

SESAME

Number 260: May 2025

Area Meeting, 6 May / Westminster FMH / Sex & Gender / BYM / George Fox – *The New and Living Way* / QiS suggested response / Woodbrooke courses & events / Christian Aid Week 2025 + news / Climate Justice news / 'Beyond the Pale' – landmines and N-weapons / BDRC update / After 3MSP / From Peace & Justice / CFSC Statement / Holding in the Light / On Ministry (*again*) / 'The Big Picture' / 'Patient Trust' – words of Teilhard de Chardin / AM March Minutes / ... &^c.



Some of the hundreds of Friends and others gathered for Meeting for Worship outside New Scotland Yard on 3 April: a response to the raid on Westminster Meeting House the week before. See page 3. (Photo by Hollyanna Petersen, courtesy of Christian Climate Action)

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 10 June 2025**. 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 Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 7.00 pm, at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and online. All members and attenders of Quaker meetings in South East Scotland are welcome, including teenagers; but as it is an evening meeting, there will be no care for children.

Alastair Cameron
Clerk

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 22 March 2025
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 – preparation* [see page 7]
4. Membership matters
 1. *Application for membership*
 2. *Report on membership visit*
 3. *Recording of deaths*
5. Matters from Elders, trustees and local meetings
 1. *Funeral arrangements* [see Michael Nott's article, Sesame 259, page 31]
 2. *Annual budgeting*
 3. *Annual report and financial statements 2024*
6. Community building
7. Quakers in Scotland [see page 10]
8. General Meeting matters
9. Appointments: from Nominations Committee
10. Reports and correspondence
11. Closing minute

Quaker Earthcare Gathering: Nurturing Radical Witness and Worship

An all-age residential gathering at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, DE55 1AU

Friday–Monday, 24-27 October 2025. Adults: £375; 6-16s: £120; 0-5s: £20.

Financial support available. Contributions invited for a bursary fund.

Join us for this residential weekend to explore how our Quaker faith and communities can help us to meet the Earth crisis with hope, strength, and compassion. Our time together will be deeply rooted in worship, and will include a children's programme, short talks, workshops, discussions, practical activities, music, dance, art and much more.

*For more information contact **Ailish Carroll-Brentnall**, tel.: **07518206894**, or go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/events/quaker-earthcare-gathering-nurturing-radical-witness-and-worship>*

The Raid on Westminster Friends Meeting House

Quakers have never held that our meeting houses are ‘sacred spaces’, and in the past were blunt in denying the claim if made by others for their own religious edifices. Nevertheless, since we are a pacifist society, and require of those who hire our premises that they abide by our principles, it was inappropriate that police officers should have entered the building by force, when they went to Westminster Meeting House on 27 March, and worse that they did so ready to attack those there with tasers (electric shock devices intended to incapacitate). The group they were targeting, Youth Demand, had announced on its website <https://youthdemand.org/take-action> that it planned non-violent disruption in protest against the genocide in Gaza and to call for climate action. Youth Demand was previously little-known – it had had some coverage in the Scottish press, after Hannah Taylor, a student at Glasgow University, was banned from university premises for spraying a building with water-soluble paint in protest at the institution’s investment of more than £6.8m in the arms industry (a sanction criticised by Ghassan Abu-Sittah, the University Rector, and later withdrawn; see <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25037312.student-banned-glasgow-uni-campus-allowed-return/>). The event at the Meeting House was not a planning meeting in connection with any sort of demonstration but an openly advertised session to welcome new and potential members. The six women arrested were accused of conspiracy, as if being the same room as activists or would-be activists were itself evidence of plotting criminal behaviour. One of the six was a student journalist covering the meeting. Her phone, camera and laptop were seized, and she herself was held incommunicado for 16 hours, as if suspected of terrorism or espionage and needing to be kept from alerting confederates. Plainly this was hugely disproportionate; and a pre-emptive swoop on prospective disruptors who support Palestine or climate action is in marked contrast to the policing of farmers’ protests at the loss of tax privileges, at which no-one is arrested. (George Monbiot has written on this, and there is footage of ambulances unable to get past slow-moving tractors at the *Byline Times* website; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/apr/03/protest-britain-activists-quaker-meeting-house>

and <https://bylinetimes.com/2024/12/12/two-tier-reporting-when-climate-protesters-slow-ambulances-theyre-vilified-so-why-are-wealthy-farmers-given-a-free-pass/>.)

On its own terms, the raid might appear to have been entirely counter-productive: Youth Demand received useful publicity and has had a rush of new recruits; the widespread media coverage was predominantly critical of the Metropolitan Police. (There is a round-up of articles, with links, here: <https://quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/media-coverage-of-westminster-meeting-house-police-raid>.) However both of these outcomes must have been foreseen when the raid was ordered, and its real purpose may rather have been

to push further the boundaries of the laws permitting such action: the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023. The responses of Quakers in Britain, and of Churches Together in England, rightly focused on this (see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/churches-together-in-england-stand-with-quakers>). Friends have called for both laws to be repealed.

Joe Cox, interim Public Affairs and Media Manager for Quakers in Britain, has suggested seven things to do to defend the rights of protesters. They include contacting MPs (see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/westminster-meeting-house-raid-email-your-mp-template> for a template email), writing to local papers, and using the news as an occasion for outreach – the words of a poster could be “YOU DON'T HAVE TO SMASH DOWN THE DOORS TO COME TO A QUAKER MEETING”! His full list is at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/7-actions-to-take-now-to-defend-our-right-to-protest>. It cannot be assumed that this event was an aberration, or that, unless the law is rectified, something like it will not happen again.

After the Supreme Court Judgment

In 2021, Britain Yearly Meeting minuted as follows (Minute 31: Acknowledging and Welcoming Gender Diverse People). Emphasis has been added to the final paragraph (opposite):

Our testimony of equality stems from the religious conviction that all people are of equal spiritual worth, that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

In 2003, Meeting for Sufferings responded to the Gender Recognition Bill, based on our testimony of equality, and encouraged Quaker Life Central Committee to promote the pastoral care of transgender people, their families, spouses and children, their friends and meetings. In 2015 the Tabular Statement started to record “Other” as well as men and women as one step to acknowledging the diversity among us. More recently, following consideration of trans and non-binary inclusion in a number of meetings, Quaker Life drafted an initial statement in 2018, inviting all Quakers in Britain to discuss and reflect together on gender diversity.

These discussions and reflections have not always been easy. Our consideration has coincided with wider consideration of legislation reform in Britain, and the associated conflict has been reflected among Friends in our yearly meeting. We recognise that we need to keep listening and searching together.

In an atmosphere of trust, we need to listen, to share our journeys, in silent worship, and in prayer. We all have human gifts and friendship to offer. We need to rejoice in the things that make us different, not be ashamed or excluded. Our differences are a blessing, and we must all work to ensure that the support is there in each meeting to allow this blessing to bear fruit.

We seek to provide places of worship and community that are welcoming and supportive to trans and non-binary people who want to be among us. Belonging is more than fitting in.

With glad hearts we acknowledge and affirm the trans and gender diverse Friends in our Quaker communities, and express appreciation for the contribution and gifts that they bring to our meetings, which are communities made up of people with a diverse range of gender expressions. The end of our travelling is for differences not to divide us. We rejoice in recognising God's creation in one another. This is what love requires of us.

This position is unaffected by the unanimous decision of five justices of the UK Supreme Court that Scottish ministers (and the Scottish courts) were wrong in affirming a right to self-identify as male or female; and thus that for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 a person's sex is the one she or he had at birth. The full text of the 88-page judgment can be accessed at https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf. It is too early to say what all of its effects may be, but the status in law of trans people is self-evidently undermined.

Plainly, the judgment is open to challenge. It was the contention of Amnesty International (allowed as a written submission) that "*human rights principles demonstrate beyond doubt that the interpretation of the Scottish courts [was] correct*" (para. 34 of the judgment) – such principles are ultimately determined by the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg. Parliament's intention, according to the civil servant who drafted the 2010 Act, was the opposite of what the Supreme Court held the legislation to mean: it was supposed to give transgender people with gender recognition certificates (GRCs) the same legal status as biological men or women (see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/18/ruling-on-woman-definition-at-odds-with-uk-equality-acts-aim-says-ex-civil-servant>.) There were procedural issues to cast doubt on the fairness of the handling of the case, notably the refusal to allow the intervention of Victoria McCloud, the first transgender judge in the UK, whose application was supported by the Good Law Project (see <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/28/transgender-judge-seeks-leave-to-intervene-in-uk-court-case-over-legal-definition-of-woman>), on the basis that a decision on trans rights made without having heard from a trans person is "not what justice looks like".

Equally plainly, however, we cannot expect either an appeal from Holyrood against the ruling or a bill at Westminster to overturn it any time soon. The UK Government not only quietly abandoned a manifesto commitment on trans rights even before the judgment was delivered (see <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/10/labour-shelves-plans-easier-people-legally-change-gender>), but has welcomed its "clarity"; and Labour MSPs gloated over the failure of the Scottish Government to uphold rights they themselves had voted to enshrine in law. SNP ministers have said they accept the judgment, since they clearly lack the cross-party support needed to take it to Europe, and with ministers and Labour backbenchers in the House of Commons already prepared to attack the European Convention on Human Rights and call for the UK to withdraw from it (as reported

at <https://www.politico.eu/article/britain-lawmaker-obsess-european-court-again/>), to win in a “foreign” court might anyhow be a Pyrrhic victory. (Nevertheless, the Good Law Project has announced its intention to mount a crowd-funded appeal – see <https://goodlawproject.org/crowdfunder/supreme-court-human-rights-for-trans-people/> – saying:

We believe the UK is now in breach of its obligations under the Human Rights Act and the European Convention of Human Rights and we plan to ask the High Court for a declaration of incompatibility. We believe the legal arguments are strong – but we must also point out that the Supreme Court has revealed a readiness on the part of our courts to disapply, in the case of trans people, normal legal and procedural safeguards.

There is, of course, no guarantee that the appeal, if allowed, would succeed, although the money raised is already close to the target figure.)

All this is not to say that in the meantime the worst that could happen *will* happen; the exclusion of trans women from women-only spaces has been cited by Lord Sumption, himself a former Supreme Court justice, as something that has become permissible but is not obligatory, and the Court did say (in para. 110, quoting a judgment in an employment case, and in paras. 249-261) that trans people still have legal protection against harassment and discrimination; as well as rights under equal-pay legislation (paras. 262-3). It is not denied that these rights are restricted: the final phrase of para. 262, “*We do not see this difficulty as compelling a different conclusion [as to the effect of a GRC and the right interpretation of the Equality Act]*” is echoed in 263, where the “*difficulty*” is an “*anomaly*”, likewise set aside. Lady Falkner, chair of the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC), has said that, despite its overturning twenty years of policy-making, the Court’s “*new legal reasoning*” is – in a phrase much over-used since the ruling was given – “*a victory for common sense*”; but “*only if you recognise that trans people exist, they have rights, and their rights must be respected.*” A big *if* – and whether ‘rights’ that depend on the goodwill of others and cannot reliably be enforced can really be described as such is questionable.

Not all Friends will be disturbed by the ruling. (‘Sex Matters to Quakers’ is, according to its website, “*a small, informal group of Quakers in Britain who meet monthly to consider how to challenge the gender ideology that has captured the headquarters [sic] of Quakers in Britain*”, i.e. as reflected in the YM 2021 Minute; unsurprisingly, they have failed to be accepted as a Quaker Recognised Body, and unsurprisingly they resent this, seeing it as confirmation of aggressive intolerance within the Religious Society of Friends.) For most Quakers, I think, it is clear that “*what love requires of us*” is to stand by trans people, who are confronted by an existential threat, as the Good Law Project rightly calls it. However it requires more than that. Friends are urged (in *Advices & Queries*, 17) not to allow “*the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue*” but this may not go far enough; sometimes it can be self-indulgent to tell ourselves we are “*speaking Truth to power*” in using strong words that antagonise, even if they are justified. To say, for example, that “*bigotry, prejudice*

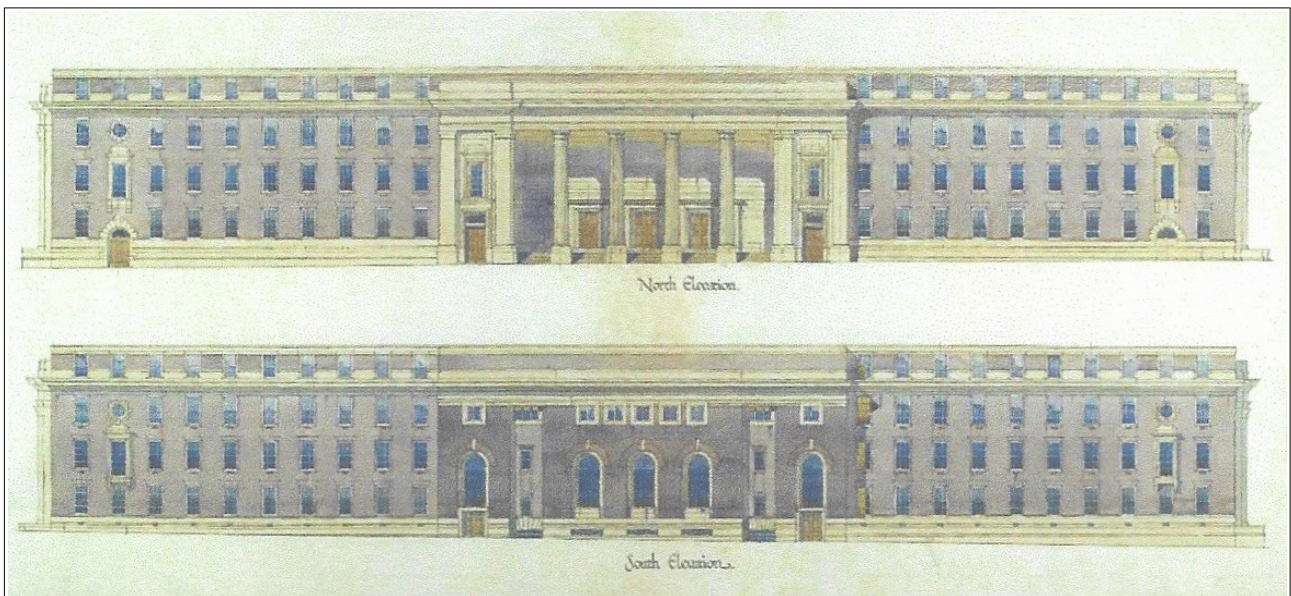
and hatred” underlie the ruling is unlikely to win over anyone who genuinely thinks that at the heart of the issue is the “common sense” question of whether a rapist is sent to a women’s prison or not, matters of anatomy, or the purity of organised sport. They too have to come to see what truly is.

Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 – 23-26 May

BOOKING TO ATTEND YEARLY MEETING in person or online closed in April. It is still possible, however, to sign up on the Woodbrooke events page to hear and see the **Swarthmore Lecture** – see page 13. Its title is *The Meaning of Quaker Community*, and it will be given by **Emily Provance**, of Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting. A version of it will appear in book form later in the year.

The **Salter Lecture**, organised by the Quaker Socialist Society and named for Alfred and Ada Salter (see *Sesame* 257 for a review of Ada’s biography), also usually takes place over the Yearly Meeting weekend. This year’s lecturer is **Abimbola Johnson**, a Black lawyer who chairs the Independent Scrutiny & Oversight Board (ISOB), established to tackle racism and racial disparity in the police forces of England & Wales. Her lecture will probably be on the Sunday evening, 25 May, although the time, venue and title had not been announced before *Sesame* went to press. It may be possible, as in previous years, to watch it on YouTube; details will be in *Sesame* when we get them.

If you will be at Friends House, or joining in the proceedings on Zoom, it would be very helpful if you could make some notes of your impressions for sharing in a future Sesame. The deadline for the next issue is 10 June.



The North and South elevations of Friends House, drawn by the architect, Hubert Lidbetter (1885-1966). The designs were approved by Yearly Meeting 1924; building work began in July that year and, having been delayed by the General Strike, was completed in late 1926.

'The New and Living Way'

Writing some twenty years later, Fox describes the start of his mission, in 1648. He was 24 in July that year. Note that "professors" refers not to holders of academic office but to those professing Christianity – prominent laymen in the established Church.

NOW, WHEN THE LORD GOD, and his son, Jesus Christ, did send me forth into the world, to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation, and their way to God: even that divine Spirit which would lead them into all Truth and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any. But with and by this divine power and spirit of God, and the light of Jesus, I was to bring people off from all their own ways to Christ, the new and living way, and from their churches, which men had made and gathered, to the Church in God, the general assembly written in Heaven, which Christ is the head of, and off from the world's teachers made by men, to learn of Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life, of whom the Father said, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him'; and off from all the world's worships, to know the spirit of Truth in the inward parts, and to be led thereby, that in it they might worship the Father of spirits, who seeks such to worship him, which spirit they that worshipped not in knew not what they worshipped.

And I was to bring people off from all the world's religions, which are vain, that they might know the pure religion, and might visit the fatherless, the widows and the strangers, and keep themselves from the spots of the world. And then there would not be so many beggars, the sight of whom often grieved my heart, to see so much hard-heartedness amongst them that professed the name of Christ. And I was to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings, and singings, which stood in forms without power, that their fellowships might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the eternal Spirit of God; that they might pray in the Holy Ghost, and sing in the spirit and with the grace that comes by Jesus, making melody in their hearts to the Lord who hath sent his beloved Son to be their Saviour, and caused his heavenly sun to shine upon all the world, and through them all, and his heavenly rain to fall upon the just and the unjust (as his outward rain doth fall, and his outward sun doth shine on all), which is God's unspeakable love to the world.

And I was to bring people off from Jewish ceremonies, and from heathenish fables, and from men's inventions and windy doctrines, by which they blowed the people about this way and the other way, from sect to sect; and all their beggarly rudiments, with their schools and colleges for making ministers of Christ, who are indeed ministers of their own making but not of Christ's; and from all their images and crosses, and sprinkling of infants, with all their holy days (so called) and all their vain traditions, which they

had gotten up since the apostles' days, which the Lord's power was against, and in the dread and authority thereof I was moved to declare against them all, and against all that preached and not freely, as being such had not received freely from Christ.

Moreover when the Lord sent me forth into the world, he forbade me to put off my hat to any, high or low; and I was required to 'thee' and 'thou' all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small. And as I travelled up and down, I was not to bid people 'good morrow' or 'good evening', neither might I bow or scrape with my leg to anyone; and this made the sects and professions to rage. But the Lord's power carried me over all to his glory, and many came to be turned to God in a little time, for the heavenly day of the Lord sprang from on high, and brake forth apace, by the light of which many came to see where they were.

But oh, the rage that then was in the priests, magistrates, professors, and people of all sorts, but especially in priests and professors! for, though 'thou' to a single person was according to their own learning, their accidence and grammar rules, and according to the Bible, yet they could not bear to hear it, and the hat-honour, because I could not put off my hat to them, it set them all into a rage. But the Lord showed me that it was an honour below, which he would lay in the dust and stain it, an honour which proud flesh looked for, but sought not the honour which came from God only, that it was an honour invented by men in the Fall, and in the alienation from God, who were offended if it were not given them, and yet would be looked upon as saints, church-members, and great Christians. But Christ saith, 'How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' 'And I', saith Christ, 'receive not honour of men': showing that men have an honour, which men will receive and give, but Christ will have none of it. This is the honour which Christ will not receive, and which must be laid in the dust. Oh, the rage and scorn, the heat and fury that arose! Oh, the blows, punchings, beatings, and imprisonments that we underwent for not putting off our hats to men! For that soon tried all men's patience and sobriety, what it was. Some had their hats violently plucked off and thrown away so that they quite lost them. The bad language and evil usage we received on this account are hard to be expressed, beside the danger we were sometimes in of losing our lives for this matter, and that, by the great professors of Christianity, who thereby discovered [i.e. *revealed*] that they were not true believers. And though it was but a small thing in the eye of man, yet a wonderful confusion it brought among all professors and priests. But, blessed be the Lord, many came to see the vanity of that custom of putting off the hat to men, and felt the weight of Truth's testimony against it.

Biblical verses alluded to or quoted in this passage include: Revelation 14:6; Hebrews 12:23; John 14:6; Matthew 3:17; Psalm 51:6; Hebrews 12:9; John 4:22; James 1:27; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 5:45; Galatians 4:9; John 5:44; and John 5:41.

Quakers in Scotland proposal – a suggested response following the threshing meeting held on Saturday 1 March 2025

Prepared by the AM Clerk in consultation with the planning group and Elders, for consideration at South East Scotland AM on 6 May 2025

Background

The proposal for a single charitable body for Quakers in Scotland, able to take on the trustee responsibilities of the six existing Quaker charities (four Area Meetings plus General Meeting for Scotland and the Dundee Property Trust), goes back a number of years. The new Quakers in Scotland (QiS) charity was registered by OSCR, the charity regulator, on 13 March 2025.

The foundation document of the new QiS sets out the formal structure of the charity. How local meetings will relate to the new body, to each other, and to Britain Yearly Meeting has not yet been worked out. Extensive consultation was carried out in the summer of 2024, resulting in a paper setting out four possible options. In November 2024, Area Meetings were invited to give views.

South East Scotland AM said it was unable to do so at that point and set up a threshing meeting to consider the issues; this was held on 1 March 2025.

The options presented

The 'possible patterns' set out in the consultation paper were:

1. The status quo. In agreeing the establishment of the new trustee body and to apply for registration as a SCIO, Friends have effectively ruled out the 'do nothing' option. SESAM minutes note that in agreeing to nominate foundation trustees for the SCIO it is not necessarily agreeing to joining this body in due course.
2. The 'Welsh model' - assets and financial responsibilities transferred to the 'national' body; membership and other responsibilities retained at 'area' level.
3. QiS and Local Meetings (LMs) only. However, SESAM minute **2024/11/07** says - '*we are clear that Option 3 ... would not be acceptable*'.
4. QiS and LMs plus the option of intermediate meetings. In this case it is assumed that AMs relinquish responsibilities to QiS which then delegates some responsibilities back to area groupings. The form of area groupings could vary depending on local needs. The process by which responsibilities might be delegated has not yet been determined.

In the course of the threshing meeting, the view was expressed that a fifth option might be on the table: QiS is established and SESAM remains a separate charity for the foreseeable future: this relates to the caveat from SESAM noted in the comment in Option 1.

The threshing meeting

A threshing meeting is intended to allow participants to listen to conflicting ideas and to explore alternative possibilities. It does not make deci-

sions or record minutes (beyond a simple minute of record). However some general themes emerged from the discussions, recorded by the AM clerks and members of the planning group in their personal notes.

In general, those at the meeting outlined features of the current relationships that they held dear and others that they found frustrating.

The things that people hold dear as key features of our Area Meeting include:

- Our membership process including hearing the report read
- Honouring those who have died: hearing memorial minutes read aloud
- Knowing who is appointed to key roles
- Support from peers for clerks, elders and pastoral Friends
- “seeing each others’ faces”.

Whatever new system is adopted, people were clear that the features should include:

- Openness to newcomers; practices that encourage them in their journey to Quakers
- Compassion, caring, co-operation, compromise
- Opportunities for learning, supporting witness, spiritual growth
- Vision for our future
- Ways of involving young people in running Quakers
- Structures that help us serve God and the world
- A national voice for Quakers in Scotland.

A request was made for a clear proposal to be put to AM, a plan that people can respond to.

Looking ahead

The threshing meeting demonstrated that there is less of a gulf than had been felt between those who were sceptical of the Quakers in Scotland proposals and those who were wholeheartedly in favour.

Option 4 offers a way forward, but significant questions remain around sharing of finances, management of property, safeguarding, eldership and pastoral care.

We feel some concern about the aspect of Option 4 which relies on ‘delegating responsibilities back’ to local or regional level by a process yet to be determined. We see the Quaker tradition as benefiting from a bottom-up approach, where the wider body earns its authority from the constituent bodies, rather than imposing authority on them. Certainly, our trustees must work by consent of the worshipping body.

This reorganisation represents an opportunity to re-think the Quaker geography of Scotland. We believe it would be a worthwhile exercise to invite all 33 local meetings (and three worship groups) to think about the other meetings they would link up with and on what basis. We also think it might allow us to think about how non-geographical groups, such as Young Friends, might relate more effectively to the wider Quaker movement in Scotland.

While resolving some of the challenges of charity administration is worthwhile, it is insufficient to justify wholesale change in our long-established structures and processes, including our Area Meetings. On the other hand, a picture of a Scotland in which Quakers are vibrant, thriving, present in the world and loving within our communities is attractive. If Quakers in Scotland enables that, it will be truly transformational.

We ask the QiSCG (or the trustees of the QiS charity) to offer:

1. Plans for how key issues will be handled following the transfer of responsibilities: specifically sharing of finances; management of property; safeguarding;
2. An outline of whether fewer jobs (other than trustee roles) will be needed;
3. Proposed arrangements are envisaged for maintaining eldership and pastoral care under any new, more flexible system;
4. Proposed systems to guard against local meetings becoming isolated: from surrounding LMs, from QiS, and / or from BYM ;
5. Ideas for how the current Area Meetings might work together, and together with QiS, as an interim measure or for the foreseeable future.

31 March 2025

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

On Earth as it is in Heaven;

The Kingdom of God and the yearning of Creation

by Eden Grace (Swarthmore Lecture, 2019)

Eden Grace, of New England YM, is the Director of Global Ministries for Friends United Meeting (FUM), and before that was for nine years the FUM Field Officer at the African Ministries Office in Kisumu, in western Kenya. In her lecture, she explores the roots of our contemporary witness to God's creation. She believes that unless we draw on spiritual knowledge to change the world we shall not only be ineffective but will actually do damage to ourselves. The experience of finding God in nature has characterised Friends' spirituality throughout our history.

The text is backed up by a bibliography which reflects the wide variety of themes covered, and there are ideas for workshops supplied by the Swarthmore Lecture Committee.

Rachel Frith

The text of a new letter urging Tokio Marine to stop insuring fossil fuel projects and, in particular, EACOP, is at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/tokio-marine-faiths-letter-2025-04-17>. At <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/03/climate-crisis-on-track-to-destroy-capitalism-warns-allianz-insurer> it is reported that other insurers fear that the climate crisis threatens not just their own business but capitalism itself.

Woodbrooke Courses: May & June

DETAILS of courses and events commencing or taking place before the end of May were in *Sesame* 259; more have since been added, and so we are reprinting details of those that take place or start on or after 08/05/2025.

Unless marked otherwise, events are online. Many are FREE or 'pay as led'. It is necessary to book (at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>) as places are limited. If a price is shown, it is the **standard** fee, and a **50 % discount** is usually available to participants aged 18–35.

Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant

Thursday 8 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST

Paulette Meier

Book Launch: The 18th Century Enslaving Industry —

Lancaster Quakers' Involvement by Ann Morgan

Thursday 8 May, 19:30 – 20:30 BST

Ann Morgan, Rhiannon Grant

Nominations in a Nutshell

£40

Saturday 10 May, 10:00 – 16:00 BST

Marilyn Higgins, Judith Roads

George Fox and the Quaker Peace Testimony

Monday 12 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST

Lily Chadwick, Douglas Gwyn

Quakers and Star Wars

£36

3 sessions: Tuesdays, 13 – 27 May, 19:30 – 21:00 BST

Martin Urschel, Rhiannon Grant

Write From the Heart

£48

3 sessions: Tuesdays, 13 – 27 May, 19:00 – 21:00 BST

Rosie Carnall

Enquiring Into: Divine Guidance

Thursday 15 May, 19:00 – 21:00 BST

Rosie Carnall

Квakerский Путь [RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE COURSE: 'The Quaker Way']

19 May – 6 July

Sergey Grushko, Natasha Zhuravenkova

FOR MORE DETAILS SEE <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/ru4/>

Understanding Power: Focusing Energy for Change

Tuesday 20 May, 19:00-21:00 BST

Lucas De Koning

2025 Swarthmore Lecture:

THE MEANING OF QUAKER COMMUNITY by *Emily Provance*

Saturday 24 May, Evening [time to be confirmed]

Awakening: Spiritual Practices To Anchor Your Day

£54

4 sessions: Thursdays, 29 May – 19 June, 07:00-08:00 BST

Simonne Wood

Can We Know the 'Truth' ?

Historical Research and the Ongoing Quest for Answers

Thursday 29 May, 19:00 – 20:30 BST

Lily Chadwick, Laura J. Rediehs

Food, Faith and Witness

£36

3 sessions: Thursdays, 29 May – 12 June, 18:30-20:30 BST

Wendy Pattinson, Naomi Richards

- Time with the Texts*** [RESIDENTIAL] **£285**
 Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH
 The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 30 May and
 ends at lunchtime on Sunday 1 June ‘Ben’ Pink Dandelion
- Challenging Traditional Quaker Histories: Quakers and Enslavement*** **£36**
 4 sessions: Mondays, 2 – 23 June, 19:30-20:30 BST
Lily Chadwick, Caitlin McGeever
- Exploring the Quaker Spiritual Path***
 Monday 2 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Stuart Masters
- Simplification: Reflecting, Relaxing and Letting Go*** **£25**
 2 sessions: Tuesdays, 3 & 10 June, 19:00-21:00 BST Wendy Hampton
- Coming Together for Continuing Revelation:*** **£54**
Quaker Approaches to Dialogue
 6 sessions: Tuesdays, 3 June – 8 July, 18:30-20:00 BST Windy Cooler
- Resilient Communities: Cultures of Care – Inner Transformation***
 Wednesday 4 June, 18:30 – 20:30 BST Amanda Woolley
- EVA KOCH SCHOLARS 2025: Rewilding the Light, Quaker Eco-Spirituality***
 Thursday 5 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Jeanne Marie (Jaimie) Mudd
- How Does a Quaker Meeting Work?***
 Thursday 5 June, 19:00-21:00 BST Wendy Hampton
- Quakers in Film and Television***
 Friday 6 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Stephen Brooks
- Making Sense of AI: Silicon, Sacredness and Humanity***
 Monday 9 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Kenneth Cukier
- The Inner Worlds of George Fox and William Blake*** **£30**
 2 sessions: Mondays, 9 & 16 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Benjamin Wood
- Faiths for Climate Reparations***
 2 sessions: Wednesdays, 11 & 25 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Shanon Shah
- Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant***
 Thursday 12 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Paulette Meier
- EVA KOCH SCHOLARS 2025:***
How a Meeting House Can Be a Hub for Climate Witness
 Thursday 12 June, 19:00-20:30 BST
Jean Jenn, Julia Mann, Alexandra Rook, John Shinebourne
- The Spirit of Dissent: Quaker Origins in Early Modern England*** **£72**
 4 sessions: Thursdays, 12 June – 3 July, 19:00-20:30 BST Erica Canela
- Book Launch: Speaking in Quaker Meeting for Worship by Rhiannon Grant***
 Monday 16 June, 19:30-20:30 BST Simonne Wood, Rhiannon Grant
- Time Set Aside: An Individually Guided Retreat*** [RESIDENTIAL] **£925**
 The Ammerdown Centre, Radstock, Somerset BA3 5SW
 The retreat will begin at 17:00 BST on Monday 16 June, and end with lunch
 on Friday 20 June. Annique Seddon, Timothy Peat Ashworth

- Resilient Communities: Cultures of Care – Community Transformation***
 Wednesday 18 June, 18:30-20:30 BST Amanda Woolley
- EVA KOCH SCHOLARS 2025: Exploring Traditional African Food Preservation***
 Thursday 19 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Hezron Masitsa
- The Meaning of Community: Exploring the 2025 Swarthmore Lecture*** £40
 [IN-PERSON WORKSHOP]
 Leeds Central Quaker Meeting House, 188 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX
 Saturday 21 June, 10:00-15:00 Emily Provance
- Clerking in a Nutshell*** £40
 Saturday 21 June, 10:00-16:00 BST Judith Roads
- Book Group: A Testament of Devotion by Thomas Kelly*** £72
 6 sessions: Mondays, 23 June – 28 July, 19:00-20:30 BST Mark Russ
- Property Review and Renewal: A Process***
 Tuesday 24 June, 19:00-21:00 BST Wendy Hampton
- Supporting Vocal Ministry: How Elders and Others Can Help***
 Tuesday 24 June, 19:30-21:00 BST Rhiannon Grant
- George Fox: An Evangelical Quaker Perspective***
 Wednesday 25 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Paul Anderson, Lily Chadwick
- Spiritual Wisdom From Liberal Christianity*** £60
 5 sessions: Wednesdays, 25 June – 23 July, 19:00-21:00 BST Benjamin Wood
- How Stories Make and Change the World***
 Thursday 26 June, 18:30-20:30 BST Sarah Woods
- Simplicity: A Quaker Way of Life***
 Saturday 28 June, 10:00-12:00 BST Lindsey Markwell
- Quakers and the Spirit: The Annual CRQS/QSRA Quaker Studies Conference***
 In-person [£35] and online [£20] on Saturday 28 June, 10:00-16:30.
This annual Quaker studies conference is co-sponsored by Woodbrooke's Centre for Research in Quaker Studies and the Quaker Studies Research Association. It will explore a range of scholarly approaches to the topic 'Quakers and the Spirit.' The in-person venue is Central Leeds (Carlton Hill) Quaker Meeting House, 188 Woodhouse Lane, Woodhouse, Leeds LS2 9DX – refreshments will be provided but please bring a packed lunch.
- The Meaning of Community: Exploring the 2025 Swarthmore Lecture*** £40
 [IN-PERSON WORKSHOP]
 Coventry Friends Meeting House, 25 Hill Street, Coventry CV1 4AN
 Saturday 28 June, 10:00-15:00 Emily Provance

Bursary help with the cost of participating in events may be available; speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com for further information.

The Editor welcomes participants' reports for possible inclusion in Sesame.
 NB. Emily Provance will be at **Edinburgh QMH** on **12 July** for a workshop exploring her Swarthmore Lecture; you need not go to Leeds or Coventry to hear her!

QUIZ – St Luke’s Church, Ninian Quadrant, Glenrothes KY7 4HP
 Friday 16 May 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm

BOOK SALES – Elie Church Gate (High Street, Elie KY9 1DB)
 Saturdays 10.00 am – 1.00 pm
 28 June – 16 August inclusive

Events in East Lothian

QUIZ NIGHT – Abbey Church, 1 Church Road, North Berwick EH39 4AD
 Saturday 3 May 6.30pm start

**COFFEE MORNING – St Andrew's Blackadder Church, St Andrew Street,
 North Berwick EH39 4NU**
 Saturday 17 May 10.00 am – 12.000 noon

Events in Tweeddale

SPONSORED WALK – starts Peebles RFC pavilion, Hay Lodge Park, EH45 8NN
(Sponsor forms available from chris_patters75@hotmail.com; the walk is seven miles, on a route along the Tweed, with a picnic stop at Lyne Bridge. Unaccompanied children (aged 7-14) are welcome to participate.)
 Saturday 10 May 10.00 am start

COFFEE MORNINGS – St Andrew’s Leckie Church Hall, Peebles EH45 8AD
 Thursday, Friday, Saturday 10.00 am – 12.000 noon
 15-17 May

PLANT SALE – St Andrew’s Leckie Church grounds (as above)
 Saturday 17 May 10.00 am – 12.000 noon

Other Christian Aid News

Myanmar Earthquake Appeal

Christian Aid launched an emergency appeal in March following the devastating earthquake in Myanmar. Access to vital services such as water, power and basic foods has been critically disrupted.

Immediate emergency support is now urgently needed, including food parcels, water kits, shelters, and cash for essential supplies.

Christian Aid is mobilising to assist its partners and quake-affected communities with essential aid and recovery over the coming weeks and months. Donations can be made at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/myanmar-earthquake-appeal>

The RESTORE Campaign

The climate and debt crises are colliding to trap millions of people in poverty. These crises are a symptom of the broken systems and broken relationships of our times.

The Restore Campaign invites you to join in God’s work to restore creation.

Join us to call on the UK Government to stand up to reckless polluters and greedy lenders.

What's the problem

For too long, the UK Government has backed the world's biggest polluters and greediest corporate lenders, whose reckless actions are fuelling the climate and debt crises. The UK Government has looked the other way and repeatedly backed the wealthy and powerful over people living in poverty.

The climate crisis

The climate crisis is leaving parents fighting to feed their children, crops devastated, and entire villages displaced. Floods have destroyed communities in Nigeria. Wildfires have devoured homes in Greece. Cyclones have killed thousands in Malawi. Drought is starving people in South Sudan. And in every climate disaster, people in poverty feel its impact hardest.

The debt crisis

Over 60 % of African countries spend more on debt payments than health-care or education. These debts mean they cannot provide basic services for their citizens. For example, in Ethiopia the government is unable to pay some doctors and teachers, meaning hospitals and schools have to close.

What's the solution?

The UK Government is uniquely placed, and morally obliged, to act. It can tax the profits of polluters like Shell and BP. It can introduce 'debt justice' laws that force private lenders to cancel or negotiate the debt of low-income countries. *This could pull millions of people out of poverty.*

Sign the petition

Paper petition forms are available, and it can be signed online at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign-launch-petition>

The text of the petition reads:

Not only must the UK government restore the aid budget. It must stand up to reckless polluters and greedy lenders who are making vast profits whilst trapping millions in poverty.

The UK must make polluters pay for the climate crisis they've caused.

The UK must use its power to force lenders to cancel or renegotiate the debts of low-income countries.

UK Government: stand up for people living in poverty.

Workshops and talks

The campaign workshop on 27 March, 'Take a Deep Dive on Debt', featuring Katrine Musgrave and Alpha Gougsa, can be viewed online at

<https://christianaid.resourcespace.com/pages/view.php?ref=16720&k=8bfa29a506>

There is to be a panel debate on 7 June on the connections between the debt and climate crises, with Precious Kalombwana, Zambian debt activist, among the speakers. Detail of it and other events will be at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/restore-campaign-workshop-webinar-series>

Faith Will

Faith Will is a new campaign, based on research showing that more than

two-thirds of people who leave a gift in their will to Christian Aid also leave a gift to their local church or Quaker meeting. This makes great sense: our supporters care about their neighbours, local and global. So it also makes sense for churches and Christian Aid to come together to talk about the importance of gifts in Wills. There is more information (including on free will options, through Farewill and the National Free Wills Network) at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/faith-will>

Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

On the 24th of each month between 7.00 and 8.00 pm, Christian Aid supporters gather online to pray for peace. *Please note that in April this meeting moved from Zoom to Microsoft Teams* – you will be sent a link if you sign up (at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace>). If existing participants have any problems connecting, they should contact campaigns@christian-aid.org.

Sharing uncertainty, fears and hopes

Global Meetings for Worship

Two online meetings for worship were held in late April, for Friends “to share uncertainties, fears and hopes and to uphold each other.”

They were organised by the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group (QTIG) within Britain Yearly Meeting, which has been concerned at the decline in truth and integrity in public affairs, primarily because of its deleterious effect on democracy. It now sees democracy around the world being undermined and is asking “What are Quakers called to do?” Friends worldwide were invited to join in discerning a way forward.

QTIG wrote: *We feel that it is important for us to hear a broader, more global perspective because although our work is focused on Britain, the global order is shifting and we are aware that the way that looks from other corners of the world will be different from how it looks to us. We do not consider the global order as it was in any way perfect – far from it. And there may be opportunities for the global community in the changes we see, even if (or because) they are so very uncomfortable and frightening. We also offer this opportunity as a contribution to wider discernment in the Quaker world.*

Outcomes from the two Meetings for Worship that might inform future actions are to be summarised and shared with participants at the meetings and with FWCC [*Friends World Committee for Consultation*] and the Clerks of the four FWCC sections: Africa; the Section of the Americas; Asia West Pacific; and the Europe & Middle East Section (EMES).

[With thanks to **Janet Saunders** who attended the first of the meetings. Janet herself is concerned about the ‘Dark Enlightenment’ movement in the US, which is explicitly anti-democratic and appears to influence members of the Administration. See <https://time.com/7269166/dark-enlightenment-history-essay/>.]

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

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES has produced a handbook, *Hope for Children Through Climate Justice: Legal Tools to Hold Financiers Accountable*, setting out practical ways faith groups can help protect young people and future generations from the climate crisis through legal action – see:

<https://oikoumene.org/resources/publications/hope-for-children-through-climate-justice>

It also outlines possible non-litigious actions, including questioning financial organisations about their investments, or reporting concerns about companies to regulators or bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Churches are encouraged to divest, if they have not already, from fossil fuels. The handbook costs £15.75; it is available as a booklet or eBook (ISBNs 978-2-8254-1875-8 and 978-2-8254-1876-5), and supporting material can be downloaded from the WCC website.

IN MANDAN, NORTH DAKOTA, after a five-week hearing ended in March, a nine-person jury found in favour of Energy Transfer Partners, a Dallas-based oil and gas company, and awarded damages against Greenpeace of some \$667 million for defamation and incitement of protestors to commit criminal damage at the Dakota Access oil pipeline in 2016 and 2017. *The Guardian* quoted a lawyer from a team monitoring proceedings as saying: “In my six decades of legal practice, I have never witnessed a trial as unfair as the one against Greenpeace that just ended in the courts of North Dakota ... Greenpeace has a very strong case on appeal. I believe there is a good chance it ultimately will win both in court and in the court of public opinion.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/19/greenpeace-lawsuit-energy-transfer-dakota-pipeline>

Nevertheless, it is likely that other fossil-fuel companies will be encouraged by this outcome to litigate against environmental groups; Greenpeace US would be bankrupted if the award of damages were upheld. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/21/oil-protest-activism-greenpeace-dakota-pipeline-verdict>;

and <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/28/greenpeace-verdict-pipeline-north-dakota>

LEE ZELDIN, the Trump-appointed administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) boasted in March of a “*dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion*” in the form of the scaling back or complete elimination of 31 regulations that protect clean air and water and limit pollution. According to the EPA’s own figures, the regulations under threat could prevent some 200,000 deaths in the next 25 years; they had been set to deliver at least \$254bn in economic benefits annually through savings such as reduced healthcare costs and fewer sick days, whereas the cost of complying with the regulations is around \$40bn a year.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/19/trump-epa-pollution-regulation-cuts>

William Reilly, who was EPA administrator in 1990, when federal action was taken with bipartisan support to prevent acid rain, has said the Trump administration's changes could mean *"unbreathable air, places where there is pollution that you can see, rivers that burn. That is what it was like before and that is what it could be like again if enforcement is cut back."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/27/acid-rain-trump-epa>

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION is also attacking environmental laws passed at city and state level; in an executive order signed on 8 April the Department of Justice was instructed to "stop the enforcement" of state climate laws, which *"are fundamentally irreconcilable with my Administration's objective to unleash American energy"*. The communications director of Make Polluters Pay, Cassidy DiPaola, said the order is really about "ensuring billionaire polluters never have to face a jury of ordinary Americans".

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/09/trump-climate-state-laws-executive-order>

TOTAL ENERGIES' DEVELOPMENT of a liquified natural gas (LNG) project in Mozambique, from which the UK government has been seeking to extricate itself and the \$1.15 billion committed to the project in 2020 (see *Sesame 259*) was boosted in March by the release of a \$4.7bn American loan, approved by the first Trump administration in 2020, but blocked in 2021. The *Financial Times* reported that the decision by the US Export-Import Bank (Exim) would put pressure on the governments of the UK and the Netherlands likewise to re-approve funding; Mozambique's minister for energy, Estevão Pale, was quoted as saying he expects their support to be confirmed:

<https://www.ft.com/content/b4404ab3-40dd-41b4-b1c4-16cf8a5dfa93>

Friends of the Earth issued a statement on the implications of the project:

<https://foe.org/news/exim-approves-mozambique/>

CITIZENS ARREST NETWORK (CAN) aims to hold to account *"those making the decisions driving the worst environmental pollution"*. In March, groups of its members performed citizen's arrests of executives of the fossil fuel companies EnQuest, Perenco, Harbour Energy and Serica Energy, and of the CEO and Chief Finance Officer of Thames Water; indictments naming officers of Shell and BP were handed to the Crown Prosecution Service. The crime alleged was the English common law offence of 'public nuisance': an act or omission the effect of which is to *"endanger the life, health, property, morals, or comfort of the public"*. For more details, see the CAN website, <https://www.citizensarrestnetwork.org/>. Helen Burnett, Team Vicar of St Peter & St Paul, Chaldon (near Caterham, Surrey), is a CAN activist, and was interviewed in the *Church Times* about her involvement, see:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2025/4-april/news/uk/citizen-s-arrest-of-oil-executives-about-shining-a-light-says-priest-involved>

CAN features in a review of forms of climate activism, following the an-

nouncement that Just Stop Oil was ending its protests, see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/05/what-next-climate-activism-just-stop-oil-hanging-up-hi-vis-protests-arrests>

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON has a Centre for Climate Law and Governance within its law school, which has produced an interesting 24-page report, *Accelerating climate solutions through youth-focused litigation*. Actions initiated by children on environmental issues have succeeded in the courts of South Korea, Germany, Colombia, Sweden and Queensland, Australia; at the time the report was published, decisions were awaited in Mexico, the United States, and Pakistan. The report can be downloaded from

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/assets/projects/dpsl-accelerating-climate-solutions.pdf>.

[Thanks to **Rosamond Robertson** for alerting me to the two preceding items – ED.]

DIANA WARNER, a retired GP from Bristol, was tried at Leeds Crown Court for having taken part in a protest at Drax power station in 2021. She felt that the trial judge had bullied the jury into its guilty verdict, see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/feb/26/climate-protester-says-jurors-bullied-by-leeds-court-judge-to-find-her-guilty>

Nevertheless, when sentenced in March, she was *not* sent to prison – the maximum term allowed was two years – but did have costs awarded against her of £4,380, for having elected to be tried by a jury rather than in the magistrate's court. The judge's decision is at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/R-v-Diana-Warner.pdf>

Less fortunate, George Simonson, an Edinburgh graduate, *was* sentenced to two years' imprisonment, for participating in the same Just Stop Oil protest as Gaie Delap. He writes about his experience of prison here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/19/climate-activist-experience-jail-prison-uk>

and Gaie Delap herself is interviewed, for the first time since her second release, here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/23/just-stop-oil-protester-gaie-delap-78-returned-to-jail-as-no-tag-fitted-her-on-the-absurdities-of-her-treatment>

A BARRISTER FOR THE EARTH; *Ten Cases of Hope for Our Future* was published in April (Faber & Faber – ISBN 978-0-571-38636-9) and argues for the effectiveness of legal action as a way of resisting climate change. Its author, Monica Feria-Tinta, was interviewed at length in *The Guardian*, see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/08/legal-action-climate-crisis-monica-feria-tinta-law>

Also published in April was *Climate Injustice: Why We Need to Fight Global Inequality to Combat Climate Change* by Friederike Otto, of the Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College London (Greystone Books (hbk) – ISBN 978-1-77840-162-6). There is an extract at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/18/climate-change-is-not-just-a-problem-of-physics-but-a-crisis-of-justice>

FOLLOW THIS, a Dutch shareholder activist group, which since 2016 has used resolutions at AGMs to challenge oil and gas companies to reduce their emissions, will not be doing so in 2025; a number of US states have taken legal action against corporate investors for supporting climate action, and Follow This itself was sued by Exxon Mobil last year for calling on the company to reduce its emissions in line with global targets. Although the case was dismissed by the judge in Texas, Exxon had had the backing of the US Chamber of Commerce and industry groups hoping to prevent “shareholder proposals pushing social and political agendas”. In 2021, Follow This secured 61 % of the shareholders’ vote to force the board of Chevron to reduce emissions, but more recently only around 20 % have supported its resolutions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/apr/10/green-activist-pausing-backlash-oil-gas>

However BP, which in February abandoned a strategy to increase green investment and become a net zero energy company by 2050, has since seen a significant shareholder rebellion at its AGM; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/apr/17/bp-braces-for-investor-rebellion-at-first-agm-since-climate-strategy-u-turn>

FIVE GREEN GROUPS are suing the Trump administration over its removal of government webpages containing federal climate and environmental justice data. The case, filed in a Washington DC court on 14 April, identifies six crucial sites that have gone, arguing they must be restored. They include a screening tool to identify disadvantaged communities that would benefit from federal climate and clean energy investments, and an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mapping tool, EJScreen, which showed the disparate burdens of pollution alongside socioeconomic indicators.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/15/trump-climate-webpage-removal-lawsuit>

AGRIM REMINDER that the criminality of those who damage the environment for profit does not stop at illegal logging comes in news of the murder in February of two activists in Honduras, which is the country in which it is statistically most dangerous to stand against exploiters:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/apr/14/killed-dismembered-and-scattered-the-honduran-father-and-son-who-made-a-stand-against-logging>

The article draws on a report *Missing voices: The violent erasure of land and environmental defenders*, issued in September by the NGO Global Witness, see

<https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/missing-voices/>

This details 196 murders or disappearances worldwide in 2023 – as it says, *The actual number is likely to be higher. This tips the total number of killings to over 2,000 globally since Global Witness started reporting data in 2012. Global Witness estimates that the total now stands at 2,106 murders.*

Beyond The Pale – Landmines and Nuclear Weapons

FINLAND HAS ANNOUNCED its intention, following Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention banning landmines, citing a perceived threat from Russia.

The Convention became international law in March 1999 and since then landmines have been generally regarded as beyond the pale, as a weapon category that fails to discriminate between combatants and civilians, and continues for decades to cause death and hideous injuries. Not all UN states have acceded to the Convention. No surprise that the US has not – indeed, the US under Biden sent these weapons to Ukraine. And, shamefully, Scotland's First Minister John Swinney endorsed the US move.

The landmines slippage is just one aspect of the general slide away from international humanitarian law (IHL). There are cynical commentators who say that IHL has only flourished when the so-called "threat environment" is relatively benign, and when the chips are down we may expect that when it comes to conflict there will be no rules, that no methods of warfare, however cruel and inhumane, will be excluded. That ignores the fact that the IHL framework that we do have came out of responses to actual horrors, such as the bloodstained battlefields in 19th Century Europe, and the Holocaust. A fair weather code is worth nothing.

We also need to recall that the adherence of the big powers to IHL has always been partial and specious. A good example (among a multitude) is the fact that the aerial bombing of civilians areas was not a charge laid against German or Japanese WWII war leaders at the Nuremberg and Tokyo war trials, although both sets of Axis leaders were guilty of such attacks – unmistakably war crimes under existing international humanitarian law. The obvious reason for this omission was the fact that both the US and the UK had also perpetrated such attacks, as at Dresden, Hamburg, and a whole set of Japanese cities, including the horrific incendiary raids on Tokyo in March 1945, and of course the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These days the disregard of IHL by the big powers is even more blatant. Witness the US and UK's wholehearted complicity with the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

All of which will explain why citizens should push back hard against leaders and unelected demagogues when they argue that in dangerous times we have to water down our principles. If we let them get away with a scam which aims to strengthen their power over us we will be permitting the arrival of a new age of darkness and brutality. Here in Scotland we are under renewed pressure to abandon our vision for transformation and our desire that we should be known for our contribution to peace and justice, rather than for waging war. And the pushback is out there. The Finnish withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention has been criticised by Norway; *"If we start weakening our commitment, it makes it easier for warring factions*

around the world to use these weapons again, because it reduces the stigma” said foreign minister, Barth Eide. Humanitarian organisations worldwide reacted to the withdrawal announcements from the Baltic states and Poland:

“At a time of heightened global conflict and challenges to multilateralism, states should recommit to humanitarian disarmament’s people-centered and co-operative approach. They should join forces to defend unequivocally the international law they collectively created and the humanitarian principles it embodies.”

[see <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/hdstatementmarch2025.html#endorsements>]

Note too the strong response from Craig Dalzell to John Swinney’s deplorable remark:

“If Scotland is to be held up as a credible nation ready for independence then its Government needs to understand the power of its words on the world stage. Promoting future crimes against humanity – however inadvertently – is not the way to do that.”

[see: <https://www.thenational.scot/politics/24758859.john-swinneys-land-mine-treaty-error-matters-independence/>]

And the unspeakable machinery down at Faslane/Coulport? That blot on the landscape is not merely about its potential to share in grim atrocity and the wreck of civilisation. What we do or fail to do about that touches the centre of how we conceive our humanity, how we describe the kind of community we want to live in, how we see ourselves in a shrinking world under critical threat from climate and bio-diversity collapse. Don’t let the strident media, think-tanks or bland academic voices take our vision from us. And as for the political wobblers in our midst we need to get them to make an unequivocal commitment to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

David Mackenzie

*The **Mines Advisory Group (MAG)**, joint winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, is a global humanitarian and advocacy organisation that finds, removes and destroys landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded bombs from places affected by conflict. It also provides education programmes, particularly for children, so people can live, work and play as safely as a possible until they clear the land.*

Since 1989, MAG has helped over 20 million people in 70 countries rebuild their lives and livelihoods after war. See <https://www.maginternational.org/>

*The **HALO Trust** (HALO = Hazardous Area Life-support Organization), based in Dumfries & Galloway, with which the late Diana, Princess of Wales was associated, does similar work; it receives support from various governments, including that of the UK, which, however, cut funding for landmine clearance from £100m to £25m in 2021. The Trust has destroyed over 1.5 million landmines, over 11 million pieces of large calibre ordnance and over 200,000 cluster munitions. Some 10,800 minefields have been cleared and 353.36 km² have been made safe from landmines.*

See <https://www.halotrust.org>

International Mines Awareness Day was marked on 4 April. Every day, around 15 people are killed or injured by landmines or unexploded bombs.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee – *update*

As we move into the next phases of our task, we are aware of the heavy workload these will entail. Our pastoral care Friends have suggested ways of ensuring all our members feel supported. Two members have said they need to step back from the committee for a year; we will not seek replacements, but we can co-opt people to help us with aspects of our work.

The membership of our new working groups, including on *Advices & Queries*, and the Introduction to the whole text, was confirmed at our March meeting. Other groups were laid down, and updates from all the 'live' topic groups confirm that we are nearing the end of this part of our work.

Looking at our timeline, we were again encouraged by much we have done over the past six years. We are well aware of how much still needs doing before our text is handed over to the Friends House publications team, who will prepare the draft for Friends' consideration. Bea Robinson gave us some insights into what that will entail. Our goal is to have the text ready to hand over early in 2026: it will be available for Friends to study towards the end of 2026 and brought to Yearly Meeting in 2027.

Part of our immediate work is preparing for YM 2025. There is an online preparation session, on **Monday 28 April at 7.00 pm**; and our clerks will take part in the **Friday evening session** [23 May] of YM itself. They will also be working closely with the new Agenda Committee during the imminent change from Meeting for Sufferings to Continuing Yearly Meeting.

The Communicating with Friends group (which includes me) is now preparing for the challenge of keeping Friends informed of what's going on ahead of the release of the draft text, and then helping them engage with it. Our book is one in a long line of books of discipline for our Yearly Meeting – but *Quaker Faith & Practice* is the only one many of us have ever known.

All this new work requires skills different from those we have been using until now, at which some of us are apprehensive. All of us know, though, that we will discover unexpected gifts and that together we will rise to the challenges we face. Please continue to uphold us with your prayers!

Key messages from the March meeting:

Our priority throughout 2025 is to complete our work on the first full draft of the content for the new book, to be ready by late 2026 for inclusion in Documents in Advance ahead of Yearly Meeting in July 2027. We are working closely with the Publications Team of Quakers in Britain on planning for the production of the draft.

We have commenced work on the drafting and updating of Advices & Queries.

We hope to reflect voices of Quaker children and young people in the new book, and have gathered some potential material for inclusion.

Friends at Yearly Meeting 2025 will have several opportunities to hear more about our overall progress, both at the Special Interest Meeting on 28 April online and during Yearly Meeting in session in May.

Mary Woodward

3MSP and the NPT PrepCom – the Next Steps

In March, **Janet Fenton** attended the Third Meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On the eve of the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) she writes:

THE TPNW MEETING OF STATE PARTIES closed on 7 March with positive commitments and actions. With 94 signatories, and 78 countries where nuclear weapons are already banned, the TPNW continues to attract support from at least 130 of the UN's 193 member states at the General Assembly each year since its adoption in 2017.

Next, from 28 April to 9 May, we will see the final meeting of the 'NPT PrepCom': the Preparatory Committee (so-called, but open to all states parties) for the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Both the NPT and the TPNW will be separately reviewed before the end of 2026, when comparisons, challenges and progress can be explored by all participants.

Exploring common security and disarmament has to include a proper understanding of the complementarity of these two treaties.

Scotland is not a UN member state, but the fact that all the UK's nuclear weapons are deployed from the Faslane/Coulport complex, despite opposition from the Scottish Government, is one reason why Scotland is recognised as having significant strategic importance to the global disarmament movement. The UK will not discuss the TPNW, but is signed up to the NPT, claiming it "the Cornerstone for Nuclear Disarmament", and describing its own weapons as "the UK's Independent Nuclear Deterrent."

There are several points to be made on these assertions.

- The UK system is not, as is claimed, independent, but is deeply integrated with US nuclear policy and infrastructure.
- Article 6 of the NPT commits signatories to "*pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament*", and Article 1, "*not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons ...*". So far, complete disarmament has not been undertaken by *any* Nuclear Armed State under the NPT, and the term "nuclear sharing" has developed some very elastic interpretations, hard to reconcile with Article 1.
- So-called 'deterrence' is an outdated concept, originally based on the idea of two opposed but equally empowered protagonists, but now being touted in a hostile and uncertain environment by a questionable number of volatile actors. Logically, deterrence justifies proliferation.

The true rationale for disarmament comes through the recognition of the value of human life and the responsibilities we all have towards the planet

that sustains it. Nuclear weapons are the most destructive, inhumane and indiscriminate weapons ever devised. Scientists and diplomats have never presented any scenario where their use could be compatible with the principles of International Humanitarian Law. The threat arising from any use of nuclear weapons, deliberate or accidental, is, at worst, of making the planet uninhabitable for human (and many other) beings, in a matter of days or even hours.

Any suggestion that only upholding the NPT is responsible, and that the TPNW undermines it, is neither credible nor honest. We need to halt proliferation but also to eliminate stockpiled weapons if we are to be truly safe. Both treaties call for this, the TPNW more specifically. The first UN resolution, "*to eliminate atomic weapons and other major weapons of mass destruction from national armaments*" is the parent of both treaties.

This is why it is necessary to highlight the need for the UK Government to fulfil all its NPT obligations. The first step is to stop nuclear sharing and dependence on the US. After that, the UK can ratify the TPNW and remove and destroy its nuclear weapons

This is well understood by the governments in nuclear free states, and by the articulate 'Generation Z' of survivors and well-educated scientists and climate experts who provide the physics and technologies that we need if we are to survive. That is why they turned out, to yet again advance their case at the UN in March.

However, the small number of nuclear-armed states disregard survivors of the nuclear explosions undertaken as 'tests' which have damaged indigenous environments around the planet. They disregard the atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the *hibakusha* from the two Japanese cities which were attacked by the US nearly 80 years ago.



The photo shows members of the Nuclear Truth Project (see its website at

<https://nucleartruthproject.org/>) On the left, are two third-generation Qazak survivors of Soviet nuclear explosions in Kazakhstan. There are social and health issues arising from the exposure inflicted on their grandparents, and how those earlier generations were silenced through shame and discrimination. With them is Hinamœura Morgant-Cross, a French Polynesian Member of Parliament who is also a member of the anti-nuclear NGO Association 193. She became a parliamentarian in order to take her own story to the UN. French Polynesia is an overseas territory of France, and while it has its own parliament, it cannot legislate on certain reserved matters including defence and foreign affairs. There are certain parallels to Scotland's situation, but French Polynesia is on the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and so, unlike Scotland, would attract UN support for an independence referendum.

Hina, as friends call her, was seven years old in 1996, when French testing stopped. 'Test' is a word Hina doesn't use, and nor should we. These were nuclear detonations. She has suffered from leukemia since she was 24. Almost the entire population of French Polynesia was affected by radioactive fallout from the French 'tests' in the atmosphere, in or above the lagoon of Mururoa Atoll. 41 devices were exploded between 1966 and 1974 – the most contaminating in the history of the French nuclear programme. As a white Scottish woman in reasonable health in my seventies I was very honoured and grateful to have the opportunity to hear her speak, along with Bill Kidd MSP, at the Parliamentarians' Conference on Day One of 3MSP.

The rationale for disarmament comes through the recognition of human rights and responsibilities. The humanitarian approach has always been at the heart of the TPNW, addressing the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any nuclear weapons use, utilising a holistic, humane gender-aware and intersectional view of the challenges, and considering solutions we might achieve when human rights and women's perceptions and experience are always included, not only in the diplomatic chambers but at every level from the high street to the board room.

The TPNW evidence is presented by compassionate scientists and academics, and the testimony of the damaged, whether octogenarians from Nagasaki, younger people with second-, third- and fourth-generation experiences of harm inflicted at Nevada, Semipalatinsk and Kiribati, or affected servicemen and women. All attended 3MSP.

Militarily useless, expensive at every level, dangerous to everyone that comes in contact with them, it should not be beyond our powers to recognise that nuclear weapons are not any kind of asset, but a terrifying liability. A nuclear armed military alliance, including one that aspires to control a putative Euro-bomb, makes a mockery of the real danger that the planet is in. Power politics and the protection of boundaries and material wealth endanger states, and nuclear weapons just add the risk of a swift end to any possibility of survival.

Instead, we could respond with mitigation measures to changes to the climate and the loss of biodiversity and choose responsible use of inclusive technology. Full implementation of the TPNW is the only sane response to any consideration of nuclear weapons. There are thousands of these weapons in the world putting us all at risk every minute of every day.

Nuclear disarmament requires us to challenge militarism, confront violent masculinities and gender discrimination, to make major changes to prevailing political structures that presently confuse the use of violence and force with any kind of meaningful security.

The issues related to financing militarism, military alliances like NATO and the modernisation of nuclear weapons and technical weapons are moving centre stage as European governments adjust their positions in a volatile and multi-polarised world in relation to the Trump presidency and the changing ground in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa and China. To protect the planet, eliminating nuclear weapons is an urgent priority, and action from civil society as well as by UN Member states can help. The two review conferences next year for both treaties will be critical for the earth and its people.

FROM PEACE & JUSTICE

Embers of Peace – 30 years of peace and reconciliation work in Bethlehem

**Tuesday 6 May: 7.00 – 8.30 pm at Words and Actions for Peace,
58 Ratcliffe Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 1ST**

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, together with Secure Scotland and Peace & Justice, invite you to an exceptional opportunity to hear from someone in the front line of conflict resolution in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Zoughbi Zoughbi is the Director of Wi'am, the Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center in Bethlehem. Wi'am is a grassroots civil society organisation that uses both Western models of conflict resolution as well as an Arabic model, *Sulha*. See its website at <https://www.alaslah.org/>

Wi'am was the recipient in 2023 of P&J's Geoffrey & Elisabeth Carnall Peace Award.

International Conscientious Objectors Day – 15 May

**Thursday 15 May: 6.30 pm at the Peace Tree, Princes Street Gardens;
then at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL.**

Conscientious Objectors Day, first observed in 1982, was adopted by the European Bureau of Conscientious Objectors in 1985 and soon received worldwide recognition: having been adopted by War Resisters' International, it changed from being European Conscientious Objectors Day to International Conscientious Objectors Day.

Ever since, it has been marked by vigils outside prisons or barracks where COs are held, by demonstrations at embassies of states where COs are not recognised and/or unfairly treated, by street theatre, and by ceremonies where names of conscientious objectors past or present are read out and publicly honoured. (For more on its history, see

<https://www.ppu.org.uk/remembrance/history-international-conscientious-objectors-day>)

The event in Edinburgh is organised by Peace & Justice, with support from Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Peace Pledge Union, Protest in Harmony, Secure Scotland and Women's International League for Peace & Freedom.

Contributions from **Protest in Harmony**, **Israeli Refuser Solidarity Network** and **David Mackenzie** (Trident Ploughshares and Secure Scotland), who will speak on opposition to the tides of war globally.

Meet at 6.15 for a 6.30 start – book at:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/conscientious-objectors-day-edinburgh-615pm-thur-15-may-princes-st-gdns-tickets-1333703275399?aff=oddtcreator>

Please bring images to remember particular conscientious objectors, and your anti-war, pro-peace posters and banners.

Peace & Justice – planning for the future

Peace and Justice Scotland (P&J) has a distinctive role and character, and a long history of working with and building many valuable connections across a wide network of the Scottish organisations working for peace, human rights, anti-militarism and common security. In these difficult and dangerous times it is hugely important that it continues as an organisation, particularly in its role as a national organisation.

OSCR [*the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator*] has recently reviewed its practices, and some aspects of regulation will change in July, so this is an appropriate time for reflection and renewal. At an Extraordinary General Meeting on 12 April it was agreed there should be a three-month period of organisation dormancy, in which time a small group – to be convened by **Julian Goodare** – can engage fully with the membership in regard to clarifying and refining the function and the roles of trustees, and offer suggestions about activities in which the organisation should be engaged. At the end of the dormancy period, the group will offer suggestions of names of new trustees to be considered by the members. The group welcomes ideas and comments, which can be sent to edinburghpeaceandjustice@gmail.com.

Opposing War Memorial Project

Despite delays due to COVID and other problems, this project is still alive. Heather Kiernan, former convener of P&J trustees, has re-engaged with sculptor Kate Ive and will re-convene the committee later in the year to bring the project to a fitting conclusion with a slightly more modest sculpture recognising Conscientious Objectors and all who have suffered in wars.

CFSC Statement on the US-Canada trade war

*Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) issued this statement on 2 April; addressed to Canadians and concerning the crisis there, it is of wider interest as a clear statement of Quaker principles. Suggestions in **bold type** at the end (emphasised in the original) are relevant to us all. Let us hold in the Light Friends in North America, on both sides of the border – ED.*

THE US HAS INITIATED A TRADE WAR WITH CANADA. It's very unclear what the ultimate plans of the US administration are. The deep uncertainty that Canadians are facing—whether to interpret rhetoric about annexation as a US negotiation tactic or a deeper threat—is resulting in a range of feelings and experiences such as fear, anger, and betrayal.

At Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers), we are clear that, as in all wars, this situation will create mostly losers. It will cause great suffering to almost all while further enriching a very few.

We call for continued relationship building with the US. We urge dialogue and diplomacy. We support acts of compassion—a form of bravery that resists simple narratives and refrains from demonizing the other side or distancing from them. We acknowledge with thanks and hold in the Light all those in the US who are practicing noncooperation and otherwise protesting this trade war and other harmful government policies.

We are disturbed by the voices we hear within Canada loudly proclaiming the need to strengthen the military as a means of defence against invasion. Such thinking is not surprising given the militarism that pervades every aspect of Canadian culture from film and video games to history textbooks. This thinking is completely unrealistic, outdated, and dangerous.

As we've explained elsewhere, civilian-based defence and related techniques of active nonviolence are viable ways for nations to defend themselves. [See <https://quakerservice.ca/news/russia-has-invaded-ukraine-what-are-alternatives-to-a-military-response/>] They don't require killing. We urge Canadians to learn more about active nonviolence.

We urge Canada to engage in nonviolent resistance focused on justice and peace. Rather than just pointing fingers at the US, we join with the many voices calling the federal and provincial governments to use this as a moment to reflect on Canadian policies.

In this challenging moment, Canada can reassess, change course, and build more equitable, environmentally sustainable, and resilient economies that don't leave people behind. Canada can use the urgent need to reduce dependency on US trade as an opportunity to prioritize investments in human rights and social justice.

We've seen proposals including implementing price controls on essential products, investing in greening the economy, and curtailing copyrights and patents held by US companies so that, for example, generic drugs could be made in Canada at a vastly reduced cost.

One impactful initiative would be cancelling the planned purchase of 88 war planes from the US weapons company Lockheed Martin. The planes are not

only made in the US but their source code is processed through US facilities and parts and maintenance would need to come via the US. The fighter jets are estimated to cost over \$70 billion for their full lifecycle. These planes are not designed for defence, they're designed to strike first by dropping bombs.

Canada still has the chance to get away from this disastrous purchase. For years we've proposed cancelling it for reasons of conscience. But now, due to the trade war, calls to cancel this order are getting much more attention.

This 70 billion could do a great deal of good for everyday Canadians. It could be invested in environmentally sustainable jobs, healthcare, restorative justice programs that keep communities vibrant, and reconciliation efforts including realizing promised commitments to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The prospects of increased economic insecurity are stressful to many of us. They are directly impacting the poor and marginalized most of all. This is coming at a time when many people can least afford it. The cost of living in Canada was already increasing and poverty has been growing at historic rates.

A policy CFSC advocates for—a guaranteed livable basic income—would be one forward-looking and long-term contribution to addressing the economic insecurity many Canadians are currently facing.

Feeling powerless generates anxiety, so we encourage you to take the actions that you're able to take:

1. **Take in news with care.** Psychologist Rick Hanson explains, "What flows through the mind sculpts your brain. Immaterial experience leaves material traces behind." Placing sustained attention on something changes your body and mind, not always for the better. Social media is designed to capture your attention. This is often done by showing you sensational or inaccurate bad news. Try to notice where you're placing your attention and how you're feeling. More bad news intake might make you feel worse without informing or empowering you to take any meaningful actions. **Take breaks from bad news and remember to do things that bring you joy.**
2. What happens in the US tends to spread to Canada. **Reach out to people who are feeling particularly targeted** by current policies in the US and let them know you're thinking about them and they matter to you. **Building community can be done at any time.** It especially matters when people are feeling tense.
3. **Buy local.** It's usually a positive thing to do for lots of reasons and right now it's an even better thing when you can.
4. **Ask questions of candidates and vote.** Canada will hold an election on April 28th. This is an important opportunity to ask questions of candidates running for office. Would they support a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income that could help Canadians who are being hurt by the impacts of the trade war?

[From the CFSC website, <https://quakerservice.ca/>]

Held in the Light

WHAT DOES IT MEAN to be ‘held in the light’? Or to ‘hold someone in the light’?

When I first started attending Quaker Meetings I began to notice this expression used from time to time. Often it came up when someone in the meeting was faced with some kind of challenge, or not attending meeting due to illness or some other reason. The invitation seemed to be for others to use their imagination to focus on the person and bathe them in a supportive glow of light.

As I considered what this might mean, it seemed to me that the ‘light’ referred to must be the light of consciousness. Consciousness in the form of focused awareness directed toward a person in need who is held in the light of *collective* consciousness and (I thought) may well feel some benefit. I had better say why.

Focused awareness can be immensely powerful. Sports psychologists have found through experimentation that an athlete, let’s say a weight lifter, can improve his or her performance by just imagining lifting increasingly heavy weights. This suggests that focused attention can exercise the muscles required to lift greater weights with just the power of imagination. Could it be that the request to hold another in the Light may in fact have a degree of efficacy, despite the scepticism that such an idea may attract? I admit I am something of a sceptic myself, which may explain my attraction to analytical thought. If I hear something curious I want to investigate further.

For some years now I have been practising a form of Chinese yoga called *Qi Gong*, a Buddhist discipline involving physical exercise and movement which is itself a form of meditation. The person who leads our sessions often warns us, ‘Don’t let thinking steal your *Chi*’. The word *Chi* refers to ‘the life force’. Thinking in this context is considered to be an impediment to keeping our focus on the body, its breath. Thought is fine for everyday commerce, but is considered something of an encumbrance when it comes to spirituality.

Here I would like to quote something from *Advices & Queries*:

Take heed dear friends to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.

I do like this passage. Again the term Light – which I take to be the Light of consciousness – ‘shows us our darkness’. We are, after all, fallible beings, despite having that of God within us; we can get things wrong, sometimes very wrong. We can also be wilful and dogmatic. This is the darkness we need to be shown.

What I am about to say sounds a bit like one of those ‘light bulb’ riddles – ‘How many people does it take to make your life into a spiritual practice?’

In *Practising the Power of Now* (2001), Eckhart Tolle says: “Sanity – consciousness – can only come into this world through you. You do not need to wait for the world to become sane, or for somebody else to become conscious, before you can be enlightened.”

‘Consciousness that is aware of itself’, this surely is who we essentially are. Beings who are alive to the ineffable nature of being.

Eckhart Tolle is a great man to consult on this kind of subject. But clearly George Fox and his Quaker followers had come to the same awareness. You don’t need preachers to lead you and tell you what is right or wrong. We have an inner sense and ‘Light’ to guide us. In Meeting we sit in silence focusing our attention inwards. When a person feels moved to speak they will stand up, perhaps trembling, and say what it came to them to say – we call this ‘Ministry’. We need no designated ministers – we *all* are ministers. Quakers maintain that there is that of God in everyone. This chimes with what we call our Inner Light. The light of God within. A light that emanates from all living things including ourselves. It may be that when we encounter stressful or difficult circumstances, a person’s essential inner light may become diminished. An exhortation to hold a person in the light, is to consciously invite the healing light of awareness to mend that person, or rearrange the situation with which they are faced.

One of the ‘Kindler’ booklets says: “*Three hundred years ago, Quakers were called ‘Children of the Light’.*” (It doesn’t say *who* knew them as such; I suspect it may have been other Quakers, given the amount of persecution early Friends experienced.) “*They lived to radiate God’s Light of love for all.*”

This particular booklet (*Journeying the Heartlands: exploring spiritual practices of Quaker worship*, ed. Elizabeth Brown & Alec Davison), also quotes Jim Pym, formerly of Central Edinburgh Meeting:

The light is also the guide when it assumes a personal aspect for us. It is the Inner Teacher or Christ in us. The light enables us to see the Way (another synonym for Christ) and follow the Way which is the right one for us in harmony with God’s will. The Light is essentially loving but can be quite uncompromising in showing us where we have gone wrong.

There is a short passage from *Quaker Faith & Practice* which I think illustrates the significance of the power of Inner Light for Quakers, as follows:

*The first gleam of light, the first cold light of morning which gave promise of a day with its noontide glories, dawned on me, one day at meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit. ‘Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee. Then I believed that God speaks to man by his spirit. **Caroline Fox**, 1841 (Q. F. & P. 26.04)*

I find this passage particularly interesting because it points to the healing power of inner light. She doesn’t say so, but hints that her depression may have lifted. It also suggests to me that she was in effect holding *herself* in the light. I find this both touching and illuminating.

Simon Jackson

Thoughts on Ministry

[L]et none be hasty to utter words, though manifest in the Light in which ye wait upon the Lord; but still wait in silence, to know the power working in you to bring forth the words, in the ministration of the eternal word of life to answer the life in all.

Stephen Crisp (1628-1692), *from a letter of 1663*

I was often exceedingly distressed after meetings, under a thought that I had refused to answer the requiring of God ... When the time came indeed, that I was to open my mouth in a few words for the Lord among his people it was so indisputably clear, that I had no scruple of its being certainly the holy requiring: and yet in fear I reason'd it away one meeting, to my deep sorrow. But the all-seeing One knew it was from an innocent fear ... and therefore he graciously owned me again; And in another meeting shortly after, a fresh strong motion, or concern, came upon me, and I broke forth in a few words, but scarcely durst I stand upon my feet: And after the meeting I got quietly away, with some ease and an holy peace of mind ... It is only his fresh and renewed requiring, not only opening matter to speak, but engaging to speak it at this time, whereby the Church or particulars [i.e. *individuals*] are edify'd, as our Father would have his children edify'd.

From An account of the life and travels (1753) of John Fothergill (1676-1744)
– he had this experience in c. 1697, when aged about 20.

There is no occasion at all, for those who regard [Christ's] power as the substance of their ministry, to be any wise solicitous about words; as the lowest and most simple are really beautiful, when fitly spoken under that holy influence.

John Griffith (1713-1776) – *journal entry, 1734*

I began to attend [*Meeting for Worship*] ... and here after a short time the second challenge came [*the first had been to give up smoking, which he did*] – to get up and witness to the inward life in God that now was mine. I hesitated and shrank back: my wife had taken a friend to Meeting that morning, and that individual of all people was the one I could not witness before: but once again the issue was plain and obedience was the only path to further growth, so I rose and falteringly spoke of the thing that had bound me to my seat, the subject of fear! The reward in both cases was instant and overwhelming, the joy of obedience, and also the realisation that a new power had come into my life and was working through me.

J. Rowntree Gillett (1874-1940), *writing in 1937 of his spiritual awakening in 1905*

See also extracts 2.55 – 2.73 in Quaker Faith & Practice; and those by Sarah Lynes Grubb (1773-1842) [28.04], John William Graham (1859-1932) [2.52] and Anne Hosking [2.76].

Speaking in Quaker Meeting for Worship: what, when, how, and why, a new book by **Rhiannon Grant**, is published on 27 May (ISBN 978-1-80341-753-0) in the *Quaker Quicks* series. It has an online book launch on Monday 16 June (see page 14).

The Big Picture

Reincarnation gets talked about a lot more these days. Did you know that some early Christians followed Plato in believing in it, and it was not declared to be odds with Church teaching until AD 553, and even then was not banned outright?

If this idea intrigues you, the first question that crops up is “How does it all work?” Clearly, there is something enormous, a ‘Big Picture’ here.

My own experience and meditation upon it have led me to these insights, so here is a scenario for your consideration.

The way that spirituality works is we all get to experience everything, exploring different themes one life at a time. It is an important part of fully knowing ourselves.

We set it up before we get here, aware that on Earth we have light and dark in our lives. Spirit beings and future human companions work with us in this setting up.

We plan our themes around other people, objects, events, places and cultures.

The focus is on two themes. First, a primary goal: the force that pushes one forward every day. The second theme is the conflict or obstacle theme: the force that tries to pull one off track every day. We work with this basic tension and maybe another theme or two.

What are the themes? There are likely to be about fifty, and I'm sure you can imagine some of them. They are things like: being a disadvantaged person, a leader, a critic, a person for justice, a manipulator, victim, rescuer, peacemaker, an intellectual, a person who is rejected, a warrior, a survivor, a martyr, a wealthy person, and so on.

Then we are born and forget all this. Forgetting is crucial, to activate free will.

Once our lives are well under way, though, we can examine our life patterns, if we wish. We tend to repeat an action or set of actions, like a never-ending groundhog day, until we have learned to respond differently: to overcome. A picture can emerge. In my own case, I eventually overcame acute feelings of abandonment in a life full of loss. I came to see it as my conflict theme. My primary theme pushes me all the time to a clearer understanding of spirituality.

When we go Home again, a non-judgmental Life Review helps us see how we got on. We can explore our themes as often as we wish.

Our Eternal Presence is our real identity. These ‘theme’ episodes are pieces of theatre for us to widen our experience. Shakespeare, that master of metaphysics, knew it: *“All the world’s a stage,/And all the men and women merely players; ...”*

Susan Kime

Advice from Teilhard de Chardin

Rosamond Robertson has suggested including the following, which she found at <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/prayer-of-theilhard-de-chardin/>. She writes: "I wonder if the poem I am sending to you might be of relevance to Friends as we negotiate and pray towards a way forward for Scottish Friends. I like to think that whatever our position, hopes, misgivings, personal pain, Teilhard's words, written from his own experience of suffering and frustration, might offer some balm and wisdom for each of us."

Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually—let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ

from *Hearts on Fire; Praying with Jesuits*, ed. Michael Harter SJ

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was a French Jesuit, ordained priest in 1911, who served as a stretcher-bearer in World War I. As scientist, palaeontologist, and theologian, he was the author of several influential books, but was forbidden to write or teach on philosophical subjects by the Catholic Church, which after his death condemned his books.

Michael Mears's dramatic two-hander about the bombing of Hiroshima, *The Mistake*, is touring in the United States this summer, and, in September, going to Japan. Contributions to the cost of the two trips are welcomed, and can be made at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/taking-the-mistake-to-the-usa>.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 22 March 2025
at Kirkcaldy Old Kirk, and by remote videoconferencing**

2025/03/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 28.10: Harvey Gillman reminds us of the riches Quakers have to share in a hungry world.

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]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

2025/03/14 Closing minute

58 Friends (47 members, 6 attenders, 4 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 17	Central Fife 7	East Lothian 7	Falkirk & Polmont 7	Kelso 3
Penicuik 2	Portobello & Musselburgh 5	South Edinburgh 9	Tweeddale -	<i>Visitors/Others</i> 1

We record our thanks to Central Fife Friends and Kirkcaldy Old Kirk for hosting us today.

In particular, we thank Laura Pearson for organising the children's pro-

gramme; Sue Proudlove and Tony Wilkes for leading our afternoon session; and Rosemary, George and Alex for welcoming us to the Old Kirk, providing refreshments, organising our online communications, and showing some of us up the bell tower.

We next meet on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House at 7.00 pm.

(Signed)

Alastair Cameron, Clerk
Cath Dyer, Assistant Clerk

Faith in action in an age of permacrisis: *Exploring the possibilities, understanding the tensions*

A conference organised by Quakers in Britain (QPSW)
and the Quaker Council for European Affairs.

Brussels, 20-22 June

This is an opportunity to acknowledge the challenges we face and to reflect together on how we respond to them, individually and collectively. Participants will:

- learn more about Quaker work on climate justice, community peace work and alternatives to militarism
- explore how and why Quakers work in different ways at different times and in different contexts and how we manage tensions in our work
- consider new and effective ways in which you can be involved
- get to know Quakers from across Europe who want to work for social change

Space is limited so please register as soon as possible.

The registration form is at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfRPvrRSv-klTjCavS26Gk7jEipDgDHTfs4CQO2xOFMTGOSGw/viewform>

The agenda is at

<https://www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Conference-agenda.pdf>

On the Death of the Pope

*The [US] Friends Committee on National Legislation has praised the late **Pope Francis** as “a consistent advocate for peace in Israel and Palestine” and “the first pope to clarify that the very possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was immoral”:* see

<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2025-04/pope-francis-legacy-our-quaker-work-peace-and-justice>.

Tributes from the member churches of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland (though not, at the time of going to press, from Quakers in Britain) are at

<https://ctbi.org.uk/news-and-events/tributes-and-reflections-on-pope-francis/>.

See also <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v47/n08/james-butler/on-pope-francis>.

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.

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 **Laura Pearson** for further information.

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

On the 1st, 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Worship on 1st Sundays is all-age; there is a children's meeting on the last Sundays. Contact **Phil Lucas** for updates.

Falkirk & Polmont (NOTE NEW NAME) – Trinity Church, Manse Pl., Falkirk FK1 1JN

Sundays, 10.30. Contact **Denise Marshall** if bringing children; **Anna Levin** 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.

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.

3rd Sundays: Hollies Community Hub, 183 High St, Musselburgh EH21 7DE, 7.00 pm

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 **Laura Pearson**

Every Sunday at 10.30 am; blended with the meeting in person on 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th.

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.