

SESAME

Number 250: November 2023

AM on 25 November/Community Justice Working Group/Stop Ecocide/General Meeting: 2 reports/NFPB/At Holyrood: 'Peace at the Heart'; Ecocide consultation/Meeting for Sufferings/Finland/BDRC/TPNW Day of Action/A Good Death/Rufus M. Jones/Christian Aid events & activities/'Naming the Mystery'/Woodbrooke Where You Are 2024 events/September Minutes/&c.



Kuoleman puutarha ('The Garden of Death') in Tampere Cathedral – see overleaf. Mary Woodward, who describes it as "extraordinary", reports on her visit to Finnish Friends on page 26.

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on 25 November 2023 at 10.45 am, at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL, and by Zoom.

The meeting will be hosted by Central Edinburgh local meeting, and I am grateful for the work Friends there have put into preparing for the day. They are kindly providing (vegan) soup: please bring your own lunch to supplement this. Contributions of scones or cake (with lists of ingredients) would be appreciated. There will be breakout spaces in the Zoom meeting for those who want to share time together.

Everyone associated with Quakers in our area is welcome to attend; you don't have to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends. There will be a children's programme – see below. Teenagers are welcome to join in the business meeting, or to have their own space in the morning: we will particularly value their participation in the afternoon session. Parents of teens are asked to pass on this message!

This will be an all-day meeting. During the morning, we will have a presentation from Jenny Copsey from the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group, and we will also be hearing an update from the group considering the future of 7 Victoria Terrace. The full agenda is opposite. In the afternoon, we will think about diversity and inclusion in our community – it will be a lively programme including small group work and exercises to help us express ourselves and listen to others.

Our children will be joining the main meeting for some parts of the day. In their morning session, the children will go for a (short!) walk, ending in the Wildlife Garden. Please dress them appropriately for the weather (we have a Plan B if it's really bad!). In the afternoon there will be games and an art/craft activity, and tea, cake and informal connection time at the end.

If planning to bring children, please email so we have an idea of numbers (and ages).

Also, the official starting time of AM is 10.45 am, but **please arrive before that** (from 10.15) so that the children's walk can start promptly at 11.00, in order to fit it in before lunch. **If you arrive late, phone us to catch us up.**

Hugo Simberg (1873-1917) was commissioned in 1904 to decorate the interior of the new St John's church in Tampere; completed in 1907, it became a cathedral in 1923. The design of The Garden of Death, taken from an 1896 painting now in the Ateneum, Helsinki, depicts, the artist said, "a place where souls go before entering Heaven. The skeletons are little helpers of Death, and the plants and flowers are people's souls." Its unorthodox imagery caused controversy when the fresco was new.

We expect to finish about 4.00 pm with tea and cakes to fortify us for the journey home. I look forward to seeing you on the day.

Alastair Cameron
Clerk

AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 6 September 2023
3. Central Edinburgh: Memorial minute for Diana Horne [see page 7]
4. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Warm space at 7 Victoria Terrace* [see page 20]
 2. *Woodbrooke Where You Are 2024* [see page 41]
 3. *Future of 7 Victoria Terrace – interim working group report* [see page 9]
5. Membership matters:
 1. *Application for membership*
 2. *Report on visit for membership*
 3. *Transfers*
 4. *Deaths: Annette May, South Edinburgh LM*
6. Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group – Jenny Copsey [see overleaf]
7. Meetings for Worship for Marriage
 1. *Accomplishment: Alex Taylor and Richard Vass*
 2. *Appointment: Jane Ditchfield and Niamh (Echo) Gillespie*
8. Trustee and Local Meeting matters
 1. *Trustees' recommendation on payment to BYM*
 2. *Future of Festival Committee*
 3. *East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline – Central Edinburgh LM*
 4. *Tweeddale LM – Arrangements for Meeting for Worship* [see below]
9. General Meeting matters
 1. *Reports on meeting of 16 September and 11 November* [see page 16]
10. Meeting for Sufferings – Jane Kelly [see page 25]
11. Appointments:
 1. *From Nominations Committee*
 2. *AM Elders – convener*
 3. *Clerking arrangements at Central Edinburgh LM*
12. Diversity and inclusion in our meetings
13. Closing minute

TWEEDDALE L.M. is now holding Meeting for Worship twice a month: on the **second Tuesday at 7.30 pm**, at the home of Lesley Morrison, and on the **fourth Sunday at 10.30 am**, at the home of Jean McAuslin (addresses in the Book of Members). Lesley Morrison is also taking over as L.M. Clerk.

Scottish Quaker Community Justice working group

IN MARCH 2022, General Meeting for Scotland adopted the following statement on a Scottish Quaker Approach to Crime and Punishment:

Within the devolved Scottish context and given the evolving situations in prisons and community justice it is important that General Meeting for Scotland has discerned the principles on which advocacy can take place on its behalf, requiring systemic change and moving towards Criminal and Community Justice Systems more engaged with rehabilitation and restorative justice. We are concerned to seek growing points to bring about a just and compassionate society, where extremes of societal inequality do not contribute to people committing, being accused, convicted and punished for offences.

Friends, partly through their own experiences in the prisons of the seventeenth century, became concerned about the treatment of the accused or convicted. Friends witnessed to their concern for the Divine Spirit in humans by seeing prisons as an alternative to corporal or capital punishment. Subsequently, they worked for reform of these prisons.

Today, Friends are becoming aware that overuse of prisons is a destructive and expensive failure as a response to crime. We include efforts to replace prisons with non-punitive, life-affirming and reconciling responses, alongside efforts to reform or ameliorate them. The prison system is both a cause and a result of violence and social injustice.

Throughout history, the majority of prisoners have been the powerless and the oppressed. We recognise the inherent dangers in the imprisonment of human beings, which like their enslavement, often is as destructive to those involved in their imprisonment and to society as to those imprisoned.

The challenge before us is to use alternatives based on economic and social justice and on the fulfilment of human needs. Some alternatives to prisons have already been developed and more are needed to bring about reconciliation and healing within the community. Friends need to seek out, develop and support such programmes.

At the same time, we need to foster awareness in ourselves and others of the roots of crime and violence in society to ensure that our lives do not unintentionally reinforce these evils.

The 1981 Canadian minute on which our statement is closely based additionally crucially included this statement **“Prison abolition is both a process and a long-term goal. In the interim, there is a great need for Friends to reach out to and to support all those affected: guards, prisoners, victims, and families.”** Our statement, however, concluded:

There is a great need for Friends to reach out to and to support all those affected: all those within the Criminal and Community Justice systems, including those accused and convicted of crimes, staff, victims and families.

We recognize a need for restraint of those few who are exhibiting dangerous behaviour. The kind of restraint used and the help offered must reflect our concern for that of God in every person.

A few facts about Scottish prisons and prisoners, 2023

There are fifteen prisons in Scotland. Three house young offenders, and one, HMP Cornton Vale, is women-only. 13 prisons are managed by the Scottish Prison Service, and 2 are privately managed.

The imprisonment rate in Scotland in 2023 is 134 per 100,000 of population, with England & Wales at 138; the leading European rates, and significantly higher than, for example, France (106), Italy (96), or Germany (67).

Who is in prison in Scotland?

In 2021-22, the daily prison population in Scotland averaged just over 7,500 people, mostly men (4 % women). In January 2023, 28.6 % were on remand (not yet sentenced), **the highest proportion on remand on record.**

2022 Scottish Government figures show that 33 % of people arriving in prison come from areas rated as the most deprived in Scotland, with 1% from areas at the top of the scale.

People who have been in care – 1 % of the Scottish population – comprise almost 50 % of young people in prison, and 25 % of prisoners overall.

About 50 % of people reported a drug problem or tested positive for illegal substances on entering prison in 2022. Nearly 40 % reported using illegal drugs while *in* prison, and between one-quarter and one-third of those tested on leaving prison have illegal substances in their bodies.

76% of prisoners had a history of mental ill health which was identified when they arrived in prison.

60% had been receiving support for mental illness before arriving in prison

The Vision for Justice in Scotland

Since the Scottish Prison (McLeish) Commission reported in 2008, the Scottish Government has repeatedly set itself a target of reducing the use of imprisonment, and this was reiterated recently in *The Vision for Justice in Scotland* (2022) a document the Quaker working group welcomed as ambitious and progressive. [See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/vision-justice-scotland/documents/>]

Vision for Justice offers :

- To reduce imprisonment, particularly for short term offenders
- To roll out restorative justice nationally : to engage the person who is offended against with the person who has harmed them, and offers resolution for both “victim” and “offender” as a way of allowing them to reintegrate with society and move on
- To work in a trauma informed way to address trauma and childhood adverse experience (ACES)

Quaker approach now:

While Quakers would wish to encourage the Scottish government we are concerned by its track record of not delivering change and the issues and questions this leaves us with:

Many people who offend have been affected by adverse childhood experiences.

Their offending arises from a form of disconnection from responsibility for their lives and provides a way they feel allows them to survive. Only through trauma informed work or other approaches such as the 12 steps model can there be a change and can these people move on and take responsibility for their lives and actions.

Question: how can we promote trauma informed work to ensure it is delivered effectively and at the right stages of the justice process?

Many people from deprived areas start offending because of poverty of opportunity and can then remain trapped in an offending and addiction cycle. The prison system does not work, particularly when it does not focus on rehabilitation, with such a disproportionate number of offenders coming from deprived backgrounds.

Question: what should our response be to these inequalities in society?

Quakers promote restorative justice as a way of working but, because of trauma and failure to prevent or address this, very many offenders cannot take responsibility for their actions and normal restoration or punishment models do not apply.

Question: How can we work towards ensuring restorative justice approaches can be successfully used?

Currently prison is used as part of the prevailing national retributive approach, and the stigma of having been a prisoner haunts people all their lives way beyond their sentence, affecting their children too. The prison system is in crisis, emphasised by the pandemic – a desperate place both to live as a prisoner and to work in.

Questions:

- *How can Quakers help change Scotland's punitive, expensive and unhelpful overuse of prison?*
- *What should our approach be to achieve justice which transforms lives and fosters peace and inclusion in society?*
- *Should we consider in the future adopting a minute like the Canadian one on leading towards prison abolition to support Quaker work in Scotland?*

A thought-provoking booklet has been produced by some members of the Scottish Community Justice Network: *Breaking Chains and Building Change*.

Jenny Copsey

New Books in the 'Quaker Quicks' series

As well as Helen Holt's Rufus Jones and the Presence of God (see page 35), recent additions to the series are Tending Sacred Ground: Respectful Parenting by Pamela Haines (ISBN 978-180341-088-3), Inner Healing, Inner Peace by John & Diana Lampen (ISBN 978-1-80341-368-6), Do Quakers Pray? by Jennifer Kavanagh (ISBN 978-180341-400-3), Open to New Light: Quakers and Other Faiths by Eleanor Nesbitt (ISBN 978-1-80341-323-5), and – coming in 2024 – The Promise of Right Relationship by Pamela Haines (ISBN 978-180341-424-9).

Diana Horne, 1943-2023

Memorial Minute from Central Edinburgh LM

DIANA HORNE was born in September 1943 into a non-religious family, although one with Anglican and Quaker sympathies. She grew up in Portsmouth in a middle-class family along with two brothers, Stuart who was four years older and her much younger brother, Andrew. She was close to both growing up, very protective of Andrew and caring for Stuart during his later years.

In her early years Diana enjoyed trips in the family sailing boat; summer holidays were often spent at sea, exploring around the south coast. She had her own sailing dinghy for a while. Cousins visited in the summer and shared in big Christmas gatherings which they recalled with affection. There was always classical music playing throughout the house. Diana sang in the local choral society with both parents and also played the ocarina. At the centre of family life was their much-loved dog, Bosun, a lively collie cross who was just as much at home on the boat as he was on land.

There were also, however much darker elements while she was growing up which affected Diana deeply and which certainly contributed to the complete estrangement from her family after 2006 and the mental ill-health from which she suffered increasingly in her final years.

After school she trained as an osteopath, working in and around London for several years while enjoying a busy social life. She drove an old left-hand-drive Citroën 2CV imported from France and delighted in having Andrew and her young cousins to stay and introducing them to the city. She showed them a slice of life very different from what they had known. Andrew recalled being taken by her to see the musical *Hair* which was thought then to be rather shocking!

Later she decided to retrain as a social worker, first completing a degree in Sociology at the University of East Anglia before working for some years in Southampton. In 1980 she was offered employment as a psychiatric social worker at Herdmanflat Hospital in Haddington where she lived before moving into Edinburgh and buying a flat in Dalry. There was always a dog in her life. Rosa, her beautiful collie who had one blue and one brown eye is still remembered by Friends with affection. Rosa used to accompany Diana to Meeting on Sundays so it was a very sad day for both of them when all dogs were banned from the Meeting House in the mid-2000s, on account of a small boy's phobia.

Diana first encountered Quakers in 1995 when she came to a Fringe show at Venue 40, a.k.a. The Meeting House at 7, Victoria Terrace. She started attending regularly and after her retirement she was able to become fully involved in the life of the Meeting including the singing and book groups, monthly gatherings at the Glasite Meeting House and various workshops. She enjoyed poetry very much and was able to contribute poems she had written herself at the annual ceilidhs.

Around the same time her brother Stuart, who had relocated to Edinburgh, also became a regular Attender. As his health deteriorated, however, he required a good

deal of support which Diana was only too happy to provide. His death in 2006 came as a great blow to her.

When she applied for Membership in 2010 Diana revealed that she had spent many years looking for a religious community in which she could feel comfortable. She found Quakers and Quaker worship a welcome change from other churches because it allowed her to remain in control, and she liked the way Quaker Faith & Practice, especially Advices & Queries, offered clear and helpful guidance without the obscurity and negative emphases she had found in other interpretation of the Bible, particularly the emphasis on sin and unworthiness.

She experienced Meeting for Worship as a valuable, shared, quiet time, a time to think and benefit from both the silence and the spoken ministry. She enjoyed being part of a more open, like-minded, group of people while Quaker guidance towards living a good and useful life represented a much more positive kind of Christianity for her.

Another aspect of Friends that resonated for her was their egalitarian stance on Gay and Lesbian rights. Diana identified as Gay and planned to write for LGBTQ magazines after taking a course in creative writing in Glasgow.

Before being accepted into Membership she had joined a local Quaker study group and also helped to organize a meeting with representatives of the Army. This experience gave her a strong appreciation of the Peace Testimony and how its emphasis on equal rights and its lack of sectarianism pointed towards a better way of living for us all. The Hungarian Uprising of 1956 had made a very strong impression on her as a child, so finding this kind of helpful response to the violence in the world was particularly important to her.

One way in which she hoped to see the Meeting grow was to help provide more opportunities to talk with Friends about shared insights and concerns, building on courses such as Hearts and Minds. Having had a lot of experience in various forms of group work following her earlier training in social work she hoped to find ways of bringing that into service to the Meeting. Sadly it was not to be.

As her physical and mental health worsened Diana became increasingly withdrawn. She was not able to engage with Friends as much as she had hoped, she began to find it harder to leave her flat and suffered a number of falls. Gradually she stepped back from the life of the Meeting. Struggling to look after herself, she found refuge for some months with a Quaker friend who gave her much-appreciated practical and emotional support. Eventually she moved into sheltered housing in Tolcross but after several spells in hospital in 2019 and 2020 she asked her social worker to find her accommodation in a care home to the great relief of her concerned friends. In lockdown she was safe and comfortable at Marionville Court Care Home until the onset of pneumonia which led to her death in hospital in February 2023.

We thank Lynne Barty and Rachel Frith for their work, and ask that the Memorial Minute be forwarded to Area Meeting.

Central Edinburgh LM Minute 2023/07/07 (2/7/2023)

Affordability of Edinburgh Meeting House

Issues considered by the working group, 16 October 2023

The Meeting House is the home to the worshipping Quaker community in the centre of Edinburgh and South East Scotland. We would like it to be:

1. An excellent place for meetings, both by Quakers and other groups, which reflects and proclaims our Quaker values.
2. A more comfortable and sustainable place, a model for what can be done with a Quaker building.
3. Economically viable in the longer term.

The third of these desires has been at the forefront of our minds in the last two years, but we consider 1 and 2 to be central too. A final report from the group is expected in late 2023 or early 2024, but as an interim update, this is a summary list of options that the group is considering.

Property values for sale and letting.

Discussion with Friends in South East Scotland and more widely suggests that sale of the Meeting House should be a last resort. We own two flats at 6 Upper Bow. Letting of 3F2, formerly used for a resident assistant warden, is going ahead, with adjustments to out-of-hours call arrangements.

Heating costs and sustainability

We would like to reduce our energy consumption, and to improve the warmth and ventilation of the meeting house. Grants may be available that could partially cover improvements, but analysis suggests that long term financial savings will be small, and that it will take a long time to recover costs of the work. However we probably still want to do this, and will investigate the options and costs further.

Festival income

Letting out the whole building to the Fringe Society in 2023 was less work for Friends than running Venue 40. While it reduced our outreach, it was financially significantly more beneficial. It may be possible to repeat and possibly extend this.

Long-term letting of parts of the meeting house

Other than possibly (re-)letting the Bow Room, the scope appears small, without substantially impairing Quaker use of the building.

Quaker use only: No lettings

While this would substantially reduce the need for staff, modelling suggests that income falls by more than we save, increasing the funding gap for the meeting house.

Same lettings, fewer staff

Could some users run events without staff on the premises? Not the more profitable ones that require catering, nor the community groups that tend to use the building in the evenings. There does not seem to be a way to make substantial savings here.

Other savings

Looking at items beyond staff, repairs and maintenance, and energy costs, we have not identified opportunities for substantial savings.

More/more valuable lettings

Pre-COVID, we were approaching the maximum manageable numbers of lettings. While we should increase charges at least in line with costs, significant further increases may require active marketing to more profitable users, coupled with upgrading parts of the premises. We would still want to offer good rates for groups we wish to support. Options are being considered further.

Adaptability for the future

Options such as an adaptable area that could be used as office space for Quaker work or as 'hot desk' space during the week, and for children on Sundays, have been mooted.

A 'home' for Quakers

This would entail ground floor revisions to make the meeting house more welcoming to Quakers, local and visiting. Also for non-Quaker visitors, for outreach, and as part of work to make the premises more welcoming to those hiring rooms.

- The suggestion of a café on the ground floor has come up recurrently, possibly as a further usable space in the evenings when the café itself is closed.
- The ground floor can be cold; improvements would need to consider that.
- It is likely that we would want such work to be part of general improvements
- This scale of project would require significant fund-raising.

The working group welcomes feedback on this report. Please send any comments to me, or to the group's convener, David Sterratt [*contact details in the Book of Members*].

Neil Turner
Clerk to AM Trustees

AN APPEAL

Ramallah Friends School (RFS) in Palestine grew from Quaker work which began in 1869: it reopened in 1919 when its buildings were recovered from army occupation, first Turkish then British, during World War I, and it now has some 1400 students. (See <https://www.rfs.edu.ps/en/page/school-history?p=school-history>.)

Quaker International Education Trust (QuIET) has launched an emergency appeal to raise £7000 for RFS, for funds for a wellbeing programme to provide support at the School in the face of the war in Gaza and escalation of violence in the West Bank. See <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/rfs-wellbeing-support>

STOP ECOCIDE

Redlands Meeting House, Bristol, 16 September

Janet Saunders was an online participant at a recent event on tackling climate crisis: a twenty-minute video summary is at <https://vimeo.com/865268539/8a12b40611>.

The following is taken from a talk by Hilary Saunders of Bristol AM (no relation); references have been added, locating the articles mentioned and other relevant material. Janet's own comments follow on page 14. See also page 24.

Emissions are rising but so is demand for legal solutions

AS QUAKERS we believe in taking responsibility for our actions, so we all need to do what we can to reduce our carbon footprint. But when our planet is on fire and global emissions are still rising, we need to discern the truth urgently:

Who or what is responsible for this situation? And how can we stop the destruction?

We all need to reach our own conclusions, but here is some evidence you might like to consider.

We know nature is being devastated by deforestation, mining, industrial farming *etc*, but the relentless rise in emissions means we have to look at the fossil fuel companies – so what do we know about them?

In 2017 the Carbon Majors data showed 100 fossil fuel producers are linked to 71% of greenhouse gas emissions since 1988.

Last year the BBC2 documentary series, *Big Oil v. The World*, revealed that Exxon and other companies knew forty years ago that greenhouse gas emissions are linked to extreme weather events – but they hid their own research findings. [<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/p0cgql8f/big-oil-v-the-world>] Instead they denied that greenhouse gas emissions are causing global heating; they deceived the public and they delayed action on climate change.

Al Gore (US Vice President at the time) has described this as the biggest crime since World War II. (You might like to look at his recent TED talk on the fossil fuel industry [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgZC6da4mco>]).

It is still going on. In May 2022, *The Guardian* did a landmark investigation into 'carbon bombs'. They looked at the development plans of fossil fuel companies and identified 195 new carbon bombs: projects which will each result in at least a billion tonnes of CO₂ emissions over their lifetime, enough to trigger catastrophic climate breakdown.

[See

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2022/may/11/fossil-fuel-carbon-bombs-climate-breakdown-oil-gas>

and see also (from 31/10/2023):

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/oct/31/banks-pumped-more-than-150bn-in-to-companies-running-carbon-bomb-projects-in-2022>]

The report also named the 12 major companies, including Shell and BP, who are spending millions each day to exploit new oil and gas, which cannot be burned if we are going to keep global warming below 1.5° C.

Big oil companies have been making billions for decades, and could easily afford to sue the BBC and *The Guardian*, if what they said was untrue. They have *not* sued them.

Meanwhile, despite all the dire warnings, our Prime Minister has offered huge tax breaks to companies investing in new oil and gas fields in North Sea. He intends to issue more than 100 new drilling licences.

The UK and other governments are continuing to subsidise the fossil fuel companies.

Why are they behaving like this? Obviously, the fossil fuel companies are immensely rich but there is something else which gives them even more power – the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). This aims to protect the investments of fossil fuel companies who set up production plants abroad. It enables multinational fossil fuel companies to sue countries for massive compensation, if their profits are adversely affected by a government decision.

This is an example of how it works. Rockhopper Exploration (a British oil company) started test drilling in the Adriatic in 2008. Furious public protests persuaded the Italian government to ban oil drilling within 12 miles of Italy's coast in 2015. Rockhopper sued for damages under the ECT, and last year a corporate tribunal awarded them €241 million – about 6 times more than the £33 million they invested. Rockhopper now intends to invest this money in drilling for oil off the Falkland Islands.

[\[https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/09/09/no-climate-justice-oil-firm-rockhopper-wins-241m-payout-after-being-banned-from-drilling\]](https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/09/09/no-climate-justice-oil-firm-rockhopper-wins-241m-payout-after-being-banned-from-drilling)

Most corporate tribunal hearings are confidential – we only heard about this one because MEPs were so angry that they held up notices about it in the European Parliament. The European Parliament has voted to leave the ECT because it is blocking action on climate change, and the European Commission is now calling for a co-ordinated withdrawal. But the UK still supports the ECT.

Unfortunately, this is not the only investment treaty or trade deal which gives multinational companies the right to sue states for compensation, if any government decision adversely affects their future profits. There are lots of them. This means that multinational companies have the power to hold the world to ransom.

Can anything be done about this legally?

More than twenty cities and states have filed lawsuits against big oil companies seeking damages for the destruction caused by climate disasters.

New York City is suing ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and the American Petroleum Institute for violating its Consumer Protection Law through false advertising and deceptive trade practices. [*A previous action by the State of*

New York against ExxonMobil failed; the New York Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that the company had not committed fraud by misleading investors on the risks of climate change. On the present case, see:

[https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/293-21/new-york-city-sues-exxonmobil-shell-bp-the-american-petroleum-institute-systematically.](https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/293-21/new-york-city-sues-exxonmobil-shell-bp-the-american-petroleum-institute-systematically)]

Massachusetts and Minnesota are suing big oil companies for fraud and deceptive practices.

[<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/10/oil-companies-corporate-free-speech-laws-climate-litigation>

<https://climateintegrity.org/news/minnesota-wins-key-ruling-in-its-fight-to-hold-big-oil-accountable-for-climate-lies>]

Puerto Rico is using anti-Mafia law to sue former members of a huge fossil fuel lobbying group which successfully blocked action on climate change, accusing them of organised crime.

[<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/big-oil-calls-puerto-rico-racketeering-climate-claims-far-fetched-2023-10-16>]

<https://grist.org/accountability/hoboken-rico-lawsuit-oil-companies/>]

Children and young people are trying to use the law to uphold their human rights.

Six young people from Portugal have filed the first climate change lawsuit at the European Court of Human Rights, suing 33 states, including the UK, for not having done enough to prevent climate change from affecting their right to life. [*Duarte Agostinho & Others v. Portugal & 32 Others*; see

[https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press?i=003-7756998-10741219.](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press?i=003-7756998-10741219)]

16 others have just won their legal battle against the state of Montana for violating their constitutional right to a “clean and healthful environment”.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/montana-youths-win-key-climate-lawsuit-on-their-right-to-a-clean-and-healthful-environment-180982734>

But winning a case doesn’t always secure the necessary action, especially when governments like that of the UK want to reduce our human rights.

In 2018, 25 young people won a case against the Colombian government for failing to protect the country’s rainforest. However, deforestation increased, and they had to return to court to ask it to force the government to take action.

[<https://www.dejusticia.org/en/en-fallo-historico-corte-suprema-concede-tutela-de-cambio-climatico-y-generaciones-futuras> (from 2018, in English); and

<https://www.dw.com/en/colombias-youth-fighting-for-the-amazon-in-the-courts-and-on-the-streets/a-49523373>

The Dutch government was sued for inaction on climate change, and the courts ruled emissions must be reduced by at least 25%.

<https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/urgenda-foundation-v-kingdom-of-the-netherlands/>

As a consequence, Shell moved its base to the UK, where, despite record

profits, it now says it will not increase investment in renewable energy.

All of these lawsuits are a response to environmental destruction that has already occurred. We do not have a law to stop the damage from occurring in the first place.

What we need to protect nature from very powerful corporations is the strongest law – and that is criminal law. **That is why we need to make ecocide a crime in international law.**

Criminalising Ecocide – and what Friends can do

POLLY HIGGINS, a successful barrister, realised that the Earth needed “a really good lawyer” and she decided to find out what could be done. In 2010 she proposed a law of “ecocide” to be part of the remit of the International Criminal Court as a crime against humanity.

What is ecocide?

An independent expert panel for its legal definition proposed in June 2021 that *ecocide* should mean “unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either wide-spread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.”

What is the ICC what are its powers and jurisdiction?

The International Criminal Court (ICC) investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

Which countries recognise the ICC?

123 states are parties to the ICC, but some prominent countries – including China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States – remain outside this body. All EU Member States and all EU candidates (except Ukraine and Turkey) are parties to the Rome Statute. (See <https://asp.icc-cpi.int/states-parties>)

If named individuals are called to trial at the court, any state party must arrest them if they are within its jurisdiction. This makes travel difficult for criminals.

How is this different from local and national climate protection?

Environmental offences are usually punished with fines. These are not effective at stopping damaging activity, as the large polluters can factor them into their budgeting. Making ecocide a crime means those charged are criminals in the eyes of the world: a much more powerful deterrent.

The role of faith leaders

Leaders of many world faiths and creeds have come together to support the call for a law of ecocide. (See <https://www.faithforecodelaw.earth>)

Their statement reads:

We, as people of faith

- *are deeply concerned about the ongoing destruction of our home, the Earth.*
- *demand a global response to prevent mass damage and destruction of ecosystems: Ecocide.*
- *support creating legal protection for life on Earth by including Ecocide as a crime against peace under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.*

Quakers are not yet part of this faith community.

What are we called to do?

With regard to what area meetings can do, here are some suggestions:

- We could sign the Manifesto for the Criminalisation of Ecocide (at the website www.stopECOCIDE.earth) and perhaps publicise the fact that we have done this – but that would have to be done in the name of our area meeting, not Quakers in Britain.
- We could send a Minute to Meeting for Sufferings calling on Quakers in Britain (Britain Yearly Meeting) to support the criminalisation of ecocide.
- We could discuss ways of raising awareness of what ecocide means (most people still don't know). At the most basic level that just means having conversations, but we might also want to write to local MPs, making it clear that this is an issue we care about and asking what their party is doing about it.
- As the next year will be crucial for the Stop Ecocide campaign, we could also urge local Quakers to donate to Stop Ecocide International so they can have an effective grassroots campaign.

North Scotland AM is already asking that the Stop Ecocide International manifesto be considered and signed by GM for Scotland and BYM.

Janet Saunders

“The rules of our world are laws, and they can be changed. Laws can restrict or they can enable. What matters is what they serve. Many of the laws in our world serve property – they are based on ownership. But imagine a law that has a higher moral authority... a law that puts people and planet first. Imagine a law that starts from first do no harm, that stops this dangerous game and takes us to a place of safety ...”

Polly Higgins, 2015

Jojo Mehta's obituary of Polly Higgins from The Guardian is at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/25/polly-higgins-obituary>

The book Faith Voices for Ecocide Law (ISBN 978-91-988142-0-0), recommended at the event, is available as an eBook, or can be downloaded as a PDF from

https://www.faithforecodelaw.earth/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Faith-Voices-for-Ecocide-Law_221107.pdf

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

16 September 2023

Eighty people were at the September meeting in Inverness (in person or by Zoom) including one visitor and four attenders.

Options for Scotland

Our Clerk, Michael Hutchinson, had received an encouraging reply from Paul Parker, the YM Recording Clerk, as to whether *Quaker Faith & Practice* 5.03 (which defines the constitutional standing of General Meeting for Scotland) presents an obstacle to a fundamental re-structuring of it and the four Scottish Area Meetings – it does not.

The four questions put to AMs by the Options working group [*in our Minute 2023/09/08, on page 46*] had been answered affirmatively by all; and General Meeting also agreed that the proposed changes should go ahead.

The working group proposed at GM in June as the ‘Options 3’ group (now to be called the ‘Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group’) was given authority for the following:

- *draft documents to be brought to us for the decision on having a single charity, following liaison with the six trustee bodies;*
- *wider options to be brought to General Meeting and the four Area Meetings on how best our meetings might evolve, if they wish, and be grouped together;*
- *how we could improve common ways of working together, such as for eldership and pastoral care, and for learning and growth.*

The following Friends had been nominated to serve on the Group, with one name still to come:

Pam Brunt (<i>East Scotland AM</i>)	Alex Page (<i>North Scotland AM</i>)
Peter Christy (<i>West Scotland AM</i>)	Martin Pippard (<i>East Scotland AM</i>)
Kate Gulliver (<i>West Scotland AM</i>)	Lesley Richards (<i>Worcester &</i>
Ken Jobling (<i>S.E. Scotland AM</i>)	<i>Shropshire AM</i>) – <i>as convenor</i>
	Neil Turner (<i>S.E. Scotland AM</i>)

These names were approved, but the Group was to choose its own convenor and further members may be added. It is to serve until the process is complete, or as determined by General Meeting.

Reports

The Meeting heard a substantial report from the **Parliamentary Engagement Working Group** (PEWG) which covered work described in Sarah Komashko’s report [*page 21*], collaboration with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (to whom GM approved a donation of £500), and involvement in an initiative by Billy Vaughan, BYM Public Affairs Officer, with the support of the Quaker Truth & Integrity Group, to bring together MPs who share our concern to defend democratic institutions and integrity in public life.

Busa Cochrane-Muir had attended the gathering of **Central European YM** in Gdansk, 25-28 May, with Friends from Sweden, Germany, Austria, Hun-

gary, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Portugal and Poland, and visitors from the UK and Australia; the theme was *Diversity is our Strength*. A highlight was a meeting for worship held in front of the old prison where Quakers had been incarcerated in the 1680s.

Our Local Development Worker, **Zoe Prosser**, spoke to a report of her work in the past year; priorities for her work in 2024 were to be brought to November's GM.

General Meeting also heard from its representatives to **Meeting for Sufferings**, on the July meeting [see Sesame 249] and to the **Scottish Religious Leaders' Forum**; also from the **GM Ecumenical Officer**.

Minutes from Area Meetings

North Scotland AM had sent their Minute 34/23 from their meeting on 26 August, urging that GM support the **criminalisation of ecocide** [see pages 14-15]. It was decided to postpone discussion until after Meeting for Sufferings had considered this; West Scotland AM was to be looking at the issue in October.

Minute 016/23 from West Scotland AM on 23 February was spoken to by Ann Kerr; it concerns **Race and Privilege**. This too is to be brought back to General Meeting. [*Diversity and inclusion in our meetings, as an aspect of this, is to be considered at Area Meeting – see the Agenda on page 3.*]

11 November 2023

Seventy attended GM in Perth, in person or online, including two attendees. During the opening worship, Friends held in the Light the conflict in the Middle East.

GM Budget for 2024

Katrina McCrea, our Treasurer, presented the General Meeting budget for 2024, as approved by the Trustees. It projects an income of £28,500 and expenditure of £30,500, giving a projected deficit of £2,000, so as to reduce current surplus funds.

Local Development Worker: priorities for work in 2024

To the existing three priorities, of expanding role-holder networks, supporting Quaker community building, and spreading awareness of available resources and materials, a fourth was added: supporting the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group (QiSCG) to work for change (see below).

Work with children and young people

Mary Troup, our CYP advocate, gave a report which included video accounts of this year's Shindig by two of the participants, and also told GM about the performance of *Wangari's Trees* at Holyrood [see page 23].

Appointments & Nominations

It was noted that Nigel Dower had been appointed to QiSCG by between-meetings procedure, and Lesley Richards chosen by the Group as con-

venor. GM appointed Edmund Holt also; he, like Nigel Dower is a member of North Scotland AM, and both are to serve for the duration of the Group's work. Various other appointments were made or renewed.

The Nominations Committee is looking for a Friend to represent us on the Board of the Iona Community, and for someone to serve as a trustee of Peace & Justice Scotland, in place of Mary Alice Mansell.

Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group

Neil Turner reported on the work of QiSCG since September. Its draft governing document for a new all-Scotland charity is on the GM website at:

<https://quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Draft%20QiS%20governing%20doc%2010%20Nov%202023.pdf>

Online consultations on it, open to all Friends, will be held on Thursday 30 November from 2 – 4 and 6.30 – 8.30 pm. Details will be circulated.

QiSCG's own terms of reference as agreed by GM are also on the website:

<https://quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/GMS%20QiSCG%20terms%20of%20reference%202023%2011%2011.docx>

The Group plans a number of streams of discussion, likely to include:

- *Treasurers in discussing closer working and convergence of financial management;*
- *Eldership and pastoral care;*
- *Membership, marriages, deaths – how to manage in a larger organisation;*
- *Nominations;*
- *Property management;*
- *Staffing and payroll arrangements;*
- *Who does what: Memoranda of Understanding between the new organisation and local meetings, and any regional or other intermediate bodies that are needed.*

Reports

The report of the **Parliamentary Engagement Working Group**, presented by Richard Raggett, co-convenor, included a review of peace witness. Sarah Komashko, our PEO, spoke on recent work including supporting Sharyn Lock, an Attender who mounted a five-day vigil at Holyrood to call for a ceasefire in Gaza [see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvFxo3ZPkUIY>]

Meeting for Sufferings had sent GM a minute on IPP [see *Jane Kelly's report, page 25*] because the Scots equivalent has not been abolished and might be of concern; this was forwarded to the **Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group** which also reported this time [see *page 4*].

Mary Woodward reported on the **Ecumenical Officers Forum**; and our representative on the **Interfaith Group for Domestic Abuse**, Margaret Roy, spoke on the '16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence' [see *page 39*].

Ecocide

GM felt unable at this time to sign the Ecocide Manifesto, despite sympathising with its objectives, but urged Friends to participate in the public consultation on the Bill proposed by Monica Lennon MSP [see *page 24*].

Northern Friends Peace Board: 23 September 2023

We were pleased to be joined by a number of Scottish Friends at our meeting in Edinburgh, and also by Ellis Brooks of QPSW from Friends House – notionally (like many staff members, he mainly works from home). During worship we remembered our Friend and former NFPB treasurer, Peter Kennedy, who had died after a road traffic accident, and also Brian Larkin, the former coordinator of Peace & Justice Scotland, who died in August.

Peace action in Scotland

Janet Fenton reported on recent developments in Peace & Justice Scotland, Secure Scotland and Scottish CND. Melissa Parke, the new Executive Director of ICAN, was to attend the *Festival of Survival* in Glasgow on 4 November, and the film *A Guided Tour of the Unacceptable* is available for screenings.

Reports

We heard updates from Peter Speirs, Clerk to NFPB Trustees; Deryck Hillas, our Treasurer; and Philip Austin, NFPB Co-ordinator. Our nominations committee brought the name of Till Geiger to attend the FWCC Europe & Middle East Section Peace & Service Network's weekend meeting in Brussels, 20-22 October.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness

Ellis Brooks told us about the Peace at the Heart exhibition, launched that week at the Scottish Parliament [*see page 24*]. He also gave a brief update on other aspects of QPSW work for peace, including efforts to support the 'Make Polluter's Pay' action day and website, and opposition to the 'Anti-Boycott' Bill [*see Sesame 249*].

Board meetings in 2024

We have received a paper setting out some considerations regarding how we meet during the coming year, recognising the advantages and disadvantages of meeting online and in person, as well as the possibility of local NFPB gatherings and online only events that might include a wider range of Friends. The Clerks will bring proposals to the Board in December.

DSEI

A number of NFPB members were among those Friends involved in Quaker Roots' witness at the DSEI [*Defence Sales & Equipment International*] arms fair in London in September. We heard reflections from them about creative ways to protest against the arms trade, including online events to raise awareness of issues relating to it. Friends had been encouraged to go to London for the 'no faith in war' day and to take part in a walking vigil and a peace pilgrimage from Oxford to London. An online Meeting for Worship, hosted by NFPB and Woodbrooke, enabled other Friends to be part of the events. Support given by Britain Yearly Meeting staff had been much valued. Friends were encouraged to widen activities to raise issues with local arms companies.

Future work proposals***a) Ukraine***

Till Geiger spoke to a paper outlining proposals for a publication to draw on Friends' different views and experiences in relation to the war in Ukraine. We strongly support the initiative and noted that in the interests of a more balanced membership it would be good to have additional women on the working group. We look forward to hearing about the progress of this work at future meetings.

b) Peace Testimony

Philip Austin reminded us of concerns and responses shared at our previous meeting. Friends were needed to work with Philip and trustees in developing ideas for the work and those interested were asked to contact Philip in the first instance.

Members' forum

The activities reported included vigils in Huddersfield, Manchester and in Derbyshire – Fritchley Meeting also holds vigils in Alfreton and Belper, nearby; an exhibition in Bainbridge Meeting House (Wensleydale & Swaledale AM) the tour of Michael Mears's play *The Mistake* (performed at the Edinburgh Festival, 2022) and a lecture on preventing violence against women. Manchester Friends were preparing action in response to the forthcoming Conservative Party Conference in the city. Our attention was drawn to a book *Friendless Childhoods Explain War*; its author, Bob Johnson, is a Quaker who used to work with violent prisoners at HMP Parkhurst. (See <https://www.watersidepress.co.uk/books/friendless-childhoods-explain-war-bobjohnson/>)

The Board's next meeting will be in Bolton on 2 December.

Alan Frith

The 2023 Geoffrey & Elisabeth Carnall Award was to Wi'am, the Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre, based in Bethlehem. It is hoped to have a report on the event in September to mark the presentation ('From Palestine to Scotland: Resolving Community Conflict') in the January issue.

Warm Space at Edinburgh Meeting House

The Warm Space programme will be running once again each Thursday afternoon from 2 – 4 pm. at 7 Victoria Terrace throughout January and February. Tea, coffee, biscuits and chat will be on offer with additional activities such as art and crafts on some afternoons.

Volunteers are sought to help out and to spread the word. Fliers will be available from the end of November for distribution. Please contact Lynne Barty or Kate Arnot for further details.

At Holyrood: Parliamentary Engagement

Sarah Komashko *writes:*

Firstly, I'd like to introduce myself: as mentioned in *Sesame 248*, I started in July as the new Parliamentary Engagement Officer (PEO), carrying on from the previous PEO Andrew Tomlinson. My job is to build relationships with politicians, civil servants and other civil society groups in Scotland to try and influence policy and legislation in line with Quaker values and priorities. I also support Quakers to engage directly with the Scottish political process. Having attended General Meeting on 11 November, I hope to meet even more Scottish Friends soon.



Recently, work has focused on, among other things, the event and exhibition we put on at the Scottish Parliament in September. Peace education is already indirectly in the Scottish curriculum, being part of the *Sustainable Development Goals* and falling under 'Learning for Sustainability'. However, provision can be patchy, and a lot depends on the willingness of each local authority to encourage teachers to incorporate it into their lessons. We worked with Michelle Thomson MSP on a motion supporting increased funding and prominence for peace education across Scotland, which we encouraged MSPs to sign. 21 MSPs from SNP, Labour, and the Greens did so, including seven from South-East Scotland [*see overleaf*].

We hoped with the event, exhibition, and motion, to raise the profile of peace education and have it more firmly embedded in all Scottish schools. One outcome we are contacting MSPs about is to see whether they could connect Scottish Mediation with the right person in the local authority to explore the roll-out of peer mediation. If you would like to write to your MSPs about this (which could also include a 'thank you' for signing the motion, if they're one of the MSPs listed on page 22), the following form of words could be used:

Peer mediation as one aspect of peace education can lead to increased empathy, understanding and better relationships across school communities and a significant decrease in conflict, leaving more time for teaching and learning. One step you could help us with is connecting Scottish Mediation with the right person in the local authority to explore the roll-out of peer mediation. This could replicate

(Continued on page 23)

Motion S6M-10229

Michelle Thomson Scottish National Party Falkirk East

Members' Business Motion Lodged: 04/09/2023 Achieved Cross-party Support for Members' Business

Peace at the Heart of Scottish Schools

That the Parliament recognises the work of Quakers in Britain and Quakers in Scotland in their initiative, Peace at the Heart of Scottish Schools; understands that this educational approach aims to reflect the benefits of peace education among young learners across Scotland, through cultivating better relationships, engagement in learning, increasing wellbeing and confidence, and developing as ethical global citizens; believes that peace education brings strong links to the Curriculum for Excellence at both a cross-curricular level and by meeting the four capacities, with ethics and peace education embedded throughout; considers that Peace at the Heart of Scottish Schools has wider legislative connections, including through the well-being indicators outlined in the Scottish Government's getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach, and reaching the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 to ensure that citizens worldwide develop knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development by 2030, including through the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence; notes what it sees as the mental health benefits of the creative arts and what it considers to be the importance of promoting and supporting good mental health in children across Scotland, including those in the Falkirk East constituency; recognises what it sees as the value of training young people as peer mediators as part of a whole-school approach to peace-building in every Scottish school; believes that Global Citizenship Education is essential, now more than ever, to help children and young people prepare for 21st century challenges; understands that support for schools to offer peer mediation, global citizenship education and mental health support, including by organisations such as Scottish Mediation, the International Development Education Association of Scotland (IDEAS) and the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), varies in availability due to different levels of funding and resources between local authorities; acknowledges what it sees as the potential positive impact of peace education on the challenges of disruptive behaviour in classrooms, and notes what it considers to be the importance of supporting a range of peace education initiatives for Scottish schools, through recognition and funding, to enable young learners across Scotland to become ethical global citizens now and in their future.

Supported by:

Annabelle Ewing, **David Torrance**, **Colin Beattie**, Stuart McMillan, Kevin Stewart, John Mason, Ivan McKee, **Evelyn Tweed**, Clare Adamson, **Ben Macpherson** [SNP]; Bill Kidd, Paul Sweeney, Mercedes Villalba, Rhoda Grant, Katy Clark, Pam Duncan-Glancy, Michael Marra, **Foyso Choudhury** [Labour]; Maggie Chapman, **Mark Ruskell**, Ross Greer [Green].

[Names in **bold type** are MSPs representing constituencies or regions in South East Scotland. Local MSPs who signed Paul McLennan's previous motion on Peace at the Heart (Motion S6M-04587 in June 2022) are Miles Briggs and Megan Gallacher [Conservative]; Alex Cole-Hamilton [Liberal Democrat]; Daniel Johnson, Monica Lennon and Martin Whitfield [Labour].]

(Continued from page 21)

the enormous success of Young Talk in Fife schools. Every local authority is slightly differently set up, so your advice on the right person to speak to, and an introduction if possible, would be really helpful.

MSPs' contact details can be found at <https://www.parliament.scot/msps> by entering your postcode. Please let me know (at SarahK@quaker.org.uk) of any responses.

Wangari's Trees

On 21 September, we held an event at parliament for International Peace Day. A group of P6 pupils from Oakgrove Primary School in Glasgow performed a musical they had written themselves about Wangari Maathai. She founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya and led mass re-forestation efforts despite political intimidation, and was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Oakgrove pupils were introduced to Wangari's story last year by Mary Troup of Glasgow Meeting, who was volunteering at the school. Using Mary's musical skills and working with their teacher, the P5 class (as they were at the time) wrote, composed, and choreographed their own performance to share Wangari's inspirational story. Three students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland also worked with the pupils on the musical composition and accompanied them for the parliamentary performance.



The children and their teacher after the performance, with Mary Troup (seated), the Conservatoire students, and MSPs Michelle Thomson, Claire Baker, Liam Kerr and Foysol Choudhury. (There are more pictures at <https://twitter.com/OakgrovePri/status/1704856166122066204/>.)

The children were very excited to perform at Parliament – for some it was their first visit to Edinburgh! Ten MSPs attended the performance and were captivated by the pupils' engaging and enthusiastic presentation. While this may not sound like many, we are told it is a very good turnout for an event; many more sent their apologies and expressions of support.

Ellis Brooks and Izzy Cartwright from the Quaker Peace & Social Witness peace education team at Quakers in Britain also attended the performance, along with contacts from the peace education world and the EIS teaching union. We had a productive networking meeting afterwards that strengthened links between all participants and generated ideas for promoting peace and global citizenship education in Scottish schools.

Peace Education exhibition

The following week, 26-28 September, our peace education exhibition was set up right at the entrance to the Debating Chamber: a prime location giving us a great opportunity to engage with passing MSPs. The exhibition was designed by Ellis and Izzy and included display panels, videos from the *Wangari's Trees* performance, and interviews with peer mediators.

Many MSPs made a point of stopping by the exhibition, especially those who had been invited by their constituents. This demonstrated the power of a simple email to your MSP! We were able to speak further with MSPs from all parties about the benefits of peace education and peer mediation. The videos and interviews let them see firsthand how activities like peer mediation can help young people learn to understand themselves and others, and manage disagreement constructively.



Sarah Komashko standing in front of the exhibition with Richard Raggett and Carolyn Burch, co-convenors of the GM Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG).

Public Consultation: STOP ECOCIDE

On 7 November, Monica Lennon MSP announced her intention to bring a Member's Bill to criminalise ecocide in Scots law, and the following day a consultation was launched which will be open until 9 February 2024. See:

[https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/consultation-document-final-version--\(1\).pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/consultation-document-final-version--(1).pdf)

The online survey is at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EcocidePrevention/>.

Meeting for Sufferings, October 2023

Papers for the meeting are at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2023-10-calling-letter-agenda-papers>

and the minutes can be read at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2023-10-follow-up-letter-minutes>

This was the first Meeting for Sufferings I had attended in person, having only taken part in the Zoom version before. For me it was a very much richer experience. It was also a powerful and profound one. I hope those online also felt involved.

The meaning of membership was considered in light of the difficulty of finding enough people to serve on central committees. We should trust our nominations process to bring forward the right Friends for service not necessarily being dependent on membership in its current form.

We had a vibrant report from Welsh Quakers *Crynwyr Cymru*. You should read the full report on how they are living their faith. [*Pages 12-17 of the papers for the meeting.*]

We heard from the group reviewing Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, who presented a way forward for MfS to become part of a 'Continuing Yearly Meeting'. Detailed proposals will be brought to YM 2024.

There was a report from the Sustainability Monitoring Group, who told us how we are meeting our commitments made at Canterbury in 2011 to become a low carbon sustainable community, and we asked Quaker Peace & Social Witness to remain alive to developments. We also gave our support to area meetings and local friends on their work on ecocide law. We heard from Friends with concerns for the situation in Sudan; Friends who are striving to end Modern Slavery; and Friends who wish to end 'imprisonment for public protection' (IPP). [*Despite repeal of the legislation which provided for it, there were 2,892 IPP prisoners in England & Wales as of 31/12/2022; see <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06086/>. The Scottish equivalent, an Order for Lifelong Restriction, can still be imposed.*]

We heard an update on the presentation of the Yearly Meeting accounts for 2022. These will be presented to Friends at an online meeting open to all on **29 November at 7pm**. Trustees have also been working alongside Friends for a while on drafting a memorandum of understanding between the constituent charities making up our yearly meeting. This has now come to fruition and helps to clarify existing relationships and our responsibilities to each other. Following a final check, Meeting for Sufferings recommend all area meetings, general meetings and BYM trustees adopt it.

Quaker business is conducted in an atmosphere of worship and listening so even when differences of opinion seem to be insoluble, no one is left feeling unheard.

Jane Kelly

Finland Yearly Meeting Autumn Gathering AitO Centre near Tampere, 6-8 October 2023

During my visit to Finland Yearly Meeting's Spring Gathering in March [see Sesame 247], I was invited to attend Autumn Gathering in October. With the help of grants from the Pollard & Dickson Trust, the Francis Camfield Trust, and West Scotland AM, for which I am extremely grateful, I was able both to attend the Gathering and spend time with individual Friends in various parts of Finland.

Helsinki's worship group meets every Sunday. Sakari Oksanen had put me in touch with four of its members who were happy to meet and spend time with me during my stay in the city. Synnöve, Susanne, and Eivor are all Finns whose mother tongue is Swedish: I had deep Quaker conversations with them as they shared with me some of their favourite places in Helsinki. Gwyndaf, who grew up Quaker in West Virginia but now lives and works in Finland, met me and piloted me to Meeting, after which we shared a wide-ranging Quaker conversation over lunch.



Looking towards Suomenlinna and other islands from Helsinki

Meeting on Sunday was small. Synnöve, is present most Sundays, and is joined by a (usually) different small group each week. It being World Quaker Day, I was moved to minister about my joy in being able to join in wor-

ship with Friends in America, Canada, and Europe, as well as around the UK, during my twenty years as a Quaker. Afterwards, over coffee and cake, there was more wide-ranging conversation.

I then went to visit my friend Ville-Pekka and his family. I first met V-P at FYM 2019; he represented FYM at Britain Yearly Meeting that year. He is an isolated Friend whose work and family commitments mostly prevent him from attending the weekly Tampere worship group. It was a joy to share time with him and his family, in his idyllic lakeside sauna house.

At the Gathering at AitO, just outside Tampere, I was warmly embraced by my adoptive Finnish Quaker family. I was honoured to be asked to serve as Elder for the Saturday's business meeting – even though I could only do it in English. The day's business was, as usual, conducted mostly in Finnish. Leena sat beside me and made sure I understood what was going on. My Finnish is improving, but is as yet nowhere near the level required to play a full part in Quaker business meetings ...

It was good to see the progress of various items of business I'd seen begin in previous YMs. The Finnish Quaker archive project is completing; the library project continues – how can its books be made available to Friends now that they do not own a flat in Helsinki? One Friend offered to scan all the hard copies of Quaker News (QN), going back decades, and add them to the Quaker archive.

The current QN editor wished to lay down the office. She gave feedback from a questionnaire sent out to gather Friends' levels of interest in continuing or laying down the publication, and we held a threshing meeting. The need was clearly felt for some version of QN to exist, but the how and the who were not so clear...

An *ad hoc* group had formed around the need to assist with the funerals of several deceased Friends. Copies of memorial minutes for these Friends were brought and read aloud, and will be added to the Quaker website. The group had produced a leaflet to assist ministers of Finnish churches (Orthodox and Lutheran) and funeral directors if they were asked to arrange a Quaker funeral, together with leaflets for the three Finnish worship groups offering guidance about practicalities.

The funerals group asked YM to consider the formation of a Funerals committee or a Care of FYM committee. It would ideally involve representatives from all three worship groups and “share matters concerned with caring in FYM, which would include support for arranging funerals where necessary”. It was hoped that this committee would also foster more direct contact between the three groups (Helsinki, Tampere, and Northern).

The production of a Finnish translation of Thomas Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion* was proposed. It was felt it would be good to have this not simply for Friends, but because there is very little Quaker literature in Finnish. The executive committee (ExCom), which deals with business between

Gatherings, was asked to investigate cost: if small, ExCom could proceed; if substantial, a special Zoom meeting of all the YM would be held.

At the start of the weekend, we had been invited to share our thoughts on *Life is about listening and speaking*. Lari had invited us to think over the weekend *What hinders me from listening to others?*, and in the Saturday evening post-sauna epilogue one Friend offered an answer into the silence. This led us into a deep and rich silence around the wood fire, in which we gave our deeply personal responses. The silence continued to deepen, and the warmth and love it contained wrapped around us all, making us reluctant either to break it or leave – a truly gathered meeting that is a wonderful memory for all of us.

On the Sunday morning our Meeting for Worship was followed by a talk from Kati, a Lutheran minister, whose official title is Pastor of Social Responsibility. Her work involves working multiculturally, ecumenically, and with the rainbow [LGBTQ+] community. Ten Tampere congregations – Methodist, Orthodox, Catholic, Free Church, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Charismatic, Adventists, the Salvation Army and the Silent Movement – work actively together, saying *there is more unites us than divides us*. Most agreed to proposed guidelines “respecting diversity”, but some church members left their congregations because they couldn’t cope with the idea of rainbow people. Kati commented *We have to be sensitive to what it is possible to say* and added that they continue to work together even though it’s not always possible to say “We”.

In the final feedback session there were many appreciative references to our Saturday night silence by the fire. One Friend, who was fairly new to Quakers, summed it up:

*The silence helps you hear and understand the words
And when you have finished speaking, the silence wraps around the words
Like a blanket
and keeps them safe.*

My dear friend Jane in Muhos had not been able to host me on this trip, so we stayed in Tampere on the Sunday night, caught up on news, and talked of Finnish Friends and about the FWCC/World Gathering next year. Next morning we met Lari, who is currently an executive committee member, to talk over the Gathering and other matters of concern for Finnish Friends. I then spent a wonderfully enriching time with Lari before preparing to fly back to Scotland the next day...

I have been invited to attend FYM next May: I really hope to find a way to do this, as my connection with Finnish Friends is a deep and abiding joy in my life.

Mary Woodward

FYM's English-language website is <https://www.kveekarit.org/en/homepage/> but it has not been updated recently.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

*Radcliffe Conference Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry
11 and 13-15 October 2023*

The first part of our committee meeting, by Zoom on the Wednesday evening, included noting which draft texts required consideration at the weekend, and a report by Rosie Carnall, co-clerk, on her meeting with Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. Our work will not be part of the business at YM 2024, but we will offer Friends opportunities to engage with it.

Most of us met in Coventry; three joined us on Zoom. One of our number was prevented by ill health, and one had asked for a temporary release; our workload is increasing, and many of us are struggling. We are hoping that YM Nominations Committee will find other people to join us.

Those present in person were fascinated to see a large grey 'owl' in the middle of our square of tables: part of new IT being trialled by Friends House in blended meetings. A camera on the top rotated to point at whoever was speaking, which was grand much of the time, but could expose inadvertent rustling or shuffling during periods of silence! The quality of the link was impressive and Friends joining us remotely were very happy with the way it made them feel completely part of the meeting.

On the Friday evening we discussed sharing text with Friends in future. Ben Robinson of Quaker Communications was with us for the first half of the weekend, and made valuable contributions. Why would we want to share more text? What would we hope to learn? Might it be helpful to share text with specific groups who could offer constructive criticism? What does the publications department require from us, and when?

On Saturday we considered our Project Timeline, noting how it is changing as our work proceeds. Some groups need more time than projected; some can't complete their tasks until others have finished *their* work (e.g. the current review of YM structures, and the consideration of Membership).

Work on the publication process will start soon. How do we tackle 'gaps and overlaps' (which sounds like a fun topic group name!)? It must be remembered that 'complete' is not the same as 'finished'. What *can't* we do ourselves? Professional copy-editing could be valuable and time-saving.

Ben Robinson said it was very helpful for him to be in our sessions and get a clearer idea of how we work and what we produce. He pointed out that writers' and readers' perspectives are different, and both are valuable. We need to be very clear about stating the primary source for the extracts we include – huge amounts of time can be spent trying to trace the copyright owner. Music, audio, and video recordings all have different, and generally more complicated, copyrights.

We also need to be clear about which formats we want to use. Can we accept that the quality of some forms of media (e.g. video) may be less than

perfect – and that imperfection makes its content inaccessible to some? Friends House have improved recording facilities and it would be possible for volunteers to make audio recordings – but a trained voice actor would be preferable for a final recording. Would we want multiple readers for the extracts? What about audio description for video material?

We propose to offer a complete draft text to YM Gathering in 2027 – this would be an excellent test of all these considerations. It could be helpful to have some parts of our text produced in various formats before this date.

We received a set of Advices & Queries from the Diversity and Inclusion group and advice for drafters of text from our Accessibility group. Our work to date does not always meet these guidelines. It might help to have some text copy-edited by Ben and his team to get their feedback. We are continually mindful of the need to be simple and clear in our writing without losing the richness of our subject matter.

We discussed reports from the groups set up to look at our use of anthology material and consider our first steps towards finding a structure for the completed Book. Do we need to add explanations and/or context for extracts from early Quaker writing? Where can we find extracts about subjects that have arisen since the publication of *Quaker Faith & Practice*? Our diversity of experience is all valid: it melds into a unity, not a uniformity. We can't include everything, but our core text needs both 'voice of the book' and anthology extracts.

There were a number of diagrams and pictures accompanying the report from the Structure group. Do we want to arrange our material alphabetically? Alphabetically within sections, *e.g.* 'Faith', 'Practice'? Do we follow divergent then convergent thinking, starting from unity and moving through diversity to a concluding unity? Do we use Sinek's Golden Circle: "Why? What? How?" Is the structure of the book a tree, a forest, a spiral, a solar system? We want to be *creative* and *bold*... Can we combine some of these structures? We were reminded that, while making material as accessible as possible, it is impossible to make everything accessible to all – *e.g.* British Sign Language is inaccessible to someone with visual impairment.

The Spiritual Experience and Theology Group reported on its progress and asked us whether Theology needed to be a separate topic. Rhiannon Grant was asked for a paper on 'what a theology topic might contain' for our next meeting. The group also wanted clarity on how we refer to ourselves: do we write about *Quakerism*, *Quaker faith*, *the Quaker Way*? There is no 'official line', but we were reminded that we follow "not a notion, but a way".

After lunch we looked at the drafts on Service, Witness, and Testimony. It was felt there was still work to be done on the first two. Testimony did not make specific mention of particular testimonies – would they be elsewhere in the Book? Our testimonies change over time – there is not a fixed list. Again, we are aware of overlap between topics, especially in the use of extracts – at present one extract may appear in several topic drafts.

The Funerals group, of which I am a member, will meet later this month to consider texts we have produced individually. We wanted the committee to be aware we are writing about more than 'just' funerals as such. Other topics also overlap – it was felt there needs to be a conversation between the Funerals, Personal Journeys, Diversity and Inclusion, Spiritual Experience and Close Relationships topic groups, to avoid duplication.

The Faithful Lives group brought another question – does this topic need to be included separately? It worked well in earlier two-volume Books of Discipline, but fits less well into one. Some felt singling out particular Friends as examples implies some people are 'better' than others. Should there be a place for complete *Testimonies to the Grace of God in the Life of ...?* These give a more rounded picture. It was agreed to lay down the Faithful Lives group, keeping the material collected for possible use elsewhere.

The Radcliffe Centre's timetable had imposed changes on our usual weekend programme, but we were able to take time on Saturday afternoon to share the examples we had been invited to bring as possible extracts for the Close Relationships topic. In small groups we talked about these and the sub-headings we might want to see in the topic.

Our Saturday evening session was something completely different. I had not known of our Friend Geoffrey Carnall's love of light verse. His daughter Rosie had brought a short play Geoffrey had written many years ago, describing Art Ender's first visit to Meeting and his search for enlightenment as to the nature of Quakers. Rosie had asked me if I'd read God's part, which I gladly did (though I was sad not to be able to follow the stage direction that I be seated on top of a stepladder and veiled until it was my turn to speak...). It was a fitting end to a strenuous day.

On Sunday we considered our co-clerks' proposed report to Meeting for Sufferings in December: I commend it to you (when it becomes public) as a superb summary of what we've achieved so far, our immediate next steps, and our longer-term timetable. The Close Relationships group was appointed, and additional members found to act temporarily for those of us who have had to step aside for a while. Our own Nominations group had been unable to find names to bring forward as Elder or new member of the Communicating with Friends group. Some of our members are coming to the end of the three years for which they were appointed. At our next meeting we will need to set up topic groups to work on Yearly Meeting Structures and Resources & Stewardship. Reviewing how the work on several topics fits together may also result in changes to our groups.

Before our closing worship, we approved our key messages:

We are glad to be on track to share a first complete draft of the new book for Yearly Meeting 2027, with a finished draft for Yearly Meeting to agree for publication in 2030.

We have produced some Diversity & Inclusion A&Q for use in drafting content.

We are exploring further ways of sharing draft content with Friends more widely. We have started working with Britain Yearly Meeting Content and Publications Team to think through the process for producing content for publication in multiple formats.

We welcome the new OWL audio and visual technology provided by BYM that has enabled us to have a more effective and inclusive blended meeting.

This report may not read with the zing of some of my previous ones – I, like others on your committee, am finding it hard to balance and find energy for ‘personal’ and ‘Quaker’ in my life. More than ever, we can’t do this work without your prayerful support.

Mary Woodward

International Day of Action, 26 November 2023

The second Meeting of States Parties (2MSP) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) takes place at the UN in New York from 27 November – 1 December.

There will be civil society participation, including a number of campaigners from the UK. Against a grim background of unbridled and destructive violence the TPNW is strengthening and growing in credibility. There are now 93 signatories, 69 states parties and four accessed countries; and whenever it is on the agenda of the UN General Assembly it has the support of around 130 states. 2MSP will continue the patient and constructive work begun at 1MSP in Vienna last year and civil society will play its part.

As governments, experts and campaigners get ready for a week of building on the treaty banning nuclear weapons, there will be an International Day of Action on Sunday 26 November to call for an end to nuclear weapons and bring attention to the TPNW. All around the world, people will be taking action to show the delegations in New York that we expect them to be bold, courageous and use the TPNW to dismantle nuclear deterrence, and make sure the rest of the world is paying attention to this crucial opportunity.

We want to co-ordinate UK-wide events and share news, pictures and videos on social media and the website nuclearban.scot. We expect there will be the usual mix of imaginative stunts, gatherings and small photo-ops, as for the day the TPNW entered into force.

The process for sharing is simple. Just send your images to [ICANdayofaction@gmail](mailto:ICANdayofaction@gmail.com) on the day. It would also be helpful if you can let me know beforehand if you are planning an event.

David Mackenzie
Trident Ploughshares

Trident Ploughshares, c/o Peace & Justice, 58 Ratcliffe Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 1ST

A Good Death

Recent articles in *The Friend* about death, bereavement and assisted dying have prompted me to write about my experience of the death of my wife, Pat, which happened in June 2020, during the first COVID lockdown.

Apart from surgery to replace both hip joints, Pat had enjoyed good health and had remained very active, enjoying walking and gardening in the large village garden which had been ours since 1997. But not long after her 80th birthday, near the end of 2019, Pat started experiencing balance problems. Visits to a physiotherapist and medication brought no cure. With symptoms becoming more severe, we managed to get a doctor's appointment just after the country went into full lockdown in March 2020. Our GP raised the possibility that the small tumour which had been removed from her breast two years earlier had metastasised and said he would get her into hospital for a scan. The NHS was not functioning well just then and by the time a hospital appointment was available at the end of the month, Pat was quite ill, confined to bed and had to be taken to hospital by ambulance. I received a phone call on 1 April to say that the scan had revealed a cluster of six tumours in Pat's cerebellum.

Steroids can work short-term miracles. Two days later, I was able to fetch Pat home. April 2020, was a beautiful month, weather-wise. Pat was not able to walk far but I borrowed a wheelchair from a neighbour and wheeled her out into our lovely garden most days. Half way through the month we were both in the garden when the breast cancer consultant, who was working from home in Fife because of the lockdown, phoned to talk us through the options. It was not possible to target the tumours with radiotherapy because of where they were situated but there was the option of chemotherapy and more general radiotherapy. We discussed with her what the chance of prolonging life would be and the probable side-effects of the treatment. Pat's response was immediate and certain: "No, thank you. I'd rather not be messed about any further." I could only support her. We had a lovely few weeks together as the steroid dose was steadily reduced and Pat's mobility decreased. We got out all the photos from our life together and before we met and sorted and labelled them. By the end of the month, Pat could no longer manage the stairs. I organised a hospital bed to be installed on the ground floor with a commode nearby. Community and palliative care nurses started paying daily visits. They were superb. In between, I would not have been able to manage Pat's care on my own. Without further support, she would have needed to be in a hospice, where, because of the lockdown, I would not have been able to visit. Fortunately, Mike and Jane, my younger son and his wife, were able to move in and support me. Jane had just retired from HMRC and Mike, who was also a tax inspector, was working from home so could work as easily from Scotland.

Throughout this, Pat was amazing. She knew she was dying, accepted all the implications of that and just got on with it. For a period, towards the end of May, she slipped in and out of consciousness. I recall at one point she asked me, "Phil, what do you think actually happens when you die?" I knew both of us were agnostic about life after death. "My darling, I've not been there so I can't say. I imagine you go to sleep and just don't wake up again." "Yes, that's what I thought."

A week or so before she died, Pat, largely unconscious by now, became restless. The nurse who came that day thought this was probably an indication that she was in pain and fitted her with a syringe driver which automatically injected her with morphine. Her bowels had not been operating for a while but on one of those last days they suddenly opened and the three of us had to change her nightdress and all the bedding. As we were lifting her helpless body, she said, "Sack of potatoes" – the last words I heard her say. She kept her sense of humour to the end. She died on 5 June and is buried in Binning Wood, a beautiful beech wood burial site about five miles from our East Lothian home.

A week or two after the funeral I decided to clear Pat's desk in the upstairs room we had shared as an office and found a piece of recycled scrap paper. Pat had written on the plain side in pencil:

*Don't mourn for me now I am gone
But remember me and I shall live on
Through you
And be content
To rest quietly here to the end of time
A part of this world that gave me so much*

She must have written this after she came back from hospital and while she was still able to get about the house unaided. It is testimony to her clarity of mind and acceptance of her death. She had been immersed in Quakerism during the last forty years of her life and I am sure that the spiritual calm and groundedness this gave her enabled her to see her death as a natural closure and continuation of her life. She had a good death. In many ways she is with me still but this doesn't prevent me aching, over three years later, for her physical presence. We became best friends in 1960, when we were at university together, and were married for nearly 58 years.

Phil Lucas

Could good words reduce hearers to a righteous life, instead of saying "Walk in the Spirit", Paul would have said to the Galatians, "Hearken to your Minister:" he would have had no need to have recommended unto them an inward guide. Paul's experience evidenced unto him that it was not by hearing of words, but through his obedience to the law of the Spirit, that he came to mortify the deeds of his body, and lead a righteous life: and what he found to be effectual in himself, that he recommended to the churches.

From *The Grounds of a Holy Life* by **Hugh Turford** (d. 1713)

A Quaker Giant of the 20th Century

Rufus Jones and the Presence of God, by **Helen Holt**, an Attender at Kelso, is published in the 'Quaker Quicks' series this week (ISBN 978-1-80341-342-6). Here she sets out why Rufus M. Jones was, and remains, an influential figure.

HOW ARE human beings related to God? Can experience, science or philosophy shed any light on the matter? What are the implications of such a relationship, if it exists? These are the questions that the American Quaker Rufus Jones wrestled with in the first half of the 20th century. He concluded that humans and God were in fact intimately related, and discussed his ideas in terms of the Inner Light and mysticism. The Inner Light was a way of expressing his belief that God is present within us, as part of our very nature. Mysticism was a way of exploring his conviction that all of us can know this presence.

Born in 1863, Jones has been described as a Quaker giant of the 20th century, in large part because he is widely credited with revitalizing Quakerism by casting it as a mystical religion that was consistent with the latest discoveries in psychology. He sought to share his vision through numerous books, and was much in demand as a speaker both in his native America and further afield. His mission to popularize mysticism was made that much more interesting, however, because he was active at a particularly tumultuous time in the history of Quakerism, when Quakers were attempting to come to terms with the advances in science and biblical criticism that were challenging old formulations of faith. Thus, while some wholeheartedly embraced Jones' ideas, relieved that he had made faith and their experience of God intellectually credible, others were dismayed or even outraged, accusing him of taking Christ out of Quakerism and making the soul divine.

Controversies aside, as a person Jones was undoubtedly charismatic and is frequently described in glowing terms. The English Quaker John Hoyland, for example, enthused that "To a whole generation of us he was a prophet and a saint and a shining light. We loved him and we venerated him. He was the leader of our lives." The American pastor and radio broadcaster Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote that he was "natural, genuine, direct, human ... He possessed the spiritual vitality he pled for, and he shared it." And his biographer David Hinshaw proclaimed that there was "something Olympian about him", in that those who knew him felt instinctively that his faith would enable him to meet any crisis in life.

Today, we might describe Jones as 'authentic' or 'integrated': his spiritual convictions matched his actions, and he saw no contradiction between his religious beliefs and the latest developments in philosophy and science. We might also describe him as someone who was spiritually creative, in that he developed novel ways of looking at important spiritual concepts and inspired others with his spiritual vision and vitality. Although the

science and philosophy of the early 20th century are different in many ways from today's, there is, I think, still a lot we can learn from Jones, both about his conviction that faith should take the latest knowledge on board and about the everyday spiritual practices that made him the man he was. Fortunately, there is an abundance of material to draw on to gain some insight into Jones' life and thought. He wrote hundreds of editorials for Quaker journals and over 50 books – all for the general public rather than academics. The books include historical studies of mysticism, advice about the spiritual life, and children's stories based on the Bible. Especially interesting are half a dozen autobiographical works, some of which give charming accounts of his childhood in rural Maine. Reminiscent of Huckleberry Finn for their tales of adventures and misadventures, they are shot through with spiritual reflections and give us an insight into the convictions and experiences that shaped Jones' future life and beliefs. There is also a fascinating collection of archived letters both to and from Jones at Haverford College, where he taught for most of his career. The personal content of these letters, expressed in cramped or flamboyant cursive script, provides a glimpse of some of the emotions that were accompanying theological upheavals. Some of them are reproduced in the book.

Rufus Jones and the Presence of God looks first at the life of Rufus Jones, tracing his journey from farm-boy to influential Quaker leader and reformer. It then explores how he came to hold the views that he did, showing how he sought to integrate insights from people as varied as his prophetic and saintly Aunt Peace, the 2nd-century theologian Clement of Alexandria, and the so-called father of modern psychology William James. With this foundation in place, the book explores why Jones believed what he did, assesses whether his arguments are convincing, and explains why his ideas about the relationship between God and humans delighted some and worried others. Finally, it identifies some of the spiritual practices that might have contributed to Jones' spiritual maturity and to his ability, in the phrase associated with the 17th century Brother Lawrence, to practise the presence of God.

"This is the book on Rufus Jones we've needed for a long time. Helen Holt has given us a beautifully written, compact yet impressively comprehensive introduction to one of the most influential Quakers of the twentieth century. Jones' thinking is clearly articulated, and Holt does not shy away from critiquing Jones when he is less than clear or cogent. Holt also offers what Jones neglected to provide: a practical guide to the mystical path he extolled in his life and work. Highly recommended to anyone seeking to better understand the roots of the modern Quaker way."

Mark Russ, Quaker theologian, blogger and author of *Quaker Shaped Christianity*

[Helen Holt's next 'Quaker Quick' is to be on Quakers and Chocolate.]

Woodbrooke Event: ‘Naming the Mystery’

RHIANNON GRANT, whom I remember as an infant (her parents, Jim and Stephanie, were then the wardens of Watford Meeting House), is a Woodbrooke Tutor, author of *British Quakers and Religious Language* (2018) and other books, and serves on the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. On 18 November, she led an event at Edinburgh Meeting House which was advertised:

In meeting for worship, we come together in expectant waiting and to listen – but what are we waiting for? And what are we listening to? During this day together we will play with ways to name this mystery, sometimes known as God, Spirit, Love, or Light.

Participants were mainly from Central Edinburgh, but it was good to be joined by others from Polmont, East Lothian, Perth and Dundee.

Our first task was to list the names used for the Who or What that is central to Meeting for Worship, and then to sort them into categories by whether we ourselves use each one *Always*, *Sometimes*, or *Never*. We did this in two groups and found that there was wide variation in how each name was regarded.

In the second session, the list of names used “fairly regularly” was supplemented by quotations from Quaker sources (see below) which we considered. These drew on widely varied experience – our late Friend Jim Pym was cited, using words from Eastern religions.

The third session was an attempt to find new metaphors drawn from daily life for the experience of worship – mine was soup-making.

To follow up, Rhiannon gave us several suggestions for further reading, including her own *Telling the Truth about God* – a ‘Quaker Quick’. This will soon be in the AM Library, when I have read it myself.

Rachel Frith

Things Quakers say

We have many names for the Divine – Spirit, God, Heavenly Father, Universe, Papa, Mother, Light – and we know that without it this work would not have been possible.

The Editors of *Spirit Rising: Young Quaker Voices* (by an international group of Young Friends), in their Introduction (2010)

What do you call that which we are seeking to worship?

The ground of our being, the ultimate reality, the meaning, the father, the mother, the everlasting arms, the spirit, God ...

Quality and Depth of Worship and Ministry, a pamphlet issued by the Committee on Eldership & Oversight, 2011

1. There is something more in reality than whatever we can perceive with our senses and measure or hold in our minds.
2. This “something more” is not merely the object of belief; it is experienced by the individual as a presence – and an absence. Some of us experience it as an encounter with something personal. It is not simply an individual experience since we can also meet it as a group.
3. We believe that all people have the potential for this experience.
4. This is the experience which has been given names such as “God”, “The Light”, “The Tao”, “The Inward Christ”, “The Spirit”, and “that of God in everyone”. It is not the naming which is important, but the experience.

John Lampen, *Finding the Words: Quaker Experience and Language*, a pamphlet published by the Hope Project, 2007

This is the truth which we know and try to live ... that every person is capable of response to the divine Spirit; that this Spirit, or Light, or God reaches out to each one directly and freely; that if we follow the leadings of this Spirit faithfully we are led out of sin into unity with the divine will; that this unity leads us into love of and care for all humankind, who are our kin; that what the Spirit shows us is living truth which cannot be fettered by words.

Janet Scott, *What Canst Thou Say?* (Swarthmore Lecture 1980); also in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 27.26

Christians call [the Pure Principle] “The Mind that was in Christ Jesus”, or “The Cosmic Christ”. In Buddhism, it is the “Unborn Buddha Mind” or our “Original Face”. In Hinduism it is the *Atman*, in the sense of the Self that is One with God. In China, it was known as the *Tao*, while the other monotheistic religions speak of “the Soul” or “the Spirit” or use phrases similar to the Quaker term “That of God”.

Jim Pym, *The Pure Principle: Quakers and Other Faith Traditions* (2000)

[‘God’ is] shorthand for that which is eternal: Being, Essence, Is-ness. Some would call this Light, or Love, or Christ.

Peter Parr, *Answering that of God*, a pamphlet from the Kindlers, 2012

Had I really stood up in front of all those people and testified? Well, hardly testified, but yes, I had been driven by some inner prompting which, for want of a more precise word, one might well call spirit ...

Elisabeth Salisbury, ‘On first rising to minister’, in *Quaker Monthly*, vol. 47, p. 98 (1968); also in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 2.58

God or whatever we may choose to call it.

Rex Ambler, *The End of Words: Issues in Contemporary Quaker Theology* (1994)

See page 41 for information on future Woodbrooke events in the first half of 2024; Rhiannon Grant is to lead the one planned for June.

Christian Aid

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

Christian Aid is standing with church leaders and other organisations to call for more action to tackle violence against women and girls.

With one in three women experiencing violence at least once in their lives, it is a global issue which comes under the spotlight each year during the *16 Days of Activism* campaign. The theme of this year's campaign is '**invest to prevent violence against women and girls**'.

Christian Aid has joined forces with Integrity, the Church of Scotland's Violence Against Women and Girls task group, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Religious Society of Friends on the issue.

Starting on 25 November, (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls), and ending on 10 December, (Human Rights Day), the initiative involves all kinds of events and activities including marches, vigils and church services.

As part of the campaign, ecumenical gender justice prayer and awareness resources will be available in Glasgow Cathedral; St Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral, Inverness; St Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Dundee; and St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh. There will also be an ecumenical prayer service at 11 am on Saturday, 25 November in Glasgow Cathedral, to mark the start of the 16 days.

Karen Hendry, the minister who will be leading the service at Glasgow Cathedral, said, *"Across Scotland and around the world, women experiencing violence need to know that their lives matter. The Sixteen Days of Activism campaign, seeks to make that loud and clear by connecting the issue of violence against women with human rights. This year we are called to invest and to set the agenda for much needed change in our cultures, behaviours and attitudes. The Church of Scotland's violence against women working group, Integrity, are committed to being part of this initiative."*

Val Brown, Head of Christian Aid Scotland, said: *"Gender justice is one of the core themes of Christian Aid's global work. We're honoured to be partnering with so many Scottish denominations to pray and raise awareness about this important issue."*

This year, the focus is on prevention through investment.

Christian Aid is calling on the UK Government to reverse funding cuts to the foreign aid budget and scale up its investments in women's rights organisations, to ensure vital work can continue in the most vulnerable communities.

Head of UK Advocacy and Campaigns, Jennifer Larbie, said: *"Women all round the world are affected by violence. In the poorest communities, women and*

girls are at risk for various reasons – exploitation, domestic abuse, childhood marriage.

“Climate change, covid-19 and ongoing conflict have exacerbated these threats, generating new risks and amplifying vulnerability.

“The solution lies in robust responses, including scaling up investment in women’s rights organisations. Christian Aid is working with local partners globally, to reduce gender based violence, especially in faith-based communities, where we have increased female leadership and supported religious leaders to speak out on issues of gender inequality.

“But we need to ensure the issue stays at the top of political agendas and funding is increased not cut back. Every woman has the right to feel safe and live a full life, free from poverty and abuse.”

For more information, email edinburgh@christian-aid.org

Scotland, COP28 and Loss and Damage

A **template letter** to a Member of Parliament can be downloaded from:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/campaign-climate-justice>

It suggests urging that s/he press the UK Government to:

- *Deliver the UK’s existing pledges on international climate finance, predominantly through grants and without further depleting the aid budget.*
- *Pay into the new Loss and Damage Fund agreed at COP27.*
- *Make the UK’s big polluting companies, including fossil fuel companies, pay in order to fund the UK’s Loss and Damage contributions.*
- *End all new UK fossil fuel projects and invest in renewable, efficient energy instead.*

[COP28 will be taking place 30 November – 12 December 2023, in Dubai.]

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

In the Image of God: B’Tselem’s work for Human Rights in the midst of conflict

Join Christian Aid and The Friends of St Andrews Jerusalem and Tiberias on **Monday 27 of November**, 2.00 – 3.30 pm, to hear from Sarit Michaeli, International Advocacy Lead for B’Tselem (the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territory). Sarit will be speaking about the vital work of B’Tselem as it strives for a future in which Human Rights, liberty and equality are guaranteed to all people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The venue is Augustine’s United Church, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL; if you wish to attend in person, please contact edinburgh@christian-aid.org. It will also be possible to join online at <https://christian-aid-org.zoom.us/j/81172973247>.

Colonialism and Climate Crisis

Webinar: Decolonising Climate Conversations

Wednesday, 29 November 2023 – 19:00 GMT

History matters. In 2022, the UN's intergovernmental panel on climate change finally recognised colonialism as a main driver of the climate crisis. The acknowledgement opened a long overdue discussion about historical actions, current responsibility and racial equity in and between countries.

But progress amongst leaders to follow suit and link these issues has been slow. Racial justice, colonialism and climate justice are rarely mentioned in the same breath.

What will it take to truly decolonise climate conversations, actions and solutions? What role does the church play? As leaders, experts, activists – and fossil fuel lobbyists- get ready to gather in Dubai for COP28 climate talks, this webinar brings together panellists to explore these questions.

We'll also allow time for individual reflection to consider what we as Christians and campaigners, can do in our own lives to move on these conversations and restore justice.

All are welcome. To sign up go to:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/decolonising-climate-conversations>

See also: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/programmes>

Woodbrooke Where You Are, 2024

The first dates for South East Scotland's *Woodbrooke Where You Are* 2024 have now been fixed:

24 February – **Ben Pink Dandelion**: Essentials of Quakerism

11 May – **Simonne Wood**: What happens in Meeting for Worship

29 June – **Rhiannon Grant**: Telling our Spiritual Stories

Details will be circulated but the sessions are likely to be from about 10 am to 4 pm, including a light lunch. The dates for the two further sessions next autumn are being discussed. These are interactive sessions suitable for everyone, no matter how long you have been attending Quaker meeting. We want to encourage as many people as possible to benefit from these sessions, which sound very interesting. Many thanks to the Sylvia Marshall Bequest and Area Meeting for making these happen. Please put these dates in your new 2024 diaries now!

Marilyn Higgins,
on behalf of Elders

SEASONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Central Edinburgh** Meetings for Worship will take place as usual on 24 & 31 December.
There will be an extra meeting by **Zoom ONLY** on Monday 25 December, 10.30 – 11.00 am.
- Central Fife** Meetings for Worship will take place as usual on 24 & 31 December in Kirkcaldy.
- East Lothian** There will be **NO** meeting on 31 December - Dunbar Town House will be closed.
- Kelso** Meetings for Worship will take place as usual on 24 & 31 December.
- North Edinburgh** The meeting on 24 December (at Liz Law's home) will be at **4.00 pm**, rather than at 7.00.
- Penicuik** [*Meeting on the first Sunday in the month, Penicuik LM is unaffected by seasonal disruption this year.*]
- Polmont** Please check with **Mariot Dallas** for possible changes on 24 & 31 December.
- Portobello & Musselburgh** Meeting for Worship as usual on 24 December.
- South Edinburgh** Meeting for Worship by **Zoom ONLY** on 24 & 31 December – the Open Door will be closed.
- Tweeddale** Tweeddale Local Meeting has decided to resume its Meetings for Worship at 10.30 am on the fourth Sunday in the month (see page 3); but there will be **NO** meeting on 24 December.

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

Faith in politics? – A testimony to equality

by Catherine West & Andy Hull (Swarthmore Lecture 2017)

When confronted with Advices & Queries 34 (“Remember your responsibilities ...”) we may wonder how to proceed. Catherine West gives us the answer in the 2017 Swarthmore Lecture. She reminds us of the many social ills which have received attention and action by Quakers personally or in cooperation with others. As leader of Islington Council she helped to set up the country's first Fairness Commission. As an MP she calls on us to exercise our democratic rights and support political action and legislation.

Rachel Frith

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Wednesday 6 September 2023
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh
and by remote videoconferencing**

2023/09/01 Worship and introductions

During worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 2.91: when a meeting is in division and uncertainty, it can be given grounds for confidence when guidance comes and we 'become finders of God's purpose'.

[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]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

023/09/10 Closing minute

32 Friends (30 members and 2 attenders) have been at all or part of this meeting, either in person or by Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 12	Central Fife 1	East Lothian 4	Kelso 2	Penicuik 1
Polmont 1	Portobello & Musselburgh 5	South Edinburgh 5	Tweeddale 1	<i>Visitors/Others</i> -

We record our thanks to staff at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House for hosting us today.

We next meet on Saturday 25 November at 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh – timings to be arranged.

(Signed)

Alastair Cameron, *Clerk*
Cath Dyer, *Assistant Clerk*

A Prayer for Peace

O God of all justice and peace we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.

While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.

Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

(Written by the Very Revd Canon Richard Swell, Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem.)

Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland

Contact details of named Friends are in the Book of Members. 'QMH' = Quaker Meeting House

MEETING IN PERSON

Central Edinburgh – QMH, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

Sundays at 9.30 & 11.00 am. Tea & coffee afterwards; soup and bread & cheese lunch, 12.30.

Wednesday, 12.30–1.00 pm. Tea & coffee; you may bring your own lunch.

Contact the office, centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk or 0131 225 4825, for updates; see also <https://www.quakerscotland.org/central-edinburgh/covid-guidance>.

Central Fife – The Old Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy KY1 1EH

On the 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am. On 1st Sundays, also at 10.30 am, at

Linburn Scout Hall, Abbey View, Dunfermline KY11 4HA.

Contact **Laurie Naumann** for further information.

East Lothian – Dunbar Town House, 79 High Street, Dunbar, EH42 1ER

On the 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Contact **Phil Lucas** for updates.

Kelso – QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

Sundays at 10.30 am. Contact **Anne Macnaughton** for updates.

North Edinburgh worship group – * * * NOW MEETING IN FRIENDS' HOMES * * *

4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm. – contact **Tony Gross** or **Rufus Reade** for updates.

Penicuik – Venue to be confirmed: contact penicuikquakers@blueyonder.co.uk

1st Sundays at 11.00 am – contact **Mark Hutcheson** for updates and further information.

Polmont – Greenpark Community Centre, Greenpark Drive, Polmont FK2 0PZ

Sundays at 10.30: contact **Mariot Dallas** for updates, and if bringing children.

Portobello & Musselburgh – Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 11.00 am, with a children's meeting.

1st Sundays: Evening meeting at 7.30 pm; NO children's meeting.

Contact **Robin Liebmann** for further information.

South Edinburgh – The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 5HY

Sundays, 10.30 am. For information contact the clerking team, sedclerks@gmail.com.

Tweeddale – 2nd Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, and 4th Sundays at 10.30 am, meeting in Friends' homes. For further information contact **Lesley Morrison**

MEETING BY ZOOM

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

Every Sunday at 9.30 am ONLY (blended with the meetings in person).

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

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

East Lothian – for login details contact **Phil Lucas**

Tuesdays at 7.30 pm

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

South Edinburgh – for login details contact sedclerks@gmail.com.

Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with meetings in person.

1st Thursdays at 8.00 pm (online only). Meeting for worship (30 mins) followed by chat.