



October 2021

Scottish Friend



Remember COP 26: Earth from Space

Courtesy of Jill Whitefield, Buckie



Welcome Friends to the October 2021 edition of the Scottish Friend. As lockdown eases, some of us are still on Zoom.

I am handing over to your new editor **Amer Syed** from Aberdeen meeting. Please from now send in your contributions to him.

Comments and suggestions would be welcomed. When sending in contributions, please note your LM.

In Friendship, Sila and best wishes to Amer.

Editor, Scottish Friend: Sila Collins-Walden, Inverness LM
Editor's Gofer, Technical Advisor, and Last Chance to Blame if Anything Goes Wrong: Brian Walden

Scottish Friend is distributed by Sue Proudlove

Please send articles as an **editable attachment** to amer.s.syed@gmail.com or typed or hand-written to Flat C, 22 College Bounds, Aberdeen, AB24 3DS to arrive five weeks before GM, ie, by **5 February 2022**. 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 Administrator, Sue Proudlove, know. You are strongly encouraged to do this in view of escalating postage costs.

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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, 20th November 2021

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all!



I write this as preparations for COP 26 intensify. Locally there is a flurry of activity as two of the COP pilgrimages pass through and stop in East Lothian. Some Friends intend to join them as day-pilgrims; others will walk all the way to Glasgow. On 6th November many of us will gather in Glasgow or nearer home for the Global Day of Action – See you there! However you intend to take part, our Quakers in Scotland website keeps us up to date and gives details of events, and what is happening in Glasgow Meeting House.

A week after the close of COP26, we have General Meeting and it will provide an opportunity to share our stories and our post-COP hopes and expectations.

Our next General Meeting will be on 20th November. We will start with worship at 10.15 am, break for lunch from 12.15 pm to 1.15 pm, and our afternoon session will finish about 2.45 pm. This is an opportunity to meet in person and virtually with Friends from across Scotland. We worship together and in a spirit of worship we attend to our church affairs, and matters concerning the spiritual life and witness of Quakers in Scotland. Please do come! All are welcome.

This GM will be our first ‘blended’ meeting, with some Friends present in the Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edin-

burgh EH1 2JL and others joining by Zoom. I will send out details of how to join nearer the time.

We hope that young people of Shindig age (11 and up) will come to GM in Edinburgh. They might choose to spend either the morning or the afternoon contributing to the GM business meeting and do their own thing with the rest of their time in Edinburgh. **LM Clerks PLEASE pass this calling letter to young people and their parents in your Meeting.** Guidelines for young people attending GM will be circulated with the final arrangements email and papers in advance.

So, what will we be doing at GM in November? Our Treasurer Nigel Dower will take us through the GM Budget for 2022. In small groups we will be exploring our understanding and experience of Quaker eldership and oversight, in preparation for training and supporting our elders and overseers. Our GM link people with peace organisations will tell us what it has been like for them to be Quaker representatives on these bodies. We will also be updated on Meeting for Sufferings, our parliamentary engagement work, and we'll hear from our new Community Justice Working Group.



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.

Elizabeth Allen

General Meeting Report for Scotland 11th September 2021 Via Zoom.

Pamala McDougall Dundee

This was different. As an experiment, draft minutes were circulated prior to the meeting and we were asked by our clerk for feedback after the event. If it is positive, then this practice will continue. I have yet to reflect and consider the pros and cons but I was almost overwhelmed by the number of reports and reading material to print off and wade through. This was a meeting of two halves with a break for lunch which was a welcome respite in the middle of a very busy, but important agenda with COP 26 looming in November in Glasgow.

A total of 54 Friends gathered by Zoom to be welcomed by our clerk, Elizabeth Allen. She brought a message of warm greetings from John Bremner, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Officer of the Synod of the United Reform Church.

Decisions taken in between meetings included nominations for the GM working group to identify Options for Change in the way we work which would benefit Quakers in Scotland, with Lesley Richards as convenor. Lesley spoke to us about the group's progress so far which included meeting with Treasurers and Trustees of Area Meetings. There are nine members of the group and Zoe Prosser, GM Local Development Worker, will also liaise with the group.

As a member church, we were saddened to hear that the Scottish Churches Housing Action organisation has been laid down after 27 years due to lack of support.

On a more positive note, we heard from Matthew Bittle who spoke to his video report on the Shindig 2021 event which is an annual event for Young Friends in Scotland. He said the participants enjoyed meeting in person and spoke of a powerful and

meaningful spiritual experience. Appreciation was expressed to the Shindig Team and Trustees who made it all possible.

Andrew Tomlinson was welcomed with open arms, as was the news that his post as Parliamentary Engagement Officer has been made permanent. As a long-time supporter of this post from its inception, I have a strongly felt appreciation of this work being undertaken on our behalf and am glad it can continue without the uncertainty of funding. Along with the support of the Parliamentary Group, Andrew has already worked on opportunities for engagement on issues which concern Quakers in Scotland. He brought us up to date with the new arrangement of the SNP and Scottish Greens forming a governing partnership which is a significant step in the year Glasgow hosts COP 26 in November.

The Working Group has written to each political party to respond to questions of particular Quaker interests, including urgent action to tackle the climate emergency, to prioritise improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable, incentivise agro-ecological farming, sustainable land use, and the circular economy.

The recent publication of 'The Programme for Government' 2021-22 highlights where progress has been made and identifies the gaps. In other areas, the Scottish government's intention is to put forward a new Human Rights Bill and a new Land Reform Bill, both of which have had practical Quaker input.

Andrew identified for us potential opportunities for Friends' engagement and welcomes contact with individual Friends. I, for one, appreciate the helpful advice and information already available from Andrew. Others in the meeting also expressed their thanks for the work of Andrew and the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group. It was noted in the group's report written by the convenor, Joyce Taylor, that Andrew has a wonderful network of contacts in the Scottish parliament, but we can increase

the impact of parliamentary engagement if local meetings and individual Quakers reach out to their MSPs.

Martin Mansell had circulated a written report on all the work being carried out by the COP 26 Hub Group which includes current plans and contributions of Quakers in Scotland. These include providing Glasgow Meeting House as a resource centre, arranging accommodation for visiting Friends and supporting delegates from the Global South. We also heard about disseminating information about COP 26 to Quakers in Scotland and beyond (see COP 26 webpage on Quakers in Scotland webpage).

Our local Development Worker Zoe Prosser is involved with setting up an activists group and has produced posters and a list of activities.

I felt the mood of engagement, excitement, enthusiasm and hope for change from many 'little boxed in' Friends—through Zoom and into the spiritual life of GM. It felt we were ready for COP 26!

Some of our Quaker witness is carried out in partnership with other groups, both religious and secular. One such body which GM for Scotland is part of is Stop Climate Change Scotland (SCCS). Andrew Tomlinson is on the Advocacy Committee and Rosemary Hartill attends meetings of the Public Campaign Group. Rosemary shared with us her personal experience of engaging with SCCS which she has found rewarding.

You will have noticed that I have identified by name many of those who do so much work on our behalf. This is because GM is made up of those individuals who often work in 'quiet circles' to achieve great things for which we gave thanks.

As one who has been a Quaker business meeting regular 'fan' and attender over many years, this GM was, for me, one of the most

deeply engaging and spirit-led I have attended. In fact, despite my misgivings about virtual meetings, draft minutes and occasional technical blips, I thoroughly enjoyed it! ■



Tree at Bournville Meeting House

Equanimity: A Myriad of Virtues in One Package Fran Brady, Eustace Street Quakers.

When we lost our dear brother, Martin, on 9th November 2020, his beautiful qualities were acknowledged and praised by many. He was even-tempered and cheerful, thoughtful and kind, peace-loving and helpful. In the throes of his painful final illness he showed consideration for others, including all the hospital staff, and concern for the people he would leave behind. His last words, in true selflessness, were *God Bless All*. Pondering on a virtue that might be ascribed to Martin to sum up so many admirable qualities, equanimity came to mind. Equanimity is the quality of being calm, even-tempered and non-reactive, especially in the face of difficulties.

The term “equanimity” first entered the English language in the seventeenth century. It is derived from the Latin “*aequanimitas*,” which comes from “*aequus*” (equal) and “*animus*” (mind). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it means “calmness and composure, especially in a difficult situation”. The French call it *equanime*, meaning evenness of mind. Upeksha, the Sanskrit term, means endurance and even-mindedness as well as non-attachment and non-discrimination. Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Buddhist monk, exploring the word *upeksha* in *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, included in its meaning "non-attachment, non-discrimination, even-mindedness, or letting go. *Upa* means 'over,' and *iksh* means 'to look.' You climb the mountain to be able to look over the whole situation, not bound by one side or the other." In other words you see the bigger picture.

It is difficult to capture the true essence of equanimity in any language. Equanimity is a myriad of virtues in one package. Reactivity is one obstacle that needs to be eliminated if equanimity is to be maintained. A disposition to look favourably upon the behaviour of others is a wonderful antidote for frictions in life, to look at people with fresh eyes every time we meet them, rather

than harbouring aversion towards perceived enemies. Evenness in relationships is the key. Excess attachment to people and things leads to clinging and a fear of loss. Equanimity is non-reactive. Its inner calm, acting like ballast in a ship, ensures stability and endurance in turbulence.

Adverse circumstances can upset equanimity. A simple definition of “equanimity” is the capacity to not be caught up with what happens to us. Non-attachment is based on acceptance of what is happening in the present moment. The mind rests in an attitude of balance and an acceptance of situations, and of people, as they are. Constant realignment towards a harmonious state strengthens our capacity to maintain equanimity. An awareness of impermanence facilitates the letting go of what cannot be changed. Rather than trying to control the uncontrollable we reach a state of acceptance of transience in all things including relationships. Christianity embraces equanimity. It enables the practice of many other virtues. A memorial concerning Joseph Bewley (1795–1851), a Quaker, described him as ‘a meek and quiet spirit’, united with kindness of heart and equanimity of temper. Quakers believe that God is present in everyone and that the individual in distress should be helped if at all possible. In November 1846 Joseph Bewley led a Meeting which resulted in the formation of the Friends Relief Committee.

Equanimity, a sublime emotion of Buddhist practice, is the foundation stone for wisdom and freedom and the safeguard of love and compassion. When equanimity is present, one avoids attachment or loathing. In her book *Comfortable with Uncertainty*, Pema Chodron, Tibetan Kagyu teacher, said "To cultivate equanimity we practice catching ourselves when we feel attraction or aversion before it hardens into grasping or negativity. The Buddha taught that we are constantly being pulled in one direction or another by things or conditions. These include praise and blame, pleasure and pain, success and failure, fame and disrepute. The wise person, the Buddha said, accepts all without approval or dis-

approval. Rather than striving towards the ideal of balance and non-reactivity directly we can turn our attention to how our balance is lost and how reactivity is initiated. We get distracted and excited by pleasant objects or situations, or worked up into a state of frenzy or agitation when confronted by unpleasant, undesirable objects. When we become aware of the obstacles, and can let go of them, we can aspire to attaining equanimity, through practices that cultivate calm, concentration, and mindfulness.

With acceptance of situations equanimity is strengthened. This type of acceptance is helpful in our Quaker Worship. If distracting thoughts and anxieties are ignored they fade away. In a peaceful, quiet and non-reactive way the mind can settle into Gathered Worship and listen for the voice of the Inner Guide. Before reflecting upon the qualities, and essential ingredients, of equanimity I had considered equanimity to be an innate virtue, or a birth-given trait. However, love, compassion, joy, and equanimity will grow if we are open to them and practice them. ■

*Fran is a published author of many books. She lives in Dublin and is an environmentalist and a social justice activist. One book in particular, **Debbie's Dream**, is a novel which I am reading at the moment. It's an interesting work. Ed.*

A QUESTION OF MOMENT

Why is it that all telescopes seeking intelligent life in the Universe point away from the Earth?

Week-End Retreat, Woodbrooke September 2021

Sila Collins-Walden Inverness LM.

The week-end retreat was an experiment for Woodbrooke, with limited places for around 30. The usual safeguards were in place for the protection of all guests and staff. Most guests arrived at around 2.00pm when we were greeted with cake and drinks. There was a programme, but it was flexible. Friends could choose to go along with it, or just do their own thing. There was a tour of the garden to look at Woodbrookes flora and fauna which took place in the afternoon for those who were interested.

In the evening we had a welcome from Sandra, the director of Woodbrooke, then off to have an evening meal with Friends. There was a talk by Duncan Cadbury, one of the Trustees of the Bournville Trust, who spoke of the work which is going on outwith Bournville, for example on the Langley development in Telford which will incorporate care homes, schools and shops. The aim is to build strong communities outwith Bournville.

Rhiannon Grant, Woodbrooke tutor, gave a talk on her new book “Hearing the Light” on how do we know that something *is* – God, spirit, light. How do we go about knowing things in a Quaker community? Quakerism is a work in progress, it’s not set in stone.

It was great to meet up with Friends whom I only met on Zoom. A group of us ventured into Bournville and stopped off at the meeting house, took photos and then back for lunch.

Woodbrooke had changed, the library was closed and the book shop was empty! The gardens looked a little tired.

The Future of Woodbrooke

All is not lost. Birmingham City Council's Horticultural Department, in an arrangement with Woodbrooke, are to send young people to train in the grounds of Woodbrooke and to care for the gardens whilst gaining a qualification in horticulture. It will be managed by the Horticultural department.

Because of the pandemic Woodbrooke's income was much reduced. The learning team were retained as it's essential for courses provided by Woodbrooke, especially online.. Some income was generated from the BBC who used the facilities of Woodbrooke for filming episodes of "Doctors". The Queen Elizabeth Hospital also used it for a staff training day. Woodbrooke was also used as the venue for the successful Bournville Book Fair.

Woodbrooke will change because it will have to. Covid has changed everything and everyone. In order to keep informed of proposed changes, just go to the Woodbrooke website: www.woodbrooke.org.uk.

If you wish to support the work of Woodbrooke:

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation/>



Roger's Birthday Bash.
Sila Collins-Walden. Inverness LM.

Roger Quinn, a well-respected Friend from Inverness LM reached the grand age of ninety just recently. Friends from meeting were invited along to celebrate with him at his home in Newton Hill. Kathleen his wife prepared lots of lovely food for all of all, we sat outdoors under the apple tree in the lovely garden. It was good to meet up with Friends face-to-face after this long period of lockdown was lifted, with precautions of course in place. Roger's cake was made by his daughter-law Sophie. Roger came to Scotland in 1968 and as I understand it was one of the founding fathers of our meeting in Inverness, moving around until a suitable place could be found for MfW.



POETRY CORNER

Invitations

friend on zoom from Isle of Skye -
now not English but “New Scot” to her neighbours
“you from outside , you are welcome”
not “aliens”, “immigrants”, or indeed ” foreigners”
but as a renewal, welcome new addition
Scottish inclusion
transforming xenophobia into filoxena – Greek welcome!
fear of strangers? Why? Why not loving friendship?
“xena” where stranger and guest meet in the same word

Our spare beds long unused,
Come and stay, she says to me.

Next morning

Cliffe Castle gardens , Keighley,
and coffee with Sara who has “leave to remain”
talking recipes, fruit – raspberries, blackberries and?
scrolling Farsi words on her phone, seeking translation,

bringing “Mulberry” up on screen.

Mulberry, which she has in her big garden in Iran
in her mind she is back - smiling reminiscing
.....and inviting me to visit her there - sometime

“not possible!” flits into my mind

but I reply “thank you for your kind invitation”

not strangers now, but guests of each other

Evelyn Shire



A Quiet Corner at Woodbrooke

It's Time

It's time. It's Time!
Time to be here and now.
Nostalgia for the past,
fear and dreams of the future
are distractions from this present Beauty.

It's Time. It's Time!
Time to spontaneously sing
my joy and sorrow, just for me,
no audience needed.
It will surely reveal this present Beauty

It's Time. It's Time!
Time to be still and quiet,
to delve deep inside
and journey directly into the source
of this unfathomable present Beauty.

It's Time. It's Time!
Time to be fearlessly and wholly awake
and, with an open heart and mind,
gently and courageously
welcome all as this present Beauty.

Lysana Robinson
Sunday 18th July 2021

A Quiet Mind

A quiet mind,
with senses open to input,
lifts the Veil, seeing clearly
through to what is.

Without criticism, judgement,
preference or desire,
it may, with discernment,
graciously accept what is.

Amidst the world's clatter
and the mind's chatter,
the Quietness is always there,
unchanging and accessible.

Set the scene, step aside
with open mind, trust
and by Grace,
Quietness will appear.

Lysana Robinson

Goodbye Friends

It has been four years since I became editor of the Scottish Friend. I have enjoyed serving Friends in this role. However, due to family reasons and because I feel I need to go on and to gain experience in serving another role, the time has come to move on. I also feel we need some fresh blood to take this on.

I will be handing over to Amer, he will be the new editor. Please send in contributions from now on to Amer (contact details on page 2). Amer is from Aberdeen meeting and he will start in the new year with the February edition.

In Friendship Sila



I am delighted to join the editorial team of The Scottish Friend. I would like to thank Sila for the encouragement and the very kind offer to show me the ropes. I am more used to writing equations, so this will be a new experience for me. I moved to Scotland seven years ago and very much enjoy cycling around, especially on the islands. The only things I miss are the sight of folk playing cricket and bell ringing! I worship with Aberdeen LM but since last year I am enjoying the worship via Zoom and the opportunity to meet friends from around the world.

I look forward to being the first to read the contributions and meeting new friends.

**In Friendship,
Amer**