

SESAME

Number 229: May 2020

AM by Zoom on 12 May/Church Leaders' Statement/Single-Use Plastics (*Green Challenge, Pt 2*)/At Pendle Hill/The Public Universal Friend/Firms that aid illegal settlement in Palestine/Translating the Beatitudes/Living under Lockdown/Priorities in Pandemic/Sufferings/Book of Discipline Revision Cttee./Vibrancy & Local Development Wkrs/AM April Minutes/



A Meeting for Worship on Zoom, recreated in Lego by Tony Wilkes

For information on plastics of another kind, see page 4.

For more on life under COVID-19, see pp. 3, 14, 15-16, 17, 23 and passim.

For NO MENTION of COVID-19, see pp 4-5, 5-7, 8-11 and 12-13.

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be by Zoom at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 12 May.

AGENDA

1. **Worship and introductions**
2. **Minutes of the meeting of Thursday 2 April 2020**
3. **Matters arising from the minutes**
 - 3.1. *Local development worker* (2020/04/03.1 refers) [see also page 19]
 - 3.2. *Yearly Meeting Gathering* (2020/04/03.2 refers)
4. **Consequences of COVID-19 – each local meeting is invited to report on arrangements and experiences**
 - 4.1. Update from Trustees and Treasurers team
 - 4.2. Central Edinburgh
 - 4.3. Central Fife
 - 4.4. East Lothian
 - 4.5. Kelso
 - 4.6. Penicuik
 - 4.7. Polmont
 - 4.8. Portobello & Musselburgh
 - 4.9. South Edinburgh
 - 4.10. Tweeddale
 - 4.11. Worship groups
5. **Other matters from local meetings**
6. **Membership matters**
 - 6.1. *Applications*
 - 6.2. *Transfers of membership (out)*
 - 6.3. *Transfer of membership (in)*
7. **Area Meeting Appointments**
8. **Proposal to establish a Quaker Chaplaincy post at the University of Edinburgh**
9. **Conferences & events**
10. **Closing minute**

Joint statement from Church leaders in Britain and Ireland

In an unprecedented move, Church leaders came together on Wednesday 1 April 2020. At their morning video conference senior religious leaders from around Britain and Ireland shared the situation in each of their jurisdictions; in the afternoon, senior officers of many of the churches discussed on-line worship and other arrangements during the crisis. The initiative originated with Archbishop Justin Welby who wanted to offer an opportunity for leaders to hear and support one another in these critical days for our nations.

The Holy Week Statement from British and Irish Church Leaders is supported by churches in membership of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, along with Churches Together in England, Cytûn, ACTS and the Irish Council of Churches.

GOD'S WORLD IS IN THE MIDST OF AN UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS. In the nations that make up Britain and Ireland the COVID-19 virus continues to affect people at an alarming rate, health services along with many of our institutions and organisations, both local and national, are under extreme pressure and people are getting used to living in a very different way, many in extreme isolation. As with all such crises, there is a danger that the most vulnerable in society will be most badly affected.

Christians the world over are entering an important time in the church year as we look to the events of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. At the centre of our common faith are both the depths of despair and the heights of joy. In the Bible and in the songs and liturgies of the Church, we see Jesus entering fully into human suffering. In His rising again, that suffering is redeemed and transformed into hope and joy. After Jesus' death his disciples were afraid and all seemed lost and hopeless, but the risen Christ met them in their despair and restored hope through his victory over death. We pray that the world today might know this hope in place of despair.

In the Book of Daniel we read about God's people being taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel could not pray in the Temple in Jerusalem, but he continued to pray in exile – opening his window to face Jerusalem. Though he was on his own he joined with the prayers of the people wherever they were. Now we too are separated from each other physically, but when we pray in our homes we join in with this ancient tradition of our home as a place of prayer. Wherever we are, whenever we pray, when we speak and think of Christ, there he is in the midst of us. We join our prayers with all those who pray in our own churches and communities and around the world.

As church leaders from across the many and varied churches of these Islands we urge all people to join us in prayer this Holy Week and Easter; to pray for those who suffer, those who face untimely death and all those who care for them; to celebrate our common faith at a difficult time; to help and support our neighbours in need; and to observe all the safeguards in place to slow the spread of disease.

Our Prayer

*Loving God, in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for our salvation,
cast out the darkness of our anxiety, fear and mourning,
enfold us in your love and give us joy and hope this Easter. Amen.*

The Green Challenge, pt. 2: Single-Use Plastics

In a different time (i.e. January this year), the managers of Edinburgh Meeting House set themselves the challenge of improving the environmental impact of how the building is used and run (see Sesame 228, p. 27), planning in each quarter of 2020 to consider a particular product or issue, and inviting Friends to review their own lifestyles in the same terms. In April-June, the topic was to have been single-use plastics. While the COVID-19 crisis persists, the Meeting House is, of course, not in use; but it is hoped these notes may be of interest nevertheless.

In 2018, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) produced a colourful and informative 92-page booklet, *SINGLE-USE PLASTICS: A Roadmap for Sustainability*, which is available online:

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25496/singleUsePlastic_sustainability.pdf

This was followed in December 2019 by the more specialised *Addressing Marine Plastics: A systemic approach; Recommendations for action*, which is at

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31642/AMPRA.pdf>

Public Petition PE01755, calling for the banning of “all single use plastics across Scotland”, was lodged with the Scottish Parliament on 30 September 2019, and was referred to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee on 7 November; the Scottish Government had already banned plastic-stemmed cotton buds and announced “a commitment to meet or exceed the standards set out in the EU single-use Plastics Directive [which] means that other items, including cutlery, plates and food and drink containers made of expanded polystyrene, will be banned or restricted by July 2021.” (These measures were hugely surpassed in global significance when it was announced on 19 March 2020 that the Chinese government was banning single-use plastics, through phased steps which will have their full effect by 2025. China is the world’s biggest producer of single-use plastics; the country’s largest landfill is full, 25 years ahead of schedule, and the Yangtze deposits 55 % of marine plastic litter.)

The BBC has done much to raise awareness in the UK of the impact on wildlife and the environment of plastic pollution, through programmes such as Liz Bonnin’s ‘Drowning in Plastic’, a ninety-minute documentary from 2018 (clips of which, though not the whole programme, are available on the BBC iPlayer), and from the same year David Attenborough’s series *Blue Planet II*. It has on its website a ‘Plastics Watch’ hub, “bringing together the best content from around the BBC to help you discover everything you want to know about plastics”:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/11CnCOR0GJfkDgJs57sR5Ps/war-on-plastic>

This has links to articles such as (at the time of writing): “How to solve the

plastic packaging paradox – *Are shrink-wrapped cucumbers bad if it means they stay fresh for 14 days rather than three?*” and “All the plastic you can and cannot recycle – *A visual guide to what can and can't be recycled*” as well as details of organisations which offer opportunities for volunteering, give advice on “Plastic Free Living”, or which campaign specifically for “Changing the Plastic Based Economy”.

Recycling rules for waste plastic differ between local authority areas. Thus in Fife, where a blue bin is to be used for rubbish to go to land-fill, plastic carrier bags cannot be recycled by the Council (although its website advises that many supermarkets will take them), whereas in Scottish Borders, where a blue-lidded bin is for stuff to be recycled, carrier bags *are* accepted; Fife accepts “food trays”, Scottish Borders only “clear” ones; and so on. Nowhere can polystyrene be recycled – “at the present time”, Scottish Borders says, with a glimmer of optimism – and the same is true for cling film and bubble wrap. (In some padded envelopes it is loosely attached, so that it can be pulled out and the paper, at least, may be recycled.)

With apologies to Friends who do not have access to the internet; unfortunately much information is only easily obtainable online. I have been unable, for example, to find out how to order printed copies of the UNEP reports mentioned, but will include details in a future issue should I discover them. – Editor

Three Months at Pendle Hill: Experiencing a Quaker Community

Following a chance conversation in November 2018, Mo O’Ryan and I found ourselves travelling to America on 18 September 2019 to be Friends in Residence (FiR) for three months at Pendle Hill. Excited and a little apprehensive but aware that this was my path, I went with the expectation that this would be a working retreat, like Woodbrooke but different, and a chance to meet Quakers from other parts of the world.

According to its website, Pendle Hill is

a Quaker study, retreat, and conference centre located on 24 tranquil acres in the heart of a Quaker community in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Pendle Hill offers a relaxing ‘world apart’. Our vision – ‘to create peace with justice in the world by transforming lives’ – is moved forward in daily worship, lectures and presentations, weekend workshops and retreats, short courses, and remarkable conversations.

After being there for twelve weeks, I couldn’t agree more.

Pendle Hill provides a centre for learning for various Quaker groups, such as Earthcare Witness, dynamic organisations like Beyond Diversity 101, (who offer a space for people to name and transform internalized, inter-personal, and structural patterns of white supremacy, racism, and coloni-

alism) and individuals like Pádraig Ó Tuama, who runs workshops. It also strengthens and serves Quakerism by providing educational programmes for Quaker roles, and produces the Pendle Hill Pamphlets – brief essays which express Quaker perspectives on themes of current importance.

Our duties, Mo's and mine, were divided into three main areas: Being a Quaker Presence; Gardening; and Communal Jobs.

Being a Quaker Presence meant:

- attending daily Meeting for Worship, often sitting on the Facing Bench (acting as elders) and joining staff and guests for meals;
- being available as compassionate listeners and holding Pendle Hill and all its people in the Light of prayer;
- holding a consistent and intentional spiritual presence in the midst of the busy activity that is required to keep Pendle Hill thriving; and
- guiding newcomers as they arrived or by greeting them at the rise of worship.

Gardening

Weeding, sowing, harvesting and creating compost for between 15 and 20 hours a week. We were never alone whilst working the land. Birds surrounded us, from robins to red-shouldered hawks, and visitors curious as to what we were up to; and, occasionally, there would be deer calling.

Communal Jobs

All of the community participated in the daily-shared jobs after meals. Our task was to wash dishes three times a week, more when Pendle Hill was very busy. The Wednesday Work Mornings, which are devoted to group projects, found us working in the Art Room, the grounds, the laundry, the kitchen and in the Wood shop. Working together like this is just one of the ways Pendle Hill builds community. And it was fun! Through these activities, we were able to get to know everyone at Pendle Hill on a deeper level.

There was no training as such: we learned by doing! None of the jobs or tasks assigned to us was arduous. All were interesting. We were involved in all sorts of situations and topics: food, staffing issues, conflict in meetings and other day-to-day situations. These opportunities meant that Mo and I were immersed in the Community by both being present and actively building relationships.

Americans are very direct and literal which caused a few misunderstandings to begin with, but their openness brings an honesty that I liked very much. My experience of Americans is that they are kind, hospitable and look you directly in the eye. I found their directness refreshing as they get to the point quickly and I was never confused.

American Quakers are deeply concerned about the displacement of Native Americans. Pendle Hill is particularly aware that it is on Lenni Lenape land, and sensitive to seeking ways of acknowledging ongoing and inter-

generational injuries, owning responsibility, building right relationship and repairing injustice.

Gender-based violence is also high on the agenda. Every Thursday, staff at Pendle Hill wear black to support the 'Thursdays in Black' campaign which grew out of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998). We all have a responsibility to speak out against violence, to ensure that women and men, girls and boys, are safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, work, and streets – in all places in our societies. I have taken to wearing black on Thursdays as a token of my support to this campaign.

There were a few challenges in being so far away from home. I was homesick a couple of times: when my grandson, Ollie, was admitted into hospital and when a friend died. Receiving texts & emails from home and support from Mo and everyone at Pendle Hill helped me through that time.

Whilst the walks to Media (20 minutes), Swarthmore (25 minutes) and Wallingford (15 minutes) were enjoyable, the lack of pavements made each trip out a hazardous one, especially at night.

The last event we participated in was The Pendle Hill Quaker Institute: Practicing Our Heritage of Mysticism and Resistance Conference. Quakers from all over America attended. In this extended weekend, we heard plenary speakers, engaged in extended worship, and explored both our heritage and what Spirit asks of us today in mending a broken world and creating the Beloved Community. One of the outcomes of the weekend were the following questions-

- *How do our differences show?*
- *Whom would you need to forgive to free you up to transform the world today?*
- *How can we deepen our collective spiritual practice and other aspects of our meeting life to help us discern how we are called to act in these times?*

Pendle Hill is a gateway for meeting inspirational people. The kindness, hospitality and generosity that both Mo and I received was very humbling. There is much to think about my time in such a rich environment. Being an integral part of an intentional Quaker community is a gift, one that enriches all that encounter it. The high degree of social cohesion and the immediate availability of help in any given situation were present and never more so than at the communal mealtimes. At Pendle Hill, I found unconditional love, acceptance and joy. My Quaker faith has deepened as a direct result of being there. If you ever get the chance to visit this Community, I wholeheartedly recommend you go. You will not regret it!

Katrina McCrea

For further information on Pendle Hill (including on how to join its meetings for worship online) see <https://pendlehill.org/> (Ed.)

The “Publick Universal Friend”

Jemima Wilkinson was born in Cumberland, Rhode Island, on 29 November 1752, the eighth child of Jeremiah Wilkinson, whose grandfather Lawrence Wilkinson, a Royalist army officer, had left England in the 1640s. One of Jeremiah’s cousins, Stephen Hopkins, was later a signatory of the Declaration of Independence, and he himself was a well-to-do farmer. Little is known of Jemima’s mother, Amy (or Amey), *née* Whipple, except that she died in 1764, shortly after giving birth to a twelfth child. Jeremiah was a Quaker, a member of the meeting at Smithfield, and Jemima grew up as a birthright Friend, able to quote long passages of the Bible and Quaker writings from memory. According to her first biographer, David Hudson, as a child, she disliked hard work and was fond of fine clothes; his account is generally hostile, however – “largely inaccurate as to fact and misleading in interpretation” Herbert Wisbey says of it, in *Pioneer Prophetess* (1964)¹ – and so these charges may be doubted. (From Augustine onwards, it has been common to emphasize the youthful waywardness of spiritual leaders, and Hudson may have picked up stories of this kind.) Nevertheless, she fell out with Smithfield Friends; she was disciplined in February 1776 for failing to attend Meeting for Worship, having instead been going to services of the New Light Baptists, and in August she was disowned. Her sister Patience was disowned at the same time for giving birth to an illegitimate child; her brothers Stephen and Jephtha had already been disowned in May that year, for undergoing military training as the War of Independence loomed. It has been conjectured that the turmoil within the family and the coming of war – Rhode Island had been the first colony to renounce its allegiance to the Crown, on 4 May 1776 – put her under severe mental stress, and so were factors in what happened next.

In October 1776, Jemima Wilkinson fell ill. She was bedridden with a high fever, and near to death; indeed, by her own account, she *did* die. Two archangels then proclaimed there was *Room, Room, Room, in the many Mansions of eternal glory for Thee and for everyone*; Jemima Wilkinson’s soul ascended to heaven, and her body was reanimated with a new spirit charged by God with preaching his word, that of the “Publick Universal Friend”. The Friend refused to answer to the name Jemima, and asked not to be referred to with gendered pronouns. If challenged to deny being called Jemima, the Friend would respond *Thou sayest it* (quoting Luke 23:3), and years later, when making a will, the Friend also rejected the lawyer’s formulation *the person who before the year one thousand seven hundred & seventy seven was known & called by the name of Jemima Wilkinson but since that time as the Universal Friend*; the will was signed X and duly witnessed. Public Universal Friend was *a new name which the mouth of the Lord hath named* (Isaiah 62:2); intimates used ‘the Friend’ or ‘the P.U.F.’ as short forms. Asked to self-identify as female or male, the Friend would say “I am that I am”: an

answer recalling God's reply to Moses from the burning bush, and so likely to cause offence.

Many, needless to say, *were* offended. It was alleged that Jemima's illness had been feigned, which the doctor and other witnesses refuted (although none had noticed the patient's death). The Monthly Meeting disowned more of the Wilkinsons – sisters Deborah, Elizabeth and Marcy (or Mercy) – for joining, together with Stephen and Patience, already outcast, the Friend's growing band of followers. Jeremiah was also disowned.

Dressed in a manner perceived as either masculine or androgynous – a long loose robe, usually black, with a white or purple kerchief or cravat, and, out of doors, a low-crowned, wide-brimmed hat of the style worn by Quaker men – the Public Universal Friend preached throughout Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, drawing crowds from which was formed the 'Society of Universal Friends', making the Friend "the first native-born American to found a religious community" ². Most of its members (some 300, in 1790) were under the age of 40, and there were roughly equal numbers of men and women. The majority were from Quaker families; 'Free Quakers', also called 'Fighting Quakers', who had separated from the Society because support for independence led them to renounce the Peace Testimony, tended to be sympathetic, and allowed the Universal Friends the use of meeting houses. However William Savery, the prominent Philadelphia Quaker who influenced Elizabeth Fry and met William Wilberforce, was suspicious of the Friend's "pride and ambition to distinguish herself from the rest of mankind"; and he spoke for the orthodox.

Doctrinally, there was little to divide the Universal Friends from mainstream Quakers: indeed one of the Friend's two published works was lifted almost verbatim from Isaac Pennington, because (according to Abner Brownell, an ardent follower from 1778 onwards) the Friend felt the content would have more resonance if republished in the name of the Universal Friend (!) One who heard the Friend speak near Philadelphia in 1788 wrote that "from common report I expected to hear something out of the way in doctrine, which is not the case, in fact [I] heard nothing but what is common among preachers, and commendable". If The Universal Friends were equivocal about pacifism, they were at least clear about equality, and better at putting it into practice, it may be said, than Quakers in the New England Yearly Meetings. Women held offices which tended to be reserved for men, and there were several black members.

What did distinguish them in terms of belief was a millenarianism that had faded among most Friends – an expectation that the End of the World was Nigh, which was the heart of the message when the Friend began preaching. (The fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and of Revelation was predicted to start in April 1780, 42 months after the Public Universal Friend first preached). Also, of course, there was their faith in their

founder, which was due in part to the very audacity of what was claimed. As Abner Brownell put it,

no Person would rationally think, that any Person in their right Senses, would dare to hold forth and affirm such great and exalted Things concerning themselves, and to have such a great and marvellous Mission, and to hold forth nothing but what they had immediately by divine Revelation, unless it was so in Reality.

Although the Friend advocated celibacy, it was not enforced among the Universal Friends as it was by the Shakers, the other prominent offshoot of Quakerism, which had originated slightly earlier. Sarah Richards, a young widow, took up residence with the Friend in 1786 and lived with her until her death in 1793. She adopted similar dress, hairstyle and mannerisms, and came to be called Sarah Friend; she was made trustee and legal owner of the Friend's own property. Before she died, she entrusted her daughter Eliza to the Friend's care.

The Universal Friends' settlement in West New York was, by 1790, the largest non-Native community in the western part of New York State. A second settlement (the village now called Dresden, then Jerusalem) founded in 1789, had the first mill. Unfortunately ownership of the land of the Friends' Settlement was contested; when the boundary was re-surveyed, in 1792, at least 25 homes and farms were deemed to be west of it, and so had to be re-purchased from absentee proprietors, whose title had passed through several hands, the price rising with each transaction. The community was divided: some could not afford to stay, others saw the chance to profit, since land prices generally were driven up.

By 1799 there were distinct factions, and those opposed to the Friend used stories of personal immorality and, indeed, criminality to bolster their claims. However in June 1800, the county court of Ontario, N.Y. not only rejected accusations of blasphemy but, having done so, invited the Public Universal Friend to preach a sermon to those present, as if to confirm its disdain for the allegations.

Despite this outcome, the Friend's influence, and health, declined in the new century; the Society of Universal Friends also dwindled, amid disputes over property and doctrine. The Public Universal Friend died on 1 July 1819, and the Society had disappeared by the 1860s.

Unsympathetic accounts of the Public Universal Friend portray a despotic figure, very like some cult leaders of our own time: ordering married followers to divorce, appropriating property, and banishing dissidents, while maintaining claims, either consciously fraudulent or else delusional, of being able to raise the dead and walk on water. (All such stories were vigorously rebutted, and at least some were plainly malicious fabrications.) Some have seen the Friend as a pioneer of women's rights – which, while clearly true in some respects, is contradicted by writers who point to the rejection of female identity and the wearing of men's attire as reinforcing

views of male superiority. Other interpretations are that the Friend sought to embody Paul's statement that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Galatians, 3:28), and thus was identifying as non-binary; or else was a "transgender evangelist"³, before the terminology, or even the concept, existed. Whatever the case, the Public Universal Friend was a significant pioneer of white settlement, and was in person – in the words of Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale – "decent & graceful & grave".

References

1. Herbert A. Wisbey, Jr, *Pioneer Prophetess: Jemima Wilkinson, the Publick Universal Friend* (1964) reprinted Cornell University Press, 2009. A newer study from the same press is: Paul B. Moyer, *The Public Universal Friend; Jemima Wilkinson and Religious Enthusiasm in Revolutionary America* (2015).
2. June Melby Benowitz, *Encyclopedia of American Women and Religion, 2nd edn* (2017), p. 638
3. Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (2011), p. 50

With thanks to Esmé Frith for drawing the P.U.F. to my attention. Ed.

In Occupied Palestine

In February, a statement issued in the name of Quakers in Britain, together with Amnesty International UK, Christian Aid and others, welcomed the publication of a database of businesses involved in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory as representing "a landmark step towards justice and accountability for those affected by corporate involvement in human rights violations." It went on:

The database prepared by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is a powerful mechanism to assist states in identifying companies domiciled in their territory, and/or under their jurisdiction, that conduct activities in or related to the settlements. In addition, civil society acting on behalf of those affected by human rights violations now have a clear and authoritative reference to assist their engagement with companies and governments to bring about compliance with their respective human rights responsibilities and obligations.

The UK Government objected to the report's publication, saying that UN Human Rights Council ought only to consider the actions of states, and that the database should not have been made public. It is available here:

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/un-high-commissioner-for-human-rights-report-on-business-activities-related-to-settlements-in-the-opt-advance-unedited-version-a-hrc-43-71/>

Three British firms are named: Greenkote, which makes corrosion-resistant metal coatings, Opodo, an online travel agency, and J.C. Bamford Excavators Ltd (JCB) – also notable for backing Brexit and for donating some ten million pounds to the Conservative Party between 2001 and 2018. – *Editor*

What Jesus Said

Translating the Sermon on the Mount

Norman Marrow (1907-98), a stalwart of Watford Meeting, taught Classics at Watford Grammar School from 1929 until 1967. In retirement he worked on a translation of the Four Gospels (published in 1977), "for the pleasure", as he wrote in his Introduction, "of setting down in contemporary English ... what the Greek of the original writings seemed to be saying." In doing so he confronted the fact that

the language of the traditional English Bible has such strongly religious and theological – indeed such 'biblical' – associations that it barely exists at all in 'secular' contexts, and the frequent recurrence of such terms can be very discouraging to the non-religious, however much it may meet the needs of the devout. Moreover, words and phrases of this sort tend to be read uncritically even by the latter, their very familiarity being the enemy of true comprehension.

*Words such as angel and prophet are thus not to be found in his rendering of the four "accounts of the Good News"; and in the versions of the Beatitudes given by Matthew and Luke, he, like the translators of the Jerusalem Bible (1966) and the Good News Bible ('Today's English Version': 1976), preferred "happy" to "blessed". This was challenged by a reader, **M. L. Hunt** (1897-1993), a retired Anglican clergyman, whose letter we do not have, although the gist of it is clear from the reply, as follows. (Transliterations of Greek words have been added; references are to Matthew, chapter 5; "A.V." is the Authorized ['King James'] Version of 1611.)*

20.xii.1988

Dear Mr Hunt,

I'm so glad you wrote about how best that lovely word μακάριοι [*makarioi*] should be Englished in the Beatitudes. Although it is quite a long time now since I was working on my translation, I can still distinctly remember what an exercise it was to make up my mind about this particular problem. The eventual decision to put 'happy' was not lightly made, and now, reading your cogent arguments in favour of 'blessed', I'm by no means certain that I was right.

However, trying to re-construct the arguments which eventually led me so to decide, I think they might be summarised like this: I concluded, after much reflexion, that indeed paradox played a very large part in Jesus' teaching where these particular verses were concerned. Of the nine conditions referred to, five are such that, taken literally, and humanly speaking, they do indeed suggest, not happiness, but, in their varying degrees, misery and misfortune. The 'cringing beggars' (the πτωχοί [*ptochoi*] of v. 3, A.V.'s "poor"), the 'mourners' of v. 4, 'the hungry and thirsty' of v. 6, 'the persecuted' of v. 10, and those who are 'reviled' and 'slandered', of v. 11 – all these, your average Galilean would have agreed, deserve, not our envy, but our pity. A clue is perhaps given by that mysterious (and unexpected) word πνεύματί [*pneumati* – 'in spirit'] in v. 3. All the conditions referred to, including the four which do not, prima facie, suggest misery, are capable of being looked at in a literal, material sense, but also in a spiritual

sense; whereas, as I saw it, the μακάριότης [*makariotes*] was a real and genuinely ‘happy’ state, upon the plane of the spiritual, of divine providence and grace.

The “meek” (‘gentle’, ‘unassuming’, ‘modest?’); those whose ‘craving’ is for righteousness; the “merciful”; “the pure in heart”; “the peacemakers”; even (v. 3) “those who, spiritually, are as dependant as beggars” – all of these are ‘happy’ because they go with the grain of God’s will, than which there can be no greater ‘happiness’. Those whose several states would justify our calling them wretched or most unhappy, are, rightly considered, happy indeed because they typify all those who suffer, and, by their sufferings, desire and are recipients of God’s compassion. Feeling that this paradox was at the heart of this teaching, I think I chose ‘happy’ rather than ‘blessed’ because that word seemed, in its first-sight absurdity, to be more likely to bring the paradoxical aspect of the passage to the fore.

The same sense of paradox seems to be even more pronounced at the comparable (but subtly different) passage which begins at Luke VI. 20, and following verses.

And now, after writing the above, I have re-read your ‘jottings’, and I can’t deny that you make a very good case for the contrary view!

It isn’t only, by the way, a number of fairly recent English translators who have chosen ‘happy’. Out of curiosity I looked at 5 French translations, fully expecting some at least of them to have ‘béni’; but no: the oldest (dated 1686) has ‘bien-heureux’, and so has one of 1874; the other 3 (1913, 1968, & 1971) have ‘heureux’. On the other hand, Martin Luther rendered μακάριοι by ‘selig’ which I take to be the German for ‘blessed’, corresponding to the standard Dutch translation’s ‘zalig’. As might be expected, an Italian version of 1603 has ‘beati’, while a modern Spanish translation has ‘felices’ – which I suppose is nearer to ‘happy’. All of which seems to indicate that we have here a difference of judgement which goes back a very long way!

The philosopher Aristotle was of course born too soon to be consulted about the writings of Matthew and Luke; but it is, perhaps, of interest to note that, in the Nicomachean Ethics, he is at pains to distinguish between μακάριος [*makarios*] and the great classical word for ‘happy’ εὐδαιμόνων [*eudaimon*], which last he defines with great care. (Alas, it doesn’t occur in the New Testament.)

I’m really very grateful to you for broaching this most interesting question. I hope what I have written will not be without relevance to your thinking on the subject. Too late now to greet you for Christmas, may I wish you a happy and indeed a blessed New Year,

Yours sincerely,

Norman Marrow

[With thanks to Rachel Frith (M. L. Hunt’s daughter) for making this available. – Ed.]

Living under Lockdown

How to stay sort of sane? It is probably the same for most of us, though the things we do may be totally different.

The things that keep *me* sane are various Radio 4 programmes, some of which I haven't heard in ages, like *The News Quiz* or the afternoon plays. I try not to listen to long news programmes, because they bring just more of the same – in fact the Today Programme is what gets me out of bed!

Things for which I am grateful are numerous: telephone calls from friends wishing to catch up and chat, or checking how I am getting on, and surprise ones, from friends from years ago, wondering if we are still alive!

I have been, and will continue to be, busy sewing: covering a brick (as a doorstep) until I ran out of thread – I have to wait for John Lewis to re-open; a baby quilt, which is now waiting for the baby; repairing Christmas decorations which fell apart two years ago; and I am now working on a replacement patchwork jacket. Depending on how long the lockdown continues, I will make more comfort quilts for sick children, and 'fidget lap quilts' for people at the local care home, The Elms.

The weather has been fantastic, enabling me to have a brisk 30-minute walk to admire other people's gardens, and to enjoy the natural unfold itself and give us joy – and to hang up the washing outside.

Though I cannot connect with our meeting by computer I do so by phone. On Wednesday we meet in spirit from our own homes, which I find enriching and it gets me through the week. We give thanks on Thursday for all 'essential' people, especially workers in the NHS, in care homes, and those who provide care in people's own homes; I would add postal workers, and other 'people who connect people': those who run Zoom and suchlike, and the engineers who bring us radio and television programmes. And the people who empty our bins.

One of the things that is totally new to me is having lunch at home every single day – I am probably eating more chocolate and possibly putting on weight, but hey, it can't be that bad!

I am looking forward to whole lot of things, mainly hugs – telephones help, but it is not the same as being physically with someone. I am also looking forward to getting my hair cut; going on buses; going to the cinema and having lunch out; doing yoga; helping at the food bank; *actually* being with people at times of worship; being allowed into shops more than two at a time; going to a bookshop or the library; and seeing the moon at 7 am on the way to swimming.

Above all: hugging people and being hugged.

Alison Burnley

Forget mutual destruction and concentrate on recovery

[The following article appeared in the 'Agenda' column of The Herald on 20 April, and is reprinted by permission of the editor. The writer, **Lesley Morrison**, "a retired GP and a member of Medact", is an attender at Tweeddale Meeting.]

Rarely have the words of Robert Burns been so appropriate:

*Then let us pray that come it may
As come it will for a-that,
That sense and worth o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree and a' that.
For a' that an' a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That man tae man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that.*

The COVID-19 pandemic is pushing health and social services to the limit. Resources are stretched, health and care professionals are exhausted and we are all looking for ways of responding to a new and demanding situation.

We have to believe that out of this will come some new thinking, and new action, about how we want to live our lives and what our priorities are. The world is a small place; we are all interconnected and we are all affected by the policy and funding decisions that our governments make.

Our Government has made some very bad ones. Just as the coronavirus was gaining hold in the UK, it boasted that it had raised military spending by £2 billion to £41.5bn. Among other weapons, it is acquiring 138 new F-35 aircraft which Lockheed, the manufacturer, says "has the range and flexibility to win, again and again". Against coronavirus? Against climate change? While labs are struggling to produce the tests and equipment required to keep people safe and track the epidemic, between £2bn and £3bn per year (actual government figures are hard to trace) are being spent sustaining a nuclear weapons system, Trident, which is completely useless against any military or terrorist threat we might face and whose main function is to preserve our seat at the "top table" of nuclear nations.

Being at this top table does nothing to protect us from pandemics or from the ravages of climate change.

The COVID and climate crises may or may not be connected but it is certain that changing climate patterns will cause vectors and pathogens to migrate and adapt with resulting human exposure to infections against which we have no immunity. Our security, in terms of health and social stability, requires our governments to recognise that climate change, militarism, international conflict and the potential for new epidemics are interlinked. A system which prioritises profit over people cannot be sustained. What the COVID pandemic has again confirmed is that, as with the climate crisis, the poor suffer most. Health and social inequalities are played out with COVID

as with climate. Christina Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change wrote recently about lessons which could be drawn from the response to the COVID crisis for the climate crisis. COVID and climate change do not recognise national boundaries. Global challenges require systemic change. Prevention is better than cure. We are only as safe as our most vulnerable. And we need to value the role of science and experts.

It has been heartening to see the depth of compassion and resilience in our communities' response to this pandemic. We need to see the same level of response by the international community to this and the other major international threats. Only by working together in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration can these be addressed and the world made a safer place.

This will not be the last pandemic but, before the next one, we need to impress on our governments that we want them to divert resources from weapons of mass destruction to solutions for climate change and disease.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/18390658.agenda-forget-mutual-destruction-concentrate-recovery/?ref=wa>

From Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings was scheduled for 2 April, but was cancelled and not held online. No plans for online meeting in the future have yet been announced.

A letter is available online with updates on a range of matters that would normally have come to Sufferings:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/information-members-mfs-april-2020>

The accompanying documents comprise:

1. MfS Arrangements Group February 2020 meeting minutes
2. Update from BYM Trustees
3. Area Meeting Minutes received
4. Review of Quaker Stewardship Committee – interim report
5. Integrated strategy

Included in the minutes received was an urgent request from Bristol AM requesting support for the Stop Ecocide Campaign, together with a response from Britain Yearly Meeting's Economics and Sustainability Team (a subcommittee of QPSW Central Committee), who, although very much in agreement with the aims of the Campaign, are not particularly supportive of the request for BYM action, for what seem to be to be good reasons, as shown in the following few extracts from their note:

We are keen to focus on initiatives where there is real scope for grassroots activism to bring about change, for example through community initiatives

or talking to decision-makers. It is difficult to see how this could apply to this campaign.

It is important to note that ... the campaign for an international ecocide law has no direct connection to COP26 and will not be formally discussed there.

Whether or not Meeting for Sufferings discerns that the Stop Ecocide campaign should be adopted as a concern of the Yearly Meeting, ES staff will be happy to support individual Friends and meetings involved in the campaign, and to promote their work through our channels, as we routinely do with local activism

The Stewardship review (4) is only an *interim* report on a very important topic, with the final report not now due until Yearly Meeting in 2021. The only particular point of note on which we as an Area Meeting might consider feeding back (through me to Sufferings in the first instance, I think) is item (g) "Centralisation and regionalisation". This regards the multiplicity of (formal) charities within BYM, and the extent to which some degree of centralisation in this area might simplify things in a good way.

Item 5, *Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities 2020-2025* is our first look at plans for the future of BYM. As it says, "Quaker Life Central Committee has adopted a new strategy which supports a 'meeting-centred' approach to supporting Quaker communities." We are invited to offer feedback.

At present, we [QLCC] would like to know from Friends:

- 1. What most excites you about the strategy?*
- 2. What would you hope will change in how you and your Quaker community relate to BYM and Woodbrooke as a result of this strategy?*

What follows over four pages is at a very high level, with no structural detail. The following very nearly says it all:

A one-line description of community-centred support might be:

"Listen deeply, understand, discern and respond."

Nonetheless, we probably should devote some effort to sifting the tea-leaves provided, and reply.

Henry S. Thompson

South East Scotland AM Representative

*The Yearly Meeting Gathering, due to be held in August and postponed owing to the COVID-19 emergency, is now to be held from 31 July to 6 August 2021; still at the University of Bath. If you had already registered to attend, you should by now have received an email inviting you to cancel or transfer your booking. If you had booked (or thought you had) and have **not** received this email, first check your spam folder, but if it's not there, contact the organisers at ym@quaker.org.uk. We understand arrangements are in hand to hold some form of Yearly Meeting in 2020, and will make these known in due course.— Ed.*

Book of Discipline Revision Committee Meeting, 24 – 25 April 2020

Our committee planned to meet at Warwick University over the last weekend in April, but coronavirus meant we had to cancel that and find another way to hold our meeting. As for so many meetings, Zoom was our friend: three sessions were arranged, one for Friday evening, two for Saturday.

It was really heart-warming to see so many familiar faces on the Friday evening, most of which was spent hearing how each of us is coping with the current situation – some finding it easy, others finding it very challenging in different ways. Like so many other people, we were all extremely grateful for the technology which allowed us to see and hear each other, and know we were all holding each other in love even though we were geographically far apart.

Saturday morning dealt with business which could easily be done remotely, with the assistance of draft minutes and the many reports submitted in advance. We talked of what we had learned from our most recent 'homework', but felt that discernment of the next steps forward should be left for a later date. The planning group for this year's cancelled YMG was laid down, and we spoke hopefully of using its work for the 2021 Gathering.

Saturday afternoon had us dividing into four groups for the next piece of 'homework'. I had thought I was appointed to this committee to write, but despite there being two writing groups on offer I felt very strongly drawn to another topic – Engaging with Friends. In view of the current proliferation of meetings *via* Zoom, Skype, *etc*, it seems particularly appropriate that we should start thinking how we as a committee can use already established networks to communicate with Friends all round the country to inform and involve them in the revision process.

Due to the wonders of Zoom, we were able to have four breakout groups to discuss our particular topic. Even better, it firmly bounced us back to the main meeting when our allotted time was up, ensuring that we dealt with our business briskly and didn't indulge in idle chat! Six of us are in 'my' group: the other five, younger than I, are well-acquainted with current ways of engaging electronically, while I'm there to uphold the value of face to face meetings, and speak up for people who are less comfortable with computers, or indeed refuse to have anything to do with them!

Our group will meet next month to discuss all the ideas put forward in our brief session, and we hope to spring swiftly into action – watch out for information and invitations to take part in discussions, coming to you soon.

Our next meeting as a committee was to have been at Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath; we now hope to meet in October, either at Warwick University or electronically. As ever, we value your prayerful support and involvement in this work.

Mary Woodward

Vibrancy and Local Development Workers

The following letter, dated 29 April 2020, has been sent to Meeting for Sufferings representatives, to tell them – and Friends generally – of the progress of plans to “help Quaker communities to thrive”.

Dear Friend

We wanted to write to you today to share the decisions that have been made on the locations for the next group of local development workers, and for the pilot hub.

As you know, this work is part of a shared endeavour between Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke to change the way both organisations work to help Quaker communities across Britain to thrive. Last year, trustees of both organisations set out a joint commitment that a local development worker should be within reach of every Quaker community within five years. They also set out their intention to experiment with regional hubs, bases or clusters, to find new ways of bringing the work of both organisations closer to Friends.

The work of testing and developing this approach has been steered by a small group of Friends, working closely with Quaker Life Central Committee and with BYM and Woodbrooke trustees and staff. Meeting for Sufferings has been kept informed throughout the process, and last April Meeting for Sufferings minuted:

There is considerable enthusiasm today for the Vibrancy programme and a wish that it should continue. Friends have spoken of their experience in being supported by local development workers, enabling them to feel engaged with Quakers in Britain.

The world we are living in now looks very different to the one in which decisions were made to take the pilot project to the next stage. Whilst both BYM and Woodbrooke are having to take steps to ensure we are able to weather the difficulties presented by the coronavirus pandemic, we remain committed to working together to support Quaker communities.

That is why we have been continuing work to take forward the commitments trustees made last year. Last autumn, Friends were invited to express an interest in working with a local development worker or hosting a hub. Around 40 expressions of interest were received, and we are delighted that this process has led to energising and creative conversations with Quaker communities across Britain Yearly Meeting.

In some cases, those conversations have concluded that the time is not yet right for a local development worker, but have helped us to identify new and exciting ways to work together. Our conversations are continuing, and I [sic] hope we will hear from Friends in other places too over the coming weeks and months.

In all cases, the question is not if a Quaker community will be able to access the support of a local development worker, but when is the right time for that to happen.

Locations for the next local development workers and a pilot hub

The next group of four local development workers will be working across the following geographical areas:

- Scotland
- North-East England, and the parts of Cumbria covered by Cumberland AM
- Yorkshire
- East Anglia.

In line with the guidance received from Quaker Life Central Committee, this approach continues to provide a broad geographical spread across Britain, and means that, once they are in post, we will have at least one local development worker in each of the three nations within our Yearly Meeting.

We had originally expected that this would take place in the autumn. The challenging times we are working in means that we have had to revisit that timetable, and we will need to keep it under review as the public health advice changes and the longer term impacts of the pandemic become clearer. At the moment, we expect that the next cohort of local development workers will take up their posts in the first quarter of 2021.

A decision has also been taken on the preferred location for the pilot hub: 188A Woodhouse Lane, Leeds – an office suite attached to Carlton Hill Meeting House. This location best met the agreed criteria against which all proposed locations were assessed, including transport infrastructure, internet connectivity, health and safety, accessibility, costs and financial risk, agility and flexibility of the space, and – importantly – the potential to make a difference to Quaker communities in that part of the country.

We will be continuing to work on the details with local Friends over the coming months to ensure that the location will work in the way it is expected to for BYM, Woodbrooke, Leeds Area Meeting and the wider region. The hub is an experiment, and we will be proceeding carefully, testing what we learn from this new way of working before deciding whether to proceed with others. As with local development workers, the timetable for the hub will need to be kept under review over the coming weeks and months. At present, we expect it to be up and running early in 2021.

Continuing to support Quaker communities to thrive

We are grateful to all Friends who have submitted expressions of interest, supported those of other local and area meetings, and engaged with staff to explore options for how we can work together. These have been, and continue to be, exciting and invigorating conversations.

The third cohort of local development workers will be recruited later next year. Now that conversations are underway in many parts of the country, we are not proposing to re-run a formal expressions of interest process to inform consideration of which areas they will cover.

Different meetings will be at different stages in their thinking, and we are conscious that for some the time will not yet have been right to make contact. There is, however, an open invitation for any individual Friend, meeting or other Quaker community to get in touch to explore how local development work might support them. Rachel Matthews, our Head of Local Development, is the person to contact, using the email address local.development@quaker.org.uk.

Finally, we wanted to let you know that information on these decisions will be included in Quake! later this week. In the meantime, please do feel free to share this information with other Friends.

In Friendship

Paul Parker

Recording Clerk

Quakers in Britain

Mewn cyfeillgarwch

Sandra Berry

Director

Woodbrooke

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Thursday 2 April 2020
by remote videoconferencing**

*(replacing the meeting due to have been held
at the Bleachingfield Centre, Dunbar on 21 March)*

2020/04/01 Worship and introductions

During worship, we have heard a reading from *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 23.10, which tells us “only God can show us the way out of the mess the world is in”.

We have ensured those present know each other’s names. The attendance will be recorded in the concluding minute.

2020/04/02 Minutes of Meeting of Monday 20 January 2020

Owing to the coronavirus emergency, the clerks have been unable to meet. A signed version of the minutes will be added to the minute book as soon as is practical.

[The full minutes are included in both the print edition of Sesame, and in the PDF emailed to Members and Attenders on the circulation list, but are redacted in this publicly available version. – Editor]

[Redacted]

2020/04/11 Closing minute

37 Friends (34 members and three attenders) have been at all or part of this meeting. Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 14	Central Fife 2	East Lothian 2	Kelso -	Penicuik 1
Polmont 3	Portobello & Musselburgh 10	South Edinburgh 3	Tweeddale 2	

We next meet on Tuesday 12 May 2020, by Zoom.

(Signed)
Alastair Cameron
Clerk
Cath Dyer
Assistant Clerk

Brexit and COVID-19

On 10 March a petition to Parliament was launched, asking the Government, in respect of the UK's departure from the European Union, to

Extend the transition; delay negotiations until after the coronavirus outbreak

The government should consider delaying negotiations so they can concentrate on the coronavirus situation and reduce travel of both EU and UK negotiators. This would necessitate extending the transition period; as there can only be a one off extension, this should be for two years.

The Government's short response, issued on 9 April, was:

The transition period ends on 31 December 2020, as enshrined in UK law. The Prime Minister has made clear he has no intention of changing this. We remain fully committed to negotiations with the EU.

Further information is at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/300412>

Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland

Every Sunday

Central Edinburgh: 7 Victoria Terrace	9.30 am & 11.00 am
South Edinburgh: Open Door, 420 Morningside Road	10.30 am
Polmont: Greenpark Community Centre	10.45 am
Kelso: Quaker Meeting House, Kelso	10.30 am

Every Wednesday

Mid-Week Meeting: 7 Victoria Terrace	12.30 – 1 pm
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First Sunday in the Month

Penicuik: Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik <i>Children welcome, bring and share lunch</i>	11.00 am
Portobello & Musselburgh: Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP <i>Half an hour – no children's meeting.</i>	7.30 pm

Second Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: Dunbar Town House, High Street, Dunbar	11.00 am
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Second and Fourth Sundays in the Month

Portobello & Musselburgh: Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP. <i>Children welcome.</i>	11.00 am
Tweeddale: Nomad Beat, 10-11 Cavalry Park, Peebles <i>All welcome, but please phone to confirm 01721 721 050 or 01896 850 389</i>	10.30 am
Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am

Fourth Sunday in the Month

North Edinburgh Meeting: Broughton St Mary's Church, Edinburgh	7.00 pm
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Fifth Sunday in the Month

Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am
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Last Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: Dunbar Town House, High Street, Dunbar	11.00 am
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The Quaker belief contacts for the University of Edinburgh, and also for Heriot-Watt, Edinburgh Napier and Queen Margaret universities, are Rachel Howell and Bridget Holtom; contact details are in the Book of Members, and soon, we hope, on the Chaplaincy website.

Distribution of *Sesame* and *Scottish Friends Newsletter*

The current practice is to distribute one copy of *Sesame* and the *Scottish Friends Newsletter* to every Member and Attender household. Contributions to the costs of *Sesame* are always warmly welcomed by the Area Meeting Treasurer.. An email version of *Sesame* is more ecological and is free; if you would prefer to receive it this way, or to change the address to which a paper copy is sent, or if you would like to get one by post and currently do not, please contact **Joanna Swanson** at jmswanson69@gmail.com. A large print version is also available on request. Published by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, South East Scotland Area Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. Scottish Charity No. SC019165. Owing to the closure of Footprint UK by COVID-19, this issue has been produced at 7 Victoria Terrace. We apologise for the loss of quality.