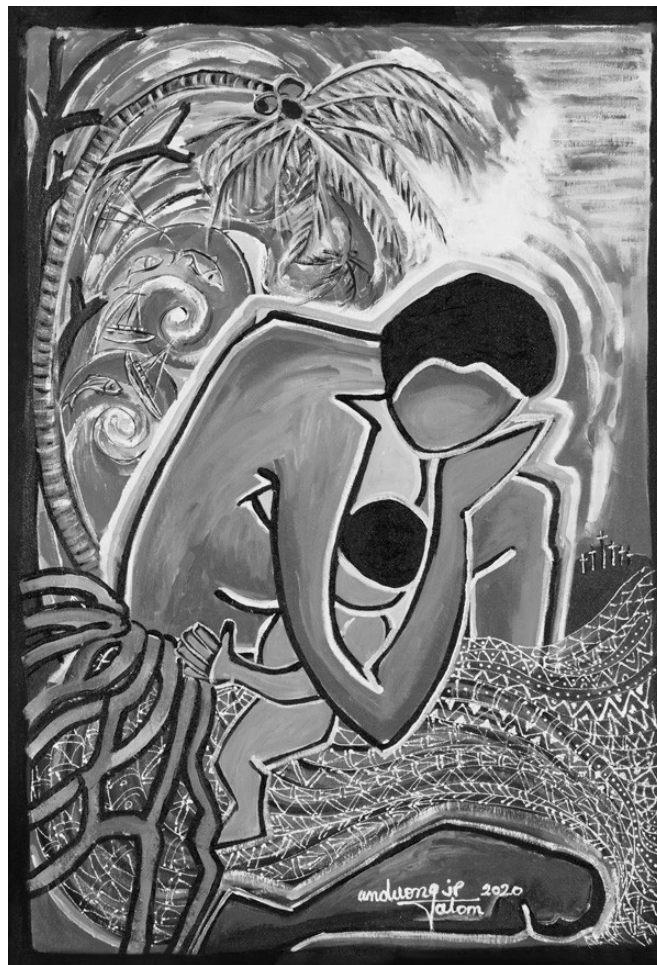


SESAME

Number 234: March 2020

AM on 20 March/'Living Earth; Loving Earth'/TPNW correspondence/
Quaker Poetry/Faslane dates/BDRC update/Meeting for Sufferings/The
Holocaust Remembered/Enquirers' Event in April/World Day of Prayer/
NFPB/CAAT update/Festival Cttee/General Meeting for Scotland/Events
on Zoom/Book Review/AM Minutes/+ *the first recipe to appear in Sesame!*



Cyclone Pam II – 13th of March, 2015
The painting by Juliette Pita (b. 1964) chosen to symbolise
World Day of Prayer, 2021 – see page 18

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to Alan Frith (email: ar.frith@btinternet.com) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 27 April**. The Editor reserves the right to condense articles. If possible, please submit articles by email sending as an attachment *and* in the body of the email. An email version of *Sesame* is available in PDF format. Contact the Editor.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Area Meeting will be on Saturday 20 March by Zoom, from 10.00 am till about 1.00 pm.

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of Monday 18 January 2021
3. Matters arising from the minutes
 1. *Enquirers' event* (2021/01/03.4 refers) – see page 17
 2. *Wedding: change of date* (2021/01/08 refers)
 3. *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (2021/01/11.4 refers)
4. Membership matters
 1. *Application*
5. Appointments
6. Tabular statement – *Richard Williams, Assistant Clerk (Membership)*
7. Proposal for a pilgrimage from Edinburgh to Glasgow at the time of COP26 – *Jonathan Baxter*
8. General Meeting for Scotland
 1. *Request from General Meeting for Scotland about blended meetings*
 2. *Report from General Meeting for Scotland, 6 March 2021 – see page 23*
 3. *Dates for hosting future GMs, 2021 and 2022*
9. Reports
 1. *Campaign Against the Arms Trade – see page 21*
 2. *Festival Committee – see page 22*
 3. *Meeting for Sufferings – see page 14*
10. Local meetings under COVID – *reports on current worship arrangements*
11. Living Earth; Loving Earth

Friends from East Lothian Local Meeting will lead us – see opposite
12. Worship sharing
13. Closing minute

Alastair Cameron
AM Clerk

Living Earth; Loving Earth

East Lothian Quakers' invitation to Area Meeting 20 March 2021

As part of Area Meeting, members of East Lothian Local Meeting offer a choice of break out groups in which you can engage with creativity. We are inspired by our awareness of being a part of life in Earth: we make, respond, participate.



1. The Migrants of the Bass Rock

A 15-minute silent slide show, prepared by **Sheila and Ian Goodall**, following the life cycle of this huge gannet colony and taking you up close to these magnificent birds. Celebration and contemplation of a bird species estimated to be 30 million years old on the plug of a long extinct volcano.

For those unfamiliar with its history, Sheila has included information about the Bass Rock, as well as a picture for those of you who would like to use it as stimulus for drawing or poetry. She also provides a recipe for Rock Buns! [see overleaf]

2. 'Not Yet Recycled': Making an 'Eco-Brick' with Ray Halliday.



More and more plastic is now recyclable; but still a great deal is not. One way of removing it from landfill and from our oceans is to fill plastic bottles which can be used as bricks to build play equipment, garden benches, plant containers and other items.

If you wish to take part in this 15-20 minute workshop, please have available a plastic bottle (the 1.5 litre squarish kind is easiest), some crinkly non-recyclable plastic, a pair of scissors and a long-handled wooden spoon. Every piece of plastic that you stuff into that bottle will be one less piece less to strangle a sea creature or fill the stomach of a bird or a fish dying of starvation.

3. Being a Beginner

Alistair Mackie describes how, as a long-time lover of all things of stone, he started carving in stone during lockdown when given a book on carving by his son. He shows you some of the things he has made and describes his process.

4. 'Show and Tell'

Sue Nuttgens hosts this session, to which you are encouraged to bring an object found in nature, sharing your insights into its function, evolution and meaning to us.

5. Reflection on *Gleanings* by Laurie Michaelis

Elisabeth Wilson facilitates a group in which you will be able to reflect upon this passage:

In Quaker terms, what does it mean to be answerable to "that of God in all creation"? As in human relationships, I think it means cultivating respect, understanding and caring for the land. It also means being willing to be transformed by my relationship with it – to learn from it, and to live within its carrying capacity.

Healthy connection to the land brings a sense of commitment rather than entitlement. Its requirements include simple living and a willingness to share – including openness to others who have different habits and lifestyles. They may also have different ideas about what to do with the land. At present we haven't got it right as a nation. The United Kingdom's arable produce would sustain the population twice over, but we import half our food. We feed more of our crops to animals than we eat ourselves. Meanwhile, our uplands are – as George Monbiot puts it – 'sheep-wrecked', shorn of the prehistoric forests that could have helped manage our watersheds and provided some of our energy needs.

We come back to familiar spiritual and ethical tensions, trying to walk the middle way. Can we be connected without being attached? Can we be open to the inevitability of change – knowing where we are, where we have come from and having a sense that we need to move on? And can we cope with the ultimate challenge of corporate discernment, finding a way forward together whilst respecting our own needs, those of the other inhabitants of the planet, and those of the land?

ROCK BUNS RECIPE (Scottish Women's Rural Institute Jubilee Cookbook, 1967)

225g (8oz) plain flour, 90g (3oz) butter, cubed, 90g (3oz) sugar, one teaspoon baking powder, one egg, 2 tablespoons of milk, 90g (3oz) currants, sultanas & chopped mixed peel (Sheila likes sultanas only, but any chopped dried fruit should work).

Rub butter into flour & baking powder, add sugar, fruit, & beaten egg to make a stiff mixture, with the milk. Put spoonfuls on baking parchment or a greased baking tray in small rough heaps. Place in a hot oven (180 fan, gas mark 6) for 10 to 12 minutes.

You can sprinkle some sugar on the buns when they come out of the oven if you hold a little back from the recipe.

“Dear Dominic Raab”/“Dear Mr Cameron ...”

Dear Dominic Raab

On Monday 18 January 2021, South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), recorded the following minute:

11.4 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

We note with joy that Friday 22 January will mark the entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This reflects work done by a huge number of people across the world, including many in Scotland. We congratulate the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on its work to achieve this; and all the individuals and organisations who have worked alongside ICAN.

We regret that the UK is not one of the 51 states that have ratified or acceded to the treaty, and call on the UK Government to do so. A petition to this effect can be signed at <https://cnd.eaction.org.uk/TPNW >.

I am writing on behalf of Quakers in South East Scotland to call upon you to do your utmost to secure the UK’s ratification of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In our understanding, this places nuclear arms on the same basis in international law as mustard gas, chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction which the UK rightly abhors.

We believe the Covid-19 pandemic has shown that there are many threats to life and wellbeing in this country to which nuclear arms offer no defence; and that the funds spent in developing and supporting our nuclear arsenal would be better diverted towards tackling such threats.

Yours

Alastair Cameron

Clerk, South East Scotland Area Meeting, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

22 January 2021

(A similar letter was sent to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.)

The following reply was sent on 1 February 2021:

Dear Mr Cameron,

Thank you for your email of 22 January to the Defence Secretary [sic – *Dominic Raab is the Foreign Secretary; the Defence Secretary is Ben Wallace*] about the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Correspondence and Parliamentary Questions Unit in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has been asked to reply.

The British Government is fully committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. However, given the current international security environment, we believe the nuclear deterrent continues to be necessary to deter the most extreme threats to the UK and our Allies. It is

our firm belief that the only effective way to achieve disarmament is through the step-by-step approach agreed under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The NPT is the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and provides the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. In its almost fifty-year history, it has played an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race and continues to contribute to the strategic stability that the international community requires. It has significantly limited the global proliferation of nuclear weapons, supported the massive reduction in weapon numbers since the end of the Cold War and has allowed all countries to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear technology. It has been successful because it is built on foundations of consensus and delivers tangible benefits to all its signatories.

The UK along with our North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Allies will not support, sign or ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It is our view that this treaty fails to address the key issues, including the technological challenges, that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament and it will not improve the international security environment. It seeks to create a rival legal framework for disarmament which has the potential to threaten the progress achieved by the NPT and the consensus it has created.

The UK believes that it is also important to prioritise the framework which enables the disarmament process. As a Nuclear Weapon State that takes its responsibilities seriously, the UK continues to work with partners across the international community to prevent proliferation and make tangible progress on multilateral nuclear disarmament.

The UK actively participates in dialogue between the five recognised Nuclear Weapon States (P5), discussing our respective policies and cooperating to deliver our collective NPT commitments. Furthermore, we continue to promote the universalisation of the NPT, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the early start of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. The UK also continues to play a leading role in disarmament verification, which will be an important component of any future disarmament agreement.

I hope that this response has helped to explain the Government's position on this issue and provided reassurance that we remain committed to realising the long-term goal of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

Yours sincerely,

*Correspondence and Parliamentary Questions Unit
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office*

This was followed by another letter, dated 10 February, also from the Correspondence and Parliamentary Questions Unit in the FCDO, in reply to

the letter to the Prime Minister. Many of the same phrases reappear in it: the UK is “committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons”; the NPT is “the cornerstone of the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament”; the UK is a “Nuclear Weapon State that takes its responsibilities extremely seriously” and “continues to work” towards disarmament, which will be achieved – eventually – using a “step-by-step approach”.

However the second letter additionally asserts:

The TPNW is only legally binding to those states that join it. The UK did not take part in the negotiations, and does not intend to join the Treaty. We do not accept that the TPNW contributes to the development of customary international law.

(This is of a piece with the British Government’s refusal to recognise the ruling in January by the UN maritime tribunal that Mauritius, not the UK, is sovereign over the Chagos Islands, which had already been stated by the International Court of Justice in 2019; and, of course, with the overt illegality of the Government’s ‘internal market’ bill, defended by ministers for only breaking international law in a “very specific and limited way”, a justification which prompted *Scottish Legal News* to quote the political scientist Frank Wilhoit: “Conservatism consists of exactly one proposition, to wit: there must be in-groups whom the law protects but does not bind, alongside out-groups whom the law binds but does not protect.” Such appears to be the UK view of international law.)

The writer also adds:

With regard to your last point, I can reassure you [sic – *it is for Alastair to say whether he is reassured*] that the Government is committed to putting the necessary resources into tackling COVID-19. However, this does not mean diverting all resources from other areas that are also essential to maintain. The UK’s nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats from other states to our national security and way of life, and it will remain essential for as long as the global security situation demands.

Although both letters make much of the UK’s commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it is hard not to doubt the whole-heartedness of British compliance, even though the NPT (in Article VI) imposes no more than an obligation to act in good faith. The UK’s nuclear arsenal is currently planned to grow and be made more powerful (see *Sesame* 231). Nor can bad faith be ascribed to Tory governments alone: in 1998, the UK was the *only* UN member state to vote against establishing a new treaty to ban the threat or use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states (India, Israel and Pakistan abstained, as did Cuba and South Korea: see https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/53/PV.79)

Editor

*With thanks to the Clerk for providing the text of his letters and the two responses.
(For more on publicising TPNW, see page 24.)*

Quaker Poetry; or, *Be Careful what you Wish for ...*

It was suggested in the group discussions at Area Meeting in November (see Sesame 233, page 33ff) that a deficiency of Quaker Faith & Practice is the lack of Quaker poetry. Verse by both of the following Friends appeared in the last version of the Book of Discipline; portions of these works (given here in full) might then be considered for inclusion. – Editor.

JOB SCOTT (1751-1793), of Rhode Island, was the last of the 'Quietist' leaders among American Friends; there are four extracts from his writings in *Quaker Faith & Practice*. This poem is taken from the May 1798 issue of *The Universalist's Miscellany*, a monthly publication "intended chiefly as an antidote against the Antichristian Doctrine of Endless Misery", founded and edited by William Vidler (1758-1816), a former Baptist minister excommunicated for his disbelief in Hell. (It eventually became the Unitarian magazine, *The Monthly Repository*, which appeared from 1806 to 1838, and was known more for its advocacy of radical causes such as the abolition of slavery than for its theological content.)

Verses taken from the Journal of JOB SCOTT, one of the Christian People called Quakers.

Fourth Month, 22d Day, 1782

QUIETNESS, AS A CANOPY, COVERS MY MIND.

GREAT God thy name be blessed,
Thy Goodness be adored;
My soul has been distressed,
But thou hast peace restored.

A thankful heart I feel,
In peace my mind is staid;
Balsamic ointments heal
The wounds by sorrow made.

Though elements contend,
Though wind and waters rage;
I've an unshaken friend
Who doth my griefs assuage.

Though storms without arise,
Emblems of those within,
On Christ my soul relies,
The sacrifice for sin.

Though inward storms prevail,
Afflicting to endure,
I've help that cannot fail,
In Him that's ever sure.

Though outward war and strife
Prevail from sea to sea,

I've peace in inward life,
And that sufficeth me.

Though clamour rear its head,
And stalk from shore to shore,
My food is angels bread;
What can I covet more?

Though ill reports abound,
Suspicious and surmise,
I find, and oft have found,
In *death* true comfort lies:

That death I mean, whereby
Self-love and pride are slain;
For these the more they die,
The more the *Lamb* doth reign.

And well assur'd I am,
True peace is only known,
Where He, the harmless Lamb
Has made the *heart* his *throne*.

Then, then may tempests rage,
Cannon may roar in vain;
That rock of every age,
The *Lamb*, the *Lamb* doth reign.

THOMAS HODGKIN (1831-1913) was a nephew of the doctor of the same name (1798-1866), the pioneer of preventative medicine who gave his name to a form of lymphoma; and grandfather of Thomas Hodgkin (1910-82), the historian of Africa. He himself was a banker and a writer – his eight-volume history *The Barbarian Invasions of the Roman Empire* was reprinted in 2001 – and he delivered the 1911 Swarthmore Lecture, ‘*Human Progress and the Inward Light*’. Emori Nolo, his most famous poem, shows ‘the peace he had won and the glad certainty of his faith’. In *The Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin* by Louise Creighton (1917), its Latin title is explained in a note, thus: “‘Dying I abhor: I care nothing about being dead.’ Translated and adopted by Cicero, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, I. 8, from Epicharmus, the Sicilian comic poet. The circumstances of Cicero's death are well known [*he was assassinated on the orders of Mark Antony, at the age of 63 in 43 BC*]. Epicharmus died at the age of 95. Sir Thomas Browne, in *Religio Medici*, erroneously attributes the sentiment to Caesar.”

EMORI NOLO: MORTUUM ME ESSE NIHIL

ONE wrote of old, ‘The struggle of this dying
Is all I dread:
I shall not heed when men above me, sighing,
Say, “He is dead.”’

Not in such words, oh Father of our Spirits,
Speak we again:
A fear, a hope each child of us inherits,
Making them vain.

II
Awful the hour, and shall be through the ages,
That closeth Life;
With the worn Soul the weary Body wages
Self-torturing strife.
Till far, so far from loving eyes around them,
One journeyeth lone,
And that close wedlock that for years hath bound them
Ends with a groan.

The pale, still Form, so late so dear a treasure,
Its fate we know;
The Dust, the Worm, its depth of ruin measure
Where it lies low.

But the vast doubt wherewith our souls are shaken
Outlasts the tomb!
‘Where, in what regions, shall the Wanderer waken,
Gazing on whom?’

III
Father! I live or die, in this confiding,
That Thou art King ;
That each still Star above me owns Thy guiding,
Each wild Bird’s wing.

That Nature feels Thee, great unseen Accorder
 Of all her wheels,
 That tokens manifest of Thy mightier order
 Her strife reveals.

And that without Thee not a wave is heaving
 Nor flake descends,
 That all the giant Powers of her conceiving
 Are Thy Son's friends.

IV

Yet, I beseech Thee, send not these to light me
 Through the dark vale;
 They are so strong, so passionlessly mighty,
 And I so frail.

No! let me gaze, not on some sea far reaching
 Nor star-sprent sky,
 But on a Face in which mine own, beseeching,
 May read reply.

For more than Poet's song or Painter's seeing
 Of fiery Hell,
 Thrills me this dread of waking into Being
 Where no souls dwell.

V

Such was my cry: hath not the mighty Maker
 Who gave me Christ,
 Hath He not granted me a sweet Awaker
 For the last tryst?

Given a Son who left the peace unbroken
 That reigns above,
 That He might whisper God's great name unspoken
 The name of Love!

VI

Have I not known Him? Yes, and still am knowing,
 And more shall know;
 Have not His sweet eyes guided all my going,
 Wept with my woe;
 Gleamed a bright dawn-hope when the clouds of sadness
 Made my soul dim,
 And looked their warning when an alien gladness
 Lured me from Him?

VII

Lord, when I tread this valley of our dying,
 Sharp cliffs between,
 Where over all, one ghastly Shadow lying
 Fills the ravine,

E'en then, Thy kingly sceptre being o'er me,
 I will not fear ;
 Thy crook, my Shepherd, dimly seen before me,
 My way shall clear.
 And when the grave must yield her prey down-stricken,
 When sleep is o'er,
 When the strange stirs of life begin to quicken
 This form once more,
 Oh, Son of Man, if Thee and not another
 I here have known,
 If I may see Thee then, our First-born Brother,
 Upon Thy throne;
 How stern soe'er, how terrible in brightness
 That dawn shall break,
 I shall be satisfied with Thy dear likeness
 When I awake.

San Remo, 1868.

Faslane, 2021: Witness for Peace

Planned dates for Meetings for Worship at Faslane – all Sundays, at 11.00 am – are as follows:

14 March

18 April

16 May

27 June

26 September

*(possibly with members of the
 Northern Friends Peace Board)*

10 October

14 November

It is thought that meeting in March and April will probably *not* be feasible; May and June are also uncertain, which is why October is included.

Remember we meet at the North Gate of HMNB Clyde, with something to sit on, weatherproof clothing, and something to eat before the drive home.

Keep well, Friends!

Alison Burnley

We desire, dear friends, that such of you as often meet in small companies for the solemn purpose of worship, may not relax in your diligence. Your situation will at times appear discouraging; but ... never forget that you are under the continued notice of the Lord; ... If with faithfulness and integrity you perform your Christian duties, your example will prevail ... and by your consistent conduct the truth which we profess will be exalted ...

Yearly Meeting Epistle, 1813

Book of Discipline Revision Committee – an update

What a difference a year makes! Last year, we held our January committee meeting at Friends House: as we looked forward to meeting again at Warwick University in April, we had no idea that our world was about to be turned upside down. One year on, your committee held its first meeting of 2021 by Zoom at the end of January.

Several Friends asked to be released from the committee in 2020, and YM Nominations brought new names to Meeting for Sufferings for it to appoint. In January we welcomed Alastair Reid of West Scotland AM and Finola O'Sullivan of Cambridgeshire AM. (We have since been joined also by Pearl Johns from Bristol and Marcie Winstanley from Northumberland AM, both of whom augment the 'youth element'.) Prevented from having our usual 'getting to know you' chats outside our sessions, we took care to spend time sharing thoughts and experiences. At our first session, as well as giving our names and homes, we were asked to say a place particularly dear to us, whether one we could visit now or somewhere we yearn to be once restrictions are lifted: many spoke longingly of the Outer Hebrides.

We have learned by experience that while using Zoom we need to change our usual working pattern, and have shorter but more frequent meetings, and ensure that the longer sessions have good breaks in them. The Saturday afternoon session was timetabled as 2-6 pm; but there was an hour's break halfway. Even so, it was hard work requiring deep concentration!

Seven task groups were set up at the November committee meeting: six to address specific topics, and the seventh to begin working out how to 'tag' all the submissions to the committee so that we could easily search for them by subject as needed. Many of us are working on more than one topic at the same time, and the reports from the convenor of each group showed that, while some groups had made substantial progress, others had been unable to make much progress, for a variety of reasons.

I'm in the Discernment group. When we began to work on the topic we ran into various questions on which we needed guidance from the committee; as other groups reported on their work it became clear that some questions are common to several topics. *Quaker Faith & Practice* has no explanation of what discernment *is* or how it works: presumably when it was written it was assumed that 'everybody knows, so we don't need to explain it' – which definitely is not the case now. Discernment also features largely in almost every other topic the groups are working on (including Nominations, Membership and Trusteeship), as well as others that have been worked on previously or are yet to be tackled. We want to avoid duplication of effort and so need to consider how the 'discernment thread' is to be woven through the other topics, and who will do the weaving. This is a complex matter, to which we will return in future meetings, as it materially affects the structure of the book and the way sections relate to each other.

I'm also part of the Communicating with Friends (CwF) group, which has combined the work of the Engaging with Friends team and the Communications team. Five members were appointed in November, and we swiftly realised we needed more; in particular, someone to act as convenor, which none of us felt able to take on. I'm delighted that our Nominations group came up with two names we were very pleased to accept: Anya Nanning Ramamurthy and Nuala Watt. They are happy to co-convene; both young, and well in tune with the multifarious ways in which people are now able to communicate electronically; and both extremely enthusiastic about the task of reaching out to Friends and ensuring that as many as possible can engage with and in the revision process.

Our Sunday morning session opened and closed with worship, and covered numerous topics. Consideration of the project management group led to a wide-ranging discussion about the problems some of us are experiencing in using Teams – it is hoped that ways can be found to make it more user-friendly for those of us who don't use it every day. We had also intended to address the problem of ensuring that we enable everyone to participate in the work of the committee *as they are able*, while preventing burn-out and isolation in the pandemic. Alas, there was not time to give the matter our full consideration, and we will return to it as soon as possible.

I was happy to report on all the 'gigs' the CwF group has led and is planning to lead, and invite all committee members to take part in these if they wish. January saw some of us visiting Hampshire & Surrey Border AM and West of Scotland AM; February has a session at which the Quaker Arts Network are investigating 'dance and the revision of *Quaker Faith & Practice*' while one of our clerks speaks to her LM as part of their "Friends on Fridays" programme. March sees our other clerk talking to her AM, and others of us visiting North Wales AM and the Westerly Friends weekend gathering which would usually take place at Crianlarich. After that we are visiting West of Scotland AM, Lincolnshire AM, and who knows where else: we will continue to offer to visit LMs, AMs and other Quaker interest groups who would like to hear from us. And, of course, we will be planning our involvement with Yearly Meeting Gathering in August!

The committee also considered our pattern of meetings for the next six months, accepting that they will all be *via* Zoom. Our next full weekend will be at the end of April, but we will meet twice for shorter business sessions before then, and also have a full-on 'social' evening, in addition to the smaller informal meetings that help us keep connected to the committee and its work. I'm particularly grateful to Tas, who has made a Zoom room available for anyone to go into at any time: I tried it recently, and had a lovely time chatting to a couple of members I don't know so well.

The key messages from this meeting are:

We are still learning about how to write this book and work as a committee. Currently we're trying out small groups on various topics: some which re-

flect existing chapters, such as trusteeship and membership, and others which bring together themes from throughout the current book, such as discernment. Looking at these topics also helps us to test out ideas about the possible structure of the book, including how to split our content into core and supplementary areas.

In our recent meeting we welcomed new members of the committee and said goodbye to others. Central Nominations Committee is looking for people with lots of different skills to help us as well as other groups – you can tell them about your interests through a simple online form:

<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/suggestnames/>

We've enjoyed visiting area meetings around Britain, recently on Zoom, and members of the committee can come and speak or run an activity for your local or area meeting or other Quaker group. How about a Q&A session to help people understand what we're doing, a creative session to make your own book of discipline in an hour, or a chance to reflect on especially useful passages in the current book?

Plans for Yearly Meeting 2021, to be held online, are unfolding and we hope to see you there. Details to follow!

Please continue your prayerful support of our work: we can't do it without you!

Mary Woodward

Meeting for Sufferings, 6 February 2021

All the papers for the meeting are available online at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2021-02-agenda--papers-package>

The minutes and other follow-up material are available from

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/meeting-for-sufferings-minutes-follow-up2021-02>

Report by the Recording Clerk on the Tabular Statement for 2019

Paul Parker gave an excellent illustrated presentation on the changes for Britain Yearly Meeting in the numbers of members, attenders, *etc.*

It's worth noting that the data reported on is all pre-pandemic...

He started with a graph of the whole trajectory of membership from the late 19th century onward. This showed that we are down by more than half from our peak in the mid-20th century, to 12,498 in 2019.

There was a net loss of 200 members for the year.

There are 70 Area Meetings, made up of 470 Local Meetings, so one new member net in every local meeting next year would stop the fall.

Since 2009:

22 % of Local Meetings have grown by 10 % or more

54 % of Local Meetings have shrunk by 10 % or more

10 % of our Meetings have over 50 members, and account for about 1/3 of our membership.

Small meetings are more likely to be growing than large meetings.

More than half the meetings which are losing membership are largish, that is, with 20 or more members.

The national patterns are often seen within individual Area Meetings (it is true for South East Scotland AM, I think).

Paul pointed out that a simple consequence of the numbers is that approximately "One in 20 Quakers has to be a treasurer".

If you are interested in reviewing the numbers for yourself, they are online in the Tabular Statement summary at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/tabular-statement-2019-for-ym-2020>,

which also includes one of the graphs from the Recording Clerk's presentation to Sufferings, which is not available online (yet – it is promised). His commentary for his presentation at Yearly Meeting in November 2020 is available online:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/tabular-statement-plain-text>

There was some comment on the likely effect of GDPR-induced culling, which our Area Meeting certainly experienced. [GDPR = the EU General Data Protection Regulation, which came into effect in May 2018.] I noted that we show *twice* as many 'terminations' as deaths between 2009 and 2019, in sharp contrast to the other Scottish AMs. Britain Yearly Meeting itself shows 50 % *more* deaths than terminations.

Report from Trustees

The financial situation is not great, but we're not in serious trouble yet. There were 35 voluntary redundancies, with the result that no involuntary redundancies were needed. The vast majority were from the Quiet Company, which has been hard-hit.

Reflections on the past year

We spent time in small groups sharing our Meetings' experiences since March, drawing some comfort in hearing that most Meetings seem to be coping, and have coped in similar kinds of successful and not-so-successful ways.

There is a website at FWCC that offers online Meetings for Worship around the world, mostly but not entirely from Europe and the US:

<http://fwcc.world/kinds-of-friends/online-worship>

Henry S. Thompson
South East Scotland AM representative

“We must bear witness to what happened”

Edinburgh Interfaith Association Holocaust Memorial Day Lecture

It was a sobering privilege to be able to hear EIFA’s keynote lecture, given by live audio link from New York on 25 January.

The speaker was Holocaust survivor, Inge Auerbacher who was born in 1934 in the village of Kippenheim, in the Black Forest, part of a long-established and fully-integrated Jewish community where her family had lived for over 200 years. Her father won the Iron Cross for bravery, fighting for Germany in World War One.

She remembered in shocking detail the horror of *Kristallnacht* in 1938 when she had to hide in a cupboard while the windows of their house were smashed and her father was arrested. As an afterthought the soldiers returned to destroy the glass chandelier in their living room.

When her father was released from Dachau the family moved to shelter with her grandparents in an even smaller village where she said she enjoyed two years of normal childhood albeit that she had to wear a yellow star and attend a Jewish school, travelling many miles alone by train each day.

In 1941 at the age of seven, she was transported with her parents to the Terezin concentration camp. Against all the odds she survived although she contracted scarlet fever, hepatitis and undiagnosed TB. The diet was appalling. Apart from potatoes, the only vegetable they ever had was turnip. Out of 140,000 prisoners two-thirds were sent on to Auschwitz. About 1 % of the children survived. Thirteen members of her family were murdered, although miraculously both her parents were spared.

After the war, the family emigrated to New York and Inge began to catch up with her education between protracted spells in hospital with TB. She owed her life, she said, to the ‘new drug’ streptomycin (discovered in 1943). Inge graduated from Queens College with a B.Sc. in chemistry and continued with post-graduate work in biochemistry. She subsequently worked for over thirty-eight years as a chemist both in research and clinical work. Later in life she turned her attention to publishing prose and poetry and was encouraged to start speaking publicly about her experiences by a man she met at the first World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in 1981, who had been a child victim of Mengele. He said: ‘there are so few of us children left, we must bear witness to what happened.’

Inge spoke with extraordinary clarity and fluency. The events of her early years were as vivid to her as if they had only just happened. She urged us to ‘make good choices’, giving examples from her own life, for example the Russian soldier who handed her a piece of “real black bread with butter” soon after liberation. The book she wrote for children, *I am a Star*, to explain what had happened and how to remain resilient, is in print, pub-

lished by Penguin. A devout believer in God she says her greatest wish is for every child to grow up in peace.

Before Inge began her talk there was an extremely moving performance of her song, "The World of Peace," sung in Rwandan by Iam Blameless who lost both his parents and other family members in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This song can be heard here:

<https://www.facebook.com/122672657791731/videos/250180499822011>

After Inge had finished speaking and answering questions, Aileen Campbell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, spoke of the fragility of democratic governments, as illustrated recently by the Capitol riots in Washington. It is crucial that we continue to actively remember and to recognise that hate and intolerance are endemic in society and must always be vigorously resisted.

Lynne Barty

I am A Star: Child of the Holocaust (A Puffin Book) ISBN 978-0140364019, is Inge Auerbacher's account written for children; she is also the co-author, with Bozenna Urbanowicz Gilbride, of Children of Terror (2009), ISBN 978-1440178092, which sets her experiences as a German Jew alongside those of a Polish Catholic girl of the same age, also caught up in the horrors of the Nazi era.

I EXPECT to pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow-creature, let me do it now ... for I shall not pass this way again.

Attributed to Stephen Grellet (1773-1855)

Exploring the Quaker Life

Saturday 24 April, 10.30-13.00 by Zoom

An online event is for those who wish to explore what it means to be a Quaker in Scotland today

We will share our experience of Quaker life through group discussion and conversations in small groups, pointing you towards helpful books and other Quaker resources, and answering any questions you may have about living as a Quaker and about the process of moving from being an attender to applying for membership.

For further information about the event please contact Mariot Dallas
[contact details in the Book of Members]

World Day of Prayer with the women of Vanuatu

Friday 5 March 2021

One thousand or more people joined in this year's World Day of Prayer service in Scotland. One thousand devices joined the service via Zoom: many of them may have been used by more than one person, so the actual number of people attending could be much higher.

This year's service was written by the women of Vanuatu, an archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, the nearest large land mass being Australia. The many islands, which were part of the Anglo-French New Hebrides, became a republic in 1980. It sounds idyllic – sandy beaches, coral reefs, tropical forest, brightly-coloured birds and fish abounding – but the islands experienced *seven* earthquakes in the week leading up to the Day of Prayer. Nearby Tonga and New Zealand had a large one on the Day itself, with many north-coast New Zealanders being evacuated from their homes owing to the risk of a tsunami. Hurricanes frequently devastate the islands, and with potentially rising sea levels island life is under constant threat.

The theme of the service was “Build on a strong foundation” – but the very lives of the people of Vanuatu are anything but strongly founded. We heard about three women whose challenges clearly illustrate the problems of life in this seeming paradise. Rhetoh is the second child in her family – the first is a boy, on whom all the family's resources were spent, meaning she could not carry on her education and had to find a way to help herself. Mothy was thrown out on the street when her stepmother had children of her own, while Jacklynda left her village to find work in a big town. Without any skills or training she couldn't find a job, and ended up living on the fringes of town, trying to eke out a very precarious existence. Access to education in Vanuatu is very unequal and malnutrition is becoming rife with the promotion of the consumption of powdered milk and junk food. Jacklynda's story is not unique: there is a 'lost generation' of young people like her who went in hope to the towns but found nothing for them there.

The service reflected its theme – Matthew 7:24-27, in which Jesus likens those who hear his words and act upon them to the wise man who built his house upon rock. It withstood everything the elements could throw at it, unlike the house built on sand by the foolish man who heard the word but ignored it, which fell apart in the wind and rain and rising waters.

Despite all the difficulties experienced by the three women we heard about, they all stood strong in their faith in God. Women from Vanuatu sang greetings to us all around the world – we are all part of God's family. Young people from around Scotland read prayers celebrating the glories of nature and humanity. We joined in confessing how we had heard but not acted upon warnings, how we had failed to be good stewards of creation. We were invited to become a house God can dwell in, a household of jus-

tice and peace. To the tune of Beethoven's Ode to Joy we sang *Now's the time to get together as a world-wide family; let's forget the ways we're different, let us work in unity.* The chaplain to Scotland's eco-congregation, David Coleman, who had in February led us in a study of Matthew chapter 6, gave us a guided meditation underlining the message that when you see the warning clouds, you know it's going to rain and need to take action.

Vanuatu's vulnerability is plain to see, but easy for us to forget as it's not on our doorstep. The women of Vanuatu didn't ask simply for prayers for themselves, as they so easily might have done, but invited us to join in praying for the whole world and then go out to build our houses and our lives wisely and on firm foundations. The closing slide show of the beauties of Vanuatu also included pictures of a volcano and the effects of a hurricane – a beautiful country but also a very fragile environment which is suffering the effects of our misuse of the world in which we live.

The Scottish World Day of Prayer service was recorded and can be found at www.wdpscotland.org.uk: I recommend it to you both for its beauty and its challenge to us all.

Mary Woodward

World Day of Prayer 2022 will have the theme "I know the plans I have for you"; the service will be devised by the women of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Northern Friends Peace Board: 6 March 2021

Our clerk, Robert Keeble of Leeds Meeting, welcomed 37 Friends to the first meeting of the NFPB since the passing into law of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. After introducing ourselves to one another we heard from Allison Challen who took us through some of the main points of the Nuclear Weapons Working Group report. She encouraged us to get to know and use those parts of the Treaty which relate to humanitarian principles, which chime so well with our own Quaker Peace testimony. As Allison and later Janet Fenton reminded us, we must insist on talking about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, because this is an unassailable argument, particularly when one considers the impacts on civilians. We were also reminded that the upcoming Scottish elections will be a great opportunity to lobby candidates and achieve publicity for the Treaty. Our attention was drawn to an excellent article, "Nuclear Weapons Are Banned! What Does This Mean For Britain?" which is available as a PDF on the nuclearban.scot website. The website is full of resources, including information on the #ICanSaveMyCity campaign, urging local elected officials to push national governments to join the Treaty.

Phoebe Spence from Stockport meeting gave us the Trustees' Report, referring to work to ensure NFPB investments are ethical, and on the Risk

Assessment process to build resilience and identify ways that the organisation can flourish into the future.

Robert then invited us to enjoy a comfort break for “Liquid in, liquid out” which caused some amusement. Everyone kept good time and we were back promptly for the talk by two Parliamentary engagement staff: Grace Da Costa, Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager for Britain Yearly Meeting, and Andrew Tomlinson, Parliamentary Engagement Officer for Quakers In Scotland. Grace and Andrew do brilliant work on our behalf, on a quite dizzying array of topics which will be close to all our hearts.

Grace told us about the work she and others in Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT) have been doing to educate peers on the subject of the Overseas Operations Bill. She has been heartened by their response; in the debate one of them mentioned Quakers in his speech, while another made reference to the Q-CAT report. We hope amendments in the House of Lords may mitigate some of the terrible effects of this Bill and will watch its progress with interest.

Andrew told us about an ambitious project called All Our Rights In Law, which aims to safeguard and strengthen human rights in Scotland, post-Brexit. He also spoke about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, number 4.7 in particular, which calls for “the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence”. He will continue to work with interested parties to put pressure on Local Authorities and individual schools to find out how they are doing this.

Grace and Andrew are both very concerned by the new Asylum Bill and encourage us to speak to our MPs about the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers. They urge us to get in touch with any questions or suggestions: graced@quaker.org.uk and andrewt@quaker.org.uk

Philip Austin gave his Coordinator’s Report. The Global Campaign on Military Spending is mounting an online campaign, 10 April – 9 May, including a petition and ideas for actions. He also spoke of work going on with Friends in Lancashire around militarisation in schools. In the Q&A session we were reminded that the Peace Education Network conference is happening 20-22 May. Ellis Brooks at Friends House is the person to contact for more information: ellisb@quaker.org.uk

The formal part of the meeting concluded with a report from Daniel Jacopovich of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (who was speaking to us from Croatia). Daniel started off by telling us about “Journey To COP26”, an invitation to people of all faith communities and none, to join together remotely and share our belief in the sacredness of all life, ahead of the UN climate change talks, COP26. The idea is that we all make a short journey to a place that is sacred to us; this will be a way for us to strengthen our collective sense of purpose in protecting the Earth and all her inhabitants. QPSW will be delighted to help amplify any social media messages you

may wish to put out in this connection. You can contact Oonagh Ryder on oonaghr@quaker.org.uk for help with this. Daniel also told us that a US arms manufacturer, Leidos, is involved in running the forthcoming UK census. He is interested to know if any of us are planning to take any action in protest. He can be reached at danielj@quaker.org.uk.

After this, we had the members' forum, with numerous tales of actions which had been taken to celebrate the ratification of the TPNW. I was honoured to be sharing a Zoom screen with so many people who helped bring about this amazing achievement.

Visitors are always welcome at the NFPB meetings; email Philip Austin at nfpb@gn.apc.org if you would like to join us in the summer. We meet on Saturday 26 June – almost certainly online.

Jessica Paterson

CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE – an update on activities in Scotland

Based on notes by Emma Cockburn, CAAT Scotland Coordinator

Along with Mwatana, the Yemeni human rights organisation, CAAT has been nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. The nomination is by AFSC [the American Friends Service Committee] and QPSW (as successor to the Friends Service Council), the winners of the Prize in 1947; as former laureates they can propose names to the Norwegian Nobel Committee. There are 329 candidates for the 2021 Prize. Emma writes: “*Well done everyone who has ever stood out in the rain or been up all night painting props for an action; this nomination is because of every step we've taken to resist the arms trade.*” The CAAT website has more, at: <https://caat.org.uk/news/what-a-nobel-peace-prize-nomination-means-for-our-campaigning/>.

The conference *It Starts Here* is being held online, 19-21 March. It is open to all; for details, see <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/caat-presents-it-starts-here-digital-conference-2021-tickets-138286455511>. Emma will be facilitating a panel discussion on the Arms Trade in Scotland, which will be a precursor to the publication (in time for the Holyrood elections in May) of the report *From Scotland With Shame*: a foundational document highlighting Scotland's contribution to the UK's arms industry, based on the research started by CAAT Edinburgh.

A briefing document on Scottish/Saudi arms links was launched in February, and formed the basis of an article in the *Sunday Post* (see <https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/yemen-made-in-scotland/>). Although the Biden administration has announced it is freezing arms sales because of the Saudi-led bombing in Yemen, the UK government has refused to follow it. Licensed sales by British companies since the war began in 2015 have been worth £5.4 billion, and the real total is probably much higher. The Court of

Appeal in England ruled in June 2019 that the licensing of arms sales to Saudi Arabia had been unlawful, and that extant licences should be reviewed and no new ones granted; but in July 2020 the Government announced the resumption of arms sales. CAAT Scotland hopes to put pressure on the Scottish Government, which in the past was indirectly aiding sales through grants to armaments firms by Scottish Enterprise; see <https://theferret.scot/arms-firms-leonardo-mw-scottish-enterprise-yemen/> *Security and Policing 2021* – in Emma’s words, “a Home-Office-run virtual event with the usual big players like BAE and Thales selling equipment to aid the militarisation of policing and borders” – took place 9-11 March; CAAT planned events around it to highlight the militarisation of Police Scotland and to support groups working with people seeking asylum and in the Dungavel detention centre.

Emma has prepared briefing materials for use in the Holyrood election campaign, and welcomes enquiries: emma@caat.org.uk. She attended the first meeting of CAAT Glasgow on 18 February, and has met with supporters in Ayrshire and Aberdeen. At all three meetings, CAAT Edinburgh was mentioned as an example of a successful local group, and (it is hoped) “the blueprint of more resistance across Scotland”.

Festival Committee report 2021

As everyone knows, the Fringe did not take place in 2020 but Venue 40 did join the crowdfunding organised by the Fringe Society and managed to raise over £600, which is earmarked for theatre drapes.

We had hoped that we might be able to be back to some sort of programme this year. However information from the Fringe Society and the City of Edinburgh Council made it clear that performances in small indoor spaces were unlikely to be allowed to go ahead. We therefore decided that the Festival in its usual form in the Meeting House would not take place. We do not feel we have the expertise or resources to offer anything online but are considering other options.

The ‘Loving Earth’ group of local Friends are very keen on the idea of using the Meeting House windows/railings for an exhibition of artwork in August, and we will also be discussing with the Eating House whether they would be interested to having a pop-up café. Friends may have other suggestions that we might consider, bearing in mind any restrictions and our limited resources (there will not be any national volunteers this year).

Several companies have agreed to carry over their deposits originally made for 2020 and we hope there will be no issues about 2022 when the Fringe will be celebrating its 75th Birthday.

Janet Grimwade

General Meeting for Scotland, 6 March 2021

This was a well-attended meeting, with 83 Friends and attenders connected on 75 devices. These are some of the main items of business.

Parliamentary Engagement Working Group

Joyce Taylor reported on the Group's activities, including preparations for the COP26 meeting to be held in Glasgow in November. We were encouraged to view the PEWG's page on the Scottish Quaker website which features submissions made to Government in respect of the 'All Our Rights in Law' consultation, and the Scottish Land Use survey – see <https://quakerscotland.org/our-work/parliamentary-engagement>

Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group

After discussing a letter from the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network, an open informal grouping, we agreed to set up a formal five-member group to work alongside it, so that General Meeting can own and speak for the work done by Friends to promote social justice in Scotland.

Meeting for Sufferings

Ann Kerr, our representative at Meeting for Sufferings, raised her concern that having reps. and 'alternates' means the participants at Sufferings differ every time; causing, she felt, a lack of cohesion in the membership, only partly mitigated by residential meetings, home groups and Zoom break-out rooms. She also felt that since the formation of Yearly Meeting Trustees, the responsibilities of Sufferings are not clearly understood.

It was decided to hold a threshing meeting, to which current and former Sufferings representatives from General Meeting and the Scottish Area Meetings will be invited.

Online meetings

At lunchtime some Friends indicated how pleased they were to be able to meet by Zoom. But a report to the meeting from one of the five representatives to interfaith and ecumenical bodies included the statement that its writer was "someone who for many reasons does not 'do' Zoom".

North Scotland Area Meeting's proposal

The main business of the afternoon was a matter first raised in North Scotland Area Meeting (NSAM) in 2015.

The 'Area' of NSAM covers two cities, one with an old city-centre meeting house, and stretches northward to Shetland, and west to the Western Isles and Skye, and Appin on the mainland. In the new tabular statement it has 237 adult members and attenders. The vast majority of these live on the mainland in the neighbourhoods of Inverness or Aberdeen, which are themselves over 100 miles apart. Elsewhere, except perhaps in Orkney, Friends are very thinly spread.

NSAM ran a listening project in 2016. Friends have found the demands of being a charity a heavy burden, particularly in finding people to fill some essential roles, and sent a minute to General Meeting in 2017, suggesting a possible single charity for the whole of Scotland. In 2018-19 General Meeting held a meeting with the (Yearly Meeting) Simpler Meetings Project in Scotland. Since then it has established a GM Communications group, and arranged support/training for role-holders, and worked on templates for matters such as safeguarding. Last autumn NSAM reported its further discussions to General Meeting, requesting continuing assistance from GM and other AMs in Scotland, and reiterated its suggestion of reducing the number of distinct charities in Scotland.

The meeting decided to proceed in small steps. It will set up a working group to explore and evaluate options for later consideration. The group will note the recent experiences of London, Yorkshire and Wales. (London & Middlesex and Yorkshire were Quarterly Meetings which, unlike the majority, did not quickly atrophy when reconstituted as General Meetings in 1966; the 'Meeting of Friends in Wales' has in recent years had responsibilities analogous to those of GM in Scotland – see *Q.F.&P.* 5.04/5.05.)

The next General Meeting will be on 12 June *“if nothing occurs to prevent”*.

Taken with thanks from the report for The Scottish Friend by Jane Mitchell – Ed.



TPNW Tote Bag

Janet Fenton writes:

The shopping bag you need for all outings in the run up to the election. You can buy it online at

<https://scottishcndshop.org/collections/miscellaneous/products/nuclear-ban-tote-bag>

(it costs £4 plus £1 for postage)

OR

people in (reasonably central) Edinburgh can arrange with me to collect it or have it dropped off, if they email me or phone me.

Janet

[contact details in the Book of Members]

EVENTS ON ZOOM

Songs From Lockdown

Friday 19 March, 8.00-9.00 pm (log in from 7.30 pm)

Majk Stokes writes: *"I'll be performing some of the new songs and poems I've written since the UK went into its first Covid lockdown; and hoping to raise a wodge of money for charity. I'm not charging people anything for the gig myself, but I'd like to encourage everyone who joins to make a donation, so I've set up a JustGiving page:*

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/majks-rednoseday21>

"There'll be lots of new silly songs and poems (and one or two serious, actually rather powerful ones) to lift your spirits after a pretty grim time – and you can also have the warm glowy feeling of having given some money to an amazing cause and helped some people less fortunate than you are."

For more information and login details see **<https://www.majk.co.uk/>**

Equinox Ceilidh

Saturday 27 March, 7.00-10.00 pm

The Ceilidh Collective in association with Portobello & Musselburgh Local Meeting will be holding an Equinox Ceilidh online, hosted by Hazel Darwin-Clements and Robin Liebmann, featuring acts from local talent, many of whom will be familiar. Robin says "Please come and join us for an enriching and playful evening of music, poetry, stories, song and magic. Performed and hosted by our local Quaker community and friends from further afield. Your ticket to this Zoom event includes a wee box of delights sent to your door". The event is fundraising for a World Climate Ceilidh as part of COP26 – you'll be hearing more about that nearer the time. For tickets and info, visit **www.ceilidhcollective.org**.

Refugees in Scotland

A Zoom meeting will take place on Monday 12 April at 5.00 pm to learn about the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR). The link is given below.

We will be hearing from Sabine Chalmers, SFAR Co-ordinator, who will outline the needs and experience of refugees in Scotland and the work of SFAR. We hope it will be an opportunity to hear about what Quakers are already doing at a local level to engage with and support refugees, and to consider what further action – if any – might be taken. Quakers are one of

13 bodies working in partnership through SFAR, and we are represented by Hilary Patrick of Central Edinburgh local meeting.

This event is organised for General Meeting for Scotland by South East Scotland Area Meeting, and we welcome participation by all. Please pass on word to others who may be interested.

[For login details, contact the office at Edinburgh Meeting House]

BOOK REVIEW

There! I have said it.*

Spiritual Insights – Patricia M. Bateman, 2020, Moldavite Press, £7.99, 416 pp. ISBN 978-1-8382837-1-1

This chunky hardback – too big for most pockets, except, perhaps, of an overcoat, but definitely portable – brings together three books written at different times, and in different styles. A symbol on the right-hand pages shows which you are in: a lotus flower for *A Guide to Eternity*; a tree of life for *States of Being*, the longest; and a triskelion (a Celtic triple spiral) for *Knowing*, which differs from the other two in comprising seven chapters written in continuous prose – on ‘Knowledge’; ‘Empathy’; ‘Courage’; ‘Belief’; ‘Happiness’; ‘Understanding’; and ‘Pain and Suffering’. The others are both themed sequences of thoughts, most running to two or three pages, set as unrhymed, unmetrical verse. At times, I felt, the line breaks were more for the sake of the text’s appearance on the page, than called for by the sense or rhythm of the words, and a thought expressed in four lines would not have lost anything by being said in one.

It also struck me as I read it that *Spiritual Insights* is the sort of work Georg Lichtenberg must have had in mind when he compared a book to a mirror: “when a monkey looks in, no apostle can look out”. The thoughts it offers are conveyed in colloquial language, with phrases from well-known songs (“All you need is Love”; “I will survive”; even “Keep right on to the end of the road”); and echoes, in various places, of scraps from Ecclesiastes, the Gospels, Julian of Norwich, Shakespeare, Milton, Kipling and Dylan Thomas that have become common currency. They are for the most part,

* From p. 266, in the book under review

therefore, not startlingly original in their expression, for all that they may be worth saying.

Some are startling in other ways, however. This, from p. 19,

...
 You may choose
 To come again
 On planet Earth
 To face once again
 The same set
 Of events
 And personalities
 Necessary
 For you soul's growth.

is a notion I flatly reject – I am with Stephen Grellet in expecting to pass through this world but once (see page 17 of this issue of *Sesame*) – and serial existence pops up again later as an idea (e.g. on p. 103). Other provocative thoughts include this (p. 36):

Natural disasters
 Are a means
 Of bringing greater Light
 To shine on this Earth.

A moment's thought tells us that this is indeed true; in the same way that being afflicted by a dreadful disease can give the sufferer new insight into God's love, as was the experience of Walter Martin (see *Q.F.&P.* 21.58 and 26.14). Nevertheless, to assert on that basis that motor neuron disease 'is' an outward and visible sign of Grace would seem callous or blasphemous, and this saying too might appear unfeeling, even complacent, to – for example – people in Vanuatu, for whom earthquakes and cyclones are a frequent visitation (note the grave crosses in the painting on our front page). I struggle more to find the truth in this (p. 21):

Everything that happens
 To you
 In life
 You have consented to
 Or requested.

and I have my doubts about this (p. 35):

Nothing is beyond forgiveness

although I can see it *ought* to be true.

All these examples are from *A Guide to Eternity*, the first section, in which the 'I' who speaks is (for the most part) not the author, but the object of prayer; "I AM" (p. 108); the one who can speak of "my" Creation (though in *States of Being* we are told the Creator "Is not a person./It is a force./The force of life-giving energy ..." (p. 222)) – God, in short. For me, this makes

the first part of *Spiritual Insights* the least rewarding. It is a fundamental tenet of Quakerism that the Holy Spirit can speak to and through any of us – but quoting Harry Lauder? I can't say *why* that should be an obstacle, but for me it is.

I am more comfortable with the human 'I' of the second section, though here too there are statements that are challenging (e.g. p. 166):

It is a law of the Universe
That we do not interfere in
The destiny of another Being.

Patricia M. Bateman, who is an attender at South Edinburgh Local Meeting, has been a spiritual healer for more than twenty-five years and served with our Friend Annie Miller on the Board of Trustees of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers (now the Healing Trust – for more information see <https://www.thehealingtrust.org.uk/>). She herself has written:

My hope is that this collection will provide insight and enlightenment for those who seek to explore and develop their understanding of what is spirituality. In these troubled times, there are many who seek simply-worded spiritual guidance and wisdom in a non-religious approach.

I, then, am not one of her intended readers – I am quite comfortable with a religious approach and 'technical' theological language. But even so, I have been given much to think about.

Have you advanced
In self-knowledge?
Do you see yourself
More clearly now?
Do you begin to sense
Your limitations,
Your weaknesses
As well as your strengths?
(p. 287)

Spiritual Insights can be bought from Amazon as a Kindle edition at £3.99, and it is hoped that it will soon be available in paperback.

Alan Frith

Get your kilt on for Christian Aid!

If your boots are made for walking, why not take part in the Kiltwalk? You can take on any Kiltwalk-inspired challenge you wish. Go for a walk, cycle, jump on a trampoline or take the family on a scavenger hunt! The Kiltwalk is happening virtually all across Scotland, 23-25 April. Get moving for Christian Aid and The Hunter Foundation will increase your sponsorship by 50%! Sign up today and don't forget to name Christian Aid as your chosen charity. Money is collected through Just Giving. Lauren McFarlane will be delighted to support you to get set up – lmcfarland@christian-aid.org

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Minutes of Area Meeting held on Monday 18 January 2021 by remote videoconferencing

2021/01/01 **Worship and introductions**

During worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 24.03, William Penn's advice to '...let us try what Love will do...'.
We ask Cathy Holman (*P&M*) to serve as Elder for this meeting.

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

2021/01/02 **Minutes of Meeting of Saturday 28 November 2020**

The minutes for our meeting held by remote videoconferencing on 28 November 2020 will be signed and entered in the minute book once it is possible for the Clerks to meet face-to-face.

[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]

2021/01/12 Closing minute

45 Friends (42 members one attender and two guests) have been at all or part of this meeting. Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 19	Central Fife 2	East Lothian 2	Kelso 3	Penicuik 1
Polmont 4	Portobello & Musselburgh 6	South Edinburgh 6	Tweeddale -	<i>Visitors</i> 2

We next meet on Saturday 20 March 2021 by Zoom at 10.00 am.

(Signed)
Alastair Cameron
Clerk
Cath Dyer
Assistant Clerk

Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland

Contact details of named Friends are in the Book of Members.

MEETING IN PERSON

It is hoped that Meetings for Worship at which Friends are physically present may resume in April, and it is expected that an announcement will be made by the First Minister on 23 March regarding the lifting of restrictions. After that date, for information on arrangements, and on whether meetings will be 'blended' (*i.e.* open to be joined online as well as in person) please contact the **named Friend** listed below for the Meeting concerned.

For information on **Tweeddale Local Meeting**, contact **Anna Lawrence**.

MEETING BY ZOOM

Central Edinburgh – for login details contact centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk

Sundays at 11.00 am – expected to be blended with meetings in person, if they happen.

2nd and 4th Sundays at 9.30 am – Meeting for Worship (45 mins)

2nd and 4th Thursdays – 'Epilogue' at 9.00 pm

Central Fife – for login details contact **Laurie Naumann**

On the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays at 10.30 am, to be blended with the meeting in person.

East Lothian – for login details contact **Di Simcock**

Wednesdays at 7.30 pm.

North Edinburgh worship group – for login details contact **Tony Gross**

4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm.

Penicuik – for login details contact **Mark Hutcheson**

1st Sunday in the month at 11.00 am.

Polmont – for login details contact **Mariot Dallas**

Sundays at 10.45 am; preceded by Children's Meeting, 10.00-10.30 am.

Wednesdays at 8.00 pm.

Portobello & Musselburgh – for login details contact **Mary Jane Elton**

2nd and 4th Sundays at 11.00 am – NOT to be blended with meetings in person.

South Edinburgh – for login details contact **David Somervell**

Sundays at 10.30 am.