

SESAME

Number 262: September 2025

Area Mtg 10 September/Fox's Journal *extract*/Climate Justice *news*/Pausing the Police/Nordic YM Gathering/Mtg for Sufferings/3 Quaker Artists/Trans Rights/NFPB/QiS/Interfaith Learning/Mental Health/Woodbrooke *events, courses*/Christian Aid *news*/Psalm 23 in Scots/GM at Perth/May Minutes/ &c.



Friends' art at the Whitespace Gallery this month – see page 18

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Wednesday 10 September at Edinburgh Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, and online.

All associated with Quakers in South East Scotland are welcome; you don't have to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends. As this is an evening meeting, there will be no children's meeting but young Quakers are very welcome. I will be joined at the table by the most recent member of the clerking team: Mark Hutcheson of Penicuik local meeting as assistant clerk.

Alastair Cameron
Clerk

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 2025
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Meeting for Worship for Marriage, 5 July* (minute 2025/06/3.1 refers)
 2. *Quakers in Scotland* (2025/06/3.3) [see page 23]
 3. *Palestine* (2025/06/8.3)
4. Membership matters:
 1. *Application for membership*
 2. *Reports on membership visits*
5. Matters from local meetings
 1. *Falkirk & Polmont: Cladhan Hotel witness*
 2. *Portobello & Musselburgh: proposed exhibition on conscientious objection*
 3. [Possible third item]
6. Use of Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House
7. Dates of meetings in 2026
8. Appointments
 1. *from Nominations Committee*
 2. *Hope for the Future QCCIR/Woodbrooke conference 2026*
9. Reports and correspondence
 1. *John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust*
 2. *Scotland Demands Better, 25 October*
10. General Meeting matters
 1. *Hospitality on 8 November*
11. Closing minute

The Limits of Protest

“... how long will it be I wonder until a future UK Government deem the activities of the Quakers to be a threat to national security?”

Brendan O’Hara MP, in *The National*, 4 July 2025

ON THURSDAY 3 JULY, there was a showing at Edinburgh Meeting House of the film *To Kill a War Machine*, a documentary about Palestine Action. Across the UK, more than a hundred screenings were arranged at short notice that week, to let the film be seen before it became a criminal offence to express support for the group it portrays, which (all must know by now) the House of Commons voted on 2 July to proscribe, along with two lots of violent white supremacists, all three held to be terrorist organisations. The film was due to be shown at the United Reformed Church in Sheffield at the same time as in Edinburgh, but during the day, the church had a visit from the police, warning against it. This actually secured it a larger audience – it was shown instead out-of-doors, in Tudor Square – but it is concerning that before the proscription had come into effect it was being enforced – and extended. *To Kill a War Machine* has not been banned. It was produced within the law and certified for cinema release by the British Board of Film Classification. Nevertheless, it *has* effectively been suppressed; its makers, Rainbow Collective, have felt obliged to remove the online version from their website and refuse to allow screenings, lest exhibitors be accused of “*showing sympathy for or inviting support for a proscribed organisation.*” (See <https://tokillawarmachine.com/>.)

When the Terrorism Act was being debated in Parliament, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, specifically ruled out the suggestion it might be used against Greenpeace, whose actions had included disrupting the production of nuclear warheads at Aldermaston, spray-painting a power station and destroying a field of genetically-modified maize. None of these, he said, “would fall remotely under the scope of this measure” (reported at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1999-12-14/debates/b8b65fd0-3cdc-4cc0-9d23-dfce015aa510/TerrorismBill>). In practice, of course, anti-terrorism legislation has proved capable of being widely (mis)applied – against Icelandic banks, for example, in the crisis of 2008. Even so, the assurance is worth recalling, since the actions of Palestine Action are so obviously comparable to what was explicitly said to be outwith the scope of powers now being invoked.

Following the first protests against the proscription, there was an interesting article in the *London Review of Books* by a Quaker, Huw Lemmey, (<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v47/n13/huw-lemmey/short-cuts>) describing his own arrest as an anti-war teenager in 2003, and how the police lied to him and the others involved, telling them they would not be charged if they gave up their demonstration having made their point; they did so, only to get letters later summoning them to the police station. [Continued page 8]

Marriage to Margaret Fell

Margaret Fell was born Margaret Askew in 1614, and married Thomas Fell (b. 1598) in 1632, the year after he was called to the bar as a barrister, when he was 34 and she was 17. They lived at his ancestral home, Swarthmoor Hall, and had nine children, of whom seven daughters and a son lived to adulthood. Judge Fell, as he became, was elected M.P. for Lancaster in 1645, and despite his disapproval of Cromwell's assumption of civil and religious power, was, at the time of his death on 8 October 1658, vice-chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, having been responsible, as a parliamentary commissioner (jointly with John Bradshaw, who had presided at the trial of Charles I), for preventing royalist insurgency in Cumberland and Lancashire, as well as serving as a judge in Cheshire and North Wales.

George Fox first visited Swarthmoor Hall in 1652; Margaret Fell and her daughters were early converts to Quakerism. Judge Fell was never a Friend, but risked unpopularity by letting himself be seen as protecting them; he did not participate in meetings for worship at the Hall, but sat outside the meeting room with the door open.

When she was widowed, Margaret Fell became even more active on Friends' behalf. In 1664 she was arrested for failing to take an oath and for allowing Quaker meetings to be held in her home; she said that "as long as the Lord blessed her with a home, she would worship him in it". After six months in Lancaster Gaol, she was sentenced to life imprisonment and forfeiture of her property, remaining in prison until 1668, in which time she wrote religious pamphlets and epistles, before being released by order of the King and council. The following year she visited Bristol, and so was in the city when Fox arrived there on his return from Ireland:

I HAD SEEN FROM THE LORD a considerable time before, that I should take Margaret Fell to be my wife. And when I first mentioned it to her she felt the answer of life from God thereunto. But though the Lord had opened this thing unto me, yet I had not received a command from the Lord for the accomplishment of it then. Wherefore I let the thing rest, and went on in the work and service of the Lord as before, according as the Lord led me, travelling up and down in this nation and through the nation of Ireland. But now, after I was come back from Ireland and was come to Bristol and found Margaret Fell there, it opened in me from the Lord that the thing should be now accomplished.

And after we had discoursed the thing together I told her, if she also was satisfied with the accomplishing of it now she should first send for her children, which she did. And when the rest of her daughters were come I was moved to ask the children and her sons in law whether they were all satisfied and whether Margaret had answered them according to her husband's will to her children, she being a widow, and if her husband had left anything to her for the assistance of her children, in which if she married they might suffer loss, whether she had answered them in lieu of that and all other things. And the children made answer and said she had doubled it, and would not have me to speak of those things. I told them I was plain, and would have all things done plainly, for I sought not any outward advantage to myself.

And so when I had thus acquainted the children with it, and when it had been laid before several meetings both of the men and women assembled together for that purpose, and all were satisfied, there was a large meeting appointed of purpose in the meeting-house at Broad Mead in Bristol, the Lord joining us together in the honourable marriage, in the everlasting covenant and immortal Seed of life, where there were several large testimonies borne by Friends. Then was a certificate, relating both the proceedings and the marriage, openly read, and signed by the relations and by most of the ancient Friends of that city, besides many other Friends from divers parts of the nation.

[The date of the marriage of George Fox and Margaret Fell was 27th of 8th Month (i.e. October – the year began in March), 1669. Ninety Friends signed the certificate.]

...

After this I stayed in Bristol about a week and then passed with Margaret into the country to Olveston [*in Gloucestershire*] where Margaret passed homewards towards the north, and I passed on in the work of the Lord into Wiltshire, where I had many large and precious meetings.

And from thence I passed into Berkshire, where I had many large precious meetings, and so from thence till I came into Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, where I had many precious meetings all along till I came to London.

Earlier in the Journal, Fox writes of a wedding he attended in Yorkshire in 1666, where he spoke on the Quaker view of marriage:

And there was a great marriage of two Friends the next day. And there came some hundreds of beggars. And Friends refreshed them instead of the rich. And in the meeting before the marriage I was moved to open to the people the state of our marriages, how the people of God took one another in the assemblies of the elders, and how God did join man and woman together before the Fall. And man had joined in the Fall but it was God's joining again in the restoration, and never from Genesis to Revelation did ever any priest marry any, as may be read in the Scriptures. And then I showed them the duty of man and wife how they should serve God, being heirs of life and grace together.

George and Margaret spent most of their married life apart; they were at Swarthmoor Hall for about a year in 1675-76, after which he returned to London, and was mostly there, or abroad, for the rest of his life. Margaret remained at the Hall. Norman Penney says in the 1901 edition of the Journal that she was regarded with "high esteem and Christian love ... [and] generally acknowledged as a faithful nursing-mother of the flock; ... she often addressed them, when in bonds or otherwise, with letters of consolation and encouragement. ... It is also probable she contributed largely from her means to the relief of their outward necessities. ... [S]he died much beloved and lamented, at her own house at Swarthmore [sic], in 1702, being near the eighty-eighth year of her age, and having survived George Fox about twelve years."

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

FOLLOWING THE HEARINGS held last December (see *Sesame* 258) the International Court of Justice issued in July its landmark advisory opinion on states' obligations in respect of fossil fuels and carbon emissions; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jul/23/healthy-environment-is-a-human-right-top-un-court-rules>

At the Court website, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/187>, the full opinion can be downloaded in English and French. Other papers available include the explanatory press release, declarations and separate opinions by the judges, documentation from the hearings in December, including verbatim records of sessions and the written submission of states and other bodies.

A REPORT entitled *Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review*, by the International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), found “something approaching a conspiracy” in the way misinformation is targeted at decision-makers by conservative think-tanks and the fossil fuel industry, and also that rightwing populist parties are “actively contravening climate science”. Neither finding may surprise us, although data based on 300 studies should be authoritative; the report can be downloaded at <https://www.ipie.info/research/sr2025-1>

Meanwhile the UN is mounting an initiative to crack down on misinformation. Its special rapporteur on human rights and climate change, Elisa Morgera, recommended in June that the deliberate spreading of false information on the climate crisis should be criminalised; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/19/climate-misinformation-turning-crisis-into-catastrophe-ipie-report>

AFTER THE RULING at the Court of Session in January that development of the Rosebank oilfield and of the Jackdaw gas field were unlawful, because the impact assessments had not taken account of downstream emissions, Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves both said they wished the two projects to go ahead anyway (see *Sesame* 259). New guidance was issued in June which may allow them to do so – see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/19/uk-ministers-to-restart-approval-process-for-two-north-sea-oilfields>

THERE WAS A SEVENTH ARREST connected to the raid on Westminster Meeting House which was not reported at the time: Joe Booth, who is autistic and lives in supported accommodation for vulnerable adults, was arrested at his home on Friday 28 March by seven officers, the morning after the Meeting House was broken into. He had attended Youth Demand meetings there, but had not participated in protests other than a march to Downing Street at which he had handed out leaflets. Since his arrest he has been suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/22/police-arrested-autistic-activist-in-supported-housing-as-part-of-quaker-raid-operation>

The campaign group Plan B believes this crackdown on campaigners is incompatible with UK membership of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) – an Oslo-based organisation with more than fifty member countries, in which governments, companies and civil society come together to oversee the governance of fossil-fuel production. It has made a submission, supported by others including the Good Law Project and Defend Our Juries, calling for the UK's suspension. The text is at

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OsEsBhSWHek5ZtQ2QDNxI_GQcC4X4aN0p8kj3IgSDJ8/edit?tab=t.0

and there is more at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/27/suspend-uk-from-oil-oversight-body-over-protests-crackdown-say-campaign-groups>

THE GRANTHAM RESEARCH INSTITUTE on Climate Change and the Environment, part of the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE), has produced its latest report on the effectiveness worldwide of court action as a means of opposing climate change, covering cases started in 2024 and up to May 2025.

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/global-trends-in-climate-change-litigation-2025-snapshot/>

At least 226 new climate cases were filed in 2024, bringing the total number of cases filed to date to 2,967 across nearly 60 countries, with “dynamic growth” noted in the Global South, where 60 % of cases had been filed since 2020.

MEMBERS OF TWO COMMUNITIES in the Niger Delta started legal action in 2015 against Shell and a local subsidiary, now the Renaissance Africa Energy Company, over oil spillages. The Bille and Ogale communities, which have a combined population of about 50,000, claim that the companies' operations have been the cause of major pollution, including the contamination of drinking water. Shell and Renaissance blame third parties for causing the spills (of which 85 were referred to in the court's decision, handed down in June, that the action could proceed) either by sabotage or ‘bunkering’ – breaking into a pipeline to steal the oil – but the judge at the high court, Mrs Justice May, held that they could themselves be liable. The case will be heard in London – starting in 2027.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/20/nigerian-communities-shell-high-court-oil-pollution>

SOME FRIENDS ARE ALREADY INVOLVED in the initiative promoting a ‘fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty’ analogous to the one on nuclear non-proliferation. The movement's founder, Tzeporah Berman, is interviewed at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/02/every-company-wants-to-produce-the-last-barrel-sold-the-plan-to-create-a-fossil-fuel-non-proliferation-treaty>

Continued from page 3: *The Limits of Protest*

Bad faith on the part of officers and overreach in the use of their authority, in the way that evidently happened in Sheffield, are failures in policing – Lynne Barty’s article [see opposite] discusses others – which aggravate the problem. (In one extreme instance, possession of a Palestinian flag was treated as support for Palestine Action, and therefore of terrorism – on the same basis, waving a Union Jack could be held to be approval of the paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland which see that flag as theirs, and are, or at least in the past have been, incontrovertibly murderous criminals.) The Scottish Human Rights Commission has warned against such heavy-handedness, and its Chair, Professor Angela O’Hagan, has said:

“Whether the proscription of Palestine Action amounts to a justified interference is a matter for the Courts and UK Parliament. However, the proscription should not and does not inhibit the right to peaceful protest.

“There is a difference between support for a proscribed organisation and support for a political or moral viewpoint. Law enforcement that does not recognise this distinction is a risk to human rights.”

(Her full statement, and the text of the SHRC letter to Police Scotland and the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service, are at

<https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/news/scottish-human-rights-commission-warns-of-risks-to-human-rights-in-policing-of-protests/>.)

Perhaps as a result, the three protesters arrested in Scotland after mass demonstrations on 5 July – in England & Wales, it was more than a hundred – in August had their court dates cancelled and bail conditions dropped, see

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/25399308.crown-office-cancels-court-dates-scots-activists-terror-charges/>

although charges are still hanging over them; the Crown Office cannot refuse to enforce the law.

Nor does the law stand still. Members of Defend Our Juries, a group established as an appalled response to efforts by the last government to prosecute those who displayed placards reminding jurors of their rights, have been charged with terrorism for arranging Zoom meetings to discuss peaceful protest. Yvette Cooper has sought and obtained leave to appeal against Palestine Action’s application for judicial review of her justification for proscribing it. Ministers continue to claim there is information they cannot divulge that proves the group are terrorists, but details that have leaked into the public domain have been rebutted by, among others, Police Scotland, and the Proscription Review Group (PRG) which described it as “novel” to make an equivalence between “[the] use or threat of action involving serious damage to property” and being “concerned in terrorism”.

It is too early to say whether the personal misjudgments of an inept and illiberal Home Secretary are solely to blame for this situation, or if, as seems quite likely, the Government as a whole is implicated. We need to keep ourselves informed of what is happening, and to be reminding our MPs continually that, as Angela O’Hagan says, criticism is not subversion.

Pausing the Police

The Salter Lecture 2025

Sheila Taylor, a Committee Member of the Quaker Socialist Society, introduced the lecture which has been held annually since 1996 in memory of Ada and Alfred Salter. They were a remarkable Quaker couple who lived in Bermondsey at the beginning of the 20th century during which time they transformed some of the worst slums in London with their visionary housing, public health and beautification policies. Alfred Salter was a Quaker, an MP, a doctor, and a pacifist whose vision of justice transcended punishment itself while Ada championed women's rights, fought against the squalid conditions of the slums and went on to become the first female mayor in London. *Quaker Faith and Practice* contains no quotations from either of them. [*Graham Taylor's biography, Ada Salter – Pioneer of Ethical Socialism (2016), is in the AM Library, however. – ED.*]

This year's lecturer was Abimbola Johnson, an award-winning human rights barrister who was called to the bar in 2011, and works in criminal defence inquests, public enquiries and actions against the state. In 2021 she was appointed to chair the Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board (ISOB) monitoring the implementation by the police of a national action plan to tackle racism in policing.

She began by saying that her work is informed by her faith as a Quaker, and that she was drawn to Quakerism after becoming increasingly distant from the church in which she had grown up. Her work in criminal defence was disheartening because of what she had come to see as an unjust legal system operating in the UK. She developed anxiety when reading reports of unarmed black people being shot by the police in the USA, while here she was representing a disproportionate number of Black people who described receiving rough treatment by the police at the time of their arrest. Much of her early career involved representing defendants facing charges of assault against police officers, charges which were nearly always dismissed when their defence of unreasonable force having been used against them was upheld in court. As she said: "the start of my career at the bar involved cross-examining police officers whom I knew to be lying under oath – if their lies had been believed it would have resulted in my clients receiving a criminal conviction and potentially ending up in prison."

She then turned to her recent work scrutinising how the police are implementing the National Police Race Action Plan which is being developed to create an antiracist police force. The title of her lecture, *Pausing the Police* is neither a call for abolition nor a defence of the *status quo* but it is, rather, a call to stop, reflect and breathe before any power is exercised. A paused institution listens before it acts, considers before it uses force and is slow to act violently. It welcomes being held accountable.

Pausing the Police acknowledges the harms to society that may be caused by hasty police actions; it challenges the idea that speed, force and control should always come first.

She described the current situation as “*policing in crisis mode. This is not a public safety agency but a harm management system*” which leaves little time for reflection to allow for the development of wise strategies in anti-racist, ethical leadership. While she had seen excellent examples of this at an individual and neighbourhood level, usually involving dedicated officers working overtime to build better community relations, there is no institutional support for such working practices. On the contrary, year after year policing as an institution adopts the habit of acting first, thinking later.

She gave as one example a particular database run by the police which records and shares local initiatives that have worked well. So far so good. Unfortunately, it fails to list initiatives that either have *not* worked or have had limited effect. The Police Race Action Plan checks this database regularly, looking for programmes that impact police delivery against race and ethnicity. Out of 256 examples on the website not one of them records work that has failed the desired outcome.

Another example she cited was a precision, stop-and-search pilot scheme, carried out for six weeks by the Metropolitan Police in Lambeth, Barking and Dagenham, early in 2023. The Met had promised to liaise openly with these communities, but when she attended the first community meeting in Lambeth she discovered the scheme had already been running for three of the six weeks. The Met also promised to share the results of this pilot project, and to have it evaluated independently; while in progress, it was energetically promoted by the Chief Scientific Officer, who did a series of interviews in which he made huge claims about the impressive impacts he anticipated it would have. It naturally gained a lot of positive attention in the media, including the BBC. At the time of the Lecture, the results had still not been published.

A third example of acting before thinking was a recent police initiative, following interactions with the Police Race Action Plan, to develop a tool to measure the delivery of anti-racism outcomes at the local level. While potentially a very positive strategy, in practical terms the resources and infrastructure that would be needed to engage in any meaningful way with the findings had not been taken into account.

Abimbola then turned her attention to the problems surrounding Stop and Search, a tactic which targets Black people disproportionately. In the year to March 2024, approximately three-quarters of all stop-and-searches failed to produce evidence of any wrongdoing, yet when she challenges them about this dismal statistic police officers rarely have anything to suggest by way of an alternative. She said: “*I often walk away from those conversations wondering how differently Stop and Search might be viewed if the police paused and gave themselves space – or were given space – to think about real alternatives,*

to look at policing more holistically and adopt a more joined-up and considered approach when dealing with matters such as weapons and drugs."

Summing up, she said that although policing in the UK is a multi-billion-pound industry it is not innovative, reflective, nor particularly strategic. This, inevitably has led to discussions around restructuring and even defunding it. It begs the question: What *should* the police be doing?

Defunding the Police.

In his book *The End of Policing* published in 2017, Alex Vitale described the defunding movement in detail. Common to its advocates are four main factors: first, the over-policing of marginalised communities; second, the limitations of police reform; third, the need for alternatives to policing which are consistently undervalued in society (while rarely is there a proportionate undervaluing of the need for the police) which leads on to the fourth: why not imagine the possibility of creating a safe society *without* policing, and try to steer society towards that?

Although there are multiple interpretations of what defunding the police might entail, the basic definition is to redirect funding out of police departments and into community resources such as mental health, housing, social work and early legal advice. There are those who advocate reallocating a proportion of police funding while retaining police departments. Others would combine defunding with police reforms such as better accountability, bias training, *etc.* Yet others view defunding as a small step towards ultimately abolishing the police and the prison system entirely.

Today's police officers are expected to turn their hands to everything. They are called out when it would probably be better to have a well-trained, experienced social worker instead; summoned to deal with problems in people's private relationships; and often called out to deal with the consequences of addiction. They struggle in those roles for which they have not been properly trained, and the unfortunate result is that people can get hurt, sometimes catastrophically.

The defunding movement re-imagines the uses to which our society puts its resources: it can mean investing in what actually makes communities safe, moving money from punishment towards prevention. It argues that we can no longer rely on 19th century models for 21st century problems. We need innovation, humanity, and above all, we need institutions that have the courage to stop and ask: *Is this working? Should it be me? Is somebody else better suited to respond to this situation?*

Abimbola went on to speculate how police reforms might benefit from adherence to the Quaker socialist principle that ethical means should always match ethical ends. If a force examined the *harms* it was doing, instead of publishing figures, outcomes, statistics, weapons-find rates *etc.*, would this improve communication when it says it is going to try something new? Would it alter how it uses its Stop and Search powers or adjust how it provides the infrastructure when it aims to engage with communities around

a complex tool it is trying to develop for their ultimate benefit?

She cited the raid on Westminster Meeting House as a painful, recent example of act-first policing. On 27 March, up to thirty Metropolitan police officers, some armed with tasers, smashed down the door of this Grade II-listed building and arrested six young women, one a teenager, who were meeting inside. [*See also the note on page 6 concerning a seventh arrest the following day.*] Many people wondered why such a raid was necessary. The intelligence which appeared to inform the Met's decision was publicly available – indeed the meeting had been publicly advertised. The same website also explained that the women were planning protests through nonviolent means. This action on the part of the police may have been legal but was it right? Was it proportionate?

The ISOB approach is certainly to highlight positive actions being taken by the police while simultaneously discussing pathways towards change. Recommendations it made in 2024, while dealing specifically with the Race Action Plan, also translate into wider policing policy.

First to be highlighted was its concern with the way in which the Race Action Plan Team was structured on a pyramid model, rank-and-file at the bottom (*i.e.* the officers involved in its day-to-day delivery), while the decision-makers were higher up and progressively whiter as they reached the top. This created a disconnect which, though it reflected the ranking structure in the police service, was not meritocratic and did not take into account the direct experience of those trying to enact the Plan. The Race Action Plan Team were asked to consider carefully who should be speaking to representatives of different communities and who should be involved in making the decisions, to think about the qualifications and values police officers have, recognising that they all represent an institution which has repeatedly been found to be institutionally racist. They were asked to consider whether those who have risen to the top of the profession are necessarily the best-equipped to tackle antiracism.

ISOB recommended they should increase stakeholder engagement, particularly with Black communities, by speaking to them regularly and not just in times of crisis. The Team needed to develop a National Communications Strategy to improve transparency, so that people would get used to speaking to them directly. The information flow to oversight bodies also needed improvement. At all levels accountability depends on honesty.

The 2024 ISOB report also recognised that antiracism work requires specific expertise and the need for institutions to accept change. Radical intervention is required with meaningful accountability behind it. This requires humility, accepting that while someone may be in a senior leadership role they are not necessarily the best person for this particular job.

Abimbola concluded by imagining what 'Quakeresque' policing would look like. First, it would be much quieter! It would place listening at the centre of its work. Officers would be trained not just in law but in empathy.

It would value discernment. Instead of charging straight in it would ask: is this a matter for the police at all? It would record incidents where police had responded, noting where there might be others better suited to deal with the event, and would work collaboratively to ensure those agencies were adequately resourced to step up and take the appropriate action.

It would adopt the spirit of nonviolence. Force would become the absolute last resort – and a wider definition of force or violence would be adopted, one that recognised the inherent harm of police interventions – that lawful searches can still cause harm and humiliation while ultimately proving more likely to have been unnecessary than necessary. Finally, it would move at the speed of trust.

But realistically to make that happen, so much would need to change: for example, legislative reform that would limit excessive police power; the creation of local accountability boards to call local police forces to account; properly-funded community-led alternatives to police-led interventions; and transparent data on all aspects of the police use of force.

She concluded with Advices and Queries 17, *‘Think it possible that you may be mistaken’*. If the police as an institution took that level of humility to heart, we would have a very different society.

None of it would be easy – structural change never is. Pausing, however, is not a weakness; it is wisdom. It is an act of courage to stop, mid-race, and ask if you are really moving in the right direction. Her hope is that we can work towards building institutions strong enough to do just that.

Lynne Barty

NORDIC YEARLY MEETING GATHERING

“Strengthening the Nordic Quaker Community”

Solborg Folkehøgskole, Stavanger, Norway: 3-6 July 2025

I WAS VERY EXCITED to be visiting Norway: to attend Nordic Yearly Meeting for the first time, and finally to visit my friend Lilian Aarek, with whom I did the Equipping for Ministry course at Woodbrooke, 2016-18; it was lovely to spend time with her and her family and see her home.

Stavanger used to be a smallish town with a deep-water harbour; it expanded rapidly in the oil boom, and now hosts gigantic cruise ships which dwarf the smaller craft they dock alongside. When I arrived, the town was gearing up for a royal visit as part of the celebration of the bicentenary of the first organised emigration from Norway to America. On 4 July 1825, the sloop *Restauration* sailed from Stavanger with 52 emigrants on board, including two known Quakers, one of whom gave birth on the voyage. The ship was expecting to land in Massachusetts but instead made landfall at New York on 9 October. On Friday 4 July 2025, a replica of the *Restauration* set sail for New York after a ceremony in Stavanger Cathedral, in which one of

the local Quakers took part. Many of those at the Gathering went down to the harbour to wave goodbye to the ship and its crew; I chose instead to visit the art museum, which kept me entranced for several hours.

The Gathering was richly rewarding. Quakers from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden spent a long weekend looking at strengthening the Nordic Quaker community. The main speakers were Michael Eccles of EMES [*Europe & Middle East section of Friends World Committee for Consultation*] and Julia Hinshaw-Ryberg. They invited us to reflect on how we can be relevant to each other and to the Quaker family more widely, and in society in general.

The one Dane present had not long discovered Friends, and was part of a very small meeting in Aarhus: I kept checking up on him over the weekend, and was glad that he really enjoyed the experience and would happily come again. There were three Finns (plus myself as an honorary Finn) and a sizeable number of Norwegians and Swedes. The many overseas visitors mainly came from Europe, with one visitor representing Sierra Cascades YM and also being assistant clerk to Moscow Meeting. With such a linguistic mix, English was the most widely used common language; where needed, someone always made sure to translate for those who didn't understand.

Michael and Julia had originally planned separate sessions, but decided to present both the Friday night and Saturday morning sessions jointly. A common theme throughout the weekend was Paul's description (in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13) of 'the body of Christ' – one entity made up of many different parts, each with its own particular function. If one part of the body suffers, or rejoices, all suffer or rejoice with it.

The four Nordic Quaker communities are different but intertwined, and all exist in a Lutheran context. Like many of the constituent members of EMES, there are people who live in one country and worship in another. EMES's function is connecting Friends, communicating, networking, and nurturing meetings across Europe and the Middle East. We were invited to share with a neighbour what connection with or knowledge do I have of other individual Nordic Friends or YMs?

EMES's vision statement is for a thriving, vibrant, and inclusive spiritual community of Friends in Europe and the Middle East, united in transformative faith and love, working with others and actively living out Quaker testimonies. Which of these words stood out as most important for each of us? Someone suggested more regular meetings for Nordic Quakers – once or twice a year, with the assistance of Zoom; someone else added "Welcome to the organising committee ..."

The Nordic YMs are all within the liberal Quaker tradition – a minority within a Quaker minority – and are some of the oldest YMs within EMES. They have much they can share with 'younger' YMs: their experience of survival, of growth and decline, of being faithful, of structures that work, and new ways of doing things. Like many other EMES YMs, they also ex-

perience tensions, growing pains, and conflicts: they are small and geographically spread, and they too have language differences – one of the reasons for the prevalence of English throughout the weekend. Small numbers need not be a problem – the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds from which can grow a mighty tree! And one benefit of using a language which is not your own is that you think carefully about which word to use...

Michael Eccles talked about his work as executive secretary to EMES, and the 'listening visits' he makes to YMs. He goes to listen, to learn about Friends' personal lives as well as their spiritual ones. With no expectations, and no agenda, these visits are much more powerful than if they were meticulously planned. It was particularly good to hear of his and others' recent visit to Ramallah and Ukraine. Would Nordic Friends consider travelling with no agenda? Links could be made between places in different countries and create networks to join the smallnesses. The one Friend in Iceland could also be invited to take part. Covid brought about the realisation that meetings could be held online or blended: extensive and expensive travel is not always necessary. If you are inspired by the idea, if it brings life, just do it...!

The Saturday afternoon offered the opportunity to participate in a wide range of workshops, each listed with the language in which it would be conducted. I chose one in which Eivind Bryne talked about early Quaker history in Norway and in Stavanger in particular, in which his own family played a significant part. One thing that particularly struck me was that the painter Lars Herterig, seen by some as the Norwegian van Gogh, whose work I'd admired the previous day in the art museum, was supported throughout his life by local Quakers. From Britain, Stephen Grellet and William Allen had visited Norway in the early 19th century, and reports from Meeting for Sufferings to Yearly Meeting from the 1850s onwards mention regular visits to Stavanger and other parts of Norway.

The second workshop subjects included Gaza/Palestine, climate and environmental issues, and 'Giraffe language'. Sadly I couldn't investigate any of these, having agreed to present a session on the revision of BYM's book of discipline. A goodly number attended, with wide-ranging experience of books of discipline including *Quaker faith & practice*. They showed interest in my account of the BDRC's work so far, and had much to contribute.

One commented that when he first found Friends his own book of discipline seemed very dry and off-putting, but another more friendly and approachable text had made him interested in exploring further. Norway YM has suggested re-working Advices and Queries, hoping that everyone in the YM would be involved in the process: some Friends have produced draft text but as yet the rest of the YM has not taken part. The Friend from Sierra-Cascades YM, which split from NorthWest Pacific YM over attitudes to LGBTQIA people, could no longer use the latter's book of discipline, but is not yet thinking of writing its own. Ingrid Greenhow, clerk to the new Continuing Yearly Meeting's agenda committee, also came along and was most interested in hearing a first-hand account of the BDRC's work.

After all that, and many engrossing private conversations, Saturday night was a chance to let our hair down. Nordic YM has a 'Eurovision' tradition: four of the young people were invited to represent Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, and excerpts from Eurovision entries of past years were played – some went back several decades. We were invited to join the appropriate representative and, if we felt so led, to dance along to the music (while also completely free to stay seated and do nothing of the sort!) I found it fascinating: most of the music was new to me – but some Friends knew a huge amount about Eurovision! One highlight was hearing an extract from a Swedish entry – a gentle love song – and then being told that the singer (who'd been consulted beforehand) was present among us. Her father had written the song, and we then heard the whole very lovely song. The final number was Abba's *Waterloo* – and I couldn't stay in my seat, but had to join the – suddenly very large – crowd of dancers.

Sunday was taken up with remaining business and a closing meeting for worship. In the business session we heard from the group who'd been focusing on Israel/Palestine: they'd had a text exchange with a medic in Gaza who'd outlined the possible ways of getting help to people there and explained what was most needed and how it could be got into the area. The exchange ended "*Thank you for listening and for truly wanting to understand*". Safe ways of contributing financially were outlined. We heard an epistle from the children and young people, and the epistle from Nordic YM itself.

We parted, hoping to meet again in the summer of 2028, when the Gathering will be organised and hosted by Sweden Yearly Meeting. I was sorry to be leaving, and aware I could easily become an EMES groupie. There's an all-age Gathering in Cologne next August, Nordic YM somewhere in Sweden in 2028, and other opportunities to join Friends and YMs throughout the area, all of which I'd love to attend. I had a brilliantly memorable time in Stavanger, learning so much, making new friends and re-encountering old ones; realising yet again how wide and strong is the web that stretches around the world, uniting 'all Quakers everywhere'.

I had come to Stavanger with a letter of greeting to Nordic YM from Friends in Scotland, and was delighted to bring this reply back with me:

Dear Friends in General Meeting for Scotland

Thank you for sending your, and now our, Friend Mary to our Gathering. We have had a few blessed, gathered and stimulating days together. Mary has contributed to this with her presence and also by leading a workshop on the revision of BYM's 'Faith and Practice'

Thank you!

In Friendship

the clerking team for Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering

*Ulrika Mars [Sweden YM], Jon Øgard Schjelderup [Norway YM]
and Aino Vesanen [Finland YM]*

Mary Woodward

Meeting for Sufferings: Friends House, 5 July

[Papers for the meeting can be read at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-07-agenda-papers-package;>

the minutes and other follow-up material are at

[https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-07-follow-up-package.\]](https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-07-follow-up-package.)

Our meeting opened with the words of Isaac Penington quoted in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 10.01 “Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.”

This felt like the essence of the day to me as we worked our way through a seemingly endless amount of challenging business. Several times breaks were needed to create clearness. Discussion on the trans issue, following the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland v. The Scottish Ministers*, [2025] UKSC 16, occupied much heart searching among representatives. We reaffirmed our commitment to welcoming trans and non-binary Friends and to ensuring that we are able to continue offering safe spaces to everyone. [See also page 19.]

We reviewed the reallocation of the functions of Meeting for Sufferings once it is laid down, and approved the transition of General Meeting for Scotland to Quakers in Scotland, with the associated changes to *Quaker Faith & Practice*, as part of the changes being worked through by Friends in Scotland.

‘Different ways of belonging’ was again discussed. Each time I hear a similar refrain that where you live need not determine your ability to become a member of the Society of Friends.

We discussed peaceful protest. As of the night before our meeting, the organisation Palestine Action was made illegal, and several Friends on a demonstration were in danger of being arrested. [See also page 3 for developments since.]

It is important that we are spirit led while respecting the law of the state. There are links in the Minutes for suggestions of ways we can support Friends who have been detained for their witness and how we ourselves might respond.

Jane Kelly

[Meeting for Sufferings next meets for its residential gathering, 3-5 October.]

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House will be open 10.00 am – 4.00 pm on the Saturday (27 September) of the DOORS OPEN DAYS weekend, when architecturally significant buildings across the city and in East Lothian can be visited. See <https://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/regions/edinburgh> for details of other places participating in the event this year.

3 QUAKER ARTISTS

From 12-18 September, three Quaker artists, JANE ANGEL, MICHELE GUNN, and SIMON JACKSON will be showing their work at an exhibition entitled

'Inside Out & Outside In'

at WHITESPACE, 76 East Cross Causeway, Edinburgh EH8 9HQ. The Private View will be from 6.30 to 8.30 pm on 12 September.

'THE HEART OF CREATIVITY is an experience of the mystical union; the heart of the mystical union is an experience of creativity. Those who speak in spiritual terms routinely refer to God as the creator but seldom see *creator* as the literal term for artist. I am suggesting you take the term creator quite literally. You are seeking to forge a creative alliance artist-to-artist with the Great Creator.

Accepting this concept can greatly expand your creative possibilities.'

(The Artist's Way, *Julia Cameron*)

Jane says she will take an inside-out approach to her work for this exhibition. That is to say, the inspiration for her work has come from within. Her way of working is akin to art therapy, but there are important differences. Images produced in art therapy are done with the intention of revealing aspects of the patient's psyche: there is not necessarily an intention to make anything of aesthetic value, though it often happens. A way of working where there is no external object to depict allows images to emerge from a series of random marks, which are then crafted into a harmonious whole. Jane has used pastels for these images, but the same process can be carried out using paint. The final image may be figurative or abstract, but is for Jane often something of a surprise.

Jane has described her process of working as a bit like improvisation in jazz. She has worked like this for a long time. One of her pieces is retrospective; many of them contain asemic writing – marks that look like writing, but have no meaning. Jane describes them as 'gestural, mysterious and improvised.'

Jane says that making art in this way is a great adventure. It is one of her ways of living adventurously.

Michele's artwork varies according to the subject matter. Some of her works are from memory, others from experience, yet others from direct observation. All fit into the category called 'figurative', though actual human figures seldom appear.

Michele works as a supervisor for students of Art Therapy and her experience as an art psychotherapist also informs the symbolic content of her paintings. She maintains her ongoing professional development by regularly attending courses at the Leith School of Art, often attending the course on landscape painting.

At her first floor flat in Edinburgh, Michele will often paint what she can see from her window, sometimes not only depicting the view outside but including the window frame, the perfect example of 'Inside Out & Outside In'. Michele also uses pastels to great effect. She has done a series of drawings of the Meeting Room at Edinburgh Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace.

Simon has decided that for this exhibition he will only include stencil prints. (He does also paint in watercolour and acrylic, often depicting trees.)

To make his prints, Simon now makes his own stencil paper using a light card painted with linseed oil. This is easier to cut by hand. By this method he has done a few landscapes, but more often he uses it to depict birds, for which this medium seems particularly suitable.

Although the birds Simon depicts are not graphic interpretations of actual birds, he says that he tries to imbue each with the feeling of a real bird. He has said that the love he puts into his artwork makes his work a spiritual practice – you could say a form of nature worship – though not all his images are drawn from nature.

‘Start out on your own path to creativity. Dissolve the barriers that are preventing your creative impulse from finding expression. Use your rediscovered talents in whatever way you wish. Learn that it is never too late to start fulfilling your dreams’.

(The Artist's Way, *Julia Cameron*)

“Trans Rights are Human Rights” – recent news items

The UK Government has appointed Mary-Ann Stephenson to chair the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) from December, despite reservations expressed by the [Commons'] Women & Equalities Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights as to her suitability.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jul/31/mary-ann-stephenson-confirmed-as-ehrc-chair-despite-mps-objections>

Meanwhile, criticism of the Commission has continued – unsurprisingly, after one of the commissioners expressed her personal view that transgender people must accept a perceived reduction in their rights. Akua Reindorf KC said at the LSE in June that there “has to be a period of correction” and the fact this alleged need has arisen is the fault of trans rights lobbyists.

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/25220020.trans-people-must-accept-perceived-reduced-rights-ehrc-commissioner/>

For its coverage of news such as this, J.K. Rowling accused *The National* of being “anti-woman”, specifically for describing For Woman Scotland (the group that started the legal action against Scottish Ministers) as “anti-trans”; the group the paper had *actually* labelled as such was Sex Matters, which is indeed outspoken in its opposition to trans rights (see *Sesame* 261).

Laura Webster, the editor of *The National*, rebutted the accusations at <https://www.thenational.scot/news/25253214.jk-rowling-called-national-anti-woman---response/>

After the Good Law Project served notice of its seeking judicial review of the interim guidance, the EHRC withdrew the part of it relating to workplace toilets and washing facilities, although without highlighting in its press release that the amended version was fundamentally different – see <https://goodlawproject.org/ehrc-formally-abandons-single-sex-toilet-stipulation/>

At the Scottish Conservatives' conference in Edinburgh in June, a fringe meeting was told by Susan Smith, co-director of For Women Scotland that it was considering renewed litigation. She also urged individuals to start their own actions, using the fighting fund set up by J. K. Rowling.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/14/campaigners-scottish-government-supreme-court-gender-women>

The following week, Sex Matters wrote to the Scottish Government threatening to go back to court, but has not yet done so. For Women Scotland, however, is starting a new action.

A report in *The Guardian* details how, following the judgment, there has been an increase in abuse and threatening behaviour, directed against not only transgender men and women but also others who look unconventional – such as breast cancer patients.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/12/ive-been-spat-on-gender-non-conforming-women-tell-of-toilet-abuse-in-aftermath-of-supreme-court-ruling>

The activist Shon Faye appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival on 16 August; her highly praised book, *The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice* (2021), is a Penguin paperback (ISBN 978-0-141-99180-1).

In May, we suggested that a successful appeal against the Supreme Court's ruling on 'biological sex', on the basis that the process had been contrary to Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and/or that the decision itself violated Article 8, might be a Pyrrhic victory if it emboldened those who wish the UK to leave the Convention. In August, the same point was made in *The Scotsman* by its former editor John McLellan, who appeared to favour that outcome – see

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/why-victory-for-british-trans-judge-in-european-court-of-human-rights-would-be-pyrrhic-5280782>

A reader's letter next day disputed various assertions in his article.

The EHRC submitted its guidance on the interpretation of the Supreme Court ruling to the equalities minister Bridget Phillipson on 5 September. If she accepts it, campaigners have said, it will be Labour's "Section 28 moment" defining its legacy on LGBT+ rights.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/05/equalities-watchdog-response-uk-supreme-court-transgender-ruling>

Northern Friends Peace Board – Edinburgh, 28 June

Board members gathered at Edinburgh Meeting House were pleased to be joined by local Friends Jackie Noltingk and Ian Robertson, and grateful for the helpfulness of meeting house staff: 17 members were present in person with a dozen more online. In the opening part of our meeting we reflected on what was giving us encouragement, or simply spurring us on in the depressing context of widening war in the Middle East, and no let-up in the fighting in Ukraine and elsewhere. We heard about a range of activities, including work supporting refugee families, and joining with other peace groups in public witness and more, and of work with projects such as Secure Scotland and ICAN. We were challenged to consider whether we were living up to our responsibility as Friends to speak out with clarity.

QPSW

We welcomed Dixe Wills, Peace Campaigns Coordinator at Quaker Peace & Social Witness, who described the work that is being done centrally to adjust the focus of peace work in the light of the current national and international climate, which seems to be moving increasingly toward remilitarising and preparation for war. He introduced a new 20-page booklet on the Peace Testimony [see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/quakers-and-the-peace-testimony>] and also a guide for Friends to develop walking tours [see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/a-walk-in-their-shoes-conscientious-objection-walking-tour>] which draws on the research that NFPB member Barry Mills has done into second world war conscientious objectors. The issue of refusing to fight is a current concern, and Dixe described the work on this of the FWCC-EMES group under the Peace & Service Network. [FWCC-EMES = the Europe & Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.] (Since the meeting we have been glad to learn that a new Peace Lead has been appointed by QPSW to succeed Charlotte Cooper; the name appears not yet to have been publicly announced, but is of a Friend with wide experience of the Peace Movement and ecumenism, who is based within the compass of the Board, and so who we hope will maintain the working connection already established.)

Reports

We heard from the trustees and our treasurer, and had an update from our coordinator Philip Austin. Sales of our publication, *Responses to War*, had been going well – it can be bought online at <https://nfpb.org.uk/shop/> – and the extended eBook version, which will be available to download on a ‘pay as led’ basis, should be ready soon we hope. A one-page leaflet had been produced for use at vigils and demonstrations marking the 80th anniversary in August of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan – see

https://nfpb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/A5-HiroshimaNagasaki-leaflet_2025.pdf – and a new bi-monthly newsletter is replacing the Peace Round-up.

Looking Ahead

Our afternoon session was introduced by Jayne Meadows, Clerk to NFPB Trustees, who described the work of the sub-group preparing for the approaching transition due to Philip Austin's retirement at the end of 2026, after more than thirty years as Coordinator. As well as the practical issues needing to be addressed, it will be important to have a sense of the Board's priorities, both immediately and for the longer term. Philip himself reflected on some of the key areas that emerged in our last strategic review, completed in November 2020, and on what has changed since. Friends shared responses in groups to questions about the changed and changing context, and about how NFPB might best respond to this in its work to support Quakers and others in promoting peace. Discussions covered a wide range of issues, from larger geo-political changes to upholding one another in actions at a local level. We heard reflections on how and where to make a Quaker concern for peace more visible, how NFPB might change the way it meets and works, and opportunities for collaboration and partnership with Quakers and others. Our next meeting, in York on 27 September, will be a further opportunity to engage with these issues. Our meeting closed in silent worship.

Alan Frith

Timmon Wallis, formerly of QPSW and later of Quaker House, Brussels, has written *Nuclear Abolition: A Scenario*, ISBN 979-8-218-60945-0, its title echoing Annie Jacobsen's best-selling *Nuclear War: A Scenario* (now in paperback: ISBN 978-1-80499-600-3). Whereas she suggests that global destruction is the most likely outcome of the current postures of the nuclear-armed states, he offers a more optimistic alternative. His previous book, *Warheads to Windmills: Preventing Climate Catastrophe and Nuclear War*, is still available: ISBN 979-8-218-31954-0.

On behalf of the South African Government, Alvin Botes, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, issued a statement to mark the eightieth anniversary in August of the United Nations. It addresses in particular the issue of nuclear weapons, which South Africa renounced in the 1990s, having developed them in the apartheid era.

South Africa's position is resolute: peace, security, friendship, development, international cooperation, diplomacy, multilateralism, international law, and human solidarity and human rights must be the pillars of our global security system. We must reject the false binaries of might versus vulnerability. We must reject the moral relativism that tolerates weapons of mass destruction in the hands of some while criminalising them in others. We must reject the idea that peace can be built on the promise of mass death.

The full statement can be read at

<https://theafrican.co.za/tvbox/2025-08-22-the-uns-80-year-struggle-with-nuclear-weapons-hypocrisy/>

Quakers in Scotland

Responses from the QiS Coordinating Group and QiS Foundation Trustees to questions raised by South East Scotland Area Meeting

[At Area Meeting on 6 May, five aspects of the plans for Quakers in Scotland on which there was felt to be greater clarity needed in order for further discussion to take place were identified in Minute 2025/05/09 (see page 50 of Sesame 261). These are the numbered points shown below in italics, with the responses (shown thus) written jointly by the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group and the foundation Trustees. In the responses, some of the verb tenses have been amended, as documents not available at the time of writing are now on the QiS website.]

1. Plans for how key issues will be handled following the transfer of responsibilities: specifically sharing of finances; management of property; safeguarding

In addition to our Governing Document (agreed by GM and AMs and approved by OSCR (the charity regulator for Scotland), we have two draft Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that explain how these issues will be handled. The General MoU includes financial matters except those relating to property which are included in the Property MoU. Drafts of these, and other documents relating to how QiS will function are already available on the QiS webpage (<https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/qis-documents>). The latest versions were available prior to GM in June. Safeguarding already benefits from a jointly developed and consistent approach across Scotland.

2. An outline of whether fewer jobs (other than trustee roles) will be needed

One of the issues that has prompted the QiS process has been the challenge to fill existing roles, creating acute anxieties amongst Friends in at least two of our Area Meetings. Quakers in Scotland will allow for a reduction in the number of roles but, ultimately, it will be for Friends to agree what roles are required in future (see Q. 5). QiSCG does not feel it appropriate to define the roles required in advance.

3. Proposed arrangements for maintaining eldership and pastoral care under any new, more flexible system

A paper on Pastoral & Spiritual Care was shared ahead of GM in June.

[Later drafts, prepared in August, are now on the website in PDF format; 'New Proposals for Eldership' (5 pp.) are at

<https://quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Possible%20eldership%20arrangements%20Aug%202025.pdf>

and the equivalent paper on pastoral care is at

<https://quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Possible%20pastoral%20care%20arrangements%20Aug%202025.pdf>

but at the time of going to press could not be accessed.]

We know this is an important part of the work, and it may take time to get it right. The ideas for possible future ways of working have grown out of the responses to the questionnaire circulated by the QiSCG's community sub-group. Friends across Scotland (including those in pastoral & spiritual care roles) have been involved in shaping this, and BYM staff have been helpful in ensuring they remain within Quaker discipline while being sufficiently flexible to enable new and creative approaches. It is unlikely that we will transition overnight from what we have now to a fully formed replacement. Decisions about charities do not have to be held up for that.

4. Proposed systems to guard against local meetings becoming isolated: from surrounding LMs, from QiS, and/or from BYM

This was covered in the paper on Pastoral & Spiritual Care, and is likely to form part of the eldership and pastoral care arrangements with QiS retaining ultimate responsibility to ensure that this is addressed. In recognising the importance of this, we are aware that current arrangements are not perfect.

5. Ideas for how the current Area Meetings might work together, and together with QiS, as an interim measure or for the foreseeable future.

We are aware that three Area Meetings have expressed a wish to conclude their transition into QiS as speedily as possible after GM's transfer is complete. When AMs agree to lay down their existing charity and transfer their charitable responsibilities to QiS, we have mooted the possibility of having what has been described as 'intermediate Meetings' where that is helpful. Care will be needed to ensure that any business is conducted under right ordering, and to avoid creating informal structures that re-create the burdens (including the number of roles) that we are trying to lay down.

We hope that this joint response will be helpful to Friends in SESAM in your further discernment.

In friendship

Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group; Quakers in Scotland Foundation Trustees

Membership of QiS

In July, an email was sent by the GM Administrator which many Friends (including the Editor) did not receive; it conveyed a request that recipients should complete a data protection form to allow Quakers in Scotland to hold their contact details.

Some Friends were concerned that by completing this they might be compromising their membership of the Area Meeting, by virtue of which they are a member of the wider Religious Society of Friends, and pre-empting the AM discussion on joining the new body. **This is not the case.** Giving

consent will enable a person to receive emails (technical hitches permitting) and *The Scottish Friend*, but has no bearing on Area Meeting membership, any more than this is affected by a Friend's being a member of (say) a pastoral care team, the QPSW Central Committee, a Quaker Recognised Body and a planning group for meetings for learning within a local meeting. Holding any or all of these roles does not supersede that person's Quaker membership, and nor does being listed by Quakers in Scotland. The original email asked Friends and Attenders on the GM list to sign up by 8 September; this was for administrative convenience and is no sort of deadline.

The text of the form, which, if you did not receive it, you are asked to transcribe into an email and send to scotfriends@gmail.com, is

Membership statement

I understand that the responsibilities of General Meeting for Scotland will be taken over by Quakers in Scotland, and as a member of General Meeting for Scotland I wish to be a member of this new Quaker body, Quakers in Scotland, and help guide its work.

I understand my name and address will be held in the register of members.

Signed [insert name]

Date:

Data consent statement

I consent to my data currently held by General Meeting for Scotland be passed to Quakers in Scotland.

Signed [insert name]

Date:

EDINBURGH JEWISH CULTURAL CENTRE

Inter-faith Learning for All

Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre (EJCC) has a varied and stimulating series of events, both in person and online. Except for religious events, I attend them when I can. They have obtained funding for several inter-faith dialogue events, the first of which, 'Reading the Bible: Meaning and Truth', was on 4 June. The two facilitators were Rabbi Margaret Jacobi of the Progressive Synagogue in Birmingham, and Ann Conway-Jones whom some Friends will know as a Woodbrooke tutor, often with Tim Peat Ashworth, always, as far as I know, on the Hebrew Scriptures. (I did a weekend course of theirs on Jeremiah).

Ann spoke first on meaning and Margaret spoke on Truth. This was a rich

session, so this is only a summary of the event which can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NLeDKgQePA>. (Any mistakes are my misunderstandings.)

Ann said Jews and Christians have very different approaches to the same Biblical passages, even to the names used and the order of the books. The *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible) is very much most important for Jewish people; for Christians the Hebrew Scriptures (more commonly called the Old Testament) lead on to the gospels.

Both “scrutinize scripture...because they believe that it reveals the nature and intent of the divine, of God.” Christians see the Bible as a story about God, humanity and salvation, Jews read it as being about God, people and land. Diversity is creative with much to explore but first it needs to be acknowledged that asking different questions will give different answers. Bible study (by a church group) and Biblical studies (by scholars) are both legitimate approaches but are different, with different questions and aims.

Margaret began with two enriching quotes. Rabbi Hanania said “The seal of the Holy One is truth.” And Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel “On three things does the world stand: on justice, on truth and on peace.” But truth is not absolute, more important can be kindness. Somehow we have to reconcile kindness with truth and peace and justice and a tension between peace and justice. Reflecting on a theme can bring out the contradictory nature of human beings. There is one God, but that does not prevent debate, nor openness to debate. *Midrash* is a close reading of a text, playing with it, encouraging differences. Asking questions is as important as giving answers. There are a range of views both within Judaism and Christianity, but for Jews, *Torah* is the word of God, given by God, with limits to how it can be interpreted.

Questions and answers followed, both from the facilitators and those present, and finally refreshments.

The next session, on 28 July, was on ‘Divine Revelation and Human Response: Covenant and Words in Deuteronomy’, the two facilitators being Rabbi David Rose from the Orthodox Synagogue in Edinburgh and the Reverend Gareth Jones, a retired Methodist minister, active with Edinburgh Inter Faith. It too is on YouTube; at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0xjkG6_1dw. I found it very much less congenial! I really *really* didn’t like Deuteronomy, and couldn’t connect what I’d read – God, through Moses, urging the Israelites to massacre the inhabitants of the land they were being given to dwell in – to what both Rabbi Rose and Gareth Jones evidently valued in it: it was as if we had been reading different books. But I hope to be at the September session, ‘Caring for Creation: a Jewish-Muslim Dialogue on Ecology’ on 17 September.

Kate Arnot

[Details of this meeting are at ‘upcoming events’ at <https://www.jcc.scot/projects-8>]

Quaker Concern for Mental Illness

Quakers have a long history of concern for people with mental illness, perhaps because of our understanding that we are all equal in the eyes of God and that there is that of God in us all.

Early Quakers were frequently imprisoned for their approach to Christian worship, which antagonised the established church. Aware of the dreadful conditions that often existed in prison, they subsequently worked for penal reform.

It is also quite possible that since Quakers were regarded by some as mad for their outlandish approach to religion they ended up in asylums such as Bedlam, where treatment was harsh and inhumane. Again Quakers believed that the inmates should be treated with kindness and compassion, on the basis, 'There but for the grace of God go I'.

In 1796, William Tuke established The Retreat in York. Here people were treated with respect, consideration and concern, which was in stark contrast with what happened in most mental institutions of the time. (And not just in the distant past. As a young man, I worked in a South London hospital where the quality of care was shocking.)

I now want to consider George Fox the founder of Quakerism. George Fox was frequently thrown into prison for preaching an approach to faith that was considered outlandish, and thus necessarily illegal.

In prison George had plenty of time to think deeply. I imagine it may well have been while a prisoner that he arrived at the insight that, in Jo Farrow's words: *'If we set our hearts on goodness as a personal goal, it means that we have to ignore all other parts of ourselves that do not fit into our ideal of goodness'* (This and other quotations are in *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 26.29).

As human beings we all know that there is certainly another, darker, side to ourselves: the darker side that Carl Gustav Jung called the 'The Shadow'.

When George Fox encountered the dark side of his nature, instead of slamming the door of his consciousness, as many of us are inclined to do when we come across the less acceptable parts of ourselves, he set about exploring his dark side. He realised that he would not be of any use to others if he was unable to accept himself as he truly was.

Initially he was completely shocked to discover within himself a potential for crimes that could be bestial, murderous and depraved. As he explored this ocean of darkness and evil, he realised that if he was unable not acknowledge and accept these impulses as a part of himself as he truly was, he would not have made the discoveries that sets Quaker spiritually apart. Again, in Jo Farrow's words, *'[Fox] found that having faced and acknowledged his dark self, he came upon a more liberating truth at the heart of himself.'* What he himself elsewhere refers to as discovering 'An ocean of darkness and

the ocean of light'. This understanding allowed him to: *'experience the moment of enlightenment which enabled him to trust the creative and intuitive part of himself and know that it could not be obliterated by the dark side'*.

Is mental illness hereditary or is it induced by experiences in life? I decided to include this extract because it illustrates the point that many people are quite frightened of mental illness, and wish to distance themselves from any possibility that their family may have inherited this genetic defect.

'Mental illness is not simply inherited or solely induced by the environment, it is a complex interplay of genetic predisposition and environmental factors.' Thus speaks the wisdom of Google.

There may well be a genetic component, but, in my view, the vast majority of cases are induced by life events, such as childhood sexual abuse. This is where Sigmund Freud famously turned his back on the adult survivors of child abuse referring to the memories presented to him during psychoanalysis as 'fantasies'. Sadly, they were all too real. No doubt innate sensitivity plays a part to make some people more vulnerable to periods of mental distress. But surely 'sensitivity' cannot be described as a bad thing. All the more reason to treat people with kindness.

Recently I broke down in tears in the middle of a Quaker Meeting. While doing so I referred to this episode as 'The Ministry of Grief'. I was 'held' and supported during this meeting, and I haven't felt inclined to repeat the performance. I remember saying 'Thank God for Quakers'.

And I do.

Now what was it that induced this outburst? Well for me the matter was intensely personal but since it is said that 'the personal is political' from that point of view, you need only take a glance at the world today, to realise that intense grief is a very appropriate response.

Simon Jackson

[*Quaker Voices on Mental Health* is a national network of Friends who have a concern for mental health and wellbeing and want to see mental health services reformed in ways that are true to Quaker testimonies. See <https://quakervoicesonmh.org.uk/>.]

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

***What do Quakers Believe?* by Geoffrey Durham (2018)**

I have recommended books from the Quaker Quicks series before but this one is essential reading for anyone interested in outreach. Quakerism is presented through the words of a diverse group aged between 21 and 87 with Quaker, Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Hindu and Jewish backgrounds, so a very stimulating mix. It reminded me of why I am a Quaker.

Rachel Frith

Woodbrooke Courses: October/November

DETAILS of courses and events commencing or taking place before the end of September were in *Sesame* 261.

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.

Conversations With Our Children: Being Part of a Quaker Community

Wednesday 1 October, 20:30 – 21:30 BST

Rachael Swancott

Reading the Bible Non-Violently

£48

4 sessions: Thursdays, 2 – 23 October, 18:00 – 19:30 BST

David Tatum

Simpler Meetings: Small Quaker Meetings Revisited

£12.50

Thursday 2 October, 19:00-21:15 BST

Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

Quaker Visions of God

£48

4 sessions: Fridays, 3 – 24 October, 19:00-21:00 BST

Windy Cooler, Benjamin Wood

Charting Our Spiritual Journey

£40

Saturday 4 October, 09:00-16:30 BST

Kate McNally

Quakers and Creeds: The Legacy of Nicaea

Monday 6 October, 19:30-21:00 BST

Janet Scott, Benjamin Wood

Quaker Nominations

£130

6 sessions: Tuesdays, 7 October – 11 November, 19:00 – 20:30 BST / GMT

Gill Greenfield, Lucy Parker

Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant

Thursday 9 October, 19:00 – 20:30 BST

Paulette Meier

Exploring Britain Yearly Meeting

£25

2 sessions: Thursdays, 9 & 16 October, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

Simpler Meetings: Starting on Small Quaker Meetings

£12.50

Thursday 9 October, 19:00-21:15 BST

Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

Being a Quaker Clerk: For Friends From Around The World

4 Sessions: Saturdays, 11 October – 1 November, 09:00-10:30 BST (*timing of the last session may vary depending on time zone.*)

Peter Eccles, Nancy Fee, Solveig-Karin Erdal

Essentials of Quaker Eldership

Monday 13 October, 19:30-21:00 BST

Sophie Smith, Elize Sakamoto

Quakers and Creeds: Being a Non-Credal Church

Monday 13 October, 19:30-21:00 BST

Rowena Loverance, Janet Scott, Benjamin Wood

Politics: A Quaker Approach

£40

6 sessions: Mondays, 13 October – 17 November, 18:30-20:00 BST / GMT

James McCarthy

Whose Friends Are We?**£72**

6 sessions: Mondays, 13 October – 17 November, 19:00-20:30 BST/GMT

Mark Russ

Quakers and Anabaptists: Peacebuilding Today

Tuesday 14 October, 19:00-20:30 BST

Ella Asheri

Simpler Meetings: Meeting Without a Meeting House Revisited**£12.50**

Thursday 16 October, 19:00-21:15 BST

Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

Christ and Creation

Saturday 18 October, 16:00-18:00 BST

Martin Kelley, Christina Muhr, Phil Baisley, Cherice Bock

Community Surgery Hour for Trustees

Monday 20 October, 19:00-20:30 BST

Linda Craig

Property Review and Renewal: Possible Futures

Tuesday 21 October, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

Becoming Friends**£54**

8 sessions: Thursdays, 23 October – 11 December, 19:00-21:00 BST/GMT

Marilyn Higgins, Wendy Hampton

Simpler Meetings: Starting on Meeting Without a Meeting House**£12.50**

Thursday 23 October, 19:00-21:15 BST

Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

Being and Doing: Finding the Balance**£40**

Saturday 25 October, 09:30-16:00 BST

Jennifer Kavanagh

Wondering Words: Poems for Your Daily Life**£60**

5 sessions: Saturdays, 25 October – 22 November, 11:00 – 12:30 BST/GMT

Till flo* Krapoth

Quakers and Creeds: The Role of Creeds in Church and State

Monday 27 October, 19:30-21:00 BST

Robin Hanford, Paul Swarbrick, Janet Scott, Benjamin Wood

Spirit-Led? Faith and Activism: A Jewish Perspective

Tuesday 28 October, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Sara Moon, Samson Hart, Ella Asheri

The Enchanted Christianity of Anne Conway**£60**

5 sessions: Wednesdays, 29 October – 26 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Benjamin Wood

The Roots of the Quaker Way**£72**

4 sessions: Wednesday 29 October, then fortnightly on Tuesdays,

11 & 25 November and 9 December, 19:30 – 20:30 GMT

Stuart Masters

Circle Skills for Difficult Conversations in Our Communities**£48**

4 fortnightly sessions: Thursdays, 30 October – 11 December, 18:30-20:30 GMT

Leon Dundas, Ella Asheri

The Shared Quaker Story: Spirit, Community and Scripture**£72**

6 sessions: Thursdays, 30 October – 4 December, 19:00 – 21:00 GMT

Benjamin Wood

Quakers and the Supernatural

Friday 31 October, 19:30-21:00 GMT

Benjamin Wood

Moving Beyond Disability Access to Disability Justice

Saturday 1 November, 11:00-15:00 GMT

Eleanor Tew, Ella Asheri

Introductory Evening to Communicating Truthfully, Equally and Effectively

Monday 3 November, 19:00-20:00 GMT

Annie Dickson, Elize Sakamoto

Business Method Surgery for Clerks and Elders

Tuesday 4 November, 19:30-21:00

[One of Woodbrooke's staff tutors, an experienced clerk and elder, will be on hand to listen and help find solutions. All are passionate about helping meetings ensure this deeply spiritual process runs smoothly. The session is not a drop-in, but you can book right up to the start of it, at 7.30 pm.]

Seasons of Our Souls**£48**

4 sessions: Tuesdays, 4 – 25 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Alison Richards

Conversations With Our Children: Anti-Racism

Wednesday 5 November, 20:30-21:30 GMT

Rachael Swancott

Artificial Intelligence: What Does It Mean for Quakers?**£48**

4 sessions: Thursday, 6 – 27 November, 19:00 - 20:30 GMT

Kenneth Cukier

Quakers and the Trafficking of Africans: Researching Our Past**£15**

Thursday 6 November, 13:30-18:00 GMT

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Being a Quaker Clerk* [RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND]*£315**

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, nr Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 1AU

The course begins on Friday 7 November with the evening meal and ends with lunch on Sunday 9 November.

Adwoa Burnley, Judith Roads

Freeing the Imagination: Creative Writing Retreat**£40**

Sunday 9 November, 13:30-17:00 GMT

Rosie Carnall

Talking Confidently About Our Quaker Faith**£36**

3 sessions: Tuesdays, 11 – 25 November, 19:00-21:00 GMT

[TUTOR(S) TO BE ANNOUNCED]

Communicating Truthfully, Equally and Effectively* [IN-PERSON EVENT]*£35**

Oxford Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles', Oxford OX1 3LW

Saturday 15 November, 09.30-16:30 GMT

Annie Dickson, Elize Sakamoto

Quaker Trusteeship in a Nutshell**£40**

Saturday 15 November, 10:00 – 16:00 GMT

Sarah Donaldson, Linda Craig

Diversity and Paradox: Ancient Wisdom for Today

Monday 17 November, 19:00 – 20:30 GMT

David Curtis

Meet the Students: Paul Harris

Tuesday 18 November, 15:00 – 16:00 GMT

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Living More Deliberately: Spiritual Activism With Henry David Thoreau

Tuesday 18 November, 19:00 – 20:30 GMT

Robert Oulton

Enquiring Into: What We Know To Be True

Thursday 20 November, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Rosie Carnall

- Spiritual Nurture and Pastoral Care in a Nutshell*** £40
 Saturday 22 November, 10:00-16:00 GMT Heather Rowlands, Helen Chambers
- Holding in the Light: What Does It Mean?***
 Monday 24 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT Rhiannon Grant
- Poetry Reading As Spiritual Practice*** £30
 Saturday 29 November, 14:00-18:30 GMT Tracey Martin
- Quaker Treasurership in a Nutshell*** £40
 Saturday 29 November, 10:00 – 16:00 GMT
 Wendrie Heywood, Oliver Waterhouse

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.

Christian Aid: News and Events

Afghanistan Earthquake Appeal

The major earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan – shaking buildings from Kabul to the Pakistani capital Islamabad – killed more than 900 people. Life-saving rescue operations are needed to save the masses trapped under the rubble. Many more are in need of drinking water, food, shelter, blankets, cooking sets and critical medical supplies.

Yaqoob Rauf, our acting Country Manager in Afghanistan said: “This is a devastating blow, coming on top of the 2023 earthquake in Herat and the continuing dire economic situation. Even before this heartbreaking earthquake, Afghanistan was under immense strain.”

For more information or to donate, go to

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

Panel Discussion: The Global Debt Crisis, chaired by Humza Yousaf MSP 15 September, 2-3.30pm, Augustine United Church, Edinburgh EH1 1EL

Featuring Christian Aid partners, economists, and experts in ethical finance, the panel will examine how governments, multilateral institutions, and private lenders can reshape the global financial system to promote responsible lending and sustainable development.

All are welcome to this free event.

Please email edinburgh@christian-aid.org with questions or to book a place.

Prayers for Peace: Daoud Nassar, Tent of Nations

24 September, 2.00–3.30 pm, Augustine United Church, Edinburgh + online

We are delighted to welcome Daoud Nassar from the Church of Scotland's partner, Tent of Nations. Daoud is a Palestinian Christian, organic farmer and non-violent activist. The Nassar family own an organic farm in the

West Bank, surrounded by illegal Israeli settlements. The farm is a meeting place and education centre for Palestinians, Israelis, and international travellers. Their motto is *'We refuse to be enemies.'*

Sign up at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace> (NB. The form references our normal 7.00 pm start time – this special event is in the afternoon.)

A Just Peace: New films and resources

Christian Aid presents three new films and additional resources to help the conversation within your meeting and inspire action for a just peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Churches sometimes shy away from these conversations, seeing it as too difficult, controversial or uncomfortable. These new resources featuring the voices of Palestinians and UK Christians aim to help break the silence.

See <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/inspire-your-church-act-just-peace>

Christian Aid 80th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service

3.00 pm, Sunday 21 September, St Andrew's Cathedral, Inverness IV3 5NN

The Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Bishop Mark Strange, will be speaking at this ecumenical service, which is also to mark Season for Creation, and will feature global music and sung Eucharist.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/christian-aid-80th-anniversary-thanksgiving-service>

Edinburgh Kiltwalk 2025

Join us at the last Kiltwalk of the year on Sunday 14 September in Edinburgh. There are different distances to choose from and it's guaranteed to be a fun-filled day. Find out more on the Christian Aid website:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/kiltwalk-2025>

Restore Campaign

Tackling the debt and climate crises through Christian Aid's Restore Campaign is one way we can join in God's work to restore creation and see the flourishing of all people. There are videos, flyers, info sheets, a *kintsugi*-inspired art project and a petition to sign to the UK Government. See

[https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign?](https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign?utm_campaign=806653_20250310-CA-CAM-ADV-Restore-Campaign-Launch&utm_medium=email&utm_source=christianaid&dm_i=7MDW,HAF1,E8UY5,1NXJ8,1)

[utm_campaign=806653_20250310-CA-CAM-ADV-Restore-Campaign-](https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign?utm_campaign=806653_20250310-CA-CAM-ADV-Restore-Campaign-Launch&utm_medium=email&utm_source=christianaid&dm_i=7MDW,HAF1,E8UY5,1NXJ8,1)

[Launch&utm_medium=email&utm_source=christianaid&dm_i=7MDW,HAF1,E8UY5,1NXJ8,1](https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign?utm_campaign=806653_20250310-CA-CAM-ADV-Restore-Campaign-Launch&utm_medium=email&utm_source=christianaid&dm_i=7MDW,HAF1,E8UY5,1NXJ8,1)

Scottish Government funding for humanitarian work in Malawi

Recently, the Scottish Government's Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF) awarded Christian Aid £150,000 to help drought impacted communities in Neno District, Malawi. You can find out about the difference this funding has made in our latest blog; see

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/working-scottish-government>

The Twenty-third Psalm in Scots

Translation into Scots has a long and noteworthy history. Ezra Pound, in his ABC of Reading, preferred the Eneados of Gavin Douglas (1474-1522) to Virgil's Æneid; Peter Ross wrote in The Guardian in 2017 that whereas Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone is "not a very good book", put into Scots (by Matthew Fitt), it is "terrific". Two years ago, in Sesame 249, we noted the publication of two new Scots versions of the Old Testament, comparing their renderings of Psalm 23, and also traced the evolution over almost a century of the familiar English version, The Lord's My Shepherd, in the Scots Metrical Psalter of 1650. Both of the new Scots versions were re-worked from English, unlike P. H. Waddell's 1871 translation "frae Hebrew intil Scottis", which was included for comparison. The two versions here, both nineteenth century paraphrases, were omitted, and are belatedly offered as alternative readings. – ED.

Ane Psalm o' David

The Lord is my shepherd: I sallna inlak.

He mak's me til lye doun in green an' baittle gangs; he leeds me aside the quæet waters

He refreschens my saul; he leeds me in the peths o' richteous-niss for his næme's sak'.

Yis, thouch I wauk throwe the vallie o' the skaddaw o' deæth, I wull feær nae ill: for thou art wi' me; thy cruik an' thy staffe thaye comfirt me.

Thou prepairist me ane tabel in the preesince o' mine enimies: thou anaintist my heæd wi' oolie; my cupp rins ower.

Shurelie guidniss an' mercie sall follo me a' the dayes o' my liffe; an' I wull dwell in the hous o' the Lord forever.

inlak lack baittle gangs rich pastures

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSAUM

Dauvid is aye unreelin a pirn aboot Christ. Here he pents him as a Shepherd, and his sel as a silly bit lammie. It evens weel wi the tenth o' John.*

The Lord is my Shepherd; my wants are a' kent; the pastur I lie in is growthie and green.

I follow by the lip o' the watirs o' Peace.

He heals and sterklie hauds my saul: and airts me, for his ain name's sake, in a' the fit-roads o' his holiness.

Aye, and though I bude gang throwe the howe whaur the deid shadows fa', I'se fear nae skaith nor ill, for that yersel is aye side me; yere rod and yere cruik they defend me.

My table ye hae plenish't afore the een o' my faes; my heid ye hae chrystit wi' oyle; my cup is teemin fu'!

And certes, tenderness and mercie sal be my fa' to the end o' my days; and syne I'se bide i' the hoose o' the Lord, for evir and evir mair!

*sterklie boldly airts directs bude had to howe valley skaith harm plenish't stocked
chrystit annointed fa' fate*

* Chapter 10 of John's Gospel in which Jesus twice says *I am the good shepherd*. (ED.)

The first of these is by **Henry Scott Riddell** (1798-1870), the second by **William Wye Smith** (1827-1917); both were Borderers, but Smith was taken to America in infancy, and then to Canada in 1837, where he was a minister in the Congregational Church, serving from 1867 until his retirement in 1907. Riddell lived almost all his life in Southern Scotland, latterly at Teviothead in a cottage provided by the Duke of Buccleuch. The son of a shepherd, he had hoped to be ordained, but was prevented by a period of insanity. He wrote poems and songs in Scots, and was a friend of James Hogg; he came to the notice of Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte (1813-1891), a nephew of Napoleon, who, keenly interested in minority languages, commissioned him and others to make "Lowland Scotch" versions of books of the Bible. Riddell produced Matthew's Gospel (1856), the Psalms (1857), and the Song of Solomon (1858). James Murray (1837-1915), who later edited the Oxford English Dictionary, was prompted by Riddell's work to translate the Book of Ruth into more authentic Borders Scots. Smith worked on his complete New Testament in Braid Scots over many years, using the 1881 Revised Version of the English New Testament as a basis. It first came out in 1901 and was reprinted and revised up to 1924, after which the publishers issued a volume containing just the Four Gospels, also reprinted several times. In all of them, Psalm 23 appears at the end, being "about Christ", or so Smith's note asserts. Writing within and for a nationalistic expatriate community, he used a form of Scots which owes more to Burns than to any spoken variety. Graham Tulloch discusses both his and Riddell's renderings in *A History of the Scots Bible* (1989).



Man of Sorrows (c. 1860) by William Dyce (1806-64): the companion piece to *David in the Wilderness*, which appeared in *Sesame* 249 to accompany the article on Psalm 23.

General Meeting for Scotland

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND will be on Saturday 20 September, at the Soutar Theatre, A.K. Bell Library, York Place, Perth PH2 8EP, and online, 11.00 am – 4:00 pm.

This meeting will see the transition from General Meeting for Scotland's final meeting, to the first meeting of the new body, QUAKERS IN SCOTLAND.

Please do join us! All are welcome. East Scotland AM Friends will be providing hospitality for those coming in person. A soup and vegetarian/vegan sandwich lunch, with hot drinks, will be provided, but please bring your own lunch if you have other requirements. After preliminary refreshment from 10:30 am, we will start with opening worship at 11.00, break for lunch from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm, and our afternoon session will finish by about 4.00 pm, following which there will be tea.

There will be a preparatory pre-meeting by Zoom at 7.00 pm on Thursday 18 September (see below).

Please register in advance for security online and to give us the numbers coming to Perth so we can plan hospitality and use of space.

(You will receive Zoom login details even if you have registered to attend in person – this is a default setting of the registration set-up. Note the registration form shows that Zoom will be open from 10.00 am, but that the meeting doesn't start until 11.00.

Contact our Administrator, Jane Booth (scotfriends@gmail.com or 07747 396456) if you need any assistance.)

Business in the morning will include reports on:

- Shindig 2025 (*the annual event for Young Quakers from Scotland and Northern England*);
- Central European Yearly Meeting;
- Meeting for Sufferings; and
- Parliamentary Engagement (including work on Climate Justice).

We will also hear about the new publication *Quaker Voices on Mental Health*, produced by the group of the same name. [See the note on page 28.]

In the afternoon, having inaugurated Quakers in Scotland we will deal with business including appointments, and hear from the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group.

The preparatory pre-meeting on 18 September is an opportunity to hear about, and raise questions concerning, the business on Saturday.

Michael Hutchinson, Clerk
Susan Mitchell, Assistant Clerk

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 21 June 2025
at East Linton Community Hall and by remote videoconferencing**

2025/06/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 24.55: Mary Lou Leavitt asks that we lay down carnal weapons and practice instead our use of 'weapons of the spirit'.

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]

2025/06/12 Closing minute

40 Friends (39 members and one attender) have been at all or part of this meeting, either in person or by Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Central Edinburgh 11 | Central Fife 1 | East Lothian 10 | Falkirk & Polmont 2 | Kelso 4 |
| Penicuik - | Portobello & Musselburgh 6 | South Edinburgh 6 | Tweeddale - | <i>Visitors/Others</i> - |

We record our thanks to East Lothian Local Meeting for hosting us today, and to David Sterratt (CE) for facilitating our online resource.

We next meet on Wednesday 10 September 2025 at 7.00 pm at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and online.

(Signed)

Alastair Cameron, Clerk
Sara Davies, Assistant Clerk

Arthur Toulmin Smith: A British Engineer in 19th Century Russia **by Bessie White**

ISBN 978-1-8362-8301-0 (paperback); 978-1-8362-8830-5 (eBook)

This collection of letters tells the story of Arthur Toulmin Smith, a British engineer who spent his working life in Russia from 1869 until his death in 1914. After installing the telegraph in the Caucasus, and a spell managing the Moscow gas works, he set up Ludwig & Smith with a Russo-German colleague, manufacturing weighing equipment and pipework for fire brigades, as well as components for the Moscow sewerage system.

His first wife dies young in childbirth. Daughter Alice survives and is happily brought up by his second wife Minna. Through Arthur's letters home to his scholar sister Lucy, we watch Alice growing up. Staying with Aunt Lucy in Oxford she meets a trainee Unitarian minister. Will Arthur allow his only daughter to marry on just £200 a year?

The Anglican church in Moscow was named St Andrew's, in recognition of the number of Scots among the congregation. (Anglican chaplains had a hard time attempting to exert their authority!) A Unitarian, Arthur declines baptism and is thus unable to have his marriage confirmed in the English church. Yet he enjoys singing in the church choir and serves as church warden and chair of the Foreign Cemetery Committee in Moscow. The challenges of the management of places of worship whether Anglican, Unitarian or Quaker remain the same the world over, then and now.

The letters throw light on a lesser known British community abroad, and their comfortable life as expatriates among, but separate from, Russian society. Arthur's great-granddaughter Bessie White, a member of Brentford & Isleworth local meeting, provides a fascinating broader context to his life abroad.

A copy of the book has been donated to the South East Scotland Area Meeting Library at Edinburgh Meeting House.

The book can be ordered from Troubador Publishers at

<https://troubador.co.uk/bookshop/history-politics-society/arthur-toulmin-smith-a-british-engineer-in-19th-century-russia>

for £13.99 + postage & packing.

An eBook is available *via* the publishers' website, or from Amazon.

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 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 – Trinity Church, Manse Place, 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 7.00 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.