

SESAME

Number 251: January 2024

AM on 15 January / New Year Reflections / TPNW: *Interfaith Statement & 2MSP* / M^{ts} for Sufferings / NFPB / WMD (*witness against*) / WDP (*plans for*) / Events, Holidays, Courses in 2024, in Cumbria, France & online / Holyrood work / Future of Edinburgh QMH: *final report* / New Scots *et al.* / Exploring Spirituality – *in 10 sessions* / EACOP / Israel-Gaza: *a personal view* / November Minutes / &c.

Warm Space
Tea/coffee, biscuits, chat
No charge, just warmth

Everyone welcome (kids too)
2-4 pm every Thursday
in January and February

Join us at the Quaker Meeting House
7 Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street)

WELCOME

Благославно просимо स्वागतम् Bem-vindo Sveiki atvykę
لاشكافو خوش آمدید Dobrodošli Vitajte ברוך הבא
Mirë se vjen mabuhay soo dhawow Bine ați venit
Mišto avilan BIENVENIDO Witamy Hoşgeldin Добро пожаловать
اهلا وسهلا 歡迎

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Send material for the next issue to Alan Frith (ar.frith@btinternet.com) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 12 March 2024**. The Editor reserves the right to condense articles. If possible, please submit articles by email. A paper copy of *Sesame* is posted to anyone who requests it (free, but normally limited to one per household). The email version, in PDF format, goes to all on the Area Meeting list whose email address is known. Contact the Editor if you wish to change how you receive it.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Monday 15 January 2024 at 7.00 pm, at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL, and by Zoom. All are warmly invited – it is not necessary to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends to attend. However, at evening meetings, there are no arrangements for childcare.

AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2023
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Warm space at 7 Victoria Terrace – update* (minute 2023/11/4.1 refers)
 2. *Marriage of Jane Ditchfield and Niamh Gillespie* (2023/11/7.2)
 3. *BYM thanks* (2023/11/8.1)
4. Decisions by between-meeting procedure
 1. *Appointment of visitors*
5. Membership matters
6. Reports and correspondence
 1. *Future of 7 Victoria Terrace – report from Trustees*
 [The Working Group's summary report is on pages 25-30]
 2. *Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer: Sarah Komashko*
 [see page 21]
 3. *Afghan refugee support – Esther Shreeve*
 4. *Essentials of Quakerism – notice of forthcoming Woodbrooke event*
 [see page 18]
 5. *Meeting for Sufferings* [see page 6]
7. Financial matters - *Treasurer's report on bursaries*
8. Matters from local meetings and trustees
9. General Meeting matters
10. Appointments: from Nominations Committee
11. Closing minute

*The poster on the cover was designed by **Jude Claybourne**. The extra cost of having it in colour (as well as the pictures in this issue – see pages 10, 11 & 12 – and the bar charts on page 26) has been met from an individual donation and £25 from the 'Warm Space' publicity budget, for which the Editor is grateful. However we shall revert to monochrome in March; colour-printing would add appreciably to the yearly cost of producing Sesame.*

New Year Reflections

IN SCOTLAND, 1 January has been New Year's Day (or Ne'erday) since 1600, but in England, Wales, Ireland and the American colonies, where most Friends were in the early days of Quakerism, the year began on 25 March, until the Gregorian Calendar was introduced with effect from 1752. Thus in the oldest Quaker writings, there are not to be found thoughts prompted by the turn of the year; Friends were, in any case, opposed to treating particular days as special, an attitude illustrated below in the extract from the journal of **Elias Hicks**, of Long Island, N.Y., in which he saves up his seasonal musings for 'First Day' (Sunday). **Mary Alexander**, of Needham Market, Suffolk, was an active Quaker minister for more than twenty years before her death from smallpox while on a visit to Worcester at the age of 49; **John Wigham** moved to Aberdeen in 1784, and for the rest of his long life was a "diligent labourer" on behalf of the Society in Scotland.

First month 1st, 1804. My mind this afternoon has been led to consider, that many may be the changes which the present year may produce; many the trials and exercises I may be permitted to experience. And oh! may there be a centring to the source of all pure instruction, for counsel to move according to divine appointment; that whether suffering or rejoicing, that part destined for immortality may be preserved in a state of acceptance with "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," Isaiah 62:15, and who still condescends to dwell with them that are of "a contrite and humble spirit."

Mary Alexander (1760-1809)

1st of First Month, 1812. This day begins a new year. O Lord! From this time preserve me in exact conformity to thy will, without spot or blemish. I have long, thou knowest, been desirous to serve Thee with acceptance; but I have been a poor, frail, imperfect being. O! blot out my imperfections, gracious God! for thy dear Son's sake; and enable me henceforth to serve thee better. Destroy, O! destroy every fibre of selfishness; that what I am, I may be in Thee alone. Amen

John Wigham (1749-1839)

Seventh Day [1/1/1814]: Nothing transpired today either on the right hand or the left [*a reference to Ezekiel 21:16*] worthy of particular notice.

First Day, 2nd of the 1st month, 1814: Another year is ended.

Query: O my soul, how hast thou improved it? And what progress hast thou made in thy heavenly journey?

...

Elias Hicks (1748-1830)

The Editor wishes all readers of *Sesame* a Happy New Year.

*Joint Interfaith Statement to the Second Meeting of States Parties
to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
November 2023*

WE GATHER as people of faith – religious leaders, practitioners, believers of many different traditions – to affirm with one voice our opposition to nuclear weapons and our absolute belief that a world without nuclear weapons is not only possible but that a nuclear-free future is already being made.

We take great joy in the existence of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and take this occasion of the Second Meeting of States Parties to celebrate how the TPNW and its supporters worldwide have found the courage, determination and imagination to work for a world of justice and equality.

We live on a beautiful planet with the splendor of forests, mountains, rivers and oceans that we share with other creatures. Yet this planet and all who dwell here are threatened by the terror of nuclear weapons. It is our responsibility as people of faith to redirect the moral outrage of the world towards the re-making of that which is good. In this light, we celebrate the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by the UN General Assembly last year, and send our prayers for successful outcomes of COP28, which also starts during the same week as this meeting.

We honor the ancestors who have gone before us – the global hibakusha who suffered the horrors of nuclear weapons testing and use as well as the generations of diplomats, religious leaders, activists, researchers, artists and advocates – who dedicated their lives to making the world a safer place. Being together in this moment, with this landmark piece of international law and with the determination to universalize it, we know that this is only possible because of the work that went before us. At the same time, we are encouraged by the surge in a new generation of young leaders who have the courage, brilliance and hope to carry this work for-ward into the future. We work with integrity and unfailing determination because we owe so much to both the past and the future.

Our religious traditions are vast and represent many millions of people, each trying to pursue lives of meaning and goodness in a world that has never felt more threatened with catastrophe. Our faith that humanity is meant for peace, wellness, joy and love remains unwavering even as we see with clarity the devastation of the planet and our fellow human beings who are threatened globally by the double violence of climate catastrophe and rampant militarism. Nuclear weapons represent the worst of both of those threats – an evil unleashed upon this beloved planet with the power to wipe out everything that we hold most dear – our water, our air, our land, and each other.

Even as we call on all States to join the TPNW, we take seriously our role as faith communities to denounce nuclear deterrence as a false ideology which violates our most sacred commitments. We not only decry any use of nuclear weapons, we oppose wholeheartedly the preparations for and threats to use nuclear weapons as immoral. We urge States Parties at this meeting to move forward with practical commitments to provide victim assistance and environmental remediation under Articles 6 and 7 of

the treaty. We commit to doing our part to care for those members of our community who have suffered the direct impacts of nuclear weapons and to act as good stewards to remediate the land and waters which have been harmed.

We celebrate the inclusivity of the TPNW with its attention towards the intersectional harms of nuclear weapons. Our faith communities take seriously our unique commitments to the Indigenous peoples who have been most affected by these weapons of utter destruction. As our faiths direct us to exercise special love and care for the people who are most marginalized, we recognize in the treaty a meaningful avenue to addressing the violence of the past and committing to a more just future.

As diplomats, policy makers, advocates and activists gather in New York City this week, we know their work is supported by a much larger circle of people around the world who believe that another world without nuclear weapons is possible and who will continue to work, write, march, pray, chant, meditate and speak that new world into being. Nuclear weapons can never provide nourishment for our bodies, courage for our hearts, creativity for our minds or inspiration for our souls. Nuclear weapons can only annihilate, threaten and destroy everything that gives our lives meaning. Nuclear weapons drain financial resources away from addressing poverty, racism, illness and premature death. And yet, we remain resilient and vibrant in the face of their obliteration, refusing to let nuclear ideology also steal our hope, our vision and our boldness in demanding justice and a right to live in peace for all people.

There is so much work to be done. We commit, as people of faith, to working to address the roots of violence in our own religious traditions that have justified nuclear violence or that have chosen to ignore the greed and aggression that undergirds nuclear ideology. We can and will weave together a deepening of inner contemplation and reckoning that strengthens us to confront and survive threats to our collective security. We know that there is no true safety, security and peace for any of us until there is safety, security and peace for all of us.

We recognize the urgency of this moment and what is at stake for all of us – the beloved natural world and the beloved community of humanity. Our fates are intertwined and we cannot ignore the resounding threats that confront us. We feel acute fear and anxiety as an ever-present menace as we contemplate our shared future. This fear is not unique to this moment in time. Let us draw courage from the audacity and vision of past struggles for justice, taking comfort in the wisdom that immense challenges always feel impossible until they are done.

Endorsed by 114 organisations, including Quakers in Britain, AFSC, NFPB, the Methodist Church in Britain, the United Reformed Church (UK) and the World Council of Churches; for the full list see:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GZoMaM94vkkki5brTz5X4GV8lJQiIWkpsOp1zmJTOqz4/edit>

On 23 November, Bill Kidd MSP (who attended 2MSP) introduced a motion in the Scottish Parliament in support of TPNW, the text of which is here:

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-11395>

Janet Fenton, who was also there, writes about the Meeting on page 19.

Meeting for Sufferings: 2 December 2023

What an interesting, emotional and at times quite intense meeting this was. As always, I am in awe at the amount of work that Meeting for Sufferings does on our behalf and the passion and hard work that goes along with that. The papers for the meeting are at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2023-12-agenda--papers-package>

and the separate paper comprising the Epistle from Netherlands YM 2023, together with reports and epistles from the Yearly Meetings of Friends in Belgium & Luxembourg, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, is at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2023-12-14a-european-ym-reports--epistles>

It includes reports by our Friends John Phillips (writing on Sweden YM) and Mary Woodward (on Finland YM's spring gathering [see Sesame 247]).

The minutes of the December meeting are at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2023-12-follow-up-package>

I would like to highlight three areas that may be of interest to you.

1. Timeline for Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC)

The Committee plans to present:

(a) to Yearly Meeting (YM) in 2027, a complete first draft text of the new Book of Discipline, for the start of the process of familiarisation and initial discernment, engaging Friends with the text and our approach to the book – an extended “meeting for learning” – resulting in clear guidance to the BDRC on the next steps; and

(b) to YM in 2030 (after a period of further learning and consultation with Friends throughout Britain, any revision required, and further familiarisation), a complete finished text for adoption. It is likely that the new book will eventually be made available not only in print and as an electronic document but also through multiple media.

The complete first draft is likely to be made available to Friends at least six months before YM 2027 (*i.e.* by end-2026/start of 2027), to allow for thorough reading and discussion in preparation for YM.

2. Marriage declarations

Meeting for Sufferings has been asked by the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to consider the marriage declaration. MfS agreed to invite minutes and comments from Area Meetings, other Quaker bodies and individuals, so that it could reconsider this in October 2024 before making a recommendation to Yearly Meeting.

The question for consideration is: In the marriage declaration can each of the couple be offered the choice of using ‘*through divine assistance*’ or ‘*with God's help*’, or to use neither of those phrases? If this was accepted the options would therefore be:

“Friends, I take this my friend [full name] to be my spouse, promising,

*through divine assistance/with God's help/[neither of these two phrases],
to be unto him/ her/ [commonly used name]
a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live."*

There is more on this subject on pages 21 & 22 in the package of papers for the meeting. Comments from individuals or minutes from meetings should be sent to sufferings@quaker.org.uk **by the end of August 2024.**

3. Nominations and membership

At our October meeting, we agreed that nominations need not be dependent on formal membership and at this meeting we considered how that decision would work out in practice. We agreed that nominating bodies may bring the names of either members or attenders for appointment to Britain Yearly Meeting committees (other than the trustees) and we have asked the Church Government Advisory Group to bring us material indicating how we might similarly open nominations at the local and area meeting levels, as well as the implications for roles, such as trustees and registering officers, with legal responsibilities beyond our community.

Pages 28 – 31 of the papers for the meeting has more on this.

If you would like to read all the papers relating to the work of Meeting for Sufferings, they can be found at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Katrina McCrea

As reported last time, Meeting for Sufferings in October heard a concern about IPP – Imprisonment for Public Protection – which, although the legislation providing for it was repealed in 2012, still applied to 2,921 prisoners in England & Wales as of 30 September 2023. Of these, 1,652 had been recalled to prison: offenders subject to IPP sentences can be recalled after release, and for behaviour that may not be criminal, such that their status has been described as “In Perpetual Purgatory”. The other 1,269, who had never been released at all, include 188 who were originally given a minimum sentence of less than two years.

Meeting for Sufferings' December minutes include the template of a letter to be sent to Members of Parliament urging the Government “to resolve this cruel issue”. However, in the week before the meeting, the Ministry of Justice had announced legislation under which sentences will end for about 1,800 offenders on licence in the community as soon as the new law comes into force. It said a further 800 IPP offenders would become newly eligible for Parole Board consideration by March 2025, and the new legislation would also introduce a presumption that the board should terminate the licence unless it was still required to protect the public.

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2023/nov/28/offenders-indefinite-jail-sentences-terminated-moj>

The equivalent of IPP – an ‘Order for Lifelong Restriction’ – is still a sentencing option for Scottish courts. More people are serving life sentences in Scotland as a proportion of the national population than in any other country in Europe. (ED.)

Northern Friends Peace Board: 2 December 2023

Bolton Quaker Meeting House, which since 3 December 2022 has been the location of the NFPB office, was the venue for the Board's final meeting of 2023, with 30 people present in person or online; we were pleased to be joined in the room by Charlotte Cooper and Lisa Cumming, who are respectively the 'Peace Lead' at Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and the QPSW Nonviolence & Peacebuilding programme manager. Both are based in the north of England.

Inevitably, the meeting was dominated by events in Israel and Palestine; the Hamas atrocities of 7 October took place a fortnight after our previous meeting and they, and the Israeli response, had overshadowed the news ever since, impacting on the work of the NFPB Coordinator, Philip Austin, and that of our two visitors, and a concern to us all.

We had, as ever, some routine business, concerning nominations and appointments, an update from trustees, and a report from our treasurer, Deryck Hillas. Deryck's noting that the NFPB does not currently, as other Quaker bodies do, encourage Friends to remember us in their wills led to expressions of concern that such reminders can appear to incite tax avoidance by testators, of which we disapprove. It was laid on trustees to decide how to publicise the benefit to us of legacies without falling into this error.

EMES Peace & Service Network, Brussels, 20–22 October

Till Geiger had attended on our behalf the meeting of the Peace & Service Network of the European & Middle East Section of FWCC [*Friends World Committee for Consultation*] and spoke to his written report. The Network used to be a coming together of Friends directly involved in peace work for YMs and bodies such as NFPB, but in recent years its membership has widened, and its meetings become more frequent through online contact. Marigold Bentley and Mikheil Elizbarashvili were appointed to assist the coordinator Evan Welkin in shaping its future development.

The meeting had been joined online by Joyce Ajlouny, General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee. AFSC has staff in Gaza: most have lost homes and members of their families, and many struggle to find food and even to stay in contact with the office in Washington DC. Friends heard too, also *via* Zoom, from Rania Maayeh, the Head of Friends School Ramallah, about how renewed conflict is affecting the West Bank. Both called on Quakers in Europe to lobby their elected representatives and to give extra financial support to AFCS work and other humanitarian aid. An appeal has been launched to provide for counselling of Ramallah students (see <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/rfs-wellbeing-support>.) The two talks are to be made available on the EMES website:

<https://fwccemes.org/emes/peace-and-service-consultation>.

Mikheil Elizbarashvili is from Georgia, and between sessions had updated Friends on the situation in Ukraine: there seems to be enough food in the

shops, and life goes on despite the war, but there is no resolution in sight, and he expressed concern that democracy is increasingly under threat. [NFPB members were already aware of the putting under house arrest in August of Yurii Sheliashenko of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement for allegedly supporting the Russian invasion. Yurii was a speaker at the event in 2022 at which Paul Rogers was presented with the Geoffrey & Elisabeth Carnall Peace Award; see Sesame 244.] Till had found a report of the work in Colombia of Justapaz, a Mennonite peace group, “interesting but also devastating”; it supports children at risk of forcible recruitment into the army, paramilitary groups or FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* – a ‘violent non-state actor’ which formally disbanded in 2017, although some 1,200 combatants retained their weapons and are still active); many underage conscripts are also forced into prostitution. Network members were urged to raise awareness of the plight of these children, in particular in the European Parliament. [For more, see: https://www.globalministries.org/partner/lac_partners_justapaz/ and <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/justapaz/?location=colombia&theme>]

Ukraine publication

The Board plans to produce a booklet on issues raised by the invasion of Ukraine. It is envisaged as being on the lines of those in the ‘Twelve Quakers’ series produced by Quaker Quest about twenty years ago. (Each offered a dozen diverse opinions on the title topic, the subjects addressed including Death, Equality, Evil, Faith and God; most are still in print, and available at <https://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/search?q=twelve%20quakers>.) Ours would include extended versions of the prepared ministry offered at our online session in February 2023; the planning group is looking for further contributions, of between 300 and 1,500 words. **Friends who would be interested in writing are urged to contact Philip Austin: by email at nfpb@gn.apc.org, or at NFPB, Quaker Meeting House, 50 Silverwell Street, Bolton BL1 1PP.** It is intended to publish in the Spring of 2024.

QPSW

Charlotte Cooper told us that a review of QPSW work had thrown up two new priorities: the intersection between militarism and climate crisis; and conscientious objection, especially in the context of the Ukraine war.

An international week of action (leading up to International Human Rights Day, 10 December) was to be held in support of conscientious objectors (COs) in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. In the UK, Quakers in Britain, War Resisters International and the Fellowship of Reconciliation were co-ordinating a joint letter from peace, faith-based and human rights organisations to the Russian and Ukrainian embassies, calling on those states to safeguard the right to conscientious objection, to release COs from detention, and to end the persecution of human rights defenders working on their behalf; the Board agreed to support this.

Charlotte gave us an overview of Quaker work in relation to the conflict in Israel and Palestine, with particular detail about what is being done by

EAPPI [*the Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme in Palestine & Israel – which has withdrawn its Accompaniers for their own safety*]; the Peace Education team; and QCCIR [*Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations*].

Lisa Cumming described the work that she and her new colleague, Rebecca Bellamy, are doing within the peacebuilding remit. She reflected on some of the community and other tensions that had arisen since the dramatic escalation in violence in Israel and Gaza in October. She also outlined her work in support of peacebuilding in East Africa, by Friends in Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda.

Palestine/Israel

In small groups and through worship-sharing, we reflected on the current situation; our minute reaffirmed “*our commitment to work for Peace in all its height and breadth*” (citing the phrase in the Board’s founding document).

Members’ forum

Urged by the clerks to be concise, Friends duly were: we heard that **Quaker Roots** (<https://www.quakerroots.org.uk/>) are holding regular online meetings for worship, and, in January, an event on *The Human Cost of War*; that the **2023 Olof Palme Peace Lecture** in Leeds (which can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPL-Yk5Ivk4>) was delivered by Clive Barrett of the **Peace Museum** (<https://www.peacemuseum.org.uk/>), opening soon in new premises at Saltaire; and that acts of witness outside Crown Courts would be taking place that week (<https://defendourjuries.org/>).

We hope to meet next on 3 March 2024, at Sheffield Meeting House. We plan to hold three all-day in-person meetings during the year (one of which will be in Scotland, and all of them blended); with a number of shorter online meetings and regional in-person meetings.

Alan Frith



NFPB members outside Bolton Meeting House. On the right, Ann Bettys of Huddersfield is holding a banner made using the kit advertised opposite. (Photo by Lisa Cumming.)

ADVERTISEMENT



One-person rainbow-coloured “Quakers for Peace” banner kit

The completed banner is approx 155cm (5' 2").

The kit contains the rainbow coloured fabric and designs for the lettering. The fabric needs to be sewn together. Poles and dowels for the cross-bar are not included – tent poles, broom-handles etc. might be suitable.

£10



ORDER FORM

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- Please send one banner kit []
- I enclose payment of £10 plus £3 P&P
(for orders of more than one, contact us for postage costs) []

For **online orders**, please email the above details to nfpb@gn.apc.org and request bank details for bank transfer.

Meetings for Worship at Faslane, 2024 (and also in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh)

For many years, Friends have gathered periodically near the North Gate of H.M. Naval Base Clyde – where the Trident submarines are stationed which carry the missiles constituting the U.K.'s 'deterrent' – to hold a Meeting for Worship as an act of witness against these and all other nuclear weapons. All are welcome to join these occasions, which are organised by Friends in West Scotland AM. However Friends in Edinburgh, feeling that a 200-mile round trip to the Gare Loch by car was not environmentally sustainable, decided in 2022 to hold a meeting nearer home, in Princes Street Gardens, at (almost) the same time, on the same days. For 2024, the dates of these meetings (all Sundays) are planned to be:

10 March	23 June
21 April	22 September
19 May	10 November

Meetings at Faslane start at 11.00 am; those in Princes Street Gardens at 10.30, at the Peace Tree (between the bandstand and the Ross Fountain). In both places, you will need clothes appropriate for the weather, and something to sit on.

*For information and updates about meetings at Faslane, contact **Mary Alice Mansell** or **Daphne Wassermann** of Glasgow LM; about the Edinburgh meetings, contact **Alison Burnley** or **Esther Shreeve**, South Edinburgh LM. (Contact details in the Book of Members, on pages 116, 120, 84 and 88.)*



*Praying Palestinian Women,
by Halima Aziz (b. 1999)*

World Day of Prayer, 1 March 2024

“I beg you, bear with one another in love”

Each year, an ecumenical service, written by Christian women of a particular country, is held in churches throughout the world on the first Friday in March. This year's service is by Palestinian women, based on Ephesians 4:2.

Information about where services are taking place will be available nearer the time at:

<http://www.wdpscotland.org.uk/resources/service-arrangements/>.

There is more about the Church in Palestine and information about the country itself at

<https://www.wwdp.org.uk/2024-theme-and-country-palestine/>.

Events, Courses and Special Interest Holidays 2024

GLENTHORNE, the Quaker Centre and guest house at Ambleside in the Lake District, offers a wide-ranging programme of events and courses in 2024; some offer discounts to younger participants. There are more details of each event at <https://glenthorne.org/events-programme-2024/>, and the programme can be downloaded as a PDF from:

<https://glenthorne.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Glenthorne-Events-2024.pdf>

These events are only available for bookings made by telephone (call **015394 35389**) or by emailing info@glenthorne.org. For the four Woodbrooke courses – marked [W] – please contact Woodbrooke for more information, as booking for these is done directly through Woodbrooke; anyone aged **18-35** can book one of them for **half the listed price**. There is a reduction of £100 for people under 35 on the fees for courses marked **YPR**. Waiting lists will be kept for courses marked *FULL*.

What is Prayer?

FULL, £240

Friday to Sunday, 9–11 February

Led by Jennifer Kavanagh
& Annique Seddon

Spiritual Adaptation to Climate and Extinction Emergencies

14 places left, £290 **YPR**

Friday to Sunday, 16–18 February

Led by Rupert Read

Time Set Aside: An individually guided retreat [W]

FULL, £495

Monday to Thursday, 18–21 March

Led by Timothy Ashworth
& Annique Seddon

Spirituality of the Heart – Four Paths of Creation Spirituality

8 places left, £400

Monday to Friday, 8–12 April

Led by Margaret Siberry,
Anne Harding, Andrew Thomson
& Celia Sparkes

Art, spirit and life

4 places left, £500

Monday to Friday, 15–19 April

Led by Erik Dries

Ecological Homecoming:

Nature Connection Retreat [W]

9 places, £255

Friday to Monday, 19–22 April

Led by Kim Harrison & Jack Durtnall

Boot, Boat and Goat

FULL, £525

Monday to Friday, 22–26 April

Led by Terry Winterton
& Grace Ogilvie

George Fox & Early Quaker Culture [W]

11 places left, £285

Friday to Sunday, 26–28 April

Led by Hilary Hinds
& Ben Pink Dandelion

What Does Love Require of Us?

15 places, £255

Friday to Sunday, 24–26 May

Led by David and Rosemary Brown

Circle Dancing

FULL, £490

Monday to Friday, 27–31 May

Led by Anne-Lise Kryger

Tai-Chi and Chi Kung Silk Reeling

12 places left, £285

Friday to Sunday, 31 May – 2 June

Led by Kim-Noy Jackson

Continued overleaf

Living out of Joy, Dying into Love

5 places left, £500

Monday to Friday, 3–7 June

Led by Rhonda Riachi

T S Eliot – Exploring the Four Quartets

9 places left, £470

Monday to Friday, 10–14 June

Led by Barbara Windle

Blue Sky Mind Meditation

2 places left, £285

Friday to Sunday, 21–23 June

Led by Adam Dacey

Quakers as other see them

12 places, £500

Monday to Friday, 15–19 July

Led by John & Diana Lampen

Sketching & Mixed Media Painting

FULL, £510

Monday to Friday, 29 July – 2 August

Led by Sue Ford

Dru Yoga

5 places left, £525

Monday to Friday, 5–9 August

Led by Julie Slater

Exploring Quaker Botanists

7 places left, £295

Friday to Sunday, 16–18 August

Led by Letta Jones

Sketching & Mix Media Painting

FULL, £510

Monday to Friday, 19–23 August

Led by Sue Ford

***The Hope of Creation: Looking again
at the Old Testament***

12 places, £235 YPR

Friday to Sunday, 23–25 August

Led by Janet Scott

Circle Dancing

FULL, £465

Monday to Friday, 26–30 August

Led by Anne-Lise Kryger

Sculpting animals in Papier mâché

12 places, £525

Sunday to Friday, 1–6 September

Led by Patty Callaghan

Singing and Silence for the Earth

9 places left, £480

Monday to Friday, 9–13 September

Led by Meri Goad

George Fox after 400 years

9 places left, £240 YPR

Friday to Sunday 13–15 September

Led by Rex Ambler

Voices of the Earth [W]

10 places left, £255

Friday to Sunday, 20–22 September

Led by Zélie and Phillip Gross

Centering Prayer

11 places left, £250

Friday to Sunday, 27–29 September

Led by Rosemary Field

& Richard Eddleston

Boot, Boat and Goat

12 places left, £525

Monday to Friday,

30 September – 4 October

Led by Terry Winterton

& Grace Ogilvie

Inner Peace Meditation Retreat

1 place left, £285

Friday to Sunday, 4–6 October

Led by Adam Dacey

Circle Dancing

FULL, £490

Monday to Friday 7–11 October

Led by Anne-Lise Kryger

Sketching & Mix Media Painting

4 places left, £395

Friday to Monday, 25–28 October

Led by Sue Ford

***What has Wordsworth to Offer us
Today?***

12 places, £480

Monday to Friday, 28 October

– 1 November

Led by Barbara Windle

Maison Quaker, Congénies: Events in 2024

MAISON QUAKER belongs to France Yearly Meeting (*l'Assemblée de France*) of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). It is in the village of Congénies in the Languedoc region of the south of France.

Its programme for the coming year includes the following; events listed *in italics, thus*, will be conducted in French; at those shown in **bold type**, both French and English will be spoken; others will be in English.

Contact the Centre for more information: centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com

20–25 February 2024

Retraite de yoga et méditation sur le thème de l'éco-spiritualité

22–24 March 2024

Retraite de yoga et méditation sur le thème de l'éco-spiritualité

21–26 April 2024

Le silence quaker ensemble / Silent Retreat

L'occasion pour chacun d'expérimenter la Lumière / Experiment with Light

12–17 May: 'Moving into Silence' – yoga with Elke Brown

16-21 June: Art Week with Erik Dries

11–17 August: **La Semaine des Familles**

23-27 September: Music Week

13-18 October: Art Week with Kate Hale

22–24 November 2024

Retraite de yoga et méditation sur le thème de l'éco-spiritualité

The Centre's website in English is at: <https://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org/en/>

Woodbrooke Courses, January to March 2024

*As well as the residential ones listed among the Glenthorne events on pages 13 & 14, Woodbrooke is offering around hundred other courses in 2024; for full details see: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>. With the few exceptions noted, all the courses listed below are online, and will take place, or commence, in the next ten weeks. Many of them are FREE or 'pay as led' (i.e. participants are asked to pay what they can afford); it is still necessary to book, as places are limited, except for the 'Meet a Student' events which are open to all to watch live on YouTube. Where a price is shown, it is the standard fee for the event or course, and a 50 % **discount** is usually available to participants aged 18–35.*

Being a Quaker Parent

£54

6 weekly sessions, 16 January – 20 February, 20.00-21.30 GMT

Kathy Chandler, Alison Breadon, Alistair Fuller

The Joy of Service

Tuesday 16 January, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Lynden Easterbrook, Jacquie Cole, Marilyn Higgins

- Meeting for Worship Through Dance***
Friday 19 January, 14:00-15:00 GMT Robin Bowles & Ann Bettys
- A Light in the Darkness*** £35
Saturday 20 January, 10:00-16:00 GMT Tracey Martin
- Simpler Roles: doing things differently*** £10
Monday 22 January, 19:00-21:00 GMT Jonathan Carmichael & Jacquie Cole
- Woke Bible Study: is God an environmentalist?***
Tuesday 23 January, 19:00-20:30 GMT Christy Randazzo
- Rethinking Security: steps to sustainable peace with justice*** £54
5 weekly sessions, 24 January – 21 February, 18:30-20:00 GMT
Joanna Frew & Tanya Hubbard
- The Light in their Consciences (The New Quaker History Series, volume 1)*** £78
4 fortnightly sessions, 24 January – 6 March, 19:00-20:00 GMT Stuart Masters
- Foundation Course in Nonviolent Communication*** £86
6 weekly sessions, 25 January – 29 February, 19:00-21:15 GMT Jenny Tipping
- The Start of the Quaker Way: Fox 400***
3 weekly sessions, 25 January – 8 February 2024, 19:00-20:30 GMT
'Ben' Pink Dandelion
- Colorizing Restorative Justice***
Tuesday 30 January, 19:00-20:30 GMT Tanya Hubbard
- Time with the Texts: Fox 400 [RESIDENTIAL COURSE]*** £360
Friday to Sunday, 2–4 February, at The Briery, Ilkley, W. Yorkshire, LS29 3BW
'Ben' Pink Dandelion
- Spiritual Nurture and Pastoral Care in a Nutshell*** £35
Saturday 3 February, 10:00-16:00 GMT
Heather Rowlands, Jacquie Cole, Helen Chambers
- Being a Quaker Registering Officer*** £125
7 weekly sessions, 6 February – 19 March 2024, 18:00-19:30 GMT
Seren Wildwood, Michael Booth, Judith Baker, Linda Craig
- Meet the Students: Mark Frankel***
Tuesday 6 February, 15:00-16:00 GMT 'Ben' Pink Dandelion
- Racial Justice Dialogues***
6 weekly sessions, 6 February – 12 March, 18:00-20:00 GMT
Nim Njuguna & Jonathan Doering
- Exploring Quaker Business Method***
Thursday 8 February, 19:00-21:00 GMT Rachael Swancott
- Spiritual Practices for Every Day*** £35
Sunday 11 February 2024, 09:30-16:30 GMT Gill Sewell
- Quaker Responses to Ukraine***
Tuesday 13 February, 18:30-20:00 GMT Tanya Hubbard
- Story Weaving with George Fox: when I grow up***
Friday 16 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT Till flo* Krapoth

Meet the Students: Andrew Fincham

Tuesday 20 February, 15:00-16:00 GMT

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Meeting for Worship Through Dance

Wednesday 21 February, 20:00-21:00 GMT

Robin Bowles & Ann Bettys

Truth and Integrity: an interfaith exchange*Woodbrooke working in partnership with the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group.*

Wednesday 21 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Gerald Hewitson

Relational Campaigning for Climate Action

7 weekly sessions, 24 February – 6 April, 10:00-11:45 GMT

Rob Paton

Resilient Communities: why we need radical imagination

Monday 26 February, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Rob Hopkins & Kim Harrison

Exploring Threshing and Clearness

Wednesday 6 March, 18:30-20:30 GMT

Rhiannon Grant

Holding the Thread in Turbulent Times

Thursday 7 March, 14:30-17:30 GMT

Deborah Haskew & Will Johnson

Being a Quaker Clerk* [RESIDENTIAL COURSE]*£295**

Friday to Sunday, 8–10 March, at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Peter Eccles & Judith Roads

George Fox: an evangelical Quaker perspective

Wednesday 13 March, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Stuart Masters

Enquiring Into: living adventurously

Thursday 14 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Rosie Carnall & Jude Acton

Refresh Your Quaker Role: grounding your service

10 weekly sessions, 14 March – 16 May, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Jacquie Cole & Sophie Smith

Life Reflections

Sunday 17 March, 15:00-17:00 GMT

Daniel Clarke Flynn

Conversations With Our Children: living as a Quaker

Tuesday 19 March, 20:30-21:30 GMT

Rachael Swancott

George Fox in his Own Words:**£78***looking at well-known passages with fresh eyes*

19 March – 30 April 2024: Zoom sessions at 19:00-20:00 GMT, on 2, 16 & 30 April

Stuart Masters

Exploring Quaker Roles**£10**

Wednesday 20 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Lynden Easterbrook, Jacquie Cole, Marilyn Higgins

Isaac Penington and Early Quaker Spirituality

Wednesday 20 March 2024, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Phil Dahl

Learning from Indigenous Restorative Justice Processes

Thursday 21 March 2024, 18:30-20:00 GMT

Tanya Hubbard

Story Weaving with George Fox: learning and growing

Friday 22 March, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Till flo* Krapoth

The History of the Quaker Way [IN PERSON EVENT] £30
 Nottingham Friends Meeting House, 25 Clarendon St, Nottingham NG1 5JD
 Saturday 23 March 2024, 10:00-16:30 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Meeting for Worship Through Dance
 Sunday 24 March, 08:00-09:00 GMT Robin Bowles & Ann Bettys

Holding in the Light: what does it mean?
 Tuesday 26 March 2024, 19:00-20:30 GMT Rhiannon Grant

Resilient Communities: re-localising our food systems
 Tuesday 26 March 2024, 18:30-20:30 GMT Caroline Chandler & Kim Harrison

Woke Bible Study: is there patriarchy in Heaven?
 Wednesday 27 March 2024, 19:00-20:30 GMT Ashley M. Wilcox

Bursary help with the cost of courses may be available from Area Meeting; speak to a Pastoral Friend or email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com for more information.

Ben Pink Dandelion: *Essentials of Quakerism*

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 24 February 2024

The first in our 2024 programme of one-day 'Woodbrooke Where You Are' events will be on Saturday 24 February at 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL. See AM Minute 2023/11/04.2 (page 38) for the presenters, titles and dates of future events in the series.

This one draws on Ben Pink Dandelion's 2014 Swarthmore Lecture, *Open for Transformation* (which can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRO-lGD9emM>).

The event is FREE and includes a simple lunch. Places must be booked at <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/sescotland> (password *Cented24*) by **15 February**.

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

God the Trickster? Eleven Essays
 Edited by Ben Pink Dandelion (2001)

All these writers are Quakers and have had first hand experience of being tricked or tested along their spiritual paths. It might be bereavement, pain, infertility, difficult relationships or a motorbike accident, but in each case it led to a reassessment of the person's relationship with God. There are many references to Job but also to American Indian mythology.

It's very interesting and thought provoking.

Rachel Frith

"No man can be called friendless who has God and the companionship of good books."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61)

The Second Meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

New York, 27 November – 1 December 2023

THE UN TREATY on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) took effect on 22 January 2021; negotiations, in which more than 135 states had participated, concluded on 7 July 2017 with 122 countries voting for its adoption. The TPNW bans the development, testing, production, possession, stockpiling, stationing, deployment, use or threatened use of nuclear weapons, with the goal of eliminating them entirely. In terms of positive obligations, the Treaty makes provision for victim assistance and environmental remediation; it is the first treaty to recognise the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on indigenous people and on women.

At the conference that negotiated the TPNW, a civil society delegation from Scotland, including Quakers, took part in side events and lobbied as many of the 193 UN member-state missions as it could: in offices, on the floor of the UN, and in restaurants and coffee bars. We also heard about campaigns in other Nuclear Armed States (NAS) and the challenges in states that neither possess nuclear weapons nor aim to do so. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) won the Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution in informing diplomats and bringing forward the critical evidence that helped to make the TPNW a reality. The Treaty is easily understood and can change the politics and economics of nuclear weapons, thus making disarmament easier. Now it is in force, it is shifting how people think and talk about nuclear weapon. Its provisions are legally binding for states that are either a party or a signatory to it.

Living in the UK (or another NAS), you might imagine the TPNW is ineffectual unless or until the NAS decide to join it – this is the UK Government’s position. But in a world of unbridled and destructive violence, the TPNW is growing in credibility and strength, with 93 signatories, and 69 states parties. Whenever it comes before the UN General Assembly, it has the support of around 130 states.

At the end of 2023, Scottish disarmament diplomacy activists returned to New York for the second meeting of TPNW states parties (2MSP) to hear the arguments and lobby the ambassadors, adding the evidence from our own experience, from Freedom of Information Questions and our Parliamentarians’ contributions. The meeting was exciting and hopeful as it laid out the patient and constructive work begun at the first Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) in Vienna in June 2022. Through the Treaty, 40% of the global population have governments that disavow the so-called security based on nuclear weapons.

Civil society has played a significant part in achieving the incredible progress of the TPNW since 1MSP. NGOs have had an important role in amp-

lifying the voices of those affected, including the remaining *Hibakusha*, who survived Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the displaced South Pacific Islanders whose homes, community and health still bear the impacts of testing; and indigenous people around the world whose environment and genetic legacy remain broken and damaged. From India to Kazakhstan such harm has been inadequately recognised and victims denied data by the perpetrators: *“Adiya Akhmer made a very moving statement, telling how as a kid she kept hearing about this “magical fire mushroom” in her family. She learnt about it and was aware of it much later. She speaks about “Trans-generation justice” because of the ignorance the previous generations lived in. And still today Russia doesn’t release any of the data about its tests, that could enable the Kazakh people to measure their impacts. Still today no one knows how much the lives of current and future generations will be affected by it.”*

Justine Vonpierre, an intern from UN House attending with the Scottish ICAN delegation reporting on a side event at the conference, *Kazakhstan’s New Generation and Nuclear Politics*

At 1MSP, the Vienna Declaration set out steps to be taken. Member states have taken on tasks to move these forward, including setting up a Scientific Advisory Board to set the timelines and verification procedures for signatories to ensure that they are compliant, and to examine and research the environmental impact of testing and mining as well as potential use. Other groups are exploring the economic effects and requirements for a just transition from nuclear weapons. One group is looking at the complementarity of the TPNW with other treaties states may have entered into in order to recommend appropriate action. Each of these areas of work adds to a sense of change, increasing acceptance and understanding of how institutions, states and of course individuals can and must reject nuclear-weapons-based policies. It was inspiring and compelling to meet diplomats and academics and share discussions, and powerful and gratifying to hear young people from affected communities present their statements to the chamber. *This Treaty, however, will not be sufficient if its provisions are not accompanied by an ethic of disarmament. Such an ethical approach must play a role in bringing about a ‘moral revolution’ that replaces the negative concept of security based on ‘the precarious balance of deterrence’ with a positive one based on ‘the fraternity that unites us.’*

Representative from the Holy See, the smallest of the UN Member States “Security guarantees” uttered by NAS governments refers to a political idea, rather than the ordinary understanding of what gives people a sense of security. In any nuclear-armed state, the presence of nuclear weapons puts citizens in harm’s way from possible accident *or* from attack, while their social welfare is diminished through the lost opportunity costs. In particular, the UK’s motivation for hosting nuclear weapons as ‘its own’, despite dependence technically and physically on the US, has from the outset been about maintaining global status. (Ernest Bevin, 1947: “We’ve got to have this thing over here, whatever it costs. We’ve got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it.”) Atlee as Prime Minister went so far as to conceal

the decision to develop nuclear weapons – and the cost – from his own Cabinet. In Scotland this is a bitter pill.

At 2MSP, a delegation of 23 parliamentarians from 14 countries, including Bill Kidd MSP, presented a statement which clearly expresses a different vision:

“The TPNW remains a bright and powerful reason for hope when many other international developments point in the wrong direction...The threats posed by nuclear weapons extend far beyond national security concerns; they encompass the well-being of our planet and humanity as a whole. The environmental consequences of nuclear weapons devastate the health and livelihoods of our communities. It is our duty to recognize the multifaceted nature of this issue and actively work towards integrating nuclear disarmament into all policy areas.”

All of these have signed the ICAN Parliamentarian Pledge, along with the majority of our Scottish MPs and MSPs. In the event of a General Election this year, we must all do what we can to ensure that we only elect MPs who will do the same.

Our 2017 Scottish delegation colleague Tim Wallis (formerly of QPSW) is now working in the US, and was active around 2MSP with a launch of his new book, *Warheads to Windmills* for which I hope the editor can squeeze in an advert! [See the foot of page 30 – Ed.]

Janet Fenton

More detail from Secure Scotland, nuclearban.scot, UN House, NFPB and Scottish CND websites; and Tim’s book and the Secure Scotland Report (Scotland’s Part, A unique opportunity for a small country to contribute to global nuclear disarmament) can be obtained through the Words and Actions shop, 58 Ratcliffe Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 9ST

Parliamentary Engagement: *an Officer writes*

Our PEO, Sarah Komashko will be at Area Meeting to update us on her work and introduce some of the issues that are expected to occupy her and the General Meeting’s Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) in 2024.

Peace Education

When I started, the big event immediately on the radar was the Wangari’s Trees performance and ‘Peace at the Heart’ exhibition at the Scottish Parliament, sponsored by Michelle Thomson MSP. This built on work Andrew Tomlinson had done with Paul McLennan MSP, and involved QPSW colleagues Ellis Brooks and Izzy Cartwright as well as a lot of work by PEWG to bring it all together, and of course Mary Troup’s work with the children for the performance.

I do want to thank everyone who encouraged their MSPs to come along. It really made a difference: some said they’d come *because* of emails from their constituents. We interacted with around 30 MSPs over several days. This led to many signing Michelle Thomson’s motion on the benefits of peace education [see Sesame 250, page 22, for the text]. We hope this will be

debated soon, which will be timely amidst the continuing headlines about violence and non-attendance at school.

Ellis and Izzy of QPSW have built strong connections in Scotland, boosted by the events and a networking meeting at Edinburgh Meeting House. In particular, Ellis has done follow-on training for EIS [*the Educational Institute of Scotland: the largest teaching union*]; and participated in the IDEAS international development group for advocacy on global citizenship and peace education in Scotland.

I was also able to arrange meetings with MSPs to discuss peace education and other Quaker priorities. One with Ross Greer, the Green MSP, was particularly useful, as he was able to connect Ellis and me to Scottish Government officials responsible for creating a portal of materials for schools to use in their *Learning for Sustainability* lessons; peace education resources can be featured there.

Other than the debate we're hoping for, there is now less to be done on peace education at a parliamentary level, but there are still Quaker resources which might be of interest to Friends – please let me know if you'd like to know more about these. The peace education exhibition, which has now been shown across Scotland, is also still available for local meetings to host: contact Zoe Prosser, Local Development Worker: zoep@quaker.org.uk.

Human Rights

Another big piece of work (in cooperation with the PEWG and the Community Justice Working Group) was on our submission to the consultation on the Human Rights Bill. Now that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Bill has been reconsidered and passed, we expect the Equality, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee will have time to sift the responses to the consultation, so this will be a big part of my work this year.

Climate Emergency

I have also been involved in meetings with SCCS [*Stop Climate Chaos Scotland*] in relation to our climate justice priority, including a roundtable with Scottish Government officials on Hydrogen and Net Zero Emissions Technologies. It was interesting that SCCS particularly valued the voice of Quakers in this meeting: although it was on a technical matter, they felt it important to have people speaking from a lay perspective and particularly in relation to the importance of Truth and Integrity when considering the prospects of hydrogen playing a major part in Scotland's energy policy.

Another close ally in the climate space is Christian Aid, and we worked with them on an interfaith vigil during the Global Day of Action around COP28 in December.

I've also been working with QPSW colleagues from the Climate Justice team, particularly in relation to issues around Loss and Damage and Making Polluters Pay, on which the team have been focusing a lot of work, mostly through the Make Polluters Pay coalition and Faith for the Climate [See <https://makepolluterspay.co.uk/> and <https://faithfortheclimate.org.uk/>.]

As part of the Make Polluters Pay coalition, colleagues in the Westminster team secured the first ever parliamentary debate on loss and damage – see: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-09-05/debates/75DC9BB1-A3FA-4233-AC70-3E185B781ED4/ClimateFinanceTacklingLossAndDamage>

– and in November 2023 they held an event in Westminster at which MPs and peers could learn more about the issue and what they could do about it. The UK government has now pledged £60m to the international Loss and Damage Fund, following in the footsteps of Scotland’s pledge on loss and damage at COP26.

Democracy, truth and integrity

The other key focus of the Westminster public affairs team has been democracy, truth and integrity. Over recent years, Quakers and others have become increasingly concerned about threats to democracy in the UK, due to the rhetoric, policies and behaviour of politicians in Westminster. The public affairs team has been working to oppose policies and legislation that undermine democracy, as such as the Policing Act 2022, the Public Order Act 2023, and the ‘anti-boycott’ bill currently going through Parliament [see Sesame 249]. Quakers in Britain co-convenes a ‘Civil Society Voice’ network with Bond, the international development umbrella charity.

They are also working to promote the core values of truth and integrity that underpin our democracy. Grace Da Costa, Billy Vaughan and Oliver Robertson have spent the last year building relationships with stakeholders in this area: MPs, peers, academics, think tanks and other civil society groups. They have been using the Quaker method of quiet diplomacy to try and create safe spaces where people feel able to explore the problems and potential solutions. They held their first quiet diplomacy dinner in December 2023 and are planning to hold more in 2024. If you read *Quake!* or *Faith in Action* e-newsletters you’ll see updates on this work. [Both can be accessed at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters>]

Plans for 2024

Looking forward, there’s lots going on for Quakers to be involved in and for me to be doing. Part of the work of PEWG is to discern how we can be targeted and effective in particular areas – if we try to do everything, it is less likely to produce good results!

Climate

In the climate space, we hope that there will soon be the draft Climate Change Plan produced, followed by the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plans, into which I’ll be inputting along with SCCS partners.

I am also supporting Lesley Morrison and others in putting on an event for MSPs on 13 March. This builds on the Time for Reflection she gave to Parliament last year with the title ‘The Climate Crisis is a Health Crisis’. There will be a short film, various speakers and time for discussion, to consider how more climate friendly policies can lead to better health outcomes. As we found with *Wangari’s Trees*, Friends emailing their MSPs and

urging them to attend is really useful in increasing the number of MSPs we are able to reach with events. I will offer a draft email nearer the time.

Time for Reflection

I would also encourage Friends with words of wisdom to share to consider contacting your MSP to suggest a Time for Reflection to give to MSPs as Parliament opens each week. There is no obligation then to host an event on the topic, like Lesley! As mentioned, Lesley gave one last April; and in November, Martin Mansell gave a topical message on the theme of Peace [see page 43]. These and other times for reflection of different faith groups, are available on the Scottish Parliament website if you would like to see the sort of thing which could be appropriate.

Peace

In relation to peace work, we are trying to build some momentum after recent revelations about Scottish Enterprise funding going to companies supplying arms to Saudi Arabia. [See <https://theferret.scot/scottish-enterprise-criticised-human-rights-checks/>] Andrew Tomlinson and PEWG members had previously had meetings with the Minister for Trade on this; there is now a new Minister with whom we hope to meet to discuss the issue.

UK General Election

2024 will also bring the UK General Election. We might not get much notice of when it will be: the Prime Minister recently indicated it will likely be in October or November, but it might be brought forward depending on what happens at Westminster. As on previous occasions, the public affairs team at Quakers in Britain is coordinating national and local action to try to maximise Friends' influence. We are preparing materials for Quaker meetings and individuals to help explore key issues around the election and engage with local candidates, perhaps inviting them to Meetings for Worship or holding hustings either by yourselves or in collaboration with other groups.

If you're interested in updates on the wider Westminster work and on how you can play a part, please keep an eye on the *Quake!* weekly newsletter or *Faith in Action*.

A final thought

When SCCS spoke to First Minister Humza Yousaf last year, he asked for help: that all the SCCS partners get our individual members to make their voices heard on things they care about, particularly climate justice matters. It can be easy to wonder whether an email or a petition really matters; but in the face of lobbying from the fossil fuel and other polluting industries, and an often hostile media environment, it is really powerful for MSPs to feel they are doing the right thing and have their constituents behind them. I have set up a mailing list for any Scottish Friends wishing to receive a note on any issues where there is a request for signatories or feedback to go to MSPs on a particular topic.

(Sarah can be contacted at: sarahk@quaker.org.uk.)

Developing and funding the Edinburgh Meeting House

Sesame 250 (pages 9-10) carried an update from the working group which, over the last ten months, has examined the benefits and costs of maintaining our Meeting House. While affordability of the Meeting House has been a recurrent issue since we purchased it 37 years ago, large financial deficits during and after the pandemic increased concerns.

Below is the group's summary report and recommendations; it omits some detail of options considered that was in November's *Sesame*. It will be presented at Area Meeting and, we hope, widely discussed. The full 26-page report is available on request; contact **David Sterratt** or **Neil Turner**.

Purpose of the Meeting House

Despite the group's focus on finances, we are mindful that the Meeting House's purpose is to be a place of Quaker worship and witness.

In 2020, Trustees agreed with the following vision proposed by a subgroup of Management Committee:

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

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

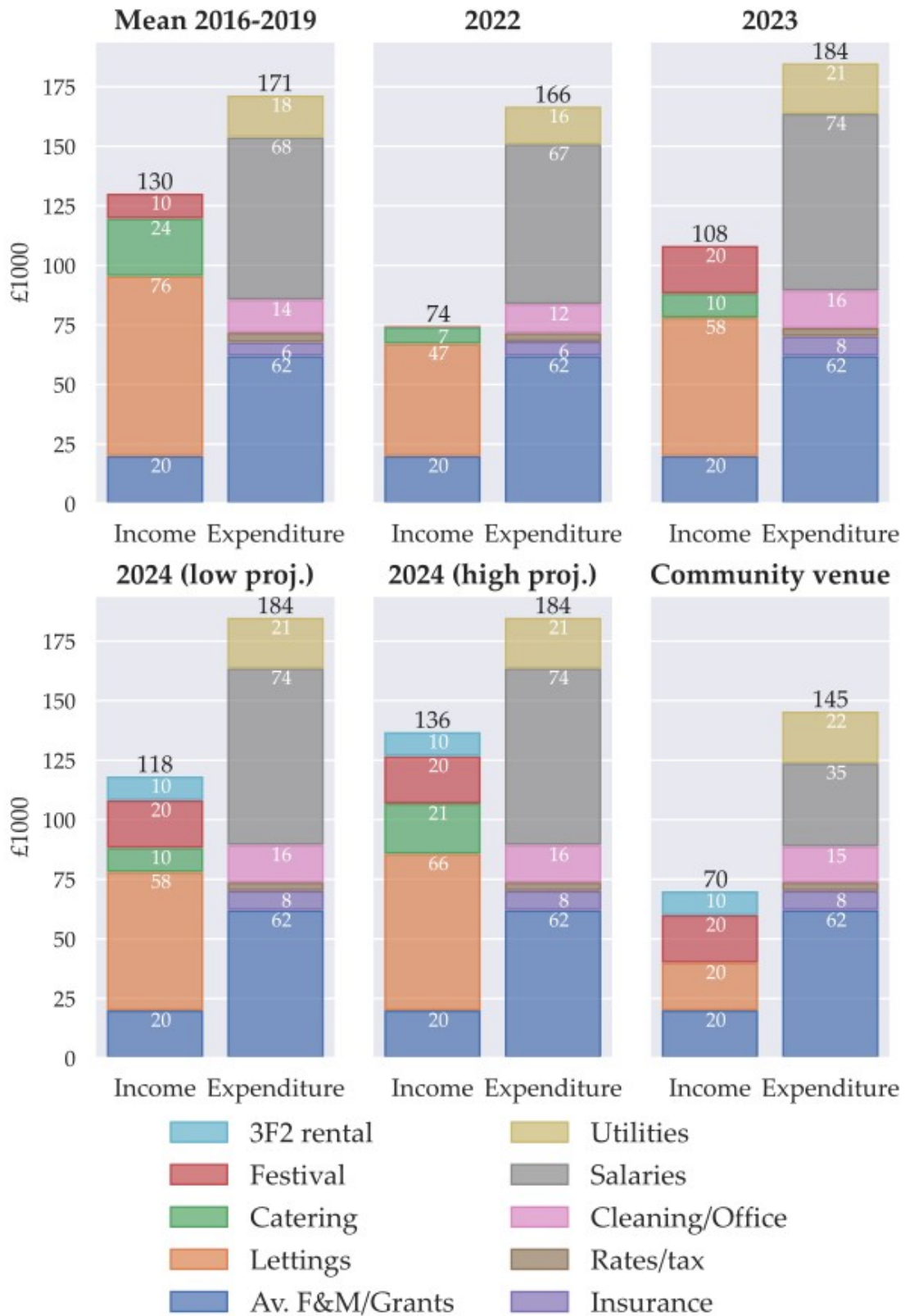
Area Meeting on 11 March 2023 heard of the value of the Meeting House to young Friends in building community, and the interest from Woodbrooke in adopting it as a 'Woodbrooke place' for regular learning events. AM encouraged Friends to bring ideas of potential like-minded partners to the Affordability Group and we were reminded of the need to locate our decisions in the context of the climate emergency, and that they should be rooted in building a community space to which people can relate.

Both the vision and the views of Area Meeting might be summarised as the Meeting House being a "Quaker home in the city".

Financial summary

The Meeting House running costs vary considerably from year to year, especially the fabric and maintenance costs, such as replacing the windows and replacing the roof. We estimated spend on fabric and maintenance in an average year and we use these annualised figures for fabric and maintenance (F&M) in this report. Apart from during the pandemic, other Meeting House costs are much less variable. We have adjusted all costs for inflation using the CPI-H index so that figures relate to 2023.

The bar charts overleaf show the historic Meeting House income and expenditure in the top row, and projected expenditure under various scenarios in the bottom row.



Historic Meeting House income and expenditure (top row) and projections (bottom row). Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2023 prices.

‘Av. F&M/Grants’: in Expenditure = averaged annual spend on fabric and maintenance costs (repairs and improvements). In the Income column, it indicates averaged grants received towards these purposes. Additional income from occasional special fund-raising appeals is not shown here.

The gap between income and expenditure averaged £41,000 between 2016 and 2019. It rose

to £92,000 in 2022, lessened a little in 2023 to £76,000. Estimates for 2024 are between £48,000 and £66,000, similar to the years before the pandemic. For the 'community venue' scenario (see text) the gap is estimated at £75,000.

We can see that:

- In an average year, we would expect to spend about £60,000 on F&M, but get back £20,000 in grants, so about £40,000 net on F&M.
- Before the pandemic, in an average good year (such as **2016 to 2019**), excluding F&M, Meeting House income balanced running costs, including the AM Insurance policy which also covers Kelso and general Quaker activities in South East Scotland.
- The 2020 and 2021 figures are not shown, because of the anomaly of the pandemic.
- The **2022** and **2023** figures show a recovery in lettings and catering, though not yet to pre-pandemic levels. Energy prices have risen, and staffing has risen due to the recovery in lettings and catering (though it is still below its historic high value in 2019).
- Future scenarios assume rental income of £10,000 from flat 3F2 Upper Bow (formerly occupied by a residential assistant warden), though it will be 2025 before upfront costs are paid off.
- In 2024, assuming a return to 2016-2019 levels of lettings catering, and assuming current energy prices (the **2024 high projection** scenario), we would be close to covering day-to-day expenditure from income. Management committee is experimenting with increasing prices on busy days of the week, which may help.
- However, we are still looking at needing to raise, on average, around £45,000 a year to be good stewards of the building fabric, and to make the Meeting House "an excellent place for meetings". Money for larger repair and enhancement work would come from applying for grants and fund-raising, e.g. special ap-peals. We assume that local Friends would be responsible for this work, but professional fundraisers could be employed at some cost.
- If we did not own and maintain the Meeting House, we would have to spend money on hiring premises for Meetings for Worship and other Quaker activities. Our estimates suggest this might cost from £10,000 - £25,000, depending on how much Quaker use or presence in the city we assume.
- We've also included a more pessimistic **2024 low projection** scenario.
- The **Community venue** scenario assumes community groups could access the Meeting House as keyholders, without paid staff on duty. The figures in this scenario assume we have approximately one paid member of staff, that we have no catering income and the lettings income goes down significantly (assuming little use of the building in the daytime by community groups). There would also be the problem of emergency lift operation.

Options considered

In summary, the group considered the following options:

Selling or letting our property. Discussion with Friends in South East Scotland and more widely suggested that sale of Edinburgh 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 having been made to out of hours call arrangements.

Heating costs and sustainability. We would like to reduce our energy consumption, and to improve the building's warmth and ventilation. Grants may be available that could partially cover improvements, but our analysis suggested that long-term financial savings will be small, so it would take a considerable time to recover costs of the work. However we probably still want to do this, and are investigating 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 letting the Bow Room (as happened up to the early 2000s), 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 could fall 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 premises? This is certainly *not* possible for the more profitable ones that require catering. Due to needing trained staff to operate the lift in case of emergency, it would not be possible for the Meeting House to remain a fully accessible venue for community groups, which tend to use the building in the evenings. There does not seem to be a way to make substantial savings here.

Other savings. We have looked at items beyond staff, repairs and maintenance, and energy costs, but we have not identified opportunities for substantial savings.

More and/or more valuable lettings. Pre-COVID we were approaching 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.

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.

Reconfiguration, particularly of the 1st floor kitchen, study (formerly the Creche), toilet and kitchen store in order to make more space, either for ad hoc lets or long-term tenants. However, it is difficult to let these spaces

independently because the access from the rest of the meeting house is via the Library.

A 'home' for Quakers. We have started to explore changes to the ground floor layout to make the Meeting House more welcoming to Quakers whether local or visiting, and also for non-Quaker visitors, for outreach, and to make the premises more attractive to those hiring rooms.

A café. We have considered a café on the ground floor, possibly as a further usable space in the evenings when the café itself is closed. We would envisage renting part of the foyer and possibly other parts of the ground floor to an external operator.

- If carefully integrated with the Quaker presence on the ground floor, the café could act as an outreach space, and make the ground floor more welcoming.
- However, depending on how much of the ground floor we devoted to the café, we might lose the current office and Bow Room space, and we do not have a plan for where they might be resited. 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 café could limit future use of the building by Fringe companies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have determined that in an average year, running and maintaining the Meeting House costs the Area Meeting around £55,000 (£48,000-66,000) net. In most years, we spend less than the average amount on the Meeting House, but in a few years with major repairs, we spend much more.

Covering these costs will continue to require intermittent fund-raising appeals and grant applications.

Lowering this annual requirement significantly would likely entail substantial change to adapt and improve the Meeting House.

Our recommendations are that we (Area Meeting) should:

1. Keep and develop the Meeting House as a Quaker home and presence in the city.
2. Invest in any remaining easy environmental upgrades, including energy-efficient lighting.
3. Continue to investigate incremental improvements to insulation and upgrading the heating system.
4. Continue to urge Friends to consider the costs of running the Meeting House when considering their Quaker giving, including in legacies. Friends' ongoing contributions to the Area Meeting make a difference!
5. Continue to work on ways of using the Meeting House to raise the profile of Quakers.

6. Encourage Meeting House Management Committee to seek to increase high volume, high income lettings.
7. Investigate the suggestion of incorporating a café on the ground floor further, addressing the previous two points, and the idea that the meeting house could feel more of a home. In particular two options:
 - (a) A pop-up café in the existing Foyer space, requiring minimal reconfiguration of the building
 - (b) A café occupying more of the ground floor (including perhaps the Bow Room and Office), which would probably include reconfiguration upstairs, most likely in the kitchen and study area.
 Both should be evaluated on income generation, benefits to Quakers, outreach, capital costs, and any change in utility to Quakers.

Group members

David Sterratt (*Convener; former convener of Management Committee*), **Miranda Girdlestone** (*Meeting House Manager*), **Henry Thompson** (*Convener of Management Committee*), **Rachel Fitzgerald** (*Portobello & Musselburgh LM, Manager of Augustine United Church*), **Phil Lucas** (*Former Meeting House Manager, Trustee, and Management Committee member*), **Jacqueline Noltingk** (*AM Treasurer, Trustee, and Management Committee member*), **Neil Turner** (*Clerk to Trustees*)

Incorporating ecocide into Scots law – for what purpose and how?

The Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS) is hosting an online discussion of this topic on Wednesday 17 January. At least one Friend is hoping to attend, but the event is now full. There is still time, however, to respond to the **public consultation** on Monica Lennon's proposals for criminalising wanton or reckless damage to the environment; 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 consultation is open until **Friday 9 February**. If legislation is enacted, Scotland will be the first jurisdiction on earth in which ecocide is a crime.

THE BOOK OF MEMBERS & ATTENDERS

lists members of the four Area Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Scotland, and non-members who are in regular contact with one of our Local Meetings; it also lists the current holders of roles such as Clerk, Elder, and Pastoral Friend (formerly *Overseer*). It is assumed readers of *Sesame* will have access to a copy.

Timmon Wallis – *WARHEADS TO WINDMILLS: Preventing Climate Catastrophe and Nuclear War*, Indispensable Press, pbk, 362 pp. ISBN 979-8-218-31954-0, £13.99 (also available as an eBook, at £8.99) was published on 15 December. It asks: *Can we 'feed two birds with one scone' by converting assets from nuclear weapons of mass extinction to evidence-based climate solutions?* Awful pun; important question.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Ukrainians and the New Scots Strategy: an update

Lynne Barty represents General Meeting for Scotland on Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees and was the project lead of Fàilte Edinburgh, the group which, under the Home Office Community Sponsorship scheme and on behalf of South East Scotland AM, supported a family of Syrian refugees during their first year in Edinburgh. She writes:

THE CRISIS of the asylum system continues with the current backlog estimated at around 140,000 cases. The percentage of cases heard within six months has fallen, and most claimants are looking at an estimated waiting time of two to three years. The Government is now putting an effort into clearing the backlog by passing some asylum claims more quickly, but this is forcing successful applicants into homelessness as they are allowed only seven days in which to leave their hotels and make other arrangements.

There are currently over 5,000 asylum seekers in Scotland accommodated in hotels. This is due partly to the chronic shortage of low-cost housing, but also to the UK Government's policy of cutting costs and trying to deter those arriving 'illegally.' According to **Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees** (SFAR) there are now seventeen hotels currently being deployed, including two in Edinburgh, and one each in Bathgate and Falkirk.

At one of the Edinburgh hotels, 125 people are expected to share 62 bedrooms, most of which do not have their own bathroom. Edinburgh City Council protested about this change of UK Government policy (the 'hotel maximisation policy') but their concerns were overridden.

As reported in the *Edinburgh Evening News* on 4 October, one councillor has raised 'significant safeguarding concerns' with the Council about the Learmonth and Piries hotels being used to host so many unrelated adults in accommodation with few or no amenities. Asylum seekers are provided with three meals a day and a personal allowance of £9.50 a week. They are not allowed to seek employment. In a welcome announcement, the Scottish Government has recently committed to providing £2 million towards free public transport for all asylum seekers from next April. This decision was influenced by the strong statement of support from the **Scottish Religious Leaders Forum**, joining a campaign led by the Maryhill Integration Network in Glasgow. David Moodie, Co-ordinator of SFAR said: "This policy ... will allow people to attend important appointments, access services that benefit their wellbeing and to travel to places of worship."

Meanwhile the Scotland-specific 'Super Sponsor Scheme', which since the 2022 invasion has enabled Ukrainians to stay in the UK, is winding down. Payment was offered to families for hosting Ukrainians in their homes but this is due to run out in March, 2024. There have been around 26,000

arrivals here, proportionally the highest number in the UK, although the actual number of Ukrainians resident in Scotland is now lower due to the freedom of movement they enjoy.

Legally, Ukrainians are not refugees: they have been provided with three-year visas which will expire in March 2025. The Ukrainian community is naturally concerned about what will happen then if the war continues. Nothing has been announced, due in part to the Ukrainian Government's concern about large numbers of Ukrainians remaining abroad indefinitely. Both the ferries that were used for housing Ukrainians in Glasgow and Edinburgh have now been decommissioned but hotel rooms are still widely deployed with 1,595 rooms currently in use. Saturday 24 February will mark the second anniversary of the invasion. There is some concern about the 15,000 visas that have been granted to Ukrainians who have not (yet) travelled to Scotland but who may decide to do so, mainly because of the severe lack of available accommodation, particularly in Edinburgh.

The **Methodist Church** is involved in activities to help the refugees based at an hotel in Erskine. Congregations have collected clothes and toiletries to donate there and have liaised with other denominations in the area.

The **Catholic Church** is represented on the Cross-Party Group for Migration. Their representative has continued to visit refugee hotels in Scotland, developing helpful contacts and attempting to gain entry. (I was unable to access Piries Hotel when delivering a Warm Space poster – there was no doorbell and no-one apparently, on duty. I had no difficulty, however, at the Learmonth Hotel where I had a cordial chat with the person on duty in the brightly-lit hallway. Both establishments are run by the Mears Group.)

The **Church of Scotland** has been exploring the possibility of a pilot project to refurbish several manses with money from the Scottish Government in order to house Ukrainians. If successful, more unused Kirk property could be adapted in the same way. The current Moderator will travel to London to meet with the Prime Minister and other leading politicians later this year to discuss their response to the Illegal Migration Act.

The revised version of the Scottish Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (referred to as 'New Scots 3') will be rolled out from June, with an overarching strategy document to be unveiled in March. See: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/>

Engagement Meetings were held in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen and online to discuss the direction it could take including a greater recognition of the role of faiths other than Christianity in Scotland. The (five-hour) Edinburgh event was on 7 November, with various speakers and some fairly short round-table discussions in between.

Of greater interest was a subsequent all-day event – *New Scots: Strength through Partnership Edinburgh Gathering*, organised by Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) and held at Hibernian FC on 14 November.

Alistair Dinnie, from the City Council, gave a useful summary of the different groups of refugees and asylum seekers arriving and/or living in the city. They include: 602 Syrians, plus the five families supported by Community Sponsorship groups like Fàilte Edinburgh; 234 Afghans; 11,000 Ukrainians of which it is thought some 3000 are currently resident; and 86 adults and 14 children of uncertain status, 149 unaccompanied minors, and about 90 other asylum seekers – expected to double by early 2024. The true number, he said, is certainly higher.

It quickly became clear that two critical shortages in Edinburgh inhibiting the Council's best endeavours are **accommodation** (there is *no* social housing available except for emergency placements) and **lack of ESOL provision** [*ESOL = English for speakers of other languages*]. We were told that on that day alone 5000 families were in temporary accommodation, 1490 of them in unsuitable flats, and that the waiting list for permanent housing is ten years. It is a problem that has been brewing over the last decade due to lack of planning and investment, not because the city is being flooded with refugees and asylum seekers. The shortage of suitably qualified ESOL teachers mirrors the shortage of other specialist support staff both in schools and FE Colleges.

Meanwhile **Fàilte Edinburgh** completed its Community Sponsorship project with a party for the family and volunteers which was held at 7 Victoria Terrace in September and a final review meeting with the Home Office in mid-November. We hope to visit them later this month to wish them well for 2024.

*The website of Scottish Faiths Actions for Refugees is <https://www.sfar.org.uk/>.
The newspaper report cited can be read in full at:*

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/people/fears-over-unsuitable-edinburgh-city-centre-hotels-being-used-to-host-asylum-seekers-4358406>

MEMORIAL MEETINGS

ISOBEL KHAN of Central Edinburgh died on 22 November last year; there will be a memorial meeting for her on **Saturday 2 March at 10.30 am** at the Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, with refreshments afterwards. She died in hospital at the age of 98; her body has been cremated and her daughter plans to take the ashes to India. Isobel and Kabir were part of Central Edinburgh Meeting over many years and were much loved.

SUE FRESHWATER of South Edinburgh died on 6 December last year; there will be a memorial meeting for her on **Friday 9 February at 3.00 pm** at the Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, with tea and cakes afterwards. Following her wishes, Sue was cremated in the simplest of funerals, which took place at Clyde Coast & Garnock Valley Crematorium; her ashes were scattered there and a sapling has been planted in her memory.

EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY WITH QUAKERS 2024

A LONGSIDE the Woodbrooke sessions planned for 2024 [*see page 38*], these philosophical discussions will form a complementary series. Very little overlap is anticipated. The Woodbrooke sessions will explore different aspects of Quakerism; 'Exploring Spirituality' will have a wider scope, including that of spirituality as experienced by other faiths.

WHAT: a series of ten philosophical discussion sessions.

WHEN: once a month from 11 February to 8 December 2024, excluding August: on the second Sunday of the month (except in May, it will be the third Sunday, 19 May) at 13.00 – 14.30 hours.

WHERE: the Meeting Room (second floor) of the Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2JL.

FOR WHOM: Quakers and others who wish to explore, or share their experience of, spirituality.

HOW: In order to help to gauge numbers, please book for the first session, during the week 1-8 February 2024, by giving your name and contact details to **ANNIE MILLER** [whose details are in the Book of Members].

SUGGESTED PROTOCOLS, which should be agreed by all:

- The sessions will begin and end with a few minutes of silence.
- They are opportunities for individuals to explore or share their personal experiences and beliefs. This can lead to a very private sharing, which should not be quoted, or discussed outside of the group.
- No one should try to change another individual's ideas or beliefs.
- Respect for other members of the group is essential.
- Only one person to speak at a time.
- No-one to speak for more than five minutes until everyone has had a chance to contribute, and then for no more than another five minutes – so that no-one dominates the group.
- No-one should quote long spiels from their gurus or teachers.

EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY WITH QUAKERS 2024 THE PROGRAMME

11 February

A. The Source: Who is your God?

10 March

B. Spirituality: What do we mean by a 'Spiritual Dimension' to Life?
Survival after death
Voluntary euthanasia

14 April

C. Resurrection in the same body, or reincarnation in a new body?
Karma

19 May

D. Why might Spirits become incarnate? What purpose?

The Meaning of Life? Identity? Who decides? Free Will? Enjoy Life?

9 June

- E. Body, Mind and Spirit
The Role of Psychology, the Role of Emotions
Personal Growth
Ego, Super-Ego
Creativity

14 July

- F. The Practice of Spiritual Discernment: Meditation
Mindfulness
Spiritual Healing
Mystical Experience

8 September

- G. Ethics – How might our Spiritual Awareness affect our Lives?
– Do our beliefs influence our Lives or our Spirits?

13 October

- H. Forgiveness: What is Forgiveness? Why Forgive?
Whom does it help more – Forgiver or Forgiven?

10 November

- I. Can a Spiritual Dimension be detected by Scientific Method?
What Theory? What Assumptions? What Hypotheses? What Evidence?

8 December

- J. Esoterica is the Study of Religion and Spirituality.
What have we read/heard/watched that has helped us on our way?

EACOP update

Pressure on investors in the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline and their insurers (see *Sesame* 247) has had an effect: construction is now running a year late. In Uganda, Students Against EACOP (<https://studentsagainsteacop.org/>) have presented petitions and staged protests – the latter met by police violence. Four students were detained after a demonstration in October at Kyambogo University, but later released; another seven, who were initially denied food or medical treatment after being arrested and beaten for protesting outside Parliament in Kampala, are still in prison, and have been joined by four more, arrested at a march expressing solidarity with them. Ugandan media are banned from reporting criticism of EACOP, but some opposition parliamentarians have come out against the project.

In the UK, those supporting the campaign against EACOP include Just Stop Oil (<https://juststopoil.org/>), and XR (<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/>). The Scottish direct action group This is Rigged (<https://www.thisisrigged.org/>) is focused on putting pressure on the Scottish Government to do more on the climate crisis.

(With thanks to Janet Saunders for passing this on.)

Israel/Gaza

Members of South Edinburgh Local Meeting met Ian Murray MP on 15 December, to discuss Gaza, the British supply of arms to Israel, and refugees. Ian Robertson introduced the topic; this edited version of what Ian shared is his own personal view.

The irony of the appalling Hamas attack on 7 October was that many of the residents of the nearby kibbutzim who were its victims had worked for peace with Palestinians. I visited Sderot, a town just a few kilometres from Gaza, and met Israeli Jews who were doing so, and regularly took Palestinians from there to Israeli hospitals. (We saw on TV how one of the first hostages to be released shook hands with the Hamas paramedic who accompanied her on her release.) These Israelis working for peace belong to a host of active Israeli civic organizations: Breaking the Silence, Combatants for Peace, Refuser Solidarity Network, B'Tselem, Women in Black and others.

On the other hand, in the occupied West Bank, armed settlers seem to have a free hand to intimidate, brutalize, take over land and even kill Palestinians. These two behaviours are the extremes of a deeply divided society. Members of the coalition government give cover to the militant settlers. Both Hamas and the Israeli government have been hijacked by fanatics.

It has become increasingly clear, even within Israel, that the government has created an apartheid state. I have visited and travelled in the occupied West Bank and the separation is total; separate roads, separate water supplies, and checkpoints everywhere, requiring passes. In Gaza, despite assertions to the contrary, the behaviour of the Israeli armed forces in cutting off water, electricity, fuel, food and medical supplies, and using “dumb” bombs that cannot be targeted, indicates that Israel is committed to finishing what it started in 1948 – the ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. What the bombs do not do, disease and starvation will.

Amid all this agony the US, the EU and the UK have been slow to urge restraint on Israel's onslaught, and with little effect. No international body has put forward any positive programme for the ‘day after.’ The two-state solution has been effectively undermined. Little or no press or diplomatic attention have been given to the One Democratic State Campaign, led by Palestinian civic society with support from progressive Jews. This campaign calls for an abolition of the apartheid system and civil rights for all citizens in historic Palestine: Jews, Muslims, Christians and other minorities†. This may seem like a utopian fantasy after the recent brutalities by Hamas and the current brutalities by the IDF. Yet who would have thought in 1960, when the Anti-Apartheid Movement was founded, that South Africa would have democratic elections without going through a violent revolution; but that it would take 34 years!

* Ilan Pappé – *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, 2nd edn, 2007

† Jeff Halper – *Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine*, Pluto Press, 2021

(Both books are available in paperback or eBook format; both authors are Israeli Jews.)

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

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

2023/11/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship, which has included our children, our reflections have been on the diversity of our meetings. Those in the room have made clay models representing ourselves in our diversity. We have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 23.10: "We need both a deeper spirituality and a more outspoken witness...".

[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*]

2023/11/14 Closing minute

59 Friends (40 members, 10 attenders, 8 children and 1 visitor) have been at all or part of this meeting, either in person or by Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 23 adults 2 children	Central Fife 1	East Lothian 5 adults 2 children	Kelso 2	Penicuik 1
Polmont 4 adults 2 children	Portobello & Musselburgh 9	South Edinburgh 5 adults 2 children	Tweeddale -	Visitors/Others 1

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

We next meet on Monday 15 January 2024 at 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh at 7.00 pm.

(Signed)
Alastair Cameron, Clerk
Cath Dyer, Assistant Clerk

Following Alastair Cameron in October 2019 and Lesley Morrison in April last year (see Sesame 226 & 247), **Martin Mansell** (West Scotland AM) led 'Time for Reflection' at the Scottish Parliament on 28 November 2023. His short presentation can be viewed online at: <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/time-for-reflection-november-28-2023>

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 – 4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm, meeting in Friends' homes. Contact **Tony Gross** or **Rufus Reade** for further information..

Penicuik – February venue to be confirmed: contact penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.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 – available if requested in advance – for 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 7.30 pm (online only). Meeting for worship (30 mins) followed by chat.