle poverty in a variety of ways. We consider ourselves to be part of a wide movement of people and groups committed to fighting poverty, and as an organisation we have responsibilities for particular pieces of work within this movement. The experts and leaders informing our work are at the grass-roots, in the communities where levels of poverty are greatest and where people have the ideas, desire and potential to change things.

Our staff, volunteers and trustees respond to the ‘asks’ from communities and from individuals who struggle against poverty. As a charity, we exist to be alongside and facilitate the work of others, rather than running our own activities. We are led by the community. Love, nurture and relatedness are at the heart of what we do and how we do it. We have come from a place of faith and continue to be nurtured by it. We are inspired by one of the ‘golden threads’ common to many of the world’s main faiths: that our greatest concern must be for the people in our society who are most marginalised.

We are *angry* about growing inequality and at the way in which the poorest are being trampled upon. We are *concerned* about how people are valued, how their voice is heard and how, in coming together, people and communities flourish and grow. We *recognise* the role which local faith groups can and do play in tackling poverty and *we want to support* them to be effective in

their work to reduce poverty and inequality in their local communities.

Collectively we are a group of people who share a commitment to building a fair and just society by working from the grass-roots, building on the expertise and knowledge of those we work alongside and shaping plans and actions together. With this in mind, we respond to requests for support from people and groups who, from the perspective of faith, share our anger at injustice and inequality in Scotland, and who want to change things for the better.”

FiSCAF—Faiths in Scotland Community Action Fund

From its inception in April 2009 Faiths in Scotland Community Action Fund has awarded grants in excess of **£1,000,000** in support of groups in Scotland’s most fragile urban and rural communities. Since January 2018 The FiSCAF Committee has been reviewing the impact of this work and is now considering its future direction.

Small grants of up to £750 are available to faith based, anti-poverty projects with an annual turnover of £30,000 or less and can be applied for at any time, however FiSCAF is not currently accepting applications for major grants.

The following are among a diverse range of faiths groups that have been awarded grants over the past few years:

[Madrassa Zia Ul Quran](#)

[St. Andrew’s Family Support Project, Dundee](#)

[Fife Arabic Society](#)

[East Ayrshire Churches Homelessness Action \(EACH\)](#)

[Open Space, Ruchazie](#)
[Findlay Family Network, Glasgow](#)
[Amina Muslim Women's Resouce Centre, Glasgow](#)

More information about these and other groups that have benefitted from FiSCAF grants can be found on the FiSCAF website: <https://www.faithincommunityscotland.org/faith-in-community-scotland-action-fund/>

FiSCAF Committee Meetings are usually held three times a year and comprise staff, trustees of FICS and volunteers like myself from other faith organisations. It is a great privilege to be involved with this committed group of individuals and to learn from them about how we can best support faiths groups who are working with some of the poorest people in Scotland. ■

Zentangle Workshop with Sadelle Wiltshire. Saturday March 24th

By Sila Collins-Walden

Inverness Local meeting held a Zentangle workshop with Sadelle, a Quaker from Vermont USA who is a qualified Zentangle art teacher. It was held at the L'arche community at Drummond Crescent Inverness where Friends hold our MfW. It was well attended by Friends, some coming from other



Sadelle Wiltshire

meetings, and there was a young persons' attendance too. Sadelle demonstrated this meditative form of art with it's abstract patterns. You don't have to be artist to do this. Zentangle art is an easy-to-learn method of creating abstract images, it's very relaxing, it expands your imagination and encourages mindfulness. It's non-representational, unplanned, and you don't need to worry about the finished effect.

How many of us have done doodles while in the workplace, or at meetings sitting scribbling away without thinking and come up with an abstract pattern without realizing it's an art work? So really it could be described as an elaborate form of doodling! It's more than that of course.

We spent the day having fun, each one of us working on our tiles. They are small squares or circular shapes similar to watercolour paper. We then began producing a small piece of artwork to keep and take home. It was an opportunity to meet up with Friends

from other meetings and with one who had travelled from as far away as the USA!!



I spoke with Sadelle about Zentangle Art:

When did you become an artist, what/ who inspired you, you could mention your Quaker faith or anything else you feel relevant.

I was drawn to artistic and creative pursuits as young child, but remember being told that artists can't make a living, and was quickly pointed into other directions as a young adult. I became a knitter in my early 20's, later, as a young mother I quickly found myself falling into fibre arts, especially spinning, weaving and jewellery making. I was also introduced to the book "The Artist's Way", by Julia Cameron, and if I can credit anything with bringing me to the realization that yes, I am an artist, it was that book. I also credit that book for helping recognize that indeed there is a connection to creating and Spirit. And it was through the personal experiences I had, seeing and finding inspiration in my own creative work and acts, and seeing the light of God present there, that I was led to worship with Friends and eventually ask for membership.

I would like to know more about your Zentangle art and how you got started.

I've always been artistic in one way or another, and I've been a spinner, jewellery artist and fibre artist for over 30 years, but I rarely gave myself time or practice to draw. In 2010, my partner and I were visiting with a friend's sister in central Massachusetts (US). That Sunday morning, before we went to to worship we saw these beautiful miniature drawings on her dining table and learned they were representative of a drawing method called Zentangle.



*Inverness
Zentangling*

The idea is that anyone can draw these beautiful images, even with no experience, AND that it is a relaxing and stress relieving way to engage with art. I loved the fact that here was a way to draw that really facilitates quiet and meditation. I have found teaching art in such a way that enables people to relax and appreciate their gifts AND that of others was a perfect match for me as a Quaker.

There are so many other creative activities that quiet and contemplation can be applied to, ways to connect with that still small voice and where you can feel that Spirit is working through you as your hands move. These days I'm facilitating many meditative art experiences, from walking and drawing labyrinths, to nature drawing, art journaling and Celtic Knotwork, as well as Zentangle. For me it's a gift that keeps on

growing and giving and a way of spreading a bit of inner and outer peace.

What are the health benefits, if any.

I believe that the health benefits of creating ANY kind of art in a meditative or mindful way are huge, and varied. This is an activity that is a great balm for dealing with stress, anger, ADHD, grief, and even pain. For me personally, my fibre art, Zentangle and intentional drawing have helped me deal with anxiety. I used to be deathly afraid of flying, for instance, and when we needed to move my mother south to live near my brother in Georgia, I used it very intentionally during necessary flights south. As a former smoker, I also recognize how mindful drawing could have been a great help during the time I was quitting years ago, in giving me something else to concentrate on during those brief moments of temptation. I have known others that have used it as a way to relax before sleep and found it was helpful for their insomnia.

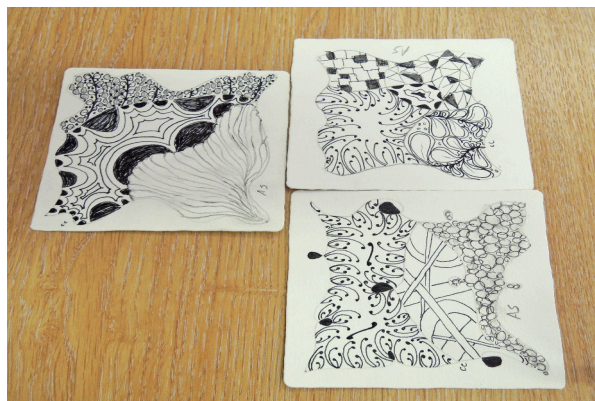
Were you invited to come to Scotland? And by whom.

I was invited to come to Scotland on this trip by Patricia Rogers of Skye Meeting, whom I had met when she hosted me for 4 days in 2016 on a visit while travelling in the Inner Hebrides with another US Friend. After worship with Skye Friends I shared a short Zentangle workshop with them as a thank you. What was really special about this was that after I returned home, Trish and I stayed in touch monthly, and a lovely friendship developed. Trish came to visit us here in Vermont the following year in October, and before her visit she told me she had a role in planning the programmes for the Westerly Gathering of Friends in Crianlarich for 2018, and suggested I might consider coming

over to lead an art workshop for them. I suggested that it might work if I were also to visit and share my art ministry with Friends in Scotland. After much discernment and reaching out, I was invited to visit with Friends in Glasgow, Skye, Inverness and Aberdeen and St. Andrews.



Skye Zentangle Workshop



More Zentangles!

How should we talk about Poverty?

Richard Raggett, St Andrews Meeting

If the killer statistic could do the trick, poverty would have been solved long ago.” Thus the Communications Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) opened a day’s conference in February in Edinburgh, “Talking about poverty: how can we tell a new story?” Statistics such as “Over 14 million people in the UK are living in poverty!” seem to have little impact. To respond to this, a two-year research project has been undertaken into public opinion in the UK analysing how people think about poverty. Using a sample of 20,000 people it sought to understand the different shades of public opinion. It investigated whether people tend to be more sympathetic if poverty is described in one way rather than another. The project’s objective was a disciplined, long-term, strategic change to the way poverty is talked about in the UK.

I can’t do justice to the professionalism and optimism of this event, attended by 130 delegates representing local and national government, charities working in the field, trade unions, housing associations and health care. This summary of JRF’s recommendations includes some personal thoughts.

Views on the Surface: opinions frequently take the form of:

- Harking back to the past - there is no real poverty in the UK now; it’s not like the old days
- Fatalism – the poor have always been with us and always will be
- “It’s down to them”: if they only tried harder, they could pull themselves out of trouble

How can we get past these instincts? Abraham Lincoln said: “Public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed. Whoever moulds public sentiment goes

deeper than he who enacts statutes, or pronounces judicial decisions.”

Good news: the same people expressing the above, “pessimistic” views, nonetheless often agreed that Government **does** have responsibility to act, that people **are** restricted by circumstances beyond their control, and that we all need certain core basics in order to live. The evidence suggests that starting conversations from certain perspectives can be surprisingly effective in drawing out deeper empathies and support for positive action. How do we do this?

Talk about “Poverty”, not the “economy”, “benefit cuts” or “austerity” which can draw people down the negative paths, such as “it’s down to them”.

Build a story around the values of justice and compassion: public opinion readily identifies with the UK being a compassionate country and a society which believes strongly in justice. Statements along the lines of “It cannot be right that our society allows so many people to live in circumstances where they have to choose between food, clothes or heating” touch the heart and create a positive response.

Use metaphors: e.g. “trapped, restrained”: using vivid images such as “locked into the constant stress of poverty” and “trapped by impossible choices” is more likely to elicit support for doing something about it.

Individual stories: examples of individuals, of real-life circumstances, are powerful and provide something striking to relate to and address. Who has to resort to the local Foodbanks and why?

Talk in terms of solutions: describe benefits as only one piece of our welfare safety net, one of the many public systems upon

which we all rely. This helps to counter the charge that we can't afford benefits or that we are being fleeced by fraudulent claimants. It may enable a discussion of benefit levels as part of a solution. By the same token, suggest specific steps which address adverse forces in the economy, e.g. the Living Wage and campaigns against zero-hours contracts and insecure work.

I found these recommendations persuasive. My own experience of having "those difficult conversations" has been to do with asylum seekers, another sensitive topic. Starting with individual stories from personal experience seemed to engage people when I was fund raising for Freedom from Torture. I had some wonderful and surprising conversations - cause for optimism.

So, I guess it is about having the conversations and not letting the negative myths slip by unchallenged. Easier said than done. I tend either to retreat or to step in too quickly, only to get hot under the collar so a conversation becomes fruitless verbal combat. As Quakers, we believe that we should not let injustice go unchallenged. We have to build the courage to talk with conviction, gentleness and understanding. Our *Advices and Queries* 17 says: "Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? When words are strange and disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken." A tough call to listen with humility; a powerful way to start conversations which need to take place about poverty in the UK. Challenge Poverty Week takes place in Scotland in October this year (see povertyalliance.org).

A journalist writing in the Guardian the other day about how to persuade people to change a strongly, perhaps irrationally, held opinion was advised: “Whoever wants to protect a democratic, open society should try to get their own views across with confidence, joy and pleasure.” ■

Universal Basic Income

John Tracey, Inverness LM.

Inverness Meeting has occasional presentations and discussion after Meeting for Worship. One such looked at Universal Basic Income.

My motivations for researching and presenting on this issue come from ‘Advices and queries’ 5 and from my experiences of working at the local Food bank where I was so often asking, “why is this happening? Why do I need to be doing this? How can we do away with the need for Food Banks?”

Coincidentally, the Friend who has responsibility for the library at Local meeting in Inverness mentioned the addition of ‘A Basic Income Handbook’ written by Annie Miller. I borrowed it from the library, read it and thought “Now I’ve read the book, what can I do?” The occasional presentations seemed to be one opportunity. Hence the presentation to Local Meeting in February of this year.

What is Universal Basic Income? It is “A cash payment where assessment and delivery are based on the individual. It is universal for a defined population, is not means-tested, not selective except by age, and is unconditional.”

History - This is not a new idea although different names have been used: State Bonus, National Dividend, Social Dividend, Negative Income Tax, Unconditional Basic Income. The idea dates right back to Thomas More's 'Utopia'. He spoke about the

death penalty being the punishment for stealing food. His idea was that a means of livelihood guaranteed by Government was a better cure for theft of food. 2017 has seen the start of the Finland Minimum Income Guarantee experiment, and in Scotland there has been funding made available to investigate the possibility for pilot projects.

Reasons for changing to Universal Basic Income

- Universal Basic Income values all individuals, not their circumstances.
- Control and choice is given to the individual.
- The poorest are freed from the anxiety and oppression of the conditionality and sanctions associated with means testing related Benefits.
- Universal Basic Income reduces income poverty and moves towards income security.
- Universal Basic Income restores the incentive to work for pay. Currently it is difficult to work your way out of poverty as incomes are aggregated and Benefits are cut. The restored incentive to work for pay increases labour market efficiency.
- There is a reduction in income inequality which will lead to a more united and inclusive society.
- The system of Benefit Support is simplified by replacing the current multiple benefits, e.g. means tested Benefits, State Pension, Child Benefit.
- Currently Benefits must be applied for and the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills needed for this may be a challenge and therefore a barrier to some. Universal Basic Income is given automatically.

Reasons for not changing to Universal Basic Income

- “Powerful interests” will prevent implementation to sustain their positions.
- Universal Basic Income will benefit the poor with the rich having to pay more.
- How will it be funded? Higher taxes.
- The present system of National Insurance benefits has an element of mutuality – pay in to take out. Universal Basic Income is something for nothing!
- Levels of Universal Basic Income will be set too high. This scenario likely to lead to erosion in value over time as has happened with National Insurance Benefit, State Pension and Child Benefit.
- Levels of Universal Basic Income will be set too low and will not cover basic needs. Presently Jobseekers’ Allowance averages approximately £65 while the EU has £140 as the amount needed for the anti-poverty level.

How will a Basic Income scheme be financed?

- There will be ‘savings’ from Benefit payments that will disappear, e.g. Universal Credit, Jobseeker’s Allowance. State Pension.
- There will be ‘savings’ on administration costs associate with these redundant Benefits payments.
- Most significantly, there will be the opportunity for funding to come from a reformed tax system. This could be changed income tax rates – perhaps more progressive tax rates, perhaps a flat rate for all? There could be new taxes such as a sales tax, a wealth tax, a financial transfer tax. Perhaps a Land Tax could replace Council Tax?
- In her book Annie Miller suggests reformed Income Tax is the best option as this has the same agency collecting and distributing of finance and there is already a system in

place. Income tax will raise the amount needed in its own right and it is the fairest and most direct method of transfer from rich to poor.

How might it work? Various models exist and there have been/are pilot projects. In her book, Annie Miller gives three possible models with full detail and analysis. (<https://www.luath.co.uk/politics-and-current-issues/a-basic-income-handbook>). The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) and the Citizens' Income Trust have drafted proposals and have been making presentations at various locations in Scotland. (<https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2018/02/pathways-towards-economic-security-and-universal-basic-income-new-rsa-report>)

Where do the political parties stand? The Scottish Green Party has Basic Income implementation as policy, while other Scottish Parties support the idea to varying degrees, e.g. presently The Scottish Government is supporting pilot projects but none have adopted it as policy.

Come an election, perhaps it would be appropriate for each party to clearly state its policy on Basic Income, allowing the electorate to consider and choose a way forward?

What is the way ahead for individual Friends? Each individual can become knowledgeable about Basic Income, confident in understanding and willing to campaign for change. Doesn't this sound familiar to Friends about any issue? There is that responsibility which lies with the individual to put their faith into action. This action could be contacting MPs, MSPs, others. It could be about spreading the word. ■

The Epistle from Experiment with Light

Margaret Roy

Thirty Friends gathered at Glenthorne to review the Experiment with Light practice, 26th - 29th March. It was a powerful experience working with so many experienced Friends. Much came out of the conference to renew and promote the practice. There are so many Light groups, many in Scotland, that contribute to the spirituality of their Meeting.

Here is the Epistle:

Epistle

To all Friends everywhere! Greetings from the Experiment with Light Conference at Glenthorne, 26-29 March 2018.

Thirty Friends from all over Britain and beyond have gathered here to explore the questions: How might we be open to the leadings of the Light? How can we support each other with trust, courage and commitment?

In our experience Experiment with Light creates a space where we can feel confident to share at a deep level. Working into our hearts deeply and looking into the hearts of others enhances our relationships – with ourselves, with each other, with our Meetings, with the world around us, and with the Light.

During our conference we were looking at the issue of how we express our Quaker faith that presently causes concern for the unity of Friends in Britain and elsewhere. We were reminded of the answer Moses received to his question who was speaking to him through the burning bush: “I am what I am” (Exodus 3:14). We encourage all Friends to rest in this ‘I am’, which is beyond reason and surpasses human understanding.

Being grounded in this inward-leading discipline helps us to enrich each other and to come to right discernment. It creates a sense of connectedness and unity that transcends differences of expression.

“In the light walk, and ye will shine.” (George Fox)

Many resources, including the meditations and the journal are available on-line at www.experiment-with-light.org. We hope to do a retreat in Scotland soon - if interested get in touch with margaret.roy@btinternet.com so we can gather numbers. Also, if you are interested in doing the experiment via skype, get in touch with Margaret.

Bible Study/Thomas Group.

One day mini-conference on 26th May at Glasgow Meeting House, 10.30 for 11am.

After looking at KENOSIS, preparing for the presence, we want to look at PRAYER, the dialogue with the Divine.

Sessions will include *The difference between East & West Christianity*, and *Awareness of levels of Consciousness*.

To attend apply to margaret.roy@btinternet.com or lorrainemcfadden59@yahoo.com

Castle Douglas Local Meeting discussion/lunch Anne MacArthur

A group of Friends and Attenders from Castle Douglas meeting met together for a shared lunch and discussion following Meeting for Worship on Sunday 25th February.

The subject under discussion was ‘austerity’. This came about through having to consider the future of Castle Douglas Community Centre where we have worshipped since our local meeting was formed in the early 1990s.



The Centre is affected by council cuts to services, which is in turn a result of wider austerity policies being implemented by local and national government. We will hear the results of a recent feasibility

study later in the year and have submitted an initial, collective response to the Centre's management committee about possible future arrangements.

The discussion on the topic of austerity soon branched out into wider social, political and spiritual themes. There was a lively sharing of ideas and personal stories and for some of us, the event was a chance to explore whether we felt there was a need to respond in some way that would be consistent with our Quaker values. Not everyone shared this objective and no conclusion was reached but everyone seemed to value the opportunity to express opinions and listen to one another in a spirit of shared concern for those in our local community. We will consider repeating the lunch/discussion format for other topics and stay alert to practical developments affecting our place of weekly worship. ■

General Meeting for Scotland
Saturday June 16th

Dear Friends,

Please do come to Inverness for General Meeting! Usually around 40 Quakers from across Scotland meet to worship, discern, share food and build community. Come and be part of it. In Edinburgh, at our last GM, a group of young people met alongside and with us. They would like to meet up again in Inverness. To make this happen I need to know numbers and ages and have contact information for each young person. Please email me about this adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk **LM Clerks PLEASE pass this on to young people and their parents in your Meeting.**

Our meeting is arranged to be held at the Methodist Church, 50 Huntly Street, Inverness IV3 5PR. If you are coming by car, it's best to park in the Rose Street car park and cross over the river on the Greig St Bridge. This is the same route as from the station. Refreshments will be available from 10 am. Business starts at 11 am. A simple lunch will be provided, but please be ready to supplement this with your own packed lunch!

If you require local information, please contact Oriole Hall at oriolehall@hotmail.com However all local Quaker B&B has been booked up so please look for something to suit you near at hand.

In the morning session we will be considering the recent Yearly Meeting held 4th to 7th May. Please look on the Quaker.org.uk website for all the details. Or read the Friend! In the afternoon We will worship together and consider important GM business.

One item will be consideration of the response from our Trustees to the minute we sent them from our Elgin GM. (I will be sending this out in full roughly 10 days before GM so you can all be

prepared. If you don't receive it please ask your LM clerk as I would like to know that lines of communication are working!)

We aim to finish at 4:30 with more cake!

I look forward to seeing you there. If you have never been to GM this would be a great one to start with! Attenders welcome. Please ask your Overseers if you require bursary assistance. Please could Overseers/Treasurers be ready to help if money is needed up front. We need to move away from expecting people to be able to pay then claim back.

Adwoa Bittle
Clerk



“Take time to learn about other people’s experiences of the Light. Remember the importance of the Bible, the writings of Friends and all writings which reveal the ways of God. As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained? While respecting the experiences and opinions of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value. Appreciate that doubt and questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to a greater awareness of the Light that is in us all.”

Advices & queries 5