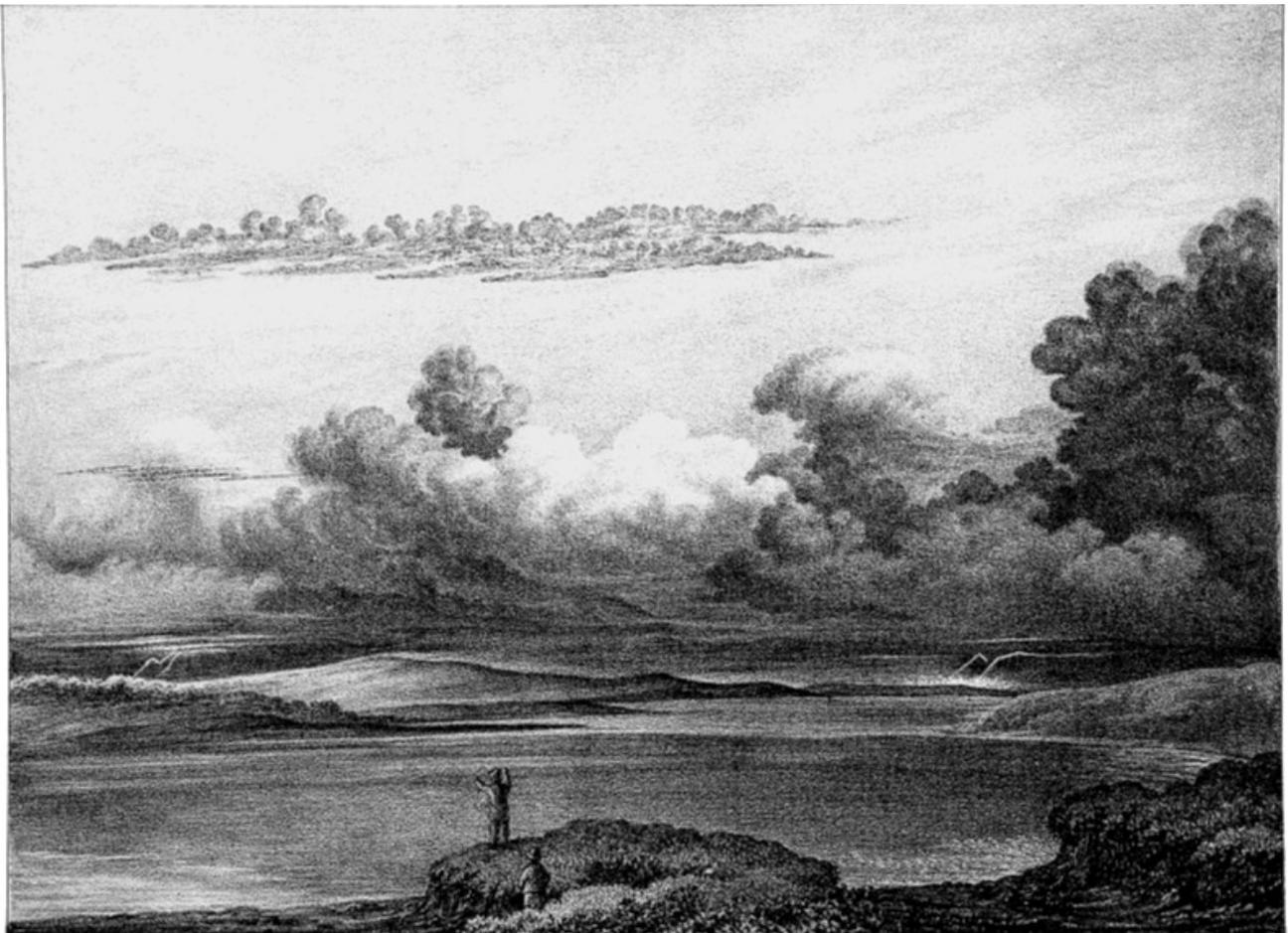


SESAME

Number 254: May 2024

AM on 7 May/Special GM, 6 April/David Hume *on Fox, Nayler & Friends generally*//Christian Aid Week + *other events*/International Conscientious Objectors Day/A Vision for Peace *in Israel & Palestine*/Climate Justice – *recent cases*/Prison Abolition/Global Days of Action on Military Spending/QPSW event in York/HELP! – *accommodation urgently needed*/March Minutes/ ... & c.



*Forms assumed by clouds when gathering for a thunderstorm; the frontispiece to Luke Howard's *Essay on the Modifications of Clouds* (1865 edition) – see overleaf.*

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Tuesday 7 May at 7.00 pm, in person at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL, and on Zoom.

There is no need to register in advance; the Zoom link will be open from 6.45 pm.

The draft agenda is opposite. Please let me know as soon as possible if other items should be included. A note of the nominations (item 10) will be sent out a couple of days before the meeting. Among other things, we'll be hearing a report on the Tabular Statement – the annual Quaker census.

All are welcome at Area Meeting who have a connection to Quakers in South East Scotland – you don't have to be a member. As this is an evening meeting, there will be no children's programme.

Alastair Cameron
Clerk

The Quakers Robert Howard (1739-1812), and his more famous son Luke (1772-1864), were mentioned in Sesame 252; in 1803, Luke Howard, a pharmacist, and later an industrial chemist, devised the classification system for clouds which has been used ever since. The illustration on the cover comes from the extended version of his essay, and shows clouds observed in March 1849. His note on them reads:

A sky full of specimens of the peculiar forms assumed by clouds when gathering for a *Thunderstorm*. (The dense clouds in front, though characteristic as *forms*, are not enough shrouded in a gloomy distance.) The *Nimbus* behind, on the left, is better placed, and shows crossed, as is at times the case, by a dense *Cirro-stratus*. The *Cirro-cumulus*, next above, is highly characteristic in its structure; and the large, dense *Cirrus* above belongs equally to approaching *Thunder*. L. H.

In 1825 Luke Howard fell out with Friends, and he formally resigned from the Society in 1836, being baptised by Isaac Crewdson, another former Quaker, into the Plymouth Brethren in 1837. There must, however, have been some sort of reconciliation, for at his death, at the age of 91, he was interred at the burial ground attached to the Friends Meeting House at Winchmore Hill, in Enfield, north London.

The 1865 edition of Essay on the Modifications of Clouds includes five poems by Goethe; four on cloud types, as classified by Howard, and a longer introductory one, in praise of his achievement in distinguishing and naming them, which was written

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 23 March 2024
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Wiston weekend 2024* (2024/03/06.5 refers) [see page 13]
 2. *Ecocide* (2024/03/06.6)
4. Membership matters:
 1. *Application*
 2. *Report on membership visit*
 3. *Transfer*
5. Matters from local meetings
6. Tabular statement 2023
7. Financial matters
8. General Meeting matters
 1. *Progress on Quakers in Scotland proposal* [see page 4]
9. Reports and correspondence
 1. *Young Friends General Meeting*
 2. *Meeting House Management Committee*
10. Appointments: from Nominations Committee
11. Closing minute

at the behest of Johann Christian Hüttner (1766-1847) of the [British] Foreign Office, who had translated the others, and who transmitted Goethe's admiration to Howard himself. (He took it at first to be a hoax.) This is Stratus, with Hüttner's version:

<p>Wenn von dem stillen Wasserspiegel-Plan Ein Nebel hebt den flachen Teppich an, Der Mond, dem Wallen des Erscheins vereint, Als ein Gespenst Gespenster bildend scheint, Dann sind wir alle, das gestehn wir nur, Erquickt', erfreute Kinder, o Natur!</p> <p>Dann hebt sich's wohl am Berge, sammlend breit An Streife Streifen, so umdürstert's weit Die Mittelhöhe, beidem gleich geneigt Ob's fallend wässert, oder luftig steigt.</p>	<p><i>When o'er the silent bosom of the sea The cold mist hangs like a stretch'd canopy; And the moon, mingling there her shadowy beams, A spirit, fashioning other spirits seems;</i></p> <p><i>We feel, in moments pure and bright as this, The joy of innocence, the thrill of bliss.</i></p> <p><i>Then towering up in the darkening mountain's side, And spreading as it rolls its curtains wide, It mantles round the mid-way height, and there It sinks in water-drops, or soars in air.</i></p>
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Luke Howard's sons, who edited this posthumous edition, included only the German, "because the simple beauty of the original is for the most part completely lost in the attempt to render it in English verse"; bilingual readers may judge if they were right.

General Meeting for Scotland

Special Online Session – Saturday 6 April

More than a hundred Friends were at all or part of the special session to consider the future organisation of the Society in Scotland.

The ‘Celtic knot’ image of a meeting’s functioning both as an ‘event’ and as a ‘community’, in which the elements of ‘witness’, ‘housekeeping’ and ‘community’ all overlap in ‘worship’ (which some readers will remember from the report of the STIR Group in 2016 – see *Sesame 201*), was offered by the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group (QiS CG) as being as relevant to General Meeting as to an Area Meeting:



It was generally liked, although the implication in the presentation that membership is an *administrative* matter rather than a spiritual one was challenged – Michael Hutchinson commented drily that it was not for him as Clerk to say he agreed with the Friend who had raised it.

The Coordinating Group’s presentation was discussed in small groups and then in a worship sharing session of the full meeting. It had been said at the outset that no decision would be made today; three of the four Area Meetings had approved the draft Governing Document with only South East Scotland believing it “not yet ready” and in need of more work. It had been noted that “*some Friends remain uncertain of the wisdom of proceeding to form a single body while certain matters remain unresolved*” (a phrase from our own minute 24/02/06). As one Friend put it, “the *only* place we should be making important decisions ... is in a gathered Meeting ... for Church Affairs,” and it is not clear how well the proposal would ensure this – if at all.

General Meeting’s lengthy minute read in part:

No structure will be perfect, but it can be ‘good enough’ and the trefoil diagram is a helpful tool to assist us in thinking things through. We can look to harnessing the spirit of excitement and opportunity we have felt today in seeking to

work together more flexibly as 'Quakers in Scotland'. Spiritual nurture and pastoral care will be the basis of the way we support our communities. Greater flexibility may become apparent through the way we look at our currently overlapping geographical boundaries. We need, though, to recognise and respect the range of diversity within our AMs. There will be costs and benefits in the process of change and we need be aware of these to ensure the benefits outweigh any detriments. If we find the process feels too complex, we can reflect on our testimony to simplicity to bring us back to where we need to be. Structures need clear purpose and responsibilities, and to be anchored in the needs of the community.

Whilst work on the draft Governing Document will continue, we are not able to proceed in setting up the new charity until further work has been undertaken by QiS CG in response to the minutes received. We are clear we wish to work in unity with each other as Area Meetings and General Meeting, and to take the opportunities given us for thinking through the way we form Quaker communities in Scotland.

We ask the Co-ordinating Group to take note of the issues raised here today and from the Area Meeting minutes and bring us proposals both for our future potential governance and how Friends within Scotland can work in community – ie the 'charity' and the 'church' aspects. The Co-ordinating group will be looking to Friends across Scotland for their input to this work.

Kate Gulliver of QiS CG has briefed us on the revision of the draft Governing Document for a 'Quakers in Scotland'. She has explained how this continues and referred to the reasons for a SCIO giving us the best model for the proposed charity. Friends are encouraged to contact the Co-ordinating Group if they have further queries or comments on the draft Governing Document.

In all of this process, we need to be ready to listen to the still, small voice of the Spirit calling us. We have come back again to the trefoil diagram, which has inspired us.

Waiting is a spiritual discipline that improves our listening and makes us ready for the way that opens. We wish to revitalise our 'tired institutions' so we can carry out our ministry in witness and community, always through the primacy of worship. We must trust each other in moving forward to find a new vision for our future.

We are grateful for the work of Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group: their insights and discernment are valued.

The next session of General Meeting will be at Glasgow on 8 June.

Sesame 253 included the text of West Scotland AM's minute on Race and Privilege, forwarded to General Meeting last year, in which the work of the charity Refuweege was commended to Friends. A 'photo-essay' on this work is at

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/apr/21/wet-weather-but-a-warm-welcome-at-glasgow-refuweege-a-photo-essay>

“So singular as to merit some attention ...”

In his own lifetime, David Hume (1711-1776) was better known for his History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Revolution in 1688, than for his philosophical writings. He began work on it after his appointment as Keeper of the Advocates' Library in 1752, his ambitions for a university career in Scotland having been frustrated by his notorious scepticism, and the first volume appeared in 1754. Completed in 1763, it was revised and reissued several times – the extract below is from the edition of 1767. Although Voltaire described it as “the best written in any language”, it is probably now usually thought of as merely the ‘Tory’ history to which Macaulay’s History of England (1848) was the Whiggish counterblast. (Hume himself disowned the party label.) Both works are disparaging of Quakers in general and George Fox in particular, although Macaulay went very much further, being concerned to blacken William Penn, a supporter of James II & VII, by casting aspersions on his honesty and integrity. Hume, on the other hand, does not mention Penn at all; and his condescending picture of Friends at least acknowledges some virtues. (This passage is from Volume VII, Chapter LXII: pages 341-346.)

WE have had occasion, in the course of this work, to speak of many of the sects, which prevailed in England: To enumerate them all would be impossible. The quakers, however, are so considerable, at least so singular, as to merit some attention; and as they entirely by principle renounced the use of arms, they never made such a figure in public transactions as to enter into any part of our narration.

THE religion of the quakers began with the lowest vulgar, and, in its progress, came at last to comprehend people of better quality and fashion. George Fox, born at Drayton in Lancashire [sic – *it is in Leicestershire*] in 1624, was the founder of this sect. He was the son of a weaver, and was himself bound apprentice to a shoemaker. Feeling a stronger turn towards spiritual contemplations than towards that mechanical profession, he left his master, and went about the country, cloathed in a leathern doublet, a dress, which he long affected, as well for its singularity as its cheapness. That he might wean himself entirely from sublunary objects, he broke off all connexions with his friends and family, and never stayed a moment in one place; lest habitude should beget new connexions and depress the sublimity of his aerial meditations. He frequently wandered into the woods, and passed whole days in hollow trees, without other company or amusement than his bible. Having reached that pitch of perfection that he needed no other book, he soon advanced to another state of spiritual progress, and began to pay less regard even to that divine composition itself. His own breast, he imagined, was full of the same inspiration, which had guided the prophets and apostles themselves; and by this inward light must every spiritual obscurity be cleared, by this living spirit must the dead letter be animated.

WHEN he had been sufficiently consecrated in his own imagination, he felt that the fumes of self-applause soon dissipate, if not continually supplied by the admiration of others; and he began to seek proselytes. Proselytes were easily gained, at a time when all mens affections were turned towards religion, and when the most extravagant modes of it were sure to be the most popular. All the forms of ceremony, invented by pride and ostentation, Fox and his disciples, from a superior pride and ostentation, carefully rejected: Even the ordinary rites of civility were shunned, as the nourishment of carnal vanity and self-conceit. They would bestow no titles of distinction: The name of *friend* was the only salutation, with which they indiscriminately accosted every one. To no person would they make a bow, or move their hat, or give any signs of reverence. Instead of that affected adulation, introduced into modern tongues, of speaking to individuals as if they were a multitude, they returned to the simplicity of antient languages; and *thou* and *thee* were the only expressions, which, on any consideration, they could be brought to employ.

DRESS too, a most material circumstance, distinguished members of this sect. Every superfluity and ornament was carefully retrenched: No plaits to their coat, no buttons to their sleeve: No lace, no ruffles, no embroidery. Even a button to the hat, though sometimes useful, yet not being always so, was universally rejected by them with horror and indignation.

THE violent enthusiasm of this sect, like all high passions, being too strong for the weak nerves to sustain, threw the preachers into convulsions, and shakings, and distortions in their limbs; and they thence received the denomination of *quakers*. Amidst the great toleration, which was then granted to all sects, and even encouragement given to all innovation, this sect alone suffered persecution. From the fury of their zeal, the quakers broke into churches, disturbed public worship, and harassed the minister and audience with railing and reproaches. When carried before a magistrate, they refused him all reverence, and treated him with the same familiarity as if he had been their equal. Sometimes they were thrown into mad-houses, sometimes into prison: Sometimes whipped, sometimes pilloryed. The patience and magnanimity, with which they suffered, begot compassion, admiration, esteem. A supernatural spirit was believed to support them under those sufferings, which the ordinary state of humanity, freed from the illusions of passion, is unable to maintain.

THE quakers crept into the army: But as they preached universal peace, they seduced the military zealots from their profession, and would soon, had they been suffered, have put an end, without any defeat or calamity, to the dominion of the saints [i.e. *the Cromwellian regime*]. These attempts became a fresh ground of persecution, and a new cause for their progress among the people.

MORALS with this sect were carried, or were affected to be carried, to the same degree of extravagance as religion. Give a quaker a blow on one

cheek, he held up the other: Ask his cloke, he gave you his coat also: The greatest interest could not engage him, in any court of judicature, to swear even to the truth: He never asked more for his wares than the precise sum, which he was determined to accept. This last maxim is laudable, and continues to be religiously observed by that sect.

NO fanatics ever carried further the hatred of ceremonies, forms, orders, rites, institutions. Even baptism and the Lord's supper, by all other sects believed to be interwoven with the very vitals of christianity, were disdainfully rejected by them. The very sabbath they profaned. The holiness of churches they derided; and would give to these sacred edifices no other appellation than that of *shops* or *steeple-houses*. No priests were admitted in their sect: Every one had received from immediate illumination a character much superior to the sacerdotal. When they met for divine worship, each rose up in his place, and delivered the extemporary inspirations of the spirit: Women also were admitted to teach the brethren, and were considered as proper vehicles to convey the dictates of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes a great many preachers were moved to speak at once: Sometimes a total silence prevailed in their congregations.

JAMES NAYLOR was a quaker, noted for blasphemy, or rather madness, in the time of the Protectorship. He fancied that he himself was transformed into Christ, and was become the real Saviour of the world; and in consequence of this frenzy, he endeavoured to imitate many actions of our Saviour related in the evangelists. As he bore a resemblance to the common picture of Christ; he allowed his beard to grow in a like form: He pretended to raise a person from the dead: He entered Bristol, mounted on a horse; I suppose, from the difficulty in that place of finding an ass: His disciples spread their garments before him, and cried, "Hosanna to the highest; holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth." When carried before the magistrates, he would give no other answers to all questions than "thou hast said it" [cp. *Jesus' answer to the high priest, Matthew 26: 64, and to Pilate, John 18:37*]. What is remarkable, the parliament thought that the matter deserved their attention. About ten days they spent in enquiries and debates about him. They condemned him to be pilloried, whipt, burned in the face, and to have his tongue bored thro' with a red hot iron. All these severities he bore with the usual patience. So far his delusion supported him. But the sequel spoiled all. He was sent to Bridewell, confined to hard labour, fed on bread and water, debarred from all his disciples, male and female. His illusions dissipated; and after some time, he was contented to come out, an ordinary man.

A footnote in the subsequent volume adds (the capital Q is Hume's):

The Quakers' address [to James II at his accession] was esteemed somewhat singular. It was conceived in these terms. "We are come to testify our sorrow for the death of our good friend Charles, and our joy for thy being made our

gouverneur. We are told thou art not of of the perswasion of the church of England, no more than we: Wherefore we hope thou wilt grant us the same liberty which thou allowest thyself. Which doing, we wish thee all manner of happiness."

Hume does not cite his source for this wording, which, from the way he introduces it, might be a paraphrase. The Irish Friend John Gough in his History of the Quakers (1790) calls it "a fictitious address, remarked for its brevity, uncouthness and blunt familiarity of expression". Gough comments that while Friends regarded "adulation and insincerity" as vices, their addresses, nevertheless, "were comprised in respectful terms; void of flattery but not indecent; unceremonious, but not uncivil." He also notes that "King Charles at his death left near one thousand five hundred of them in prison ... so that a people, paying a strict regard to speaking truth from the heart, could hardly term him their good friend", before quoting in full two authentic addresses to the new king. These, followed by others he does not quote, had the desired effect a year later of securing a warrant to the attorney general ordering the release of all imprisoned Friends in England.

Hume's criticisms of Quakers might seem the more unfair in view of the opinion he set down in a preface to what became Volume VII, drafted in 1756 but not used:

... The Idea of an Infinite Mind, the Author of the Universe seems at first Sight to require a Worship absolutely pure, simple, unadorned; without Rites, Institutions, Ceremonies; even without Temples, Priests or verbal Prayer & Supplication; ...

But he went on:

Yet has this Species of Devotion been often found to degenerate into the most dangerous Fanaticism. ... [I]n order to adapt our Religion, ... to human Infirmary: it is very difficult, & almost impossible, to prevent altogether the Intrusion of Superstition, or keep Men from laying too great Stress on the ceremonial & ornamental parts of their Worship. Of all the Sects, into which Christians have been divided, the Church of England seems to have chosen the most happy Medium; yet will it undoubtedly be allowd, that during the Age, of which these Volumes treat, there was a Tincture of Superstition in the Partizans of the Hierarchy; as well as a strong Mixture of Enthusiasm in their Antagonists. But it is the Nature of the latter Principle soon to evaporate and decay; A Spirit of Moderation usually succeeds, in a little time, to the Fervors of Zeal: And it must be acknowledg'd, to the Honor of the present Presbyterians, Independants & other Sectaries of this Island that they resemble in little more but in Name their Predecessors, who flourished during the civil Wars ...

Flattery of the Church of England in the published text had an effect: in 1775, Hume told James Boswell that "Herring, Archbishop of Canterbury, [had] sent a message to him ... that if ever he came to London he should have an apartment in his Palace at Lambeth", although E.C. Mossner, who included the unused preface and Boswell's anecdote in his Life of David Hume (1954), thought the Archbishop's approval had less to do with Hume's religious pronouncements than with his political judgements. Scots clerics were not so favourably impressed; one called Hume "an atheistical Jacobite, a monster as rare with us as a hippogriff". – ED.

Christian Aid Week: 12-18 May

Rozelle Bosch, Christian Aid's Church Engagement & Fundraising Officer, writes:

Seven days, so many ways to make a difference. There are lots of creative and fun ways to support our work this Christian Aid Week. All over the country, churches and communities will walk, bake, run cafes, hold concerts, organise book or plant sales, and so much more! If a sponsored challenge is more your speed, find out more about 70k in May on our website.

*This year we're focusing on **Aline Nibogora**, a determined mother in Burundi. Aline was pushed to the brink, but she pushed back harder.*

Worship and fundraising resources are available to order either online or via the paper order form. We hope you will make use of our digital platform or JustGiving for virtual fundraising.

*If you need any support, please do give us a ring on **0131 220 1254**.*

[See also <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>]

BOOK SALES IN EDINBURGH

Morningside United Church, 15 Chamberlain Road, Edinburgh EH10 4DJ: Saturday 11 May, 10.00 am – 5.00 pm; Sunday 12 May, 1.00 – 5.00 pm; and Monday 13 May, 10 am – 12 noon.

The week-long sale at St Andrew's & St George's West Church, 13 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PA, which is usually in Christian Aid Week, will in 2024 be taking place later in the year.

EVENTS IN PEEBLES organised by St Andrew's Leckie Parish Church, Eastgate, Peebles EH45 8AD – email office@standrewsleckie.co.uk for updates, or go to <https://leckie.church/events/christian-aid-week/>:

Coffee Mornings with second-hand bookstall and Knit-a-thon
Monday – Friday, 13 – 17 May, 10.00 am – 12 noon

Quiz Night

Wednesday 15 May, 7.30 pm

Market Stall

Thursday 16 May, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

Plant Sale

Saturday 18 May, 10.00 am – 12 noon

Except for the Market Stall (at Peebles Market), events take place at the Church or Church Hall.

OTHER EVENTS

Curry and Quiz Night

Willowbrae Parish Church, 1a Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh EH8 7DB:
Friday 10 May, 7.00 pm

Coffee Morning and Plant Sale

Queensferry Parish Church, The Loan, South Queensferry EH30 9NS:
Saturday 11 May, 10.00 am-12 noon

Spring Fayre

Livingston United Parish Church, Netherdechmont Community Centre,
Fells Rigg, Deans, Livingston EH54 8AX:

Saturday 11 May, 12 noon – 3.00 pm

Coffee Morning

St Andrew's Blackadder Church, 83 High St, North Berwick EH39 4HB:
Saturday 18 May, 10.00 am – 12 noon

Coffee Morning & Stalls

Morningside Parish Church, Braid Road/Cluny Gardens, Edinburgh EH10
Saturday 18 May, 10.00 am – 12 noon (£5 entry includes refreshments.)

Coffee Morning

St Fillan's Church, Hawkcraig Road, Aberdour, Burntisland, Fife KY3 0UP
Saturday 25 May, 10.00 am – 12 noon

These are all the events in South East Scotland of which details were available at the time Sesame went to press, but others may still be being planned.

Christian Aid Partner to visit Scotland – Monday 10 June, 2.00-4.00pm

Christian Aid's Sierra Leone Country Director Mattia Dimoh is coming to Aberdeen to speak about the impact your support has on communities. Mattia oversees a range of projects, spanning from gender justice and social inclusion to climate justice. You will also hear about *In Their Lifetime*, Christian Aid's pioneering programme which seeks to invest in innovative projects that transform lives. A Q&A session will follow, with tea/coffee provided.

Location: Upper Hall, Aberdeen Methodist Church (8 Crown Terrace, Aberdeen AB11 6HE).

Please RSVP so we can track numbers, by emailing Christian Aid at philanthropy@christian-aid.org.

Creative for Climate Justice

Christian Aid is inviting schools to be part of its *Creative for Climate Justice* exhibition in the Scottish Parliament later this year. In partnership with SCIAF and Oxfam, and supported by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, it aims to bring the voices of young people to Scotland's leaders, and to share their thoughts on the climate emergency. You can find more information on the *Creative for Climate Justice* resource page.

HELP! Can YOU answer the appeal on page 35? – or do you know someone who could?

International Conscientious Objectors Day

WEDNESDAY 15 MAY is International Conscientious Objectors Day. **Join us for a rally in Edinburgh in solidarity with Conscientious Objectors in Israel, Ukraine, Russia and around the world, whose human rights are threatened because they refuse to take up arms.**

AND to celebrate the history of conscientious objectors and their supporters who have bravely resisted military conscriptions despite the tremendous pressures they faced.

We will be joined by PROTEST IN HARMONY, a radical singing group based in Edinburgh (see <https://www.protestinharmony.org.uk/>) and by a speaker from CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade) who will talk about the dangers of militarism in Scotland. And we'll read out statements from Israeli Conscientious Objectors and remember Conscientious Objectors past and present who have stood up for peace in a time of militarism.

We'll then go down to the Peace Tree in Princes Street Gardens and wave white hankies in solidarity with Conscientious Objectors past and present. Please bring a (clean!) white hankie to shake, and your own images to remember particular Conscientious Objectors, as well as your anti-war, pro-peace posters and banners.

Meet at the corner of Castle Street/Princes Street, at 5.30 pm

Let us know you're coming and share with others:

<https://COday2024.eventbrite.co.uk>

Peace & Justice (Scotland), 58 Ratcliffe Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 1ST

An article by Ariel Gold of the [U.S.] Fellowship of Reconciliation, "Israel's heroic conscientious objectors deserve our support" can be read online at <https://wagingnonviolence.org/forusa/2024/03/support-israel-conscientious-objectors-tal-mitnick-sofia-orr/>.

The Peace Pledge Union has information on its website about other events, in particular the ceremony at the COs memorial in Tavistock Square, London, at 1.00 pm on 15 May, which will be livestreamed; see

<https://www.ppu.org.uk/international-conscientious-objectors-day-may-15th#events>

The Brussels-based European Bureau for Conscientious Objection issues reports and disseminates those of other bodies such as QUNO; see

<https://www.ebco-beoc.org/>.

Meeting House Hospitality Assistants, Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House

Duties include:

- providing a friendly welcome for users of the building;
- serving/clearing refreshments; and
- setting up/clearing away furniture for meetings.

Casual role: variable: mostly evenings and weekends, by mutual agreement. Availability to work Saturdays and Sundays would be helpful.

Salary: £12.00/hour (Real Living Wage).

Start date: September/October 2024.

Closing date for applications: 10 May 2024.

Interviews in week beginning 20 May 2024.

For full details and an application form, go to www.equaker.org.uk/vacancies.

For an informal chat about the role, please contact the Meeting House Manager on 0131 225 4825, or email office@equaker.org.uk.

Moon Tell Me Truth

An exhibition of poems written & illustrated by children from Palestine

Scottish Poetry Library, 5 Crichton's Close, Edinburgh EH8 8DT

23 May – 23 June

Contact secretary@scottishpalestinianforum.org.uk for times.

Tragically, most students featured in the exhibition are now displaced and their schools have been damaged or destroyed during the war on Gaza. Two students were killed by Israeli airstrikes in October 2023 – Obada Mohammad Abu Oba (14) and Fatima Saidam, (9), whose illustrated poems will be featured in tribute.

A PDF of the booklet accompanying the exhibition is at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PCNAKQkw_AnLPEUSyneiNlmriuTf_oN7/view

Ecocide – useful links

The manifesto of Stop Ecocide International – the document for groups to sign (as eleven Area Meetings have already done) which defines the crime of Ecocide and urges its incorporation as such into the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – is at <https://www.stopecocide.earth/manifesto>.

On Monica Lennon's proposed Ecocide (Prevention) (Scotland) Bill, see <https://www.ecocidelaw.scot/> where you can read the draft bill itself as well as blogposts and press articles on the worldwide climate crisis.

A VISION FOR PEACE

The statement below (which includes the box on page 17) was jointly drafted and signed by the following Quaker bodies:

*American Friends Service Committee
Canadian Friends Service Committee
Friends World Committee for Consultation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Quakers in Britain
Quaker Council for European Affairs
Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Quaker United Nations Office*

They add:

“We invite all Friends meetings, churches, schools, and organizations to join us in endorsing this call for peace with justice. Sign onto the statement by following this link: www.afsc.org/visionforpeace.”

A different future is possible:

Quaker organizations share a vision for peace in Palestine and Israel

April 12, 2024

FOR CENTURIES, Quakers have worked for peace. This mission is a practical expression of the nonviolent message of the gospels and the teaching reflected in the many religions around the world: love your neighbor as yourself.

Quakers believe in the inherent worth of every individual and have a history of supporting both Palestinian and Israeli communities in the region. One of our organizations, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), established the first refugee camps in Gaza in 1949 and continues to work in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel today. Indeed, we have a long-standing presence in what is now Israel and Palestine, dating back to the 1800s. Quakers established the Ramallah Friends Schools over 150 years ago, one of the first institutions to educate Palestinian women. Palestinian Quakers continue to worship at the historic Friends Meeting House in Ramallah.

With these deep roots, we speak with firsthand knowledge. In a context where entrenched inequality, violence, and injustice have persisted for decades, we anticipated that desperation would eventually boil over – and sadly, it has.

The last six months have been marked by constant grief. The devastating

attack by Hamas on October 7th in Israel claimed the lives of 1,163 Israelis and resulted in over 250 people being taken hostage. As of early April 2024, Israel's subsequent attacks on Gaza have killed at least 33,000 Palestinians, with thousands missing and presumed dead under the rubble.

Since October 7th, over 7,500 Palestinians from the West Bank and thousands more from Gaza, including children, have been imprisoned, many without charge or trial. Shockingly, more than 40 percent of those killed in Gaza have been children, surpassing the global count of child casualties in all other conflicts from 2019 to 2022. Countless children have been orphaned and maimed as a result.

In Gaza, hospitals, schools, universities, aid distribution centers, mosques, and churches have all been bombed and destroyed, leaving no safe space. Over 70 % of homes have been damaged or destroyed, with more than 1.9 million people displaced.

Essential systems such as healthcare, water, and sanitation have collapsed, leading to preventable deaths, surgeries without anesthesia, and pregnant women giving birth in tents and without proper care.

AFSC staff in Gaza have shared horrendous accounts of starvation used as a tool of war. Children in Gaza are starving to death. The World Health Organization predicts that up to 80,000 more lives will be lost to disease and starvation if no immediate action is taken. This crisis surpasses anything many of us have witnessed in our decades of responding to disasters worldwide.

The continued restrictions on aid access and Israel's failure to respect and protect humanitarian workers have created an environment where it is nearly impossible for organizations to provide assistance. This dire situation has pushed the Gaza population to the brink of extreme food insecurity and imminent famine. Hundreds of local and foreign aid workers have been targeted and killed, and AFSC's relief staff continue to face extreme insecurity, sharing with us that they are "still alive by chance."

Disturbingly, instead of increasing aid provisions, major actors such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and other members of the international community have cut off or delayed funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Unproven Israeli allegations linking UNRWA employees to the October 7th attack have had severe repercussions on the welfare of the most vulnerable population the agency serves.

Immediate action is needed so that killings and suffering can end. That starts with a permanent ceasefire, the release of hostages and prisoners, and unrestricted humanitarian access in Gaza.

In January, the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel's actions in Gaza might constitute genocide. Regrettably, Israel has taken no steps to change its behavior since this ruling, ignoring the court's provisional measures. Western governments, especially the United States, the United King-

dom, and key European states, continue to provide arms and support to Israel. Their complicity, along with unilateral vetoes preventing repeated ceasefire resolutions at the UN Security Council, raises concerns about international commitments to multilateralism and respect for international legal frameworks.

Finally, Western leaders must look beyond this moment and work towards achieving a just and lasting peace in Palestine and Israel. Violence is not limited to Gaza. More than 500 Palestinians, including more than 100 children, have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli soldiers and settlers since October 7.

Settler and military violence has resulted in the complete depopulation of 16 Palestinian villages, causing fear and tension to permeate the whole population. Restricting worship and access to mosques and churches further infringes on freedom of worship and exacerbates tensions.

Over the last several years, a growing number of international human rights organizations have recognized Israel's treatment of Palestinians as meeting the legal definition of apartheid*. In the face of this pervasive injustice, Quakers stand firm in our witness, as we have throughout history against racial inequality, South African apartheid, and all forms of war.

Even in this time of violence and pain, we hold the belief that a different future, free from injustice and violence, is possible. Lasting peace and reconciliation will be realized when both past and ongoing injustices are acknowledged and addressed, ensuring freedom, dignity, equal rights, and justice for all people living in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Let us work together to make this vision a reality.

* See <https://apartheid-free.org/category/report/> [On the reluctance of Quakers in Britain/QPSW to use the term, see the NFPB report in Sesame 253.]

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

Kinder ground: Creating space for truth
The 2021 Swarthmore Lecture, by Thomas Penny

Early Quakers such as John Woolman didn't hesitate to challenge even their friends if they saw a lack of truth; but in his experience as a journalist Tom Penny has found that communicating truthfully in our time is not always straightforward, and knowing what is true is even harder. The need, then, is not for confrontation, but for seeking common ground and creating space for truth. You should read this book to appreciate all the examples he cites to support his case.

Rachel Frith

[The lecture as delivered is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lei27xKLG9k>.]

Now is the time for action. As Quakers and as peacemakers we are called to actively live into our testimonies of equality and peace. To this end, we urgently put forward these calls to action:

To the **Israeli** government:

1. *End attacks on Gaza, commit to a permanent ceasefire, withdraw from reoccupied areas of Gaza, and end the Gaza blockade.*
2. *Cease settler and military violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.*
3. *Guarantee uninterrupted, unconditional, swift, and adequate humanitarian access in Gaza and open land crossings.*
4. *Hold accountable those who have violated the law or committed human rights abuses, including settlers.*
5. *Release Palestinian political prisoners and hostages and provide fair trials following international standards free from coercion, torture, and abuse.*
6. *Guarantee the self-determination of Palestinians by ending its occupation of all Palestinian territory and ensure Palestinians and Israelis share equal human, political, and civil rights currently denied under Israeli Occupation.*

To **Hamas** and other armed Palestinian groups:

1. *Release Israeli hostages.*
2. *Commit to and maintain a permanent ceasefire as a long-term, just, and sustainable peace is sought.*
3. *Hold accountable those who have violated the law or committed human rights abuses.*

To **Western leaders** and the US and UK governments in particular:

1. *Urgently press for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and Israel.*
2. *End complicity in Israeli human rights violations and exert levers of power with immediate economic and political pressure on the government of Israel, including imposing an arms embargo.*
3. *Actively work to ensure uninterrupted humanitarian access in Gaza, especially through ground entry points, and commit to funding and protecting UNRWA.*
4. *Hold accountable those who have violated the law or committed human rights abuses.*
5. *Uphold international law, demand equal accountability for State and non-state actors, and enforce the ICJ provisions imposed on Israel.*
6. *Support an end to Israel's occupation and equal protection and rights for all.*
7. *Ensure an inclusive political process for peace that incorporates all voices, perspectives, and political factions, especially those marginalized or acting as potential spoilers and those most affected by injustice and violence.*

As **Friends**, we will continue to support the global community of Quakers to:

1. *Urgently call and fervently work for a permanent ceasefire and amplify our voices in our communities and at the local, state, and national levels.*
2. *Encourage decision-makers calling for a ceasefire and working for peace.*
3. *Organize and participate in teach-ins, actions, and protests until a ceasefire and a just and lasting peace are realized.*
4. *Actively support an end to Israel's occupation and equal protection and rights for all people living under Israeli control and commit to actions as meetings/churches until this reality is realized.*
5. *Divest from corporations profiting from militarism, including the occupation of Palestine.*
6. *Support those in Israel and Palestine who are working for peace.*

Climate Justice and the Rule of Law – *recent news items*

WHETHER or not the Rome Statute is amended to incorporate a new crime of Ecocide, it is already criminal to cause “widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment” while fighting a war, both under the Statute itself in its current wording, and under the Geneva conventions. It is contended that Israeli forces have done so in Gaza; see: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/29/gaza-israel-palestinian-war-ecocide-environmental-destruction-pollution-rome-statute-war-crimes-aoe>

IN *SESAME 250*, Hilary Saunders referred to the case *Duarte Agostinho & Others v. Portugal & 32 others*, in which six young people from Portugal applied to sue 33 states (initially – in view of the invasion, Ukraine was dropped from the list) for failing to act to prevent climate change affecting their right to life. On 9 April, the European Court of Human Rights unanimously declared the application inadmissible, in that the European Convention does *not* provide protection for EU citizens against the actions of states other than their own, as the applicants had argued it should, and, more fundamentally, in respect of Portugal itself, they had not “exhausted domestic remedies” (*i.e.* taken their case to the Portuguese courts first). Two other decisions in cases relating to climate change were given at the same time. *Carême v. France* likewise failed on grounds of inadmissibility – Damien Carême, the former mayor of Grande-Synthe, a low-lying coastal municipality near Dunkirk, who was seeking to compel the French Government to prevent its being inundated by rising sea levels through taking more vigorous action on greenhouse gas emissions, no longer lives there, so is not personally affected, and cannot invoke the rights of a victim. (Grande-Synthe had already won a case against the President and others – see: <https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/commune-de-grande-synthe-v-france/> – only for that ruling, by the Council of State, to be ignored by ministers.) However, in *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz & others v. Switzerland*, the Court held, by a 16:1 majority, that the Swiss Government’s inadequate climate policies *do* violate the rights to life and health (under articles 2 and 8 of the Human Rights Convention) of the members of *KlimaSeniorinnen* – ‘Senior Women for Climate Protection’, an association of over 2,500 women aged 64 and over. Their website (in English) gives links to the text of the judgment, to key documents in the case, and to supportive articles from various journals including *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* – it is at: <https://en.klimaseniorinnen.ch/>.

The Court itself has produced a single summary on its rulings in all three climate cases, which is here:

<https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/press-q-a-climate-cases-eng>

As a reminder of what climate activists are up against, an editorial in the latest issue of the rightwing British monthly *The Critic* sneers at the wo-

men's case as "infantile", calls the decision in their favour "indefensible" (noting with approval that the British judge, Tim Eicke, was the one dissenting from it) and asserts that

The United Kingdom should withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and not remain subject to the Strasbourg court. Whatever problems of sovereignty were inherent in EU membership, they are as nothing to the ECtHR and its rejection of electoral legitimacy.

(The full article can be read at <https://thecritic.co.uk/the-court-of-hot-air/>; but the Editor does not recommend it. Also on the site is a 2022 piece with the promising title "*Hot air apocalypse: We need action on climate change – not more idle talk*" but the *specific* action it calls for is against "Britain's dangerous secessionist movements" which might prevent "the natural resources of these islands" (potential renewable energy, presumably) being "equitably shared" – no doubt in the way the revenues from Scotland's oil were.)

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL'S application to prosecute a woman for contempt of court, for holding up a placard reminding the jurors at a trial of climate activists of their power to acquit, was thrown out by the High Court in London last month. In April last year, Trudi Warner stood outside the Crown Court where Insulate Britain protesters were being tried for blocking a road, with a sign that read: *JURORS. YOU HAVE AN ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO ACQUIT A DEFENDANT ACCORDING TO YOUR CONSCIENCE* – an allusion to 'Bushel's Case' of 1670, in which two Quaker defendants, William Penn and William Mead, were found Not Guilty of preaching to an unlawful assembly. Bushel was the foreman of the jury which brought in this verdict, against the judge's direction and despite the jurymen themselves being held without food or water, and subsequently fined for their conduct. A plaque at the Old Bailey commemorates their "*courage and endurance*" and affirms "*the Right of Juries to give their Verdict according to their Convictions*". That reminding jurors of this could be held to amount to contempt was described by the judge as "fanciful"; he also said the submissions by government lawyers "significantly mischaracterise the evidence." (The case had been instigated by the Attorney General, Victoria Prentis, the government's most senior law officer in England, after the trial judge referred the matter to her.)

The text of the judgment is at:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/HM-Solicitor-General-v-Warner-Judgment-22.4.24-KB.pdf>

The Guardian's report is at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/22/judge-throws-out-case-against-uk-climate-activist-trudi-warner-sign-jurors-rights>

and the paper also carried an interview with Trudi Warner:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/23/trudi-warner-climate-activist-fight-with-the-uk-government>

THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, based in San José, Costa Rica, was established in 1979 under the American Convention on Human Rights, a human rights treaty ratified by members of the Organization of American States. Twenty states have accepted its jurisdiction, including most Latin American countries and several Caribbean islands, although neither the US nor Canada has done so. A panel sitting in Barbados has begun a hearing on climate change on behalf of the Court; two states, Chile and Colombia, requested “an advisory opinion on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights”, including the particular rights of women and children, and issues of loss and damage. The IACHR has gone much further than other international courts in considering how climate change impacts on human rights: in a previous opinion, it recognised the right to a healthy environment and affirmed that states must protect human rights affected by environmental harm, even if it happens beyond their borders; and in March, it ruled that Peru had violated the right to a healthy environment of people living in La Oroya, the country’s “most contaminated town”. The hearings in Barbados will be followed in May by hearings in Brasília and Manaus. A brief report, written ahead of the start of proceedings in Barbados, is at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/22/inter-american-court-climate-hearing-hear-from-victims-barbados>

There is further information on the website of ClientEarth, an international legal charity which will be participating in the Barbados hearings, at:

<https://www.clientearth.org/latest/news/what-is-the-chile-and-colombia-inter-american-court-of-human-rights-iachr-initiative/>

Quakers and Prison Abolition

In April, the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group held a meeting at Glasgow described as ‘a Conversation’, on the topic of prison abolition. It is a complex and controversial matter, and the organisers were wary of opening the event to the wider public on that account – as a policy proposal, it could easily be shouted down as naïve and irresponsible; and General Meeting responded cautiously when, in June 2022, the Working Group asked the question in its report to GM, *Should Quakers in Scotland consider in the future adopting a minute like the Canadian one leading towards prison abolition?* [a reference to Minute 93 of Canada YM, 1981, which made this call]. The event was felt to have been a success, and it is hoped that versions of the introductory talks given at it may be published, as a follow-up to the Working Group’s previous booklet, *Breaking Chains and Building Change*, which is available as a PDF at:

<https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Breakingchainsbuildingchangesmall.pdf>

It is hoped also to have an article on the subject in a future *Sesame*. (ED.)

Global Days of Action on Military Spending

12 April – 15 May

Each year the **Global Campaign On Military Spending** works ‘to raise awareness and change government policy and practice on military spending’. (Its efforts have little effect in the UK, where the governing party and the official Opposition vie with each other as to which is the more belligerent – Labour abolished the role of Shadow Minister for Peace & Disarmament in September last year, claims nuclear weapons are the “bedrock” of security, and, though not committed to raising defence spending to 2.5 % of GDP, as the Conservatives are, nevertheless says it aims to do so “as soon as resources allow”.) At the start of this year’s Global Days of Action, the international organisers issued the following statement:

Disarmament now to save people and planet

HUMANITY is at a crossroads where political decisions on defence budgets will determine the trajectory of the multiple crises in which we are immersed.

Wars and armed conflicts are devastating whole regions of the world. Global military spending has increased by 19 % between 2013 and 2022 according to SIPRI figures, and has risen every year since 2015. Yet, from Gaza to Ukraine, the DRC, Sudan, Myanmar, or Manipur, this has done nothing to resolve persistent conflicts nor reduce global tensions. Instead, increased military expenditure and intensifying militarism have only increased the volatility of global peace and cooperation. Rising temperatures are modifying climatic patterns in a profound and extreme way. Millions of people are already experiencing the disastrous consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, amplified further by violent conflict. We must act now. These fluctuating weather and climatic patterns have direct repercussions on whether territories can remain habitable as well as on the future of decent and sustainable living conditions for all.

The world is at a geopolitical crossroads, even as we are moving away from the post-Cold War period into a new era of multipolarity yet disturbingly global leaders increasing their reliance on militarised solutions. Now, military spending is touted as a necessity for maintaining all aspects of security. Meanwhile, a large network of interests and global power has emerged, led by a very few supranational private actors who control companies and influence governments in a purely undemocratic manner. It is a global power network that includes and connects military and fossil energy businesses. A network in which militarisation not only causes the death of hundreds of thousands, but also becomes instrumentally responsible for environmental disaster by protecting fossil fuel interests and predatory actors. A network that works, directly and indirectly, to prevent measures that could alleviate both the planetary environmental crisis and the suffering of millions of people. A network that does not shy away from reaping profits from arms sales to genocidal actors, as we see in the military support given to Israel to

continue its relentless attacks on Gaza. We need to ensure democratic power across the globe. Military spending not only fuels wars and armed conflicts around the globe, it also takes away resources that could be devoted to addressing climate change, investing in global justice (including the UN Sustainable Development Goals), and promoting peaceful conflict transformation and disarmament. Militaries are among the world's biggest consumers of fuel, accounting for 5.5 % of global emissions, while the use of chemicals pollutes the land around military bases, poisoning it for generations. The continued use of mines and cluster munitions, as well as conventional weaponry leaves land uninhabitable for generations. The opportunity cost of military spending costs us the Earth.

We are aware that the current challenges facing humanity (wars and conflicts, climate crisis, social crisis, crisis of democracy, pandemics, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and many more) are global and transboundary. These challenges require a common and coordinated effort that can only be achieved by building new alliances among a wide array of actors – from civil society to international institutions, states, companies, and peoples – to finance and create justice, peace, and human rights for the planet.

Together, we must push for global common or collective security, one based on trust-building, cooperation, and solidarity. Reducing military expenditure is a necessary first step and the best opportunity to build peace and create a sustainable world with dignity for all.

To this end

- We call on governments to reduce military spending and instead address pressing global challenges that require all available resources. We must denounce the hidden interests and pressures of the military-industrial complex.*
- We call for real efforts aimed at global disarmament, stopping the arms trade and ceasing arms shipments to countries in conflict. It is time for the UN General Assembly to commit to a final date and structure for a Fourth Special Session on Disarmament, noting that the last session was 36 years ago and that states have neglected their responsibility and duty to pursue disarmament through the United Nations framework.*
- We call on governments to prioritise justice over profits derived from arms trading; specifically we call on them to cease supplying arms to and buying arms from Israel and use all existing means to push for a ceasefire and an end to the genocide in Gaza.*
- We call for a sincere and active discussion on new and responsive international and regional security architectures based on the basic ideas of common security and the UN Secretary General António Guterres' New Agenda for Peace. From Gaza to Sudan to Myanmar, conflicts will not be solved by military means. We call for a global ceasefire; the logic of peace must prevail over the logic of war.*
- We call for new geopolitics that leaves behind wars and violence, creating*

structures for global governance with an atmosphere of co-operation and dialogue. A new post-violent era must flourish, based on a culture of peace, feminist principles and dialogue-based conflict resolution.

- *We call on governments to act now. A real decarbonization plan is urgently needed. We also denounce the large fossil industry corporations that have hijacked and co-opted world governments.*
- *We call on civil society across local, national, regional, and international levels, to join together in the campaign to combat the rising trend of military spending, to strengthen the global movement for peace and justice, and to challenge decision-makers who seek to justify a never-ending militarism in the name of our security.*

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has calculated that global military spending rose in 2023 to **\$2443 billion**, 6.8 % more in real terms than in 2022: the steepest year-on-year increase since 2009. For the first time since that year, military expenditure went up in all five of the geographical regions defined by SIPRI, with particularly large increases recorded in Europe, Asia & Oceania and the Middle East.

The war in Ukraine was of course a major factor in the upsurge. Russia's military spending increased by 24 % to an estimated \$109 billion in 2023: a 57 % rise since 2014, the year it annexed Crimea. In 2023, Russia's military spending made up 16 % of total government spending and its military burden (military spending as a share of gross domestic product, GDP) was 5.9 %. Ukraine was the eighth largest global spender in 2023, its expenditure rising by 51 % to reach \$64.8 billion. This gave Ukraine a military burden of 37 % and represented 58 % of total government spending. Its military spending in 2023 was 59 % that of Russia's, although Ukraine also received at least \$35 billion in military aid during the year, including \$25.4 billion from the USA. Combined, this aid and Ukraine's own military spending were equivalent to about 91 % of Russian spending. Meanwhile Poland's military spending, the 14th highest in the world, was \$31.6 billion, having grown by 75 % between 2022 and 2023: by far the largest annual increase in any European state, and a response to the conflict on its border.

However open warfare does not account for all such increases. China's military expenditure rose for the 29th consecutive year, to an estimated \$296 billion, half of total military spending across the Asia & Oceania region; in response, Japan and Taiwan both increased their spending by 11 %, to \$50.2 billion and \$16.6 billion respectively. Algeria, which has benefitted from greatly increased gas exports as European countries have stopped buying from Russia, has chosen to put more money into its armed forces, increasing military spending by 76 %, to \$18.3 billion. The largest percentage increase in military spending by any country in 2023 was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – up 105 % – on account of protracted conflict

between the government and non-state armed groups. South Sudan had the second largest percentage increase, 78 %, its government confronting internal opposition and 'spillover' from the Sudanese civil war.

Military spending as SIPRI calculates it refers to all government spending on current military forces and activities, including salaries and benefits, operational expenses, arms and equipment purchases, military construction, research and development, and central administration, command and support; actual *arms* spending is a minority of this total in most cases. Nevertheless, Eisenhower's dictum from 1953 – *Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed* – applies to at least the majority of military spending, and not just to expenditure on armaments as such.

In the name of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) **Izumi Nakamitsu**, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, issued the following message on the occasion of the 2024 Global Days of Action on Military Spending.

THE FIGURES released today [12/04/2024] by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) show that global military expenditures rose by 6.8 per cent in real terms to 2,443 billion US dollars in 2023 – a new record high. This amounts to approximately 2.3 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) or around 306 US dollars for every person on the planet. To further put this number in perspective, official development assistance in 2023¹ amounted to approximately 9 per cent of the resources allocated to global military expenditure. The United Nations regular budget² for 2023 was less than 0.14 per cent of global military spending.

In my statement on the Global Days of Action on Military Spending last year I condemned the unprecedented increase in military spending for the year 2022 which, in part, were due to the influx of weapons in Ukraine as a result of the invasion of that country by Russia. Six months ago, another deadly conflict broke out in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas. The ebb and flow of military spending is largely dependent on the intensity of conflicts and levels of mistrust among states. With the continuation of arms transfers in these two devastating conflicts and in the pre-existing ones in other regions, there is every reason to fear a continuing upward tick in military spending next year and possibly beyond.

This is happening at a time when more resources are needed for poverty eradication, sustainable development, climate action, gender equality and crisis recovery. Member States must break this vicious cycle of unconstrained military spending. As stated in Article 26 of the UN Charter, the clearest path to international peace and security is through the least diversion of human and economic resources to armaments. Resources for programmes and services that benefit the people and the planet should be prioritized over military spending. The 2030 Agenda must re-

main at the top of the political agenda. Addressing global development challenges can also help alleviate some of the structural factors that drive rising military expenditure. We must commit to reducing the human cost of weapons by moving away from militarized approaches to peace.

Our security cannot be measured by the strength of our armies alone. On the occasion of the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, I reiterate my call to move away from unconstrained military spending by prioritizing investment that generates growth and opportunity for communities. Together, we must reimagine a vision of security that places people at its core, prioritizes prevention, reduces reliance on armaments, and ultimately responds more effectively to contemporary security challenges through dialogue and trust.

1. According to OECD data, official development assistance in 2023 reached a new all-time high of \$223.7 billion.

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>

2. On 30 December 2022, at its seventy-seventh session, the UN General Assembly adopted a \$3.4 billion budget for 2023.

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12486.doc.htm>

The figures in the first three paragraphs following the GCOMS statement are from the SIPRI press release, which is at:

<https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity>:

the quotation of President Eisenhower is from his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington DC, 16 April 1953.

CREATIVE TACTICS FOR PEACE

QPSW faith in action event

**10.00 am – 5.00 pm, Saturday 18 May – Friargate Meeting House,
York YO1 9RL**

Join us as we inspire each other in the work of creating a more peaceful, equitable, just and sustainable world.

Free vegetarian lunch

Assistance with travel costs can be applied for through your local meeting and the Francis Camfield Trust

Limited spaces – the booking deadline is Friday 10 May at 5.00 pm – go to
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/events/faith-in-action-gathering-in-york-creative-tactics-for-peace>

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 23 March 2024
at Greenpark Community Centre, Polmont,
and by remote videoconferencing**

2024/03/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship, we have heard read from *Let's Explore the Quaker Way*, setting out our testimonies to truth, simplicity, peace and equality.

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

[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]

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 7	Central Fife -	East Lothian 4	Kelso 3	Penicuik 1
Polmont 13	Portobello & Musselburgh 6	South Edinburgh 7	Tweeddale -	Visitors/Others 3

We record our thanks to Polmont Local Meeting for hosting us today. We thank Duncan Wallace for facilitating our Zoom service.

We next meet on Tuesday 7 May 2024, at 7.00 pm at 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh and online.

(Signed)

Alastair Cameron, Clerk
Cath Dyer, Assistant Clerk

ACCOMMODATION URGENTLY NEEDED

THE REFUGEE FAMILY sponsored by Failte Edinburgh since 2022 will have to find new accommodation by the end of **August** 2024, as their landlord is selling the flat. There is currently an unprecedented shortage of rental housing, both managed by the City Council and privately let in Edinburgh. Benefit claimants are particularly vulnerable. In view of this and the lifting of the rent restrictions imposed during COVID, the family will struggle to find anything suitable or affordable, which would mean uprooting and starting again somewhere new.

The family, whose three children are aged 14, 10 and 6 are seeking a three-bedroomed flat, preferably in South Edinburgh where the children are settled and well-supported in local primary and secondary schools, and where they have access to a nearby medical centre, halal food shops and the Mosque.

Do you know of anyone with a suitable flat who would be willing to rent it out at the **Local Housing Allowance rate** (£316.44 per week in 2024/25, equivalent to c. £1,370 per month) or thereabouts?

Another option being considered is to form a **Scottish Quaker Housing Association** whose members might either offer to purchase the flat or buy something similar. Would this idea interest you?

Please contact **Lynne Barty** (Central Edinburgh) or **Esther Shreeve** (South Edinburgh) if you can help and/or would like to know more. Thank you. [*Contact details in the Book of Members, pages 45 and 88.*]

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 – For confirmation of the venue, 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**, **Sarah Martin** or **Marian Willoner** for further information, portymussclerks@gmail.com.

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.