

# SESAME

Number 264: January 2026

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Area M<sup>tg</sup>, 19 January / Reflections / Prison Experiences, 1662 / Quaker Spiritual Path / QiS *meetings* / Quakers in Scotland: *views* / EDAI event / C.O. exhibition / Reparations / AD 325 and *All That* / Living Witness / NFPB / Woodbrooke, Glenthorne, Congénies *events & courses* / Building community / *Work That Reconnects* / Book review: *God as Nothing* / John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust; Gal-Gael at Iona *reports* / AM Budget, 2026-28 / QARN / November Minutes / ... &c.

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*The Lord Answering Job from the Whirlwind* – William Blake, c. 1805.  
For more by Blake (from 'The Divine Image' in Songs of Innocence) see page 46.

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## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Monday 19 January at 7.00 pm at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and online. All associated with Quakers in South East Scotland are welcome.

Sara Davies  
Clerk

### DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 1 November 2025
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
  1. *General Meeting for Scotland /Quakers in Scotland* [see page 9]
  2. *Dates for 2026/27 (2025/09/08 and 2025/11/3.3 refer)*
4. Appointments
5. Between-meeting decisions
  1. *Bursary for social justice events*
  2. *Visitors for membership applicants*
6. Membership matters
  1. *Reports on membership visits*
  2. *Terminations of membership*
  3. *Recording of deaths*
7. Quakers in Scotland and SESAM [see pages 16, 18, 19, 20]
8. Matters from local meetings
  1. *Falkirk & Polmont: Cladhan Hotel witness*
  2. *Portobello & Musselburgh:*  
*meeting and exhibition on conscientious objection* [see page 25]
  3. *Central Edinburgh: spiritual review* [see page 42]
9. Trustees and Treasurer
10. Reports
  1. *Work That Reconnects course and future* [see page 43]
  2. *Central Edinburgh: Scottish Reparations for Slavery* [see page 27]
11. Closing minute

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The [US] **Friends Committee on National Legislation** issued a statement on 3 January strongly condemning the American attack on Venezuela. It is here:

<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2026-01/quaker-lobby-condemns-kidnapping-venezuela-president-and-violation-venezuelas>

## Seasonal Reflections

In January 1917, **Hubert Peet** (who edited *The Friend*, 1932-49) was in Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector (C.O.). He attended the chapel with mixed feelings:

**I**T WILL SEEM VERY CURIOUS one day again to attend a religious service at which the congregation is not regimented and watched closely by warders throughout the proceedings. Perhaps the officers are getting used by now to obvious and sometimes, I confess, almost discourteous differences of opinion with the preacher when he states, for instance, as a rebuke to the C.O. portion of his audience, that as a maker of tents

### **Paul was an Army Contractor**

who was “proud to do his bit for his Empire” [*Paul’s being a tentmaker is referred to in Acts 18:3, but his keenness to supply military customers – if he ever did – is pure conjecture*], or the comparison of Lord Cromer with Moses [sic! *Like Joseph under Pharaoh (not Moses—see Genesis 41: 39-43), the Earl of Cromer had governed Egypt, as Controller General and then Consul General, 1879-1907; formally in the name of the Khedive, but for the benefit of the British Empire. In retirement, he was president of the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage, and in 1916 was chairing the Commission of Enquiry into the failure of the Dardanelles campaign. Not, therefore, someone whom most C.O.s would esteem highly.*]. After hearing discourses of this nature it was interesting to go back to one’s cell to read, for instance, that one of the indictments against the Abbot of Wigmore at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries was that he had taught that one should hate one’s enemies and not love them. On the other hand, I have heard one or two of the best of sermons, though especially in that of Christmas morning, when the text was “I came not to bring peace but a sword” [*Jesus’ words in Matt. 10:34*], I imagine that while what was eloquently said was most encouraging and stimulating if interpreted spiritually, a more literal meaning was in the preacher’s mind.

From *112 Days’ Hard Labour; Being some Reflections on the first of my Sentences as a Conscientious Objector* by Hubert W. Peet (1917) – accessible online at

<https://wdc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/tav/id/3816>

A year later, **Alwyne A. Walmsley** (1892-1967) was likewise in Wormwood Scrubs. By then support for C.O. prisoners was well organised, with a [Quaker] Chaplains Committee arranging weekly visits and also sending them Christmas cards. He wrote to the Committee “with utmost thanks for the cheerful remembrance”, going on to say:

**I** LOOKED FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS for weeks ... as a day spent in solitary reflection and communion ... and I was not disappointed. It was one of those bright sunny frosty days which show Scrubs at its best. ... Then chapel, with an excellent sermon from the assistant Prison Chaplain. His sermons are magnificent and wonderfully broad-minded ... and finally at four o’clock we were shut in our cells for the night ... with one’s books propped up against the wall in front of one, and best of all, a keen appetite

both for them and for one's tea. Both on Christmas eve and on Christmas morning the N.C.F. [*No Conscription Fellowship*] came and sang outside the wall – an entertainment which one greatly appreciated.

Quoted in *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-1919* by John W. Graham (1922) p. 169. [*The tone of the letter may be influenced by the need to pass censorship, although there is no suggestion that any of it is meant ironically. The omissions (marked "...") are all in the published version. For more on C.O.s see page 25. – ED.*]

*Last year an Attender at Central Edinburgh suggested this poem for inclusion in Sesame, but too late for it to appear in a winter issue. Here, at last, it is. There is more about the author, David Whyte, at <https://davidwhyte.com/>.*

### *Winter Apple*

Let the apple ripen  
on the branch  
beyond your need  
to take it down.  
Let the coolness of autumn  
and the breathing,  
blowing wind  
test its adherence  
to endurance,  
let the others fall.  
Wait longer  
than you would,  
go against yourself,  
find the pale nobility  
of quiet that ripening  
demands;  
watch with patience  
as the silhouette emerges  
and the leaves fall;  
see it become  
a solitary roundness  
against a greying sky,  
let winter come  
and the first  
frost threaten,  
and then wake  
one morning  
to see the breath  
of winter  
has haloed  
its redness  
with light.

So that a full  
two months  
after you  
should have  
taken the apple  
down  
you hold it in  
your closed hand  
at last and bite  
into the cool  
sweetness  
spread evenly  
through every  
single atom  
of a pale  
and yielding  
structure.  
So that you taste  
on that cold,  
grey day,  
not only  
the after reward  
of a patience  
remembered,  
not only  
the summer  
sunlight  
of a postponed  
perfection,  
but the sweet  
inward stillness  
of the wait itself.

[From <https://dharmaworks.net/DharmaTouch/winter-apples-and-ripening-awareness/>]

## Prison Experiences of an Early Friend

*Arrested in London on 26 October 1662, at the Meeting at the Bull & Mouth in Aldersgate, **Thomas Ellwood** (1639-1713) was one of 32 Quakers taken to Bridewell. He notes in his Journal (written years later and published posthumously) that the party of trained-band militiamen which broke into the meeting “with noise and clamour” was led by “one ... Major Rosewall, an apothecary, if I misremember not, and at that time under the ill name of Papist” – there cannot have been many Catholics involved in law enforcement in London when they themselves were subject to even harsher penalties than those imposed on Quakers and other dissenters, and so it is tempting to wonder if, eight years later, he was the unnamed informer who fled rather than give evidence against George Fox (see *Sesame* 263). The raid on the Meeting was part of “a general storm which fell that day ... so that most of our men Friends were made prisoners, and the prisons generally filled.” The reason for it is mentioned later. Such detentions also impacted on the families of the arrested, who had to provide food for them in prison ...*

**B**UT AN EXCELLENT ORDER, even in those early days, was practiced ... by which there were certain Friends of either sex appointed to have the oversight of the prisons in every quarter, and to take care of all Friends, the poor especially, that should be committed thither.

This prison of Bridewell was under the care of two honest, grave, discreet, and motherly women, whose names were Anne Merrick (afterwards Vivers), and Anne Travers, both widows.

They, so soon as they understood that there were Friends brought into that prison, provided some hot victuals, meat, and broth, for the weather was cold; and ordering their servants to bring it them, with bread, cheese, and beer, came themselves also with it, and having placed it on a table, gave notice to us that it was provided for all those that had not others to provide for them, or were not able to provide for themselves. And there wanted not among us a competent number of such guests.

*After more than a week in prison, Ellwood received money from his father, his sister, and William Penington (Isaac's brother), which enabled him to join with others who were paying for food brought in by Anne Travers. Some of the Quakers were released “through the solicitations of some of their relations or a[c]quaintance to Sir Richard Brown[e] who was at that time a great master of misrule in the city”. (Browne had been Lord Mayor, 1660-61.) Those remaining were joined by another Friend:*

He was a very poor man, who lived by mending shoes, and on a seventh-day [Saturday] night, late, a carman, or some other such labouring man, brought him a pair of shoes to mend, desiring ... that he might have them in the morning, for he had no other to wear. The poor man sat up at work upon them till after midnight, and then finding he could not finish them, went to bed, intending to do the rest in the morning.

Accordingly, he got up betimes, and though he wrought as privately as he could in his chamber, that he might avoid giving offence to any, yet ... an ill-natured neighbour perceived it, who went and informed against him for working on the Sunday. Whereupon he was had before Richard Brown[e],

who committed him to Bridewell for a certain time, to be kept to hard labour beating hemp, which is labour hard enough. [...]

The Friend was a poor little man, of a low condition and mean appearance; [but] knowing he had done no evil for which he should undergo that punishment, refused to work, and for refusing was cruelly whipt; which he bore with wonderful constancy and resolution of mind.

The manner of whipping there is, to strip the party to the skin from the waist upwards, and having fastened him to the whipping-post, so that he can neither resist nor shun the strokes, to lash the naked body with long but slender twigs of holly, which will bend almost like thongs, and lap round the body; and these having little knots upon them, tear the skin and flesh and give extreme pain.

With these rods they tormented the Friend most barbarously ... Yet were they fain at last to yield when they saw their utmost severity could not make him yield; and then, not willing to be troubled longer with him, they turned him up among us.

When we had inquired of him how it was with him, and he had given us a brief account of both his cause and usage, it came in my mind that I had in my box (which I had sent for from my lodging, to keep some few books and other necessities in) a little gallipot with Lucatullu's balsam in it.

Wherefore, causing a good fire to be made, and setting the Friend within a blanket before the fire, we stripped him to the waist, as if he had been to be whipt again, and found his skin so cut and torn with the knotty holly rods, both back, side, arm and breast, that it was a dismal sight to look upon. Then melting some of the balsam, I with a feather anointed all the sores, and putting a softer cloth between his skin and his shirt, helped him on with his clothes again. This dressing gave him much ease, and I continued it till he was well; and, because he was a very poor man, we took him into our mess, contriving that there should always be enough for him as well as for ourselves. Thus he lived with us until the time he was committed for was expired and then he was released.

But we were still continued prisoners by an arbitrary power, not being committed by the civil authority, nor having seen the face of any civil magistrate from the day we were thrust in here by soldiers, which was the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the eighth month, to the 19<sup>th</sup> of the tenth month [*December*] following.

On that day we were had to the Sessions at the Old Bailey; but not being called there, we were brought back to Bridewell, and continued there to the 29<sup>th</sup> of the same month and then we were carried to the Sessions again.

*The Friends appeared before the Recorder of London, Sir Thomas Howel, who later presided at the trial of Penn and Mead, when the jurymen were imprisoned for refusing to deliver the desired verdict. The outcome in this case was unsurprising:*

And as soon as the rest of our company were called, and had refused to swear, we were all committed to Newgate and thrust into the common side. [...]

The common side of Newgate is generally accounted, as it really is, the worst part of that prison; not so much from the place as the people, it being usually stocked with the veriest rogues and meanest sort of felons and pickpockets, who not being able to pay chamber-rent on the master's side, are thrust in there. And if they come in bad, to be sure they do not go out better; for here they have the opportunity to instruct one another in their art, and to impart to each other what improvements they have made therein.

*Ellwood describes a pickpocketing gang (which included "a little boy ... who by his stature did not seem above ten or a dozen years old") working on their technique; and how "nasty sluts" came into the prison at night, through "the dishonesty of the turnkeys [gaolers], who for vile gain to themselves, ... further this lewdness."*

These are some of the common evils which make the common side of Newgate in measure a type of hell upon earth. But there was at that time something of another nature which was very offensive to me.

When we came first into Newgate there lay in a little by place like a closet, near the room where we lodged, the quartered bodies of three men, who had been executed some days before, for a real or pretended plot; which was the ground, or at least pretext, for that storm in the city which had caused this imprisonment. The names of these three men were Philips, Tongue and Gib[b]s; and the reason why their quarters lay so long there was, the relations were all that while petitioning to have leave to bury them; which at length with much ado was obtained for the quarters, but not for the heads, which were ordered to be set up in some parts of the city. I saw the heads when they were brought up to be boiled. The hangman fetch'd them in a dirty dust basket out of some by place, and setting them down amongst the felons, he and they made sport with them. They took them by the hair, flouting, jeering and laughing at them; and then giving them some ill names, box'd them on the ears and cheeks. Which done, the hangman put them into his kettle and parboiled them with bay salt and cummin seed; *that* to keep them from putrefaction, and *this* to keep off the fowls from seizing on them. The whole sight, as well that of the bloody quarters first, as this of the heads afterwards, was both frightful and loathsome and begat an abhorrence in my nature. Which as it had rendered my confinement there by much the more uneasy, so it made our removal from thence to Bridewell, even in that respect, the more welcome.

[To be continued]

*An article by Beatrice Saxon Snell in the Journal of the Friends Historical Society, vol. xxxvi. (1939), draws on C. J. S. Thompson's Quacks of Old London (1928) to tell us that Lucatellu's or Lucatelli's Balsam consisted of "Venice Turpentine, Olive oil and Spanish wine washed in Rosewater, Red Sandal-wood or Dragon's blood [i.e. Calamus draco, still used in the pharmaceutical industry] and Balsam of Peru. It was taken internally in wine and used externally for burns and wounds." Ellwood, she suggests, would have been taking it because the polluted London air caused him shortness of breath; it was supposed to be good for lung trouble.*



*Thomas Tonge, George Philips and Nathaniel Gibbs were three of the six men indicted for High Treason at the Old Bailey on 11 December 1662 before the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Robert Foster; the others were James Hind, Francis Stubbs and John Sallows. (See <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A63367.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> for a transcript of the trial.) Hind having confessed and the others being found guilty, all six were executed on 22 December, a week before Ellwood and his companions were sent to Newgate. Earlier that year, Sir Robert had presided at the trial of Sir Henry Vane, whom he had also sentenced to death, inducing the king to sanction the execution against his own inclination and despite the petition of both houses of parliament. – ED.*

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## Committing to the Quaker Spiritual Path

*Quaker Speak Video – 5 July 2018*

Transcribed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PjQNV13088>

I think one of the things that many spiritual traditions share is the teaching that the eye cannot see itself. In order for us to make even the individual spiritual growth that we desire, it's necessary to have some other eyes than ours looking at us objectively and telling us truthfully what they see, or what they don't see.

### *Committing to the Quaker Spiritual Path:*

I'm **Lloyd Lee Wilson**. I'm a member of Friendship Friends Meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, which is part of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

### *Immersing Yourself in a Faith Tradition:*

It is, I think, impossible to get the benefit of any faith tradition without immersing one's self in it. I believe like the Sufis that where thee digs thy well and where I dig my well may be on different creeks, but they come from the same living water and they flow to the same ocean. I feel that there are in fact many paths to God, but they are distinct paths. If one is intent on making that journey, the best way there is to follow the path of the faith tradition thee has chosen.

The temptation if we don't is to avoid those things we don't like. If we begin to treat our spiritual growth as a buffet or a salad bar—we're only human, we take more than we need of the stuff we really like and we shy away from the stuff that doesn't taste good or that gave us heartburn. But it is the nature of the faith journey that it's often those things that we don't like the taste of that are making the growth in us that we need in order to go forward.

### *Exchanging Individualism for Corporate Discernment:*

We live in an age of rampant individualism. It's all around us, we breathe it in with every breath. I think that one of the hardest things about committing to the Quaker faith tradition is exchanging that individualism for a sense of corporate discernment and corporate wisdom. We go through our



meetings and we're asking, "My meeting is not giving me the things that I need for my spiritual journey." It's a question that I hear all the time. But I think that the real question—the question that will help us more—is to ask, "How can I be the member my meeting needs me to be in order to do the spiritual work God has given it to do?"

So to make that switch first of all requires a great deal of courage. To give up the fact that I'm going to be my own defence here, I'm going to look out for myself and be responsible for my own spiritual journey. It takes a lot of trust to feel safe and secure, to feel that yes, these people are seeking to discern God's will, that together we can discern it better and I have nothing to fear. That's very hard, very hard.

### *Committing to the Quaker Tradition:*

Quakerism has not been a perfect journey for me. I have never sat down in the perfect Quaker meeting and never expect to. But even those difficult places are places where we grow and we grow as a community. So that's the concept I've been trying to articulate in my writings and my talkings about Quakerism: that it's not a salad bar situation. You have to step inside of the tradition: commit to the tradition. Commit to something larger than yourself and then you begin to understand, "OK, this is the part of the tradition that's real for me, I can take this in." But you can't stand outside the tradition and even understand it, much less critique it.

*[With thanks to Marion Littler for passing this on.]*

## **Quakers in Scotland: Edinburgh, 8 November 2025**

The first in-person meeting of the new body since its inauguration – there had been an online meeting on the Thursday evening before, to lessen the amount of business to be got through on the Saturday – took place at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, with 57 present in person (among whom it was good to see Anthony and Sue Buxton, former managers at 7 Victoria Terrace) and with 45 joining by Zoom. Friends in the room included four visitors: Lesley Richards, who convened the QiS Coordinating Group, two American Friends travelling in the ministry – Matt Rosen of Ohio YM (Conservative) and Peter Blood-Patterson of New England YM – and Lia den Daas, of Cambridgeshire AM, who had felt a leading to accompany Matt and Peter in visiting us. Michael Hutchinson and Susan Mitchell were at the table; **Adwoa Burnley** and **Pleasaunce Perry** took over as clerk and assistant clerk of Quakers in Scotland at the start of the New Year. (Adwoa joined us online for part of the afternoon session – she was unable to attend in person, as she was leading a weekend course on 'Being a Quaker Clerk' at Swanwick in Derbyshire; Pleasaunce was with us at the meeting house.)

Matters agreed at the Thursday session had included the following dates

for meetings in 2026:

|          |              |  |
|----------|--------------|--|
| Saturday | 7 February   | online meeting, 9.30 am – 1.30 pm  |
| Saturday | 28 February  | <b>Perth</b> & online<br>( <i>changed from 7 March, as that date clashed with Meeting for Sufferings</i> ) |
| Saturday | 28 March     | online meeting   |
| Saturday | 16 May       | online meeting   |
| Thursday | 4 June       | online, 7.00 pm  |
| Saturday | 6 June       | <b>Glasgow</b><br>[? & online ( <i>not specified in the minutes</i> )]                                     |
| Saturday | 22 August    | online meeting   |
| Thursday | 17 September | online, 7.00 pm  |
| Saturday | 19 September | <b>Inverness or Aberdeen</b> & online  |
| Saturday | 24 October   | online meeting   |
| Thursday | 5 November   | online, 7.00 pm  |
| Saturday | 7 November   | <b>Edinburgh</b> & online  |

The Thursday meeting had also heard a report of the residential Meeting for Sufferings in October (on which Jane Kelly reported in *Sesame* **263**) and had received our minute **2025/09/06.3** on researching Quaker involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. [See also ‘Concerns of the Day’, on page 27.] It had endorsed the priorities set for the work of our Local Development Worker, Zoe Prosser, in 2026. These are:

1. Supporting Quakers across Scotland (including area meetings and Quakers in Scotland) to find good ways of working within our changing structure.
2. Supporting Quaker communities to be loving, inclusive and all age.
3. Pointing the way to information about available resources and materials, including videos and non-traditional resources, to help Quaker Meetings and role-holders identify what they need, and developing and creating further resources where there is a need.
4. Continu[ing] to strengthen and develop support for role holders.

The Saturday meeting heard reports from Mary Troup, on work with children and young people, and from Elizabeth Allen, on behalf of the foundation trustees. It received a written report from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) on its work over recent months, and the annual report of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group. Richard Raggett, co-convenor of the PEWG who spoke to the former, also presented a paper on priorities for the group’s work in 2026-28 based on consultation with Friends and meetings across Scotland. Current priority areas are *Climate Justice*, *Peacebuilding* and *Economic Justice* (including land reform); all four AMs were content that these should continue to be the focus for the PEWG, although the Holyrood election in May will be a particular area of work for the Parliamentary Engagement Officer until it is

over. Within the parameters of the three priorities, 'focus points' have been identified as follows (the Quaker principles involved are noted in brackets):

*Climate Justice* – Likely focus points:

1. Supporting continued loss and damage funding (equality; sustainability)
2. Continuing to ask for truthfulness in climate policy (truth and integrity)

*Peacebuilding* – Likely focus points:

1. Continued discussions over Scottish Enterprise funding for arms/  
components (peace; truth and integrity)
2. Advocacy where opportunities arise to support ongoing development of  
Peace Education principles (peace; equality)

*Economic justice* – Likely focus points:

1. Relates to climate justice – keeping equality and simplicity in mind  
when advocating on climate policy (fuel poverty, sustainable economy)
2. Working closely with the Community Justice Working Group on  
advocacy openings (equality)

Speaking to the report of the QCJWG, Kate Philbrick, clerk of the group, described its work "to further the Quaker testimonies of peace, equality and justice, seeking growing points to bring about a just and compassionate society." In this it collaborates with the wider Quaker Community Justice Network. Events organised by the group included a book launch in October for *The Barlinnie Special Unit: Art, Punishment and Innovation*, and, still to come at the time of the meeting, a Zoom event for 'Prisoners' Week' in November, involving Andrew McLellan (former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and a former Chief Inspector of Prisons), and a talk in December on Restorative Justice. The group is working on a publication, provisionally entitled *Changing How We Respond to Crime in Scotland, from a Quaker Perspective. Re-imagining society as fairer, more caring, forgiving and compassionate*. Its themes are:

1. Prisons aren't working: our overcrowded prisons have social and financial costs.
2. There are *effective and restorative* humanising alternatives to prison and other ways of *delivering* justice.
3. Alternatives to (over-) imprisonment works elsewhere – why not in Scotland?
4. We need to consider social justice, our communities, and the causes of crime. Crime is a community issue, not just something about the offender.
5. How can Scotland change now? Scotland has a track record of change.
6. The Quaker perspective.

The rest of the meeting was mainly given over to administrative matters.

A further meeting was held on Zoom on **Monday 15 December**, at which **Michael Hutchinson** was appointed as clerk of QiS Trustees until 30 June.

**Editor**

## Christian Aid News

### *Prayers for Peace*

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month, we gather online to pray for a just and sustainable peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Each month we are joined by a partner who shares their lived experience of the region. These events are organised by Christian Aid, alongside the Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church, United Reformed Church and Quakers.

On Saturday, 24 January, we will be joined by Church of Scotland partner **Parent's Circle**. This are a group of Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost children to the conflict. Despite their profound grief, the members have chosen a unique and courageous path: to transform their pain into a force for reconciliation, dialogue, and peace. This event is online; register at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace>.

### *Register for The Gathering, 24 February 2026*

The Gathering, Christian Aid Scotland's annual supporter event, returns on 24 February 2024 at 10.30 am, online. We'll be hearing from Christian Aid's partners in Kenya, celebrating the difference we've made together over the last year and getting ready for Christian Aid Week 2026 and the year ahead. To sign up go to

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/gathering-2026>

### *Looking Ahead to the 2026 Scottish General Election*

The 2026 Scottish Parliamentary elections will be a vital moment for shaping Scotland's future on poverty, justice, and climate. Christian Aid Scotland has prepared a manifesto to highlight our vision for a fairer world, and we warmly encourage supporters to read it – available soon on our website. Alongside this, the **SIDA** [= *Scotland's International Development Alliance*] **Policy Priorities 2026–2031** set out key development goals, see

<https://intdevalliance.scot/resource/sida-policy-priorities-2026-2031/>;

and the **SCCS** [= *Stop Climate Chaos Scotland*] **Climate Manifesto** offers a roadmap for urgent climate action, see

<https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/policyprioritiesfor2026/>

Together, these resources provide churches and individuals with practical tools to engage with candidates and advocate for policies that put justice, equality, and sustainability at the heart of Scotland's next chapter. Read the manifestos, share them with candidates, and be part of a movement for change.

There is more about Christian Aid's campaigns, events and resources at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/scotland>

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**The deadline for contributions to the next issue of *Sesame* is 31 MARCH;**

## Meeting for Sufferings: London, 6 December

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) is not confined to formal worship but remains an ongoing undercurrent of awareness. Preparation involved 136 pages of papers [*which can be accessed at*

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-12-agenda--papers-package>

*and*

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/towards-a-faith-based-understanding-of-gender-diversity-in-our-church>;

*and the minutes of the meeting are at*

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2025-12-follow-up-package>].

Although I had hoped to attend in London, I joined the meeting on Zoom.

A Friend from Cambridgeshire AM, recently added to the Prison & Court Register, has received a 26-month sentence (40% in prison) and court costs of £2,400, reflecting the increasing impact of tightened protest laws. Ministry considered how Friends might be better supported when witness leads to imprisonment or fines.

MfS considered new wording for the Quaker marriage declaration. Following wide consultation, Quaker Life Central Committee recommended the phrase “*upheld by the Light of Love*”, to be forwarded to Yearly Meeting for decision. An update was also received from the Book of Discipline Revision Committee (Our Quaker way), with Friends encouraged to engage with the draft due for reflection between January and July 2027.

Two linked and sensitive items followed. A paper from QCCIR, the Quaker Committee on Christian & Interfaith Relations, responding to YM 2024 minute 31 on welcoming trans and non-binary Friends, was considered as a resource to support thoughtful and faithful engagement across meetings. While views remain divided, the minute stands and requires enactment through our Quaker processes.

A reapplication by Sex Matters to Quakers for recognition as a Quaker Recognised Body [*for more on this group see Sesame 260, and also its webpage at* <https://lgbchristians.org.uk/2024/03/12/sex-matters-to-quakers/>] did not find unity. Earlier discussion of proposed changes to the QRB application and renewal process highlighted the need for greater clarity, transparency, accountability, and a clearer understanding of evolving Quaker values.

While some difficult matters remained unresolved, this reflects our Quaker way: patient and careful discernment, trusting that we are being led towards a faithful way forward. Our final Meeting for Sufferings takes place on 7 March 2026.

**Katrina McCrea**

Representative, South East Scotland AM

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**it will be earlier if Area Meeting decides to meet *before* 13 April. – ED.**

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

**O**XFAM NEWS REPORTED in December that COP30, at Belém, in Brazil, had had “*the Amazon rainforest as a backdrop and the largest Indigenous presence ever recorded at a COP*”. Its assessment was:

The conference produced a handful of small wins, including progress on adaptation, loss and damage, and forest protection. One notable breakthrough was the establishment of a formal ‘Just Transition’ mechanism. This means that, for the first time, the climate transition has been officially tied to labour rights, human rights, and inclusion.

Still, many governments shied away from concrete commitments.

While governments hesitated, communities, Indigenous peoples, youth groups, and social movements pushed the agenda forward. If COP30 made one thing clear, it is that the road to climate justice will not be led by governments alone but by those on the frontlines demanding more.

For a fuller report, see

<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam-in-action/oxfam-blog/cop30-belem-activists-lead-as-nations-struggle-to-agree>

**I**T HAS BEEN SUGGESTED that despite President Trump’s having removed the United States from the Paris Agreement, as many as three-quarters of the commitments embodied in it can still be fulfilled in America, by the actions of state legislatures and others; the 100-page report on this is at

<https://assets.bbhub.io/dotorg/sites/28/2019/12/Accelerating-Americas-Pledge.pdf>

The organisation Climate Cabinet is working to further such progress by identifying and supporting climate activists, to help them secure election to offices in which they can influence decisions, as reported at

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/dec/04/climate-cabinet-trump-policy-counter>.

An article reviewing progress worldwide in the ten years since the Paris Agreement – it is not all bad news – is at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/dec/13/a-shift-no-country-can-ignore-where-global-emissions-stand-10-years-after-the-paris-climate-agreement>

and there is more at

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/dec/12/paris-climate-treaty-anniversary>.

**T**HE FIRST CIVIL CLAIM to link the climate impacts of oil and gas companies to deaths and personal injury in the Global South is being brought on behalf of over a hundred people who lost loved ones or homes, or who suffered serious injuries, when Super Typhoon Rai struck the Philippines in December 2021. The case against Shell will be heard in the United Kingdom under Philippines law. Survivors argue that Shell’s historic carbon pollution worsened the disaster, which caused at least 405 deaths, injured around 1,400 people, and did damage costing the Philippines more than US\$700 million. The BBC report on the bringing of the

case is at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0r9p1ypyjyo>; and there is a press release by Greenpeace, with links to pictures and other information, at <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/press-release/80143/filipino-communities-to-sue-shell-for-super-typhoon-rai-damage-in-world-first/>.

THE NET ZERO, ENERGY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE of the Scottish Parliament, which has been scrutinizing the Ecocide (Scotland) Bill, expects that Stage 1 of the legislative process will be complete by the end of January; the Bill will then move to Stage 2, when amendments can be submitted. (Monica Lennon, whose Bill it is, has indicated that she herself may suggest changes in the drafting of section 2 (the defence of necessity) and section 4 (corporate and vicarious liability) to ensure that the Bill is fair, enforceable and proportionate.) There is a great deal of material at <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/ecocide-scotland-bill> including papers seen by the committee and videos of its sessions.

A REVIEW OF THIRTEEN SIGNIFICANT JUDGMENTS delivered in 2025 which represented “*tangible changes on climate driven by legal action*” appeared in *The Guardian* on 31 December; it can be read at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/dec/31/greenwashing-illegality-false-claims-climate-litigation-wins-2025>.

(Several of these cases will be familiar to *Sesame* readers, but not all.)

IN DECEMBER, the Trump administration cited unspecified “national security risks” to halt work on Revolution Wind, a 704-megawatt wind farm, 15 miles off the coast of Rhode Island. A similar case was rejected by a federal judge earlier in the year; at that time, Sheldon Whitehouse, senator for Rhode Island, said: “If Trump’s plan is to raise families’ energy prices, cut American jobs, turbo-charge climate change, and accelerate the Great Climate Insurance Crisis, he’s knocking it out of the park with his all-out attack on American offshore wind.” The developers, Skyborn Renewables and the Danish firm Ørsted, began legal action in defence of the project at the start of January; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/jan/02/rsted-files-legal-challenge-against-us-government-over-windfarm-lease-freeze>

BY MEANS OF A PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM issued on 7 January, Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a treaty which has been agreed to by every country in the world and which was ratified by the US Senate in October 1992. He also withdrew from 65 other organizations, agencies and commissions, calling them “contrary to the interests of the United States”. The legality of this action is, of course, questionable; it has been characterised by Gina McCarthy, who was a climate adviser to Joe Biden’s administration, as being also “short-sighted, embarrassing and foolish”. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/07/trump-international-groups-un>



## ***Quakers in Scotland: Local Meetings minutes***

*Local meetings were asked to give their consideration by the end of December 2025 on closing SESAM and joining Quakers in Scotland. Here is a collation of those responses.*

### **Kelso LM [From the September meeting]**

We note the decision to dissolve General Meeting for Scotland and transfer its functions and assets to Quakers in Scotland.

Members have been asked to give their approval to the transfer, by email.

Both Members and Attenders are asked to give approval to our data being transferred to Quakers in Scotland.

We are all part of Quakers in Scotland.

We will be interested to see how the new body functions and will then be able to offer a better judgement as to whether SESAM should continue to exist.

### **Central Edinburgh**

#### ***2025/11/07 Responding to the consultation from Quakers in Scotland***

South East Scotland Area Meeting (SESAM) has asked all local meetings to provide feedback to the responses that Quakers in Scotland (QiS) Foundation Trustees have sent to SESAM following a request for information about processes.

These responses have been shared by SESAM directly as well as by Clerks along with the agenda for this meeting.

Friends in Central Edinburgh find it very hard to respond to the consultation since this asks for specific information whilst QiS is still an emergent design. However, the general feeling is that Friends would be sad if by not laying itself down SESAM were the only Area Meeting that did not join QiS. If laying down SESAM is then inevitable, as we accept, we would wish to do this but stress that more time is needed to deal with the complex legal and administrative issues involved and make them smarter and better, as concerns the question of property, staff, employment, safeguarding, and sturdy financial systems. We therefore ask QiS to give SESAM the time needed to resolve this by working together with QiS to ensure systems are robust enough and sufficiently aligned to deal with the complexities of SESAM. This is in no way to suggest these barriers are insurmountable or that we see ourselves as different from other Quakers in Scotland, but we simply wish to ensure thorough, proper practice.

### **Portobello and Musselburgh**

#### ***2025/11/05 Our Local Meeting Response to SESAM and Quakers in Scotland***

We held a preparatory discussion on 9 November and used the key points from this as a basis for our discussion at Local Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business [*sic*].

Portobello and Musselburgh Local Meeting welcome the initiative to create Quakers in Scotland, as an opportunity to simplify our legal and organisational structures and increase opportunities for community building among Friends across all parts of Scotland. We are grateful to those who have

worked hard to bring forward these plans.

We hope SESAM will agree to lay itself down in principle at the January meeting. We hope that this will begin a process that we expect to take time to conclude so it is manageable for those working through the considerable detail that this involves, at avoid overwhelm. We heard of the benefit of retaining some regional coordination, and the necessity of standing up regional clusters that ensure the continued coordination of key organisational and spiritual functions.

We encourage the Trustees of Quakers in Scotland and of South East Scotland AM to work together on effective plans for transition of the legal and financial responsibilities from one charity to the other, which can be presented for agreement at future Meetings for Worship with attention to Business.

We are mindful that the QiS Project started with requests from small meetings to the north and west asking for help with the existential challenge of a shortage of Friends to serve in Local Meeting and Area Meeting roles. As members of an area meeting with larger resources, we don't feel this pressure as much, but still feel the need to follow that call and support our Friends across Scotland with enthusiasm.

We feel there is more work to be done to set out how relationships between 36 local meetings and their clerks can be fostered and developed to allow them to know each other well enough to work together effectively and with joy. We heard of the value of regional residential gatherings such as for example at Wiston Lodge and Friends using the resources available from Woodbrooke on the Road. We are asked to live adventurously. We propose that we explore new intentional and creative ways of working and meeting regionally and nationally that foster joy and loving enthusiasm.

LM Clerks will send this minute to AM clerks.

### **South Edinburgh LM – Meeting for Worship for Business, 23 November** *Quakers in Scotland and SE Scotland Area Meeting*

Friends are aware that for some years Quakers have been considering options for our structures. Our AM would like each Local Meeting to send a minute giving the view of the meeting for consideration of the AM in January.

We have heard from those in our local meeting who have been involved in discussions about how QiS might work.

We are aware of the strains on current AM structures, and that many Friends are duplicating work across Scotland in order to sustain them. We can see substantial advantages and opportunities from strengthening the Quaker community across Scotland by working more closely together through QiS. We are reassured by the responses we have had to questions raised, and by the flexibility of possible arrangements within QiS.

We understand that many of the functions of SESAM that are most important to Friends could continue to be managed regionally in South East Scotland through the proposals for Intermediate Meetings. We would welcome that. South Edinburgh Meeting looks forward to fully joining with the other three

area meetings in Scotland in QiS as soon as this can be achieved. We acknowledge the reservations that some Friends have about this. We hope that joining QiS will happen for all in our Area Meeting as soon as is practicable if Friends agree to it at the January meeting of SESAM. We wish to move forward in faith, not fear.

### **Central Fife (Kirkcaldy) – From the clerk on 10 December 2025**

*Clerk to feed back to SESAM that Central Fife LM Friends feel that SESAM joining QiS would be our preferred next step forward, uniting as a Quaker community in Scotland and in the spirit of living adventurously and simply.*

## ***Quakers in Scotland: Babies and Bathwater***

THERE ARE FEWER THAN 700 adult Quaker members of the Religious Society of Friends in Scotland – plus a roughly similar number of attenders and children. Until last year, there were six charitable bodies representing us: four Area Meetings plus General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) and a property trust in Dundee.

This always seemed to me a ridiculous waste of energy, one that was imposed on us by a combination of charity law and Quaker practice: *Quaker Faith & Practice* 4.02 states ‘each area meeting is a separate charitable entity...’. Each charity requires a minimum number of trustees, must produce a separate set of accounts (incorporating those of each local meeting) and must report annually to OSCR (*the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator*).

So when, around eight to ten years ago, the idea was mooted of a single Scottish charity for Quakers, I greeted it with enthusiasm.

However, that excess effort is the bathwater: worth disposing of. The baby which I cherish dearly is Area Meeting; not as a legal entity, but as a spiritual body. We need a glue that holds Quakers together, encouraging local meetings to practice what we are here for: to nourish our spiritual life, to build community, to witness to our beliefs and to reach out to the world.

In September, the new body Quakers in Scotland (QiS) was established, replacing General Meeting for Scotland. In November, three of the four Area Meetings dissolved themselves, their trusteeship duties passing to QiS trustees – and the Dundee property trust intends to do the same soon.

If (as I believe it should) South East Scotland AM (SESAM) decides to follow suit, QiS will, in addition to having the responsibilities of GMS, become our Area Meeting – bringing together 36 local meetings and worshipping groups across Scotland.

My concern, based not least on seven years as SESAM clerk, is how these dual roles will be achieved. I don’t doubt that it can be done, but I fear not enough thought has yet been put in. There are many papers on the QiS website <https://www.quakerscotland.org/documents/1595>, but I don’t see a ‘big picture’ statement that roots the venture in our spiritual life and needs.

Enthusiasts for the new structure tell us that we are ‘living adventurously’ – it will be led by the spirit and the way will open up as we step forward. My instinct is rather with the Friend who said at a recent Area Meeting that she loves adventures – but before she jumps into a pool, she checks what lies under the surface.

I believe we will be helping the spirit prosper if we take time now to reflect: how will we build a structure that is both light-touch enough to be run by volunteers and effective in nurturing Quakers at a local level?

A questionnaire carried out in summer 2024 identified an overwhelming view that some level between local meetings and QiS would be needed. This does not have to take the form of AMs as we know them. Gatherings such as our Wiston weekend and North Scotland’s equivalent at Pluscarden play a great bonding role; Westerly Friends annual gathering brings together island and remoter mainland communities, independent of the geography of the old AM boundaries.

There is room for more of this, and for more flexibility: why should a meeting like Falkirk & Polmont not link up with Glasgow for some things, Dunblane for others, and Edinburgh for yet others?

The new body is committed to such an approach but the detail outlined in the document *Intermediate Meetings* is muddled and confusing. Rather than try to identify all possible options and to set out a prescriptive model for these meetings taking decisions that rightly rest with Quakers in Scotland, I believe we need collectively to reflect on why encouraging clusters of local meetings would be worthwhile and how best to do it.

And that would give us the opportunity of reconsidering the regrettable term ‘intermediate’; to me that implies something that is neither one thing nor the other. What we need is a positive name for a model of practice that will nurture and sustain our local worshipping communities.

Alastair Cameron

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## ***Quakers in Scotland: Should SESAM terminate?***

### **A Response to the article in *Sesame* 263**

**Elizabeth Allen** *writes:*

As Co-clerk to QiS Foundation Trustees, I think it would be helpful for me to respond to the article in November’s *Sesame* by Ben Davies. I have checked what I have written with my fellow QiS Trustee, David Somervell. We were both nominated for this service by SESAM.

***The discernment leading to Quakers in Scotland***

It has been said that the discernment leading to the formation of Quakers in Scotland was rushed and that there was insufficient consultation.

[Elizabeth Allen’s text rehearses at length and in detail the steps by which QiS has

*been established, so as to rebut both claims. Since, however, these particulars will be well known to those who participate in our business meetings, or attend to emails and consult the Quakers in Scotland website, or who just read Sesame – in which relevant documents have been reprinted and meetings reported, all available to be re-read at <https://www.quakerscotland.org/south-east/newsletters> – I have cut this summary; see the note at the end in **bold type**. – ED.]*

### ***The on-going task of becoming the single Quaker Body in Scotland***

It has also been suggested that the set-up of Quakers in Scotland is unfit for the task before it. This is how that task is being tackled and what has been accomplished so far.

The QiS Governing Document was accepted by OSCR; QiS Foundation Trustees remain in touch with OSCR staff and are guided by them. The QiS solicitors are dealing with the legal side of the transfers, including the sale of WSAM's property in Glasgow, and no issues have arisen with the transfers of GMS and three area meetings. Meeting for Sufferings is content with the Quaker aspects of the transfers and *Quaker Faith & Practice* will be amended in due course. One QiS Trustee is handling the TUPE transfers of staff [TUPE = 'Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)', the regulations safeguarding employees' rights when a concern changes hands] and in time will look beyond that to the harmonisation of Quaker employment in Scotland. Bank accounts have been set up, and the QiS finance committee is operational and meet regularly to deal with the financial matters and registration with appropriate authorities. Initially, QiS Foundation Trustees are using the existing GMS and AM essential policies, such as Safeguarding, and Trustees have plans to review them.

There seems to be a misunderstanding about the use of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Where there are two or more Quaker bodies involved in an area of work, MoU are frequently used to clarify who has responsibility for what. They are working documents and can be amended as required. So far, Quakers in Scotland have prepared a draft General MoU and a draft Property MoU.

Foundation Trustees work closely with the QiS Co-ordinating Group and benefit greatly from the careful preparation work which they have done. The Co-ordinating Group continues to work on the details of how QiS will carry out its Quaker area meeting responsibilities. BYM staff are available to give their support and guidance.

*Any member of SESAM who still has queries about the process of setting up QiS can discuss them with an elder, or one of the QiS Foundation Trustees.*

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## ***Quakers in Scotland: Unresolved Anxieties***

**A**T AREA MEETING in March last year we were set an exercise: first to imagine what we might do if we *wanted* to drive away newcomers and enquirers, and then to consider how many of these made-up

discouragements had found their way into how we actually organise ourselves. I am proposing here a more radical thought experiment: *What could we do if we intended to bring about the extinction of the Religious Society of Friends in Scotland?*

There are, I think, two obvious answers. The first, and surely the most certain, is to resolve that ‘Nothing must change EVER in the ways we do things.’ This has, indeed, almost worked in the past, not just for Scottish Friends. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Society dwindled in Great Britain; the decline was only halted after Yearly Meeting decided first to end the prohibition on ‘marrying out’ (marriage to a non-Friend), and then, in 1861, it modified or did away entirely with more than fifty rules that had been part of the Discipline governing Friends’ lives, most being common practices that had hardened into dogmatic outward observances, such as those relating to Quaker dress.

But waiting for stagnation to take its course might take several centuries. The never-very-numerous followers of Lodowicke Muggleton, a contemporary of George Fox, held to the faith and practice he had set out in 1651; the last Muggletonian, Philip Noakes, died only in 1979, in the adult lifetime of many of us. (Tacitly conceding that the Millennium was *not* at hand, he bequeathed the sect’s archive to the British Library.)

A very much speedier method is the second answer: ‘Think of innovations which have been damaging before, and *do them again*, only (if possible) *more so*’. Three which in the past have been harmful in varying degrees are: *birthright membership* – i.e. enabling people to be members without applying; *removing business from meetings for church affairs*, as was done with Quarterly Meetings in the 1960s; and *giving greater power to trustees* – a development imposed on the Society by a new charity law in the 1990s, and which, we are told, brought at least two Area Meetings to the brink of collapse, and necessitated the changes embodied in the structure of Quakers in Scotland (QiS) because the responsibilities of trusteeship made it too onerous for Friends to take on. It seems to me, however, that **QiS itself is repeating all three of these past errors**; and it seems like wishful thinking to suppose they will be any less destructive if done again.

**Birthright membership** was invented by accident in 1737 when YM minuted that “children [should be] deemed to be members of the Monthly Meeting of which their father is a member”. Elizabeth Braithwaite Emmott described the effect of this in *The Story of Quakerism* (1908, rev. edn 1929):

*from the moment of their birth, the children of Friends are Friends themselves in name; and some think that much of the want of real life and earnestness in the Society has been, and still is, due to the fact that, whilst many grow up ... without ever yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, or knowing for themselves forgiveness through Christ and fellowship with Him, they are nevertheless full members; and their influence and example may be very hurtful to the Society.*

Plainly this is true, even if what we now see as holding to Friends’ core

beliefs would not be expressed by most of us in these terms. Yet QiS in its foundation document asserts that a *Quaker* is “any person who identifies with, and participates in the life of, the Religious Society of Friends”: as if a person’s self-image and coming to the odd ceilidh were sufficient. It is not. Loosening our definitions does not make more of us members – it makes most of us Attenders. For if decision-making cannot be left in the hands of the members, when most are not committed enough or sufficiently well-versed in Quaker practice to participate in business meetings, it will necessarily be taken on by some sort of inner group – elders, trustees, even paid staff – with the role of meetings reduced to formal endorsement of what has been decided elsewhere. (Lest this be thought exaggerated or alarmist, note that in June 2024 Area Meeting was informed that the clerk of its trustee body had been appointed by *between-meeting procedure* by the AM clerks – see minute **2024/06/04** – rather than being put to the meeting.)

**Trustees** have been a feature of Quaker structures for centuries, so their role is not necessarily at odds with right ordering. A problem arose when the law made them answerable for the decisions of meetings (although some claims made during discussions of the new arrangements on the extent to which they *are* liable are contradicted in *Q.F. & P.* 15.11). The usual Quaker response when a responsibility is too arduous has been to share it, so that clerkship, say, becomes the task of co-clerks or a clerking team, but QiS *magnifies* the trustees’ duties, making them Scotland-wide. It has been suggested that this will make finding suitable people easier, because such a role will attract the sort of dynamic individual who can put it on her or his C.V. – just the sort of person, I think, we do *not* want. The psalmist said (Ps. 146: 3) “Put not your trust in princes”; but “Leave not you principles to trustees” is more relevant to us, since in the past twenty years we have seen the Horniman Trust, the Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture, and Woodbrooke, all shut down at the instigation of their trustees – perhaps in every case there was no alternative – at the end – but I strongly doubt it. (In relation to Woodbrooke, it is interesting to compare the trustees’ announcement of its closure – a total of twelve million pounds was needed, just to stand still – with the explicit assurance, a few months before, that restructuring “*does not mean an end to in-person learning and neither does it signal the closure of the Woodbrooke Centre*” – see *Sesame* **246** and **243**.)

Also in *Sesame* **246**, I pointed out the uncanny echo in the claims made for **meetings liberated from boring business** under QiS with what had been written about the new ‘General Meetings’ when they replaced Quarterly Meetings in the 1960s; each, said *Church Government*, § 772 (1967), would provide for

*conference and inspiration, and for a broad oversight of the life and witness of the Society within its area, considering regularly what is being done and what might be done to extend the service of its members and to reach out to those who are in need of spiritual guidance and friendship.*



They didn't. Most were moribund within a few years. Those few that survived and thrived had managed to retain substantive responsibilities that could not be passed elsewhere and so had real reasons to meet, more compelling than "oversight of life and witness" which too many Friends thought an inadequate reason for giving up a Saturday four times a year. The suggestions we have had so far about 'intermediate meetings' seem to me even woollier than those for General Meetings and even less likely to provide a durable structure.

In combination, these three features *could* – if we let them – turn QiS into a body in which the members are passengers and meetings simply rubber stamp the decisions made for them.

There is no guarantee that the Holy Spirit has a use for Quakers. In the past, it was *structure*, not beliefs, that distinguished Friends from Ranters, Levellers, Diggers, and others, and ensured that we survived when they did not. If the centrality of the gathered meeting, by which we know God's leadings, is supplanted, then why *should* the Society continue? Its true purpose – "to seek together the way of truth" will be gone.

Alan Frith

## Witness at Faslane – Meetings for Worship in 2026

SIX TIMES A YEAR, Friends meet to worship outside the North Gate of HMNB Clyde – the Faslane naval base where the UK's Trident submarines are stationed – to protest against these and all other weapons of mass destruction. **The following dates for 2026 are as yet still provisional.** Please contact Mary Alice Mansell or Daphne Wassermann nearer the time to confirm. (Contact details in the Book of Members.)

|          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| 15 March | 28 June      |
| 19 April | 20 September |
| 17 May   | 8 November   |

On the same dates as the Faslane meetings, a meeting for worship is held in Edinburgh, also as a witness for peace. This takes place in

### Princes Street Gardens

at the site of the Peace Tree, between the bandstand and the Ross fountain.

The Edinburgh meetings are at 10.30 am, and are organised by the elders of South Edinburgh local meeting; for more information contact the LM clerks at [sedclerks@gmail.com](mailto:sedclerks@gmail.com). The Faslane meetings start at 11.00.

In both places, you need to bring something to sit on, and appropriate clothing for an hour out-of-doors in whatever weather is likely at the time of year. At Faslane, you might also want to bring something to eat.

## Book Launch: From Scotland with Love

**E**DINBURGH DIRECT AID INTERNATIONAL (formerly Edinburgh Direct Aid), has worked overseas for more than thirty years, wherever there has been an opportunity for its indomitable band of volunteers to alleviate the effects of man-made or natural catastrophe, sometimes at great personal risk and once with the tragic loss of a life.

Its remarkable history has now been documented in a new book, *From Scotland with Love – an extraordinary international aid story*, written by the well-known journalist and author, Fred Bridgland, with an introduction by Martin Bell OBE.

The book was launched on 1 November at a well-attended event at Stockbridge Parish Church, complete with complimentary glass of wine and the invitation to make a donation. Chaired by the award-winning BBC journalist Allan Little it was an opportunity to hear Fred Bridgland himself talk about what had motivated him to write it. “Oh, in a word: Denis” came the reply. “When he asks you to do something it’s impossible to say no!” There was an audible ripple of recognition. Though now in his nineties, Denis Rutovitz is still very much at the helm of EDAI which he and his wife Jeanne Bell founded in 1992.

What they have done is simply extraordinary. Among some hair-raising incidents over the years the book recounts how Denis was shot in the chest in Bosnia in 1995 and nearly died. He astonished David Reeks, the volunteer driver, by his reaction. David recalled: “He actually picked up the CB radio and said: “Convoy, convoy, I’ve been hit”. At that point he was bleeding internally and in urgent need of medical attention.

Two of the many remarkable people who have contributed to the charity over the years, long-term volunteers David Hamilton and Maggie Tookey spoke briefly. David describes in the book their driving a convoy of aid through the Bosnian war zone in 1993: “We were a rag-tag army with hearts of lions. We were volunteers who chose to go to a war zone – worse, we *paid* to go!” Maggie is EDAI’s International Field Operations Director and has worked across three continents in some appalling conditions since she joined the charity twenty-five years ago. Nothing gets in her way, whether organising the delivery of a mobile clinic 10,000 feet up in the mountains in Pakistani Kashmir, or, more recently, sourcing materials for setting up and equipping a basement primary school while under fire in Ukraine. The group’s commitment, ingenuity, determination and unfailing good humour shine through the pages of this book. Well worth reading!

Copies are now available to purchase at £15 +£3 (local) postage or on Kindle from Amazon at £5.99. You can also buy the book at the EDAI warehouse, 16a West Harbour Road, EH5 1PN.

**Lynne Barty**

## Conscientious Objection, then and now

**A**ZAM IS SPEAKING from outside his hostel, somewhere in Germany: “I was an officer in the Russian armed forces: I’m now on their wanted list... I spent six-and-a-half months in church asylum here in Germany; it was a wonderful time, people were so kind”.

Azam is telling his story to 100 or so people on a Zoom call organised by the Peace Pledge Union. He has now been granted refugee status in Germany and is starting to organise the process of bringing his family – whom has hasn’t seen for over three years – to join him.

He is one of four people on the call who have lived experience of war resistance: three Russian, one Ukrainian. One refused to serve in the Russian forces from the outset – his principles would not allow him to fight. Two, including Azam, deserted, reaching relative safety by complicated routes through Georgia, Armenia, Bosnia and Croatia. The Ukrainian swam across a river to reach Romania to avoid the draft, then made his way to Germany. Their stories make clear that the right to conscientious objection – hard won in the UK during World War I – does not apply in either Russia or Ukraine. Conscriptation can be avoided only by lying low or getting out. Resistance to the military machine can mean desertion.

In November, a meeting at Portobello Library considered conscientious objection in the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and more widely today. The event was organised by local Friends to coincide with an exhibition at the library.



The exhibition panels tell the stories of 18 individuals in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee – some of the 1,300 Scots who claimed exemption from military service in World War I: conscientious objectors (COs). They came from different walks of life and had different motivations.

The panels and accompanying book were produced by the Workers Educational Association (WEA) in conjunction with Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre (P&J – now Peace & Justice Scotland) with the intention of '*bringing to life the meaning of conscientious objection in Scotland*'. It was carried out under the leadership of the late Brian Larkin, then Co-ordinator of the P&J, using funding available during the centenary of World War I.

Brian framed a project to work with descendants of WW1 COs and adult learners in Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow. These volunteers – who included our Friends Maureen Anderson and the late Andrew Farrar – learned research and curation skills about their family member – many of whom suffered badly in the jingoistic atmosphere prevailing.

Our meeting attracted some thirty people, roughly half of them Quakers. It was designed to show that war resistance is not just an historical curiosity. Today in Israel, Ukraine, Russia and other conflict zones, people are having to decide whether they fight or resist conscription to military service.

David Mackenzie of Secure Scotland ([www.securescotland.scot/people](http://www.securescotland.scot/people)) set the scene, describing militarism – war fever – as a pandemic in danger of getting out of control as we cut welfare in order to build a 'defence-led economy'. Our Friends Elizabeth Allen and Alison Burnley told family stories – Elizabeth's grandfather had been a CO in WW1 and Alison's father in WW2. It was clear that these men's decisions of conscience had had implications not just for them in the moment, but for those around them, and for the rest of their lives.

Chris Booth and Heather Stacey, both of Portobello & Musselburgh LM, gave perspectives from this century. Chris used to work for War Resisters International and was well placed to give an overview of how different countries treat refusers. Heather is a Russian- and Ukrainian-language translator with many friends in Ukraine; she spoke very movingly of the dilemmas of life when your country faces existential threat.

We finished with showing a YouTube video <http://bit.ly/4pWx5fv>. This gives the voices of sister and brother Atalya and Amitai Ben-Abba, both of whom have resisted conscription to the Israeli Defence Force. Atalya has spent time in prison and is now Media Co-ordinator for the Refuser Solidarity Network (<https://www.refuser.org/>) which provides an international base of support for Israeli war resistance.

The exhibition and meeting were sparked by a minute of Portobello & Musselburgh LM: feeling great uncertainty about the state of the world, in February 2025 we committed ourselves '*to engage with and deepen our response to violence and pervasive threats to peace*' and to take this work to the wider community.

**Alastair Cameron**

*The exhibition **Legacies of Resistance to the First World War** is a wonderful opportunity for outreach and education. It comprises 18 pop-up panels which are very easy to erect and have a small footprint. There are still copies of the accompanying*

handbook, which are given away for free or can be downloaded here:

<https://peaceandjustice.scot/what-we-do/legacies-of-resistance-to-firstworld-war-in-scotland/>

*When not on display, the exhibition panels sit in the basement of Words & Actions for Peace, so it's good to see them used. Portobello Library was very keen to host the exhibition, and I'm sure other libraries in Edinburgh, or in East Lothian, Scottish Borders or Falkirk would be too. I'm happy to advise based on the experience of putting it on in Portobello, should other meetings wish to do what we have done. – A. C.*

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## ***Concerns of the day: Reparations for Scottish Slavery Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House – 19 November 2025***

**Juliet Henderson**, of the Central Edinburgh local meeting clerking team, writes:

**T**HE 'CONCERNS OF THE DAY' events were conceived as a form of gentle outreach; not one with solid outcomes but one that simultaneously offered those new to Quakerism a calm, collective space to reflect on some of the many concerns we all share while introducing them to the Quaker way and Quaker business method. The aim of each meeting is to explore various ways forward for those present to address the concern of the day in their everyday lives.

This was the first 'Concerns of the Day' evening. Mark Bitel played a big part in introducing me to suitable speakers, setting up Eventbrite, and generally offering support. I was also ably supported by Brian Wright and Isla Whateley on the day. 56 people booked *via* Eventbrite; those present included a small majority of non-Quakers and Quakers from Glasgow.

I began the evening with a brief introduction to Quakerism and overview of our business method, followed by 35 minutes for each of the speakers to present their perspectives. We concluded with a space for all to share their thoughts in a manner resonant with the Quaker way.

To capture a flavour of the evening here are brief personal responses from Brian Wright, Isla Whateley and myself.

*Brian Wright:*

The meeting was fascinating and challenging—both process and substance—very much as it was intended to be. With the process, I've not yet been to a meeting for worship for business, so I don't have that as a well-developed reference point. Still, I was struck by both the power and the complexity of discussing something in a way that comes out of the silence and leaves room for discernment. I noted how some participants seemed unsure of how to speak if they were neither asking a question nor responding to another speaker, and I found myself unsure of how to do this as well. Yet it also created a much deeper chance to listen, and I found myself marvelling at the different voices that spoke and appreciating the patterns of resonance and dissonance that came with it.

In the substance, I tried to sit with the irreparable pain, and it left me wondering, as a newcomer to Scotland, how to engage with this history and this present. With the sounds of forgotten names echoing in my ears, I wondered what it might look like to surround the Melville Monument with the names and stories of those enslaved, killed and oppressed by the colonial project. And when the question was asked of reparations—what would be enough? I wondered if instead we should ask, what steps can we take that will remind us: nothing can undo these injustices, nothing can truly be “enough.” Instead, we must commit to doing what we can to address injustice in hopes that it will then enable us to do even more.

*Isla Whateley:*

Words I would use to describe Concerns of the Day are *confronting* and *conflicting*. I don't mean this in a negative way, but in a personal way. As someone with Indian, Scottish and English heritage, I probably share DNA with both perpetrators and victims of the colonial project. My Indian grandfather moved to Scotland from South Africa, and it is unclear how, when and why his own grandfather made the journey across the Indian Ocean. Throughout the generations, my family lost their Indian languages, names and religion for the sake of assimilation, which has left me feeling somewhat culturally confused all my life. Yet, how does this compare to the violence and long-lasting effects of Transatlantic slavery? I am not perceived as anything other than white, and I grew up in Scotland, which affords me a massive amount of privilege compared to many others, even in my own extended family. I was left with many questions, both personal and political!

Something Edwina said that has stayed with me, was that when slavery ended, it did not end the system that had produced it in the first place. This was such a simple statement, and sums up the whole issue for me, and why we are talking about reparations today.

It was fascinating to see the Quaker business method at play in a room with non-Quakers present. Brian's point about people being unsure of whether they were asking a question to the two speakers or responding to another resonates with me too – a Friend suggested afterwards that if an event is promoted as if there is a panel of speakers, people will expect a Q&A session with them. Juliet did a great job of explaining the method and moderating the discussion. Another friend also said that having one Quaker and one non-Quaker speaker was a great way to “bridge the gap”.

*Juliet Henderson:*

It was wonderful to have Irene Mosota and Edwina Peart as speakers. They are both quietly spoken and gently loving in their presence – live embodiments of justice as love in action – yet their words convey an authority derived from years and generations of personal and collective experience, as well as from that of their current roles which are, respectively, Chair of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Review Implementation Group



and Quaker Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator.

One can but listen. It felt like a form of grace that they could share their stories, facts and perspectives with no judgement of anyone for the part they or their ancestors have played in transatlantic slavery, and in perpetuating and augmenting ongoing racism and systemic colonial exploitation. Rather, their words invited us to reflect on how our shared past continues to shape our present and future, so we are ready to stand against discrimination in all its forms, in all aspects of our lives.

For Irene, it was important that we stay alive to the deep scars of slavery and how its divisions and barriers play out in our society. More specifically, how such dynamics affect all of us, whatever our creed or colour, and why it's so important not to look away but to remember the past as we work to ensure dignity, equality, and respect for all. She concluded with a powerful video from the local Scottish band 'Young Fathers' who believe every child in Scotland should be taught about why there are monuments and statues around the country which have links to the horrors of slavery and colonialism. It really brought home the message about Edinburgh's legacy.

By way of an introduction, Edwina asked us all to reflect silently upon our assumptions about her, who she was, and why she might be speaking on the given topic and to hold these thoughts inside as we listened to her. I found this worked brilliantly as an encouragement to shine the light on our unspoken biases. As a Quaker such a nudge to examination of my assumptions in the light of the spirit is something I always need to return to. In different ways she reminded those present of our complicity in prevailing systems and brought to the fore less visible aspects of colonialism that might escape us. Her underlying message was for the need to keep asking questions, to begin conversations and to quietly begin to build a different narrative about the current unjust and untruthful power structures.

The main message I retain from the evening is that we are all still an ongoing part of the history of inequality. Not staying silent and passive are important, as are small acts fostering inclusion and change.

## World Day of Prayer, 6 March 2026

This year, Christian women of Nigeria have written the worship materials for ecumenical services on the first Friday in March, based on the invitation in Matthew 11: 28-30 – *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

There are details of where to find services in all parts of Scotland at

<https://www.wdpScotland.org.uk/resources/service-arrangements/>;

more information is at <https://www.wdpScotland.org.uk/resources/downloads/>.



## Defining Doctrine: *putting words in believers' mouths*

*An event of 2025 that most Friends probably missed was the anniversary of the Council of Nicea, from which emerged the Nicene Creed. Quakers have always rejected credal statements; not necessarily because we deny the truth of what is asserted, but because any set form of words for use in worship – even the Lord's Prayer – can become, in Robert Barclay's phrase, "the Prating of a Parrot", its recitation at odds with the principle that (again in Barclay's words) "Immediate Revelation [is] the Immoveable Foundation of all Christian Faith".*

*For most Christians, however, repeating a formulaic summary of what they profess to believe is a key part of religious observance. The so-called Apostles' Creed is said in many churches including the Episcopal Church of Scotland, which uses the old-fashioned English wording below. Although the tradition that it was drawn up by the Twelve Apostles was definitively rebutted in the fifteenth century, the Roman church still maintains "it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith." The Nicene Creed is said by Catholics, and it is also part of the profession of faith required of office holders in the Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican and Methodist churches, and in other Protestant traditions also. The version here is at <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/109020/Nicene-Creed.pdf>.*

### The Apostles' Creed

**I** BELIEVE in God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

*And in Jesus Christ, his only Son,  
our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
Born of the Virgin Mary,  
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
Was crucified, dead, and buried:  
he descended into hell.*

*The third day he rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
And sitteth on the right hand of God the*

### The Nicene Creed

**W**E BELIEVE in one God,  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the*

*Father Almighty;  
From thence he shall come to judge the  
quick and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost,*

*The holy Catholic Church,  
The Communion of Saints,  
The Forgiveness of sins,  
The Resurrection of the body,  
And the life everlasting.*

*Amen.*

*father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is  
worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.*

*Amen.*

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*In July last year, prompted by the anniversary, **Annie Miller** wrote a piece about it for The Friend. A form of it did appear, but was so heavily edited that its point, she felt, was lost. The following is her revised version of what she submitted; its inclusion does not imply editorial endorsement of all her ideas. The “weighty Friend” quoted was paraphrasing part of Proposition III of Barclay’s Apology. (ED.)*

**T**HE YEAR 2025 was the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (in what is now Turkey) called by Roman Emperor, Constantine I, who had recently announced his conversion to Christianity. He convened all the Christian leaders of the day for two reasons. First, he wanted them to agree to Christianity’s being defined by a series of core beliefs in what became the Nicene Creed (still recited on a Sunday by many Christians worldwide). Thus, Christianity formally became a credal religion (in contrast to Oriental faiths). Second, he announced that Christianity would be the religion of the Roman Empire. But might it be possible that he had an ulterior motive, that of wanting to control and to oppress the populations of the conquered territories of his empire more easily?

This raises the question of ‘How might one design a controlling and oppressive religion’? Perhaps it would include the following elements:

- Anthropomorphism: that a ‘divine’ God would be presented in the image of a remote, all-knowing, all-powerful, judgemental, wrathful, human male ruler.
- Humans would not be divine but merely physical beings with a soul/psyche that could survive after death.
- Humans were created by God, including their ‘Original Sin’ and therefore they deserve punishment which awaits them in the form of eternal Hell after death.

- Resurrection in the same body, rather than – as other faiths teach – re-incarnation in different bodies. (It is easier to control people if they think that they have only one life on earth.)
- Hope – in the form of Jesus, the only Son of God, the Redeemer sacrificed on the cross to mollify his wrathful Father, thus saving some humans from the terrible punishment awaiting them, although fully deserved on account of their sins.

More recently, Christianity has also been a useful means by which the European ruling classes were able to control and oppress both their own populations (think of the Spanish inquisition) and the populations in their empires. No wonder Karl Marx regarded religion as the opium of the people.

It is interesting to consider what a minimalist and contrasting version might look like. This could be:

- “God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24, KJB). Or maybe just ‘God is love’ or ‘LOVE’ is God. Buddhists do not believe in a God. On the other hand, many might prefer to believe in a God that does not exist, rather than risk ignoring one that does.
- ‘So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him...’, (Genesis 1:27, KJB). Thus, humans are ‘spiritual beings on a spiritual journey’ with a powerful ‘God within’. Our spiritual beings survive after the death of the physical body.
- Humans are born with ‘Original Blessing’. Babies are not born evil. Heaven and Hell are only ever experienced during earthly lives.
- Re-incarnation is not only possible, but likely. Evidence for it exists, such as Ian Stevenson’s study of reincarnated children (*Children Who Remember Previous Lives*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., McFarland & Co., Jefferson, NC, USA, 2001). Spiritual beings decide to become incarnate to achieve certain objectives and may need many lives on earth to learn different lessons, and to experience the joy of creativity enabled by the agency of earthly life, (denied us in our purely spiritual forms).
- Jesus is a highly evolved, spiritual being, who became incarnate to spread his vital Love Commandment for humans, spelt out in his answer to the lawyer in Matthew 22: 37-40. A myth was then prevalent at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean, of a betrayed redeemer whose crucifixion would save the Jews and others from the oppression of the Roman Empire. Jesus realised that if he adopted the mantle of this crucified redeemer, it would increase the chance of his Love Message being accepted and spread. He needed the agreement and co-operation of his best friend, Judas, to play a crucial role in setting up this situation.
- In addition, Jesus abhorred animal sacrifice for the appeasement of a wrathful God and pointed out that, since he would be crucified, we all could consider him as the final sacrifice negating the need for all future animal sacrifices. His body and blood could be considered as that of a

lamb sacrificed to God.

- In the gospels, Jesus always exhorted people to love God, not himself. Is institutional Christianity a case of deifying the messenger? Might true Christianity be the simple but difficult practice, by spiritual beings of all faiths around the world, of obeying Jesus's Love Commandment?

These two speculative contrasting versions of Christianity help to explain the mixed messages of Christian metaphysics, based on a loving/wrathful God, who cares about/threatens physical/spiritual humans. A Christian could identify with either version, or a mixture of each, depending on his/her prior beliefs and personal experiences. Many Quakers wrestle with the 'God' word, interpreting it as a meaningful concept based on their own personal experiences. [See page 45.] It is worth exploring the possibilities, but there are no right answers.

As a weighty Friend pointed out to me some forty years ago:

The authority of Roman Catholics lies with their priests.

The authority of Protestants lies in their book, the Bible.

The authority of Quakers lies in personal experience.

[In June, Glenthorne is offering a five-day course on Reincarnation – see page 40.]

## *Living Witness – a Quaker Recognised Body*

**L**IVING WITNESS is a community that welcomes Friends who are actively discerning how we might respond to the unfolding climate and ecological crises, drawing on our Quaker values and practices. Central to this is nurturing deepening spiritual exploration among Friends and others, and supporting each other in the action and witness that may grow from this.

We hold online meetings for worship focused on the Earth every Monday and Friday morning, and every Wednesday evening. See more information at <https://livingwitness.org.uk/about-our-meetings-for-worship/#kxnf67g>.

There are more events on the events page; see

<https://livingwitness.org.uk/calendar/>

To receive notices about Living Witness events and forthcoming issues of the EarthQuaker e-newsletter, please see the website to sign up to the email list. The website also has news of other bodies, including **Faith for the Climate**, an interfaith group which in December hosted a webinar at which Lindsey Fielder-Cook of QUNO spoke about COP30 (viewable on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXuZGH5G7qk>) and **Quaker Earthcare Witness**, inspiring Spirit-led action for ecological integrity and environmental justice in the USA – see <https://quakerearthcare.org/>.

[With thanks to **Janet Saunders** for passing this on.]

## Northern Friends Peace Board: Liverpool, 29 November

There was a good turnout for the last Board meeting of 2025, with more than twenty Friends in the room and a dozen more participating in all or part of the meeting by Zoom; we were also joined online by Hannah Brock Womack, the peace lead for Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and Joanna Frew, the Outreach Coordinator of Rethinking Security, one of several organisations of which NFPB is an active member body.

During our opening worship we heard the words spoken by Gunnar Jahn (1883-1971), who chaired the Nobel committee of the Norwegian Parliament which awarded the Peace Prize to Quakers in 1947 (as quoted in Omerod Greenwood's *Friends and Relief*, 1975). He said, on that occasion:

*It is not the positive political aspect of their activities which places Quakers in a special position. It is the silent help from the nameless to the nameless which is their contribution to the promotion of brotherhood among nations.*

### Trustees' Report

Jayne Meadows, clerk to trustees, updated us on recent work. A staffing subgroup is preparing for the recruitment of a successor to Philip Austin, our coordinator, who will be retiring at the end of 2026 after more than thirty years in post, and a job description and person specification will be issued in March; the aim is to have the new person shadowing Philip for three months prior to taking over. In anticipation of the Board's income reducing in future, the new coordinator will be employed for four days a week, rather than five. Till Geiger spoke on behalf of the subgroup; of the work that is currently within the coordinator's remit, five key areas have been identified as essential, namely, supporting the Board's use of Quaker processes; arranging events and communicating with members; networking with other peace organisations; administration, including the website and management of resources; and fundraising.

### Members' Forum

About a third of those participating had news to share of peace work in their local area: vigils, Remembrance Day events, protests against the arms trade, demonstrations against racism and in support of Palestinians (and Palestine Action) and involvement in interfaith activities. Robin Bowles of Quaker Roots reported on actions at the DSEI arms fair in September; Hannah Brock Womack told us of a letter-writing campaign to discourage the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham from hosting the Specialist Defence and Security Convention [SDSC] – <https://www.stopsdsc.uk/campaign-letters/to-the-nec-group-stop-sdsc-uk> – and of an upcoming event in London, see <https://secure.declassifieduk.org/page/180663/event/1?ea.url.id=8699868&forwarded=true>:

'Challenging the War Machine' is on 31 January. Hannah hoped that NFPB members would be involved in the QPSW consultation on 'a confident Quaker voice for peace now' and will circulate further details in the New Year.

### *Coordinator's Report*

Philip Austin updated us on his work since our September meeting, including participation in the Paris gathering of the FWCC-EMES Peace & Service Network.

### *Rethinking Security*

Joanna Frew gave a succinct summary of recent work by this project, which is “*a network of organisations, academics and activists working together for security based on justice, cooperation and sustainability*” – see its website at <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/>. 2025 had seen the publication of the Labour Government's Strategic Defence Review and its National Security Strategy. There had been a severe retrenchment of global aid spending with a narrative of ‘living in a dangerous world’ which the Rethinking Security team had been trying to confront. They had been involved in marking anniversaries of peace and co-operation, such as the foundation of the UN. In 2026 they will be looking to focus on addressing the rise of the far right, climate and security and rising militarism.

### *Diana Jeater – Spirit-based peace and reconciliation work:*

#### *What does this mean in (Southern) Africa?*

Diana is a member of Liverpool meeting and is professor of African History at Liverpool University; she also serves on QPSW central committee. In 2018, she delivered the Salter Lecture, with the title (suggested by Tim Gee) ‘Bearing Witness or Bearing Whiteness? – Britain, Africa and Quakers’ [the text is at <https://quakersocialists.org.uk/salter-lectures/salter-lecture-2018-bearing-witness-or-bearing-whiteness-britain-africa-and-quakers/>, with a link to the YouTube video] and her talk to our meeting was about work promoting reconciliation in Zimbabwe. She began by citing the “singular Euro-North-American-centric epistemology that claims to be universal” as being an obstacle to engagement. Her project has taken seriously the Shona belief in *Ngozi* spirits of reparation, spirits which, if not rejected as superstitious fantasy, have been characterised as ‘evil spirits’ of retribution. It was a most interesting presentation, and led to a thoughtful discussion.

### *Peace messaging*

Trustees had been considering the Board's producing one or more new posters, to encourage awareness and action on current peace concerns. In small groups we shared ideas on words and images that might be suitable.

### *Meetings in 2026*

Board meetings next year are planned for **28 February** in Darlington, **26 September** in Glasgow, and **28 November** in Manchester; with our **peace testimony event** in York on **13 June**, at Friargate Meeting House. Its provisional title is ‘The Quaker peace testimony; what does it mean for us today?’

**Alan Frith**

## Woodbrooke Courses: Late January to April

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.

**The Editor welcomes participants' reports for possible inclusion in *Sesame*.**

### *Poetry for Spiritual Deepening and Reflection*

Wednesday 21 January, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Saskia Stenson

### *By the Rivers of Babylon: Rebellion, Protest and Pop*

Thursday 22 January 19:00-21:00 GMT

Josh Selfe

### *Spiritual Wholeness*

**£54**

4 sessions: Wednesday, 28 January – 18 February, 18:30-20:00 GMT, plus a follow-up session on Wednesday 15 April (18:30-19:30 BST). Kate McNally

### *The Spiritual Roots of Quaker Witness*

Thursday 29 January, 19:00-20:30 GMT

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

### *Spiritual Practices to Guide and Nurture*

**£54**

3 sessions: Friday 30 January, 19:00-20:30; Saturday 31 January, 14:00-18:00; Sunday 1 February, 14:00-18:00 (all GMT). Deborah Shaw, Wendy Hampton

### *Quaker Clerking in a Nutshell*

**£45**

Saturday 31 January, 10:00-16:00 GMT

Elize Sakamoto, Judith Roads

### *Surgery Hour for Quaker Treasurers*

Monday 2 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Paul Whitehouse

### *A Short Guide to Stilling the Mind*

Tuesday 3 February, 18:00-19:00 GMT

Diana Lampen

### *The History, Present, and Future of LGBTQIA+ People in Quakerism*

**£60**

6 sessions: Tuesdays, 3 February – 10 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Brian Blackmore, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

### *Exploring Threshing and Clearness*

**£15**

Thursday 5 February, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Rachael Swancott

### *Early Friends and the Books of Moses*

Saturday 7 February, 14:00-16:00 GMT

Benjamin Wood

### *Essentials of Quaker Eldership*

Monday 9 February, 19:30-21:00 GMT

Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto

### *Learning from the Quaker Earthcare Gathering: Interconnectedness*

Monday 9 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Ailish Carroll-Brentnall

### *Simplicity: A Quaker Way of Being*

**£54**

4 sessions: Mondays, 9 February – 2 March, 18:30-20:00 GMT

Lindsey Markwell

### *A First Look at Quakerism*

Tuesday 10 February, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Wendy Hampton



- Rediscovering Jesus*** £75  
6 sessions: Thursdays, 12 February – 19 March, 18:30-20:00 GMT  
Ann Conway-Jones
- Journeys in Christian Mysticism*** £86  
5 sessions: Mondays, 16 February – 16 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT  
Benjamin Wood, Mark Russ
- Resourcing and Resilience for Social Justice***  
Tuesday 17 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT  
Lyndsay Burtonshaw, Bridget Holtom, Ella Asheri, Ailish Carroll-Brentnall
- Being a Quaker Registering Officer*** £135  
6 sessions: Wednesdays, 18 February – 25 March, 18:30-20:00 GMT  
Michael Booth, Seren Wildwood, Judith Baker, Linda Craig
- Foundation Course in Nonviolent Communication*** £86  
6 sessions: Wednesdays, 18 February – 25 March, 19:00-21:15 GMT  
Özge Altinkaya, Jenny Tipping
- Henry Cadbury: Quaker, Pacifist, and Skeptic***  
Friday 20 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT James Krippner, Lily Chadwick
- From Problem to Programme: Practical Paths to Social Change*** £40  
4 sessions: Thursdays, 26 February – 19 March, 19:00-20:30 GMT John Lampen
- Understanding Quaker Meetings***  
Thursday 26 February, 19:00-21:00 GMT Wendy Hampton
- Quakers and Abolitionism in the American South***  
Friday 27 February, 19:00-20:30 GMT Katy Telling, Lily Chadwick
- In Search of Stillness: A Simple Meditation for Inner Peace*** £48  
4 sessions: Tuesdays, 3–24 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT Joanna Godfrey Wood
- Quaker Business Method Surgery***  
Tuesday 3 March, 19:30-21:00 GMT Wendy Hampton
- Essentials of Quakerism*** £30  
4 sessions: Thursdays, 5–26 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT Wendy Hampton
- Essentials of Quaker Eldership***  
Monday 9 March, 19:30-21:00 GMT Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto
- Learning from the Quaker Earthcare Gathering: Intergenerational***  
Monday 9 March, 19:00-20:30 GMT Ailish Carroll-Brentnall
- How Do Quakers Talk About God?***  
Tuesday 10 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT Rhiannon Grant
- Hope for the Future in Dark and Difficult Times –*** £385 (residential)  
***QCCIR/Woodbrooke Conference 2026*** [BLENDED EVENT] £115 (online)  
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, nr. Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 1AU  
The conference begins at 16:00 on Friday 13 March, and ends with lunch on  
Sunday 15 March. [QCCIR = Quaker C'ttee on Christian & Interfaith Relations]

***Spiritual Nurture and Pastoral Care Gathering*** [RESIDENTIAL] **£335**

Highgate House, Grooms Lane, Creaton, Northamptonshire NN6 8NN

The gathering will begin with the evening meal on Friday 13 March, and end with lunch on Sunday 15 March.

Heather Rowlands, Helen Chambers, Gilly Charters

***Healing the Voice***

Sunday 15 March, 16:00-17:30 GMT

Carolyn Baynes

***Writing Retreat*** [RESIDENTIAL]**£575**

Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH.

Monday to Friday, 16–20 March 2026 John Gray, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

[The retreat is FULL – contact Glenthorne (see opposite) to be put on the waiting list.]

***Resourcing and Resilience for Social Justice***

Tuesday 17 March, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Lyndsay Burtonshaw, Bridget Holtom, Ella Asheri, Ailish Carroll-Brentnall

***Why Nominations Matter to Quakers*****£15**

Tuesday 17 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Christine Habgood-Coote

***Enquiring Into: a Testimony to Simplicity*****£25**

2 sessions: Thursdays, 19 &amp; 26 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Rosie Carnall

***Quakers and Animism***

Monday 23 March, 19:00-21:00 GMT

Suzanne Owen, Benjamin Wood

***Quiet Diplomacy: Connection and Community***

Tuesday 24 March, 19:00-20:30 GMT

Laurel Townhead

***Quakers in Wartime:******The Friends Ambulance Unit and 'Children of the China Convoy'***

Tuesday 31 March, 19:00-20:30 BST

Janet Harris, Lily Chadwick

***Exploring Our Quaker Roots: Moving Towards Repair*****£54**

6 sessions on the first Thursday of every month: 2 April – 3 September,

18:30-20:30 BST

Freddie Wall

***Zealous: A Darker Side of the Early Quakers*****£54**

4 sessions: Thursdays, 2–23 April, 19:00-20:30 BST

Erica Canela

***The Experience of Convincement: A Weekly Retreat*****£60**

4 sessions: Wednesdays, 8–29 April, 14:30-17:00 BST Timothy Peat Ashworth

***The Big Quaker Quiz***

Thursday 9 April, 19:00-21:00 BST

Josh Selfe

***Essentials of Quaker Eldership***

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

Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto

***Learning from the Quaker Earthcare Gathering: Intersectional***

Monday 13 April, 19:00-20:30 BST

Ailish Carroll-Brentnall

***A Guide to the Quaker Business Method***

2 sessions: Tuesdays, 14 &amp; 21 April, 11:00-13:00 BST

David Heslop

***Meet the Students: Oscar Malande***

Tuesday 14 April, 16:00-17:00 BST

Oscar L. Malande, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

***Resourcing and Resilience for Social Justice***

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

Bridget Holtom, Ella Asheri, Ailish Carroll-Brentnall

***Millennials, Gen Z and the Quaker Way*****£25**

2 sessions, Thursday, 16 April &amp; 23 April, 19:00-20:30 BST

Josh Selfe, Wendy Hampton

***Peace Within: Forgiving Ourselves***

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

Paul Ricketts

***George Fox and Early Quaker Culture*** [RESIDENTIAL]**£325**

Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH.

The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 24 April, and ends at lunchtime on Sunday 26 April.

Hilary Hinds, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

*Contact Glenthorne to book a place – see below.****Quaker Trusteeship in a Nutshell*****£45**

Saturday 25 April, 10:00-16:00 BST

Sarah Donaldson, Linda Craig

***Quaker Concern: From Awareness to Action***

Tuesday 28 April, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

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

## **Events, Courses and Special Interest Holidays 2026**

**G**LENTHORNE, the Quaker Centre and guest house at Ambleside in the Lake District, offers a wide-ranging programme of events and courses in 2026, with discounts for younger participants. There are more details of each event at <https://glenthorne.org/events-programme-2026/>.

These events are only available for bookings made by telephone (call **015394 35389**), by emailing [info@glenthorne.org](mailto:info@glenthorne.org), or by writing to **Glenthorne Quaker Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH**. Booking for courses run in association with Woodbrooke (marked [W]) is through Glenthorne, and these courses **cannot be booked online**. Please contact Glenthorne by telephone or email as above.

Anyone aged **18-35** can book a Woodbrooke course for **half the listed price** and on all courses there is a **reduction of £100** for young people under 35.

If a course is marked FULL, contact Glenthorne to be added to the waiting list.

***Climate & Extinction Emergencies***

10 places, £340

Friday to Sunday, 13–15 February

Led by Rupert Read &amp; Leena Seward

***Mixed Media Painting***

8 places, £540

Monday to Friday, 2–6 March

Led by Sue Ford

*Continued overleaf*

***Writing Retreat [W]***

FULL, £575

Monday to Friday, 16–20 March

Led by Ben Pink Dandelion

&amp; John Gray

***Quietly Wild***

9 places, £530

Monday to Friday, 13–17 April

Led by Ruth Harvey &amp; Nick Austin

***George Fox and Early Quaker******Culture [W]***

11 places, £325

Friday to Sunday, 24–26 April

Led by Ben Pink Dandelion

&amp; Hilary Hinds

***Boot, Boat & Goat***

1 place left, £600

Monday to Friday, 27 April – 1 May

Led by the Glenthorne Team

***Circle Dancing***

FULL, £505

Monday to Friday, 25–29 May

Led by Anne-Lise Kryger

***God in all Things: A Quaker Look at******Ignatian Spirituality [W]***

11 places, £295

Friday to Sunday, 29–31 May

Led by Mark Russ

***Medicine for the Mind***

2 Places Left, £305

Friday to Sunday, 5–7 June

Led by Adam Dacey

***Reincarnation: A Brief Introduction***

8 places, £540

Monday to Friday, 8–12 June

Led by Rhonda Riachi

***Exploring T.S Eliot's The Four Quartets***

12 places, £485

Monday to Friday, 22–26 June

Led by Barbara Windle

***Connecting with Plants***

6 places, £550

Monday to Friday, 13–17 July

Led by Letta Jones

***Mixed Media Painting***

FULL, £540

Monday to Friday, 27–31 July

Led by Sue Ford

***Tai Chi and Chi Gung***

FULL, £310

Friday to Sunday, 31 July – 2 August

Led by Kim Noy-Man

***Yoga with Julia***

FULL, £540

Monday to Friday, 10–14 August

Led by Julia Slater

***Exploring Quaker Botanists***

10 places, £315

Friday to Sunday 14–16 August

Led by Letta Jones

***Mixed Media Painting***

FULL, £540

Monday to Friday, 17–21 August

Led by Sue Ford

***Building the Beloved Community***

8 places, £255

Friday to Sunday, 21–23 August

Led by Janet Scott

***Circle Dancing***

FULL, £505

Monday to Friday, 24–28 August

Led by Anne-Lise Kryger

***Sculpting Animals in Papier Maché***

9 places, £615

Sunday to Friday, 6–11 September

Led by Patty Callaghan

***Opening to the Spirit and Spiritual***

11 places, £290

Friday to Sunday, 11–13 September

Led by Terry Winterton

***Walking with the Alexander Technique***

10 places, £445

Sunday to Wednesday,

13–16 September

Led by Hilary Cook

***Climate and Extinction Emergencies***  
***(Advanced Course)***

12 places, £340

Wednesday to Friday, 16–18 September

Led by Rupert Read and Leena Seward

***Margaret Fell: Mother of Quakerism***[W]

9 places, £295

Friday to Sunday, 18–20 September

Led by Stuart Masters

***Boot, Boat and Goat***

FULL, £600

Monday to Friday, 21–25 September

Led by The Glenthorne Team

***Centering Prayer***

12 places, £275

Friday to Sunday, 25–27 September

Led by Rosemary Field

& Richard Eddleston

***Circle Dancing***

FULL, £505

Monday to Friday, 5–9 October

Led by Anne-Lise Kryger

***Lake of Peace:***

***Finding Calm in the Mind's Reflection***

9 places, £305

Friday to Sunday, 9–11 October

Led by Adam Dacey

***William Blake – poet, prophet –***  
***as radical now as ever***

8 places, £485

Monday to Friday, 19–23 October

Led by Barbara Windle

***Powered by Love –***

***An Evolving Universe***

4 places, £440

Monday to Friday, 26–30 October

Led by Margaret Siberry

***What is Prayer?***

12 places, £290

Friday to Sunday, 13–15 November

Led by Jennifer Kavanagh

& Annique Seddon

**COURSES FILL UP QUICKLY**, so if you are interested in anything on the list you should contact Glenthorne **without delay** to avoid disappointment.

## ***Maison Quaker à Congénies: Events in 2026***

### **Spring Art Retreat with Kate Hale: 12–17 April**

*Kate works with drawing, painting, textiles, mosaic, printing, recycled materials, and 3D willow. Currently, she uses multi-media to express political and social concerns, textiles, printing and painting alongside recycling clothing to create hooked fabric wall hangings. The retreat involves five facilitated sessions, followed by the chance to paint, draw or photograph en plein air in a variety of locations. Kate is able to help and encourage people at all levels, whether absolute beginners or accomplished artists.*

### **Quaker Family Week: 13–19 July – CONDUCTED IN FRENCH**

*Since 2022, a time to get together in a pleasant and peaceful setting, and enjoy activities as a group, as a family, or even on your own! Activities may or may not relate to our spirituality. We gather in the morning – those who wish to do so – for 30 minutes of silent worship. Breakfast is provided, as is the evening meal; families make their own lunches or cook together. There are rooms available as well as a few camping spots.*

### **Memoir Writing Worskhop with Kim Hope: 11–16 October**

Details available soon at <https://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org/en/events>.

For further information, or to book, email [centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com](mailto:centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com), or call +33 (0)4 66 71 46 41. **Other courses may be added** – see the website.

## 'Being a Quaker Community' day – 6 December 2025

**A**S PART OF THE INITIATION of Central Edinburgh's Spiritual Review, Wendy Hampton from Woodbrooke, ran a session on *Being a Quaker Community* on Saturday 6 December, 2025. The event was funded by the Sylvia Marshall Bequest and it was good value for money, as 23 Friends took part. Many people commented positively on the day, valuing the opportunity to get to know each other better, especially given the large size of our meeting and the number of relatively new people attending.

The day was spent reflecting, in pairs and small groups, on what it means to be a community and, in particular, a Quaker community. Wendy did a good job of organising so that we interacted with a large number of different people throughout the whole day. Her relaxed style helped us have fun as we enjoyed our conversations with new people. We also reflected on what we can each bring as gifts in terms of service to our community and the different meanings of ministry, both inside and outside our meeting. Welcoming difference and being inclusive as we build our community is important. The challenge of helping newer people feel involved was acknowledged and ideas generated to address this.

We realised how easy it would be to initiate conversations with each other, perhaps at the lunch tables, about questions like 'what drew you to Quaker meeting?' Many people value being accepted for who they are, given our testimony to equality, and the opportunity for deeper sharing of the 'things that are eternal.' The centrality of our meeting for worship was recognised, the foundation for all our other activities, including taking things out into the world. "Meeting feeds us and helps us be our best selves."

Small groups at the end generated ideas to build our community:

- A table at lunch for people who are keen to learn more about Quakers
- Integration of different generations
- Prompts for stimulating discussion at lunchtime
- Organising more small group discussions, including '*Becoming Friends*'
- Looking after those feeling forgotten, including longstanding members
- Having elders and pastoral Friends more personally involved with  
new people
- Encouraging newer people to attend business meetings to feel more  
involved
- The Friday evening Young Friends group could invite an older  
member to see how it works
- Support group to share issues in our everyday lives as Quakers

Wendy gave us some lovely feedback afterwards, saying what a welcoming, interested and diverse community we really are – one that she would be happy to be part of!

**Marilyn Higgins**  
Elder

## ***Work that Reconnects: A Series of Five Workshops*** ***A+E Project, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh: June – July 2025***

**B**ETWEEN JUNE AND JULY 2025, Jonathan Baxter, Jane Lewis and Chris Booth ran a second course of five *Work that Reconnects* workshops open to anyone involved in addressing the climate and ecological crises in any way and/or who wished to become more active.

This was a follow on from the *Stepping Through a Dooway* event in May 2023 [see Sesame 248] organised by South East Scotland Area Meeting in collaboration with A+E [*Art and Ecology – a project based at the Cathedral*; see <https://artandecology.earth/about/>], using *Work that Reconnects* (an empowerment approach taught by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone), as well as other creative means of exploring responses to the climate emergency.

Each session this time was slightly longer – 2½ hours rather than 2 hours – allowing for a fuller exploration and more spaciousness, and we changed our approach to Session 4, *Seeing with new eyes/ancient eyes*.

The series was publicised through networks including Quakers, XR, Stop Rosebank, Just Stop Oil, FoE Scotland, Climate Camp Scotland, Edinburgh University Chaplaincy, Protest in Harmony, A+E, Medact, SBCAN [*Scottish Borders Climate Action Network*] and interfaith networks. Twelve people signed up, including five from Quaker meetings, and there was a broad range of ages.

The aim was to build our capacity for resilience in these turbulent times. We used mindfulness, ritual, poetry and song, and drew on Joanna Macy's books *Active Hope* and *Coming Back to Life* which invite us to investigate our gratitude for being alive on earth at this time, to feel into our grief and pain for the unravelling of the world around us, to explore concepts of deep time and alternative perspectives leading to see with new and ancient eyes – and to make concrete action plans for moving forward with hope.

Each workshop led participants through a stage of Joanna Macy's spiral:

- *Starting from gratitude*
- *Honouring our pain for the world around us*
- *Seeing with new eyes/ancient eyes*
- *Going forth with hope*

The approach recognises that we often feel paralysed in the face of the overwhelming impact of the climate crisis and need to acknowledge and feel some of these emotions, in community, to enable us to continue working for a better world with energy, love and care.

Our publicity made clear that this was a series rather than single sessions, so we could create a safe space, and participants could gain a sense of the whole spiral process.

Attendance was again excellent throughout, with many participants managing all five sessions.

The course took place in the Chapter House, and we went outside to walk the labyrinth as an ending ritual in Session 5. We felt it worked better to be in the same room each time although some participants requested more use of the outdoor space.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive.

People particularly appreciated working in pairs to share experiences; the balance of thought-provoking exercises with more somatic elements (singing and movement); the coherent process to draw on strengths, passion and rage moving towards our next steps; the size and diversity of the group, the safe, trusting container and the threading of poems and songs throughout. They particularly valued the Council of All Beings, Seven Generations and *Boddhisatva* practices and bringing an object each week to represent the theme and using that as a starting point for a check in.

Further comments from participants include:

*'The sessions were such a treasure trove of shared insights and moments of clarity and reflection. I really loved the way [they] were structured, and found the practice of bringing along an object to talk about on the session's theme a lovely way to engage with the ideas and connect with each other's stories in a very grounded, embodied fashion.'*

*'The whole experience was a wonderful way to go deeper in to the emotions and reflections concerning our ecological predicament, and to do so in a way that built a beautiful sense of community with one another.'*

*'I loved the way the sessions were structured so that periods of discussion and group work were interspersed with singing, poetry, and meditative practices. This brought a nice balance to the rhythm of the evenings.'*

*'[T]he organisers ... did an excellent job putting the whole thing together and creating an enriching space for us to share and build on one another's experiences.'*

*'St Mary's Cathedral was also a phenomenal setting for the sessions to take place in.'*

*'A chance to be with like minded people, exploring the path to Active Hope.'*

*'The last session on active hope, especially the partner exercise, really galvanised me into doing something, i.e. write a wee song for the weekly Gaza vigil.'*

Suggestions for what we might do differently next time included having more time in small groups; having six two-hour sessions rather than five two and a half hour sessions; being outside more; having longer for the Council of All Beings.

The monthly Regen sessions, for those who have taken part in both courses and anyone else interested in the work, have been continuing throughout the year. We have also signposted people to other opportunities to deepen their practice such as a weekend retreat at Sauchie Hall Farm near Stirling.

We are very grateful for the financial contribution from South East Scotland Area Meeting which made this important work possible. We hope to run another 5-week course at A+E in the summer of 2026 and would welcome further assistance from AM towards the cost of this if finances allow.

**Jonathan Baxter, Jane Lewis and Chris Booth**

*If you would like to join a future series, let us know at <https://artandecology.earth/contact/>.*



## Help for Wrestlers

*God as Nothing: Why 'Does God exist?' may be the wrong question*  
by Gilbert Márkus

Darton Longman Todd, 2025: ISBN 978-1-917362-04-7

**M**ANY MODERN BRITISH QUAKERS struggle with God language. We are more inclined to use metaphors (the Spirit, the Light). Some of us are happy to call ourselves non-theists or even atheists. We continue to call our gathered meetings together 'meeting for worship' and go along with this, though some express discomfort with the word *worship* as a description of what we are doing together.

Gilbert Márkus is a former Dominican friar and owes much to what he has learned from other Dominicans, both those who wrote long ago (Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart) and teachers and writers of recent times.

A large part of this book, which I have been invited to review, is occupied by a fairly conservative exposition of what is called apophatic theology, a negative approach which declares God to be unknowable. God is the creator of all things so cannot be a creature. If we treat God as a being who can be accessed by being named, we commit idolatry, we have reduced God to an idol. Márkus explores the biblical narrative to draw out this definition.

The account attributed to Moses of his encounter with God at the flaming bush leads him to explain God as YHWH YHWH, perhaps translated as *I am that I am*. The Genesis narrative is compared with other creation narratives circulating in the Middle East at the time; the others name gods while the Hebrew develops the concept of there being only one God who is not personified and so is nameless. Ideas about God in the biblical narrative involve an ethical dimension: questions of justice and mercy, right and wrong, wealth and poverty and, in the New Testament, love and compassion.

Márkus traces the development of the concept of God as Nothing back to Paul's encounter with the Athenians and their altar 'to an unknown god' and the writing 400 years later of one Denys, also known as Pseudo-Dionysius, who was schooled in Neo-Platonic philosophy. Denys says God is completely unknown and beyond being but he points to the New Testament writers who affirm that the true experience of God is to love one another. Separate chapters are devoted to the lengthy writings of Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, near contemporaries, who both expounded in differing ways the unknowability of God.

Our problem here is the limitation imposed upon us by language. God is nothing, is not a person, but in describing God we inevitably slip into personal language. Márkus himself cannot avoid the use of the third person singular pronoun (usually male, I observe). The rest is silence, as we Quakers know well.

This is all fine by me but I have problems when the author expounds his view of Jesus of Nazareth. He takes it as given that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. This interpretation of Jesus was developed by the early church and enshrined in successive credal statements.

Márkus offers a closely argued defence of this traditional stance and illustrates it from the words of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and from the writings of the apostle Paul. He makes his case well but fails to convince me. Where he does convince me is in his quotations from the recorded teaching of Jesus that God's way is the way of justice and mercy, equality, peace and compassion. This is entirely at one with the insights about God given by the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament.

Márkus devotes a chapter to three humanist, atheist writers, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, identifying those parts of their writing which might shed light on the God as Nothing concept. They all place Man at the centre and our author gives the impression that, if they had understood the concept of God as Nothing, they might have been less contemptuous of religion. Another chapter towards the end of the book is devoted to two poets: R.S. Thomas and Paul Celan. The latter I do not know but I have spent some time with Thomas, the Welsh Anglican priest, whom I much admire and who speaks to my condition. His profound, meditative writing moves him from words to silence. God's silence is beyond language, beyond knowledge. Amen, amen.

The book finishes with 24 short 'refractions', each one worth spending some time over. So, a very thoughtful, stimulating book and probably very helpful to those Quakers who are still wrestling with the God question. For myself, I am content with William Blake:

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love,  
Is God, our Father dear:  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,  
Is Man, his child and care.  
And all must love the human form,  
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.  
Where Mercy, Love, & Pity dwell,  
There God is dwelling too.

**Phil Lucas**

*[In October, Glenthorne is offering a course on William Blake's thought – see page 41.]*

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## **Women's Silent Retreat: The Bield, Perth, 17-19 April**

Although this event, advertised in *Sesame* 259, is now FULLY BOOKED, the organisers are holding a waiting list in case of cancellations; contact **Carol Jennings** ([carol.jennings@gmx.com](mailto:carol.jennings@gmx.com)). There is a the possibility of a similar one-day event being organised later in the year. Let Carol know if you would be interested in taking part.

## **John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust: Annual Report 2024**

*This report was presented to Area Meeting in September – see Minute 2025/09/10.1 in the last Sesame – and is belatedly included now, together with a note based on the report to our November meeting by Alastair McIntosh of the GalGael Trust. – ED.*

In 2024 the Trust received three applications.

### **2024 GalGael trip to Iona for fourteen people – Grant: £1,827**

*“The weekend comprised the usual mixture of preparing and sharing food, discussions, a visit to the Abbey and its museum, and walks to St Columba’s Bay, the Hermit’s Cell and up Dun I, to the Well of Eternal Youth, with all due splashing. People were very excited about going, and in a pre-meeting Danny told every one how he’d dreamed some weeks earlier about going to an island on a boat, and he never believed it would come true.”*

*—“I am so overwhelmed by Iona. I am so happy I came, so beautiful.”*

*—“I feel more centred now. The whole weekend was amazing, and the stars at night.”*

The grant of £1,827 at first glance appears large. In reality, it made possible a four-day trip for 14 people who experience considerable deprivation in their lives. It allowed great enjoyment at a cost of £130 per head.

### **Visit to Bute – Grant: £500**

This application was from a widow of pension age living on State benefits in difficult circumstances as a lodger in a rented room, sharing kitchen and bathroom with the landlady. It was for a respite visit to an island with many happy memories in order to “take a break from it all.”

The grant of £500 made possible a carefully budgeted five-day visit.

*—“This is just to let you know that my time on Bute was – in a word – magical. To be back in the wild embrace of Bute did a world of good to my mind and spirit, and the feel and the joy of my whole immersive experience in Bute stays deeply with me.”*

### **Family Holiday**

With regret the Trustees decided that this application could not be accepted because of the lack of a suitable sponsor.

### **Application for Art Therapy Course – noted in the 2023 Annual report**

In June 2024, a grant of £480 was made from the Healing Fund, now administered by Friends Fellowship of Healing.

### **Annual Accounts for 2024**

At the start of 2024 available JW(E)T funds were £4869.31 This was augmented by Friends’ earmarking and general donations totalling £2,513.30, for which we are very grateful. After payment of grants totalling £2,327.00, the sum in hand at 31 December 2024 stood at £5,055.61.

As noted in the 2023 Annual Report, our capital sum, John Wigham’s bequest of £42,000, is depleted.

In the past, accumulated interest helped to keep the Trust afloat. Our request to SESAM for a supplement was reconsidered in September 2024, but was not accepted. We are, however, invited to re-apply “should the position arise where your outgoings are more than what you hold in reserve or receive in other support, please come back to us and we’ll look at things again – advised by AM Trustees, of course.”

**Carol Dean**

Convenor, John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust

## *The GalGael Trust – and what Iona means*

**I**T STARTED IN GOVAN in 1997, where, in the 1930s, George MacLeod was parish minister when he founded the Iona Community. The name GalGael was chosen deliberately to indicate it was setting out to be more than a campaign or a charity. The original GalGael – in Gaelic, *Gal Gaidheal* – were a mix of peoples living in Scotland who, by the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, were so settled they became known by this conjoined name: the ‘Gall’ being the foreigner and the ‘Gael’ being the heartland people.

The name re-roots notions of identity and belonging in ways that are inclusive not exclusive, recognising there is both a bit of the stranger and a bit of the native in us all. The *Gal Gaidheal* of history were associated with the iconic Hebridean galley or birlinn, which became the Trust’s emblem.

Since 2016, GalGael has arranged seven trips to Iona. Each has had a general purpose, which is to explore very generally what spirituality may or may not mean to us. But how does a group get into such a question? One way, is to tie it in with issues that arise in our everyday work at GalGael. This is helpful because it strengthens the reflection that we bring back to Govan into the workshop. The training programme and other activities are not just for their own sake, but are also about helping one another to deepen into community. Community can be understood as having three aspects – soil, soul and society. That is, our relationship with the natural environment; with the inner life of the mind or soul (or whatever term you might be comfortable with); and with each other. Often that means wrestling with our inner and outer “demons”, the things that can trip us up from functioning well in a community and as a community of members together. One way of approaching that is by looking at how to process anger. If you’re in the raging river of life, you have to learn the difference between battling what you cannot change, and using its currents to help you along, like a martial artist using the force of an opponent’s blow. With awareness, you are better equipped to “navigate life” as we called our first ever GalGael training programme. If you “*shift attention from fighting reality to focussing on dealing with reality*” you use your life’s energy more effectively.

Edited from <https://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2024-GalGael-Iona-Report.pdf> with material from <https://www.galgael.org/pages/category/who-we-are> – ED.

# Trustees of South East Scotland Area Meeting:

## OUTLINE BUDGET, 2026-2028

**A**T AREA MEETING ON 1 NOVEMBER, Trustees presented for approval an outline budget for 2026-28 – see minute **2025/11/07**. Agreeing a financial strategy for the next three years should enable us to make provision for short-term projects which it would be right to fund from the recent legacy (and for which Friends are invited to submit proposals before the end of January); to shape a financial framework for investment in our buildings to make them environmentally and financially sustainable over time, so that they cover day-to-day costs from income (including internal transfers in recognition of the use by Quakers of our meeting houses); to encourage Friends to consider increasing their contributions to the Area Meeting and through leaving legacies, knowing how these are likely to be used; and to provide the means of supporting Friends' spiritual growth.

The budget proposals are set out in the tables overleaf and on page 51; the first shows historical figures to give context. Results are shown for 2018 and 2019 – the two years before COVID – with the actual figures for each year, the average of the two in each category, and that average adjusted to 2025 prices. The columns for 2022, 2023, and 2024 give the actual figures. (2020 and 2021, the time of lockdown and the furlough scheme, are omitted; anyone wishing to see the figures for those years will find summaries of the accounts in *Sesame* **237** (September 2021) and *Sesame* **242** (June 2022), both at <https://www.quakerscotland.org/south-east/newsletters>.)

The table on the righthand page shows forecast figures for 2025 based on the year to date, with the proposed budget for 2026, 2027 and 2028, and the expected balanced budget for 2029 and going forward. The final three columns show the effect of 5 % inflation on income and expenditure.

Rounding to the nearest thousand means that some of the totals shown are not the sum of the given figures being added.

Across both pages, the tables are divided into three blocks (*shown in different colours on the sheet presented at AM*), one for Edinburgh Meeting House, one for Kelso Meeting House, and one for Area Meeting (excluding buildings), with an unallocated line and then overall totals at the bottom. Within the blocks, the different lines show the categories of income and expenditure in a similar way to the annual accounts.

Quaker use of our own buildings is shown both as income (to the two meeting houses) and expenditure (by Area Meeting). For Edinburgh, the figure of £25k was calculated as part of the affordability review. Significant investment is envisaged from the recent legacy in order to increase income from lettings and decrease energy use. This is reflected in the relevant lines. Figures here should be regarded as the minimum required for the meeting houses, and assume continuing efforts to minimise costs [cont'd on page 52]

|  | 2018<br>(£k) | 2019<br>(£k) | Average<br>2018/2019 | Av. at 2025<br>prices | Actual figures (£k) |             |            |
|--|--------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------|------------|
|  |              |              |                      |                       | 2022                | 2023        | 2024       |
| <b>EDINBURGH QMH</b>                         |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| <b>Income</b>                                |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| Lettings                                     | 66           | 69           | 68                   | 88                    | 48                  | 64          | 53         |
| Sales (incl. catering)                       | 41           | 53           | 47                   | 61                    | 13                  | 23          | 26         |
| Festival                                     | 24           | 16           | 20                   | 26                    | 1                   | 18          | 19         |
| 3F2 rental                                   | -            | -            | -                    | -                     | -                   | -           | -          |
| Quaker use ( <i>estimated</i> )              | 25           | 25           | 25                   | 25                    | 25                  | 25          | 25         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>156</b>   | <b>163</b>   | <b>160</b>           | <b>200</b>            | <b>87</b>           | <b>130</b>  | <b>123</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                           |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| Staffing                                     | 55           | 64           | 60                   | 77                    | 63                  | 77          | 84         |
| Cost of sales                                | 32           | 38           | 35                   | 46                    | 7                   | 12          | 14         |
| Heat and light                               | 15           | 11           | 13                   | 17                    | 15                  | 25          | 24         |
| Other running costs                          | 35           | 43           | 39                   | 51                    | 44                  | 52          | 53         |
| Investment in building                       | -            | -            | -                    | -                     | -                   | -           | 2          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>137</b>   | <b>156</b>   | <b>147</b>           | <b>191</b>            | <b>129</b>          | <b>166</b>  | <b>177</b> |
| Routine SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                    | 19           | 7            | 13                   | 9                     | - 42                | - 36        | - 52       |
| Overall SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                    | 19           | 7            | 13                   | 9                     | - 42                | - 36        | - 54       |
| <b>KELSO QMH</b>                             |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| <b>Income</b>                                |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| Lettings                                     | 6            | 7            | 7                    | 8                     | 4                   | 8           | 10         |
| Quaker use ( <i>estimated</i> )              | 2            | 2            | 2                    | 2                     | 2                   | 2           | 2          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>8</b>     | <b>9</b>     | <b>9</b>             | <b>10</b>             | <b>6</b>            | <b>10</b>   | <b>12</b>  |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                           |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| Running costs                                | 2            | 6            | 4                    | 5                     | 3                   | 7           | 6          |
| Investment in building                       | 1            | 1            | 1                    | 1                     | 6                   | 5           | 5          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>3</b>     | <b>7</b>     | <b>5</b>             | <b>6</b>              | <b>9</b>            | <b>12</b>   | <b>11</b>  |
| Routine SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                    | 6            | 3            | 5                    | 5                     | 3                   | 3           | 6          |
| Overall SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                    | 5            | 2            | 4                    | 4                     | - 3                 | - 2         | 1          |
| <b>AREA MEETING (<i>excl. buildings</i>)</b> |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| <b>Income</b>                                |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| Donations                                    | 112          | 108          | 108                  | 140                   | 120                 | 120         | 113        |
| Legacies                                     | 554          | -            | 277                  | 360                   | 1                   | -           | 320        |
| Investment income/loss                       | -            | 6            | 3                    | 4                     | 5                   | 9           | 11         |
| From charitable activities                   | 10           | 12           | 11                   | 14                    | 14                  | 19          | 22         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>676</b>   | <b>121</b>   | <b>399</b>           | <b>518</b>            | <b>140</b>          | <b>148</b>  | <b>466</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                           |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| Administrative expenses                      | 13           | 13           | 13                   | 17                    | 12                  | 12          | 21         |
| Quaker use of QMHs ( <i>estimated</i> )      | 27           | 27           | 27                   | 35                    | 27                  | 27          | 27         |
| Room hire for local meetings                 | 6            | 6            | 6                    | 8                     | 9                   | 10          | 10         |
| Contribution to BYM                          | 66           | 66           | 66                   | 86                    | 35                  | 36          | 36         |
| Contribution to GM/QiS                       | 8            | 7            | 8                    | 10                    | 6                   | 7           | 7          |
| Contributions to other bodies                | 3            | 3            | 3                    | 4                     | 3                   | 3           | 4          |
| Other grants                                 | 30           | 20           | 25                   | 33                    | 12                  | 15          | 26         |
| Learning, bursaries, hardship fund           | 1            | -            | 1                    | 1                     | -                   | 1           | 2          |
| Other work ( <i>Sesame, outreach etc.</i> )  | 14           | 16           | 15                   | 20                    | 29                  | 23          | 25         |
| Projects ( <i>e.g. youth work, Wiston</i> )  | -            | -            | -                    | -                     | -                   | -           | -          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>168</b>   | <b>158</b>   | <b>163</b>           | <b>212</b>            | <b>133</b>          | <b>134</b>  | <b>158</b> |
| <b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>                     | <b>508</b>   | <b>- 37</b>  | <b>236</b>           | <b>306</b>            | <b>7</b>            | <b>14</b>   | <b>308</b> |
|  |              |              |                      |                       |                     |             |            |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                          | <b>840</b>   | <b>298</b>   | <b>567</b>           | <b>728</b>            | <b>233</b>          | <b>288</b>  | <b>601</b> |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>                     | <b>308</b>   | <b>321</b>   | <b>315</b>           | <b>409</b>            | <b>271</b>          | <b>312</b>  | <b>346</b> |
| <b>TOTAL SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>               | <b>532</b>   | <b>- 23</b>  | <b>252</b>           | <b>320</b>            | <b>- 38</b>         | <b>- 24</b> | <b>255</b> |
| <i>Available reserves at year end</i>        | 613          | 620          | 617                  | 801                   | 463                 | 441         | 698        |

|  | Forecast    | Before adjustment for inflation |              |              |                        | Inflated at 5 % p.a. |              |              |
|--|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | 2025        | 2026                            | 2027         | 2028         | 2029<br><i>onwards</i> | 2026                 | 2027         | 2028         |
| <b>EDINBURGH QMH</b>                               |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| <b>Income</b>                                      |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| Lettings   | 65          | 70                              | 80           | 90           | 100                    | 74                   | 88           | 104          |
| Sales (incl. catering)                             | 30          | 30                              | 30           | 30           | 30                     | 32                   | 33           | 35           |
| Festival   | 12          | 15                              | 15           | 15           | 15                     | 16                   | 17           | 17           |
| 3F2 rental   | 10          | 10                              | 10           | 10           | 10                     | 11                   | 11           | 12           |
| Quaker use ( <i>estimated</i> )                    | 25          | 25                              | 25           | 25           | 25                     | 26                   | 28           | 29           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>142</b>  | <b>150</b>                      | <b>160</b>   | <b>170</b>   | <b>180</b>             | <b>158</b>           | <b>176</b>   | <b>197</b>   |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                                 |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| Staffing   | 90          | 85                              | 85           | 85           | 85                     | 89                   | 94           | 98           |
| Cost of sales                                      | 17          | 18                              | 18           | 18           | 18                     | 19                   | 20           | 21           |
| Heat and light                                     | 22          | 22                              | 21           | 19           | 17                     | 23                   | 23           | 22           |
| Other running costs                                | 43          | 46                              | 48           | 50           | 50                     | 48                   | 53           | 58           |
| Investment in building                             | 10          | 80                              | 40           | 20           | 10                     | 84                   | 44           | 23           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>182</b>  | <b>251</b>                      | <b>212</b>   | <b>192</b>   | <b>180</b>             | <b>264</b>           | <b>234</b>   | <b>222</b>   |
| Routine SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                          | - 30        | - 21                            | - 12         | - 2          | 10                     | - 21                 | - 13         | - 2          |
| Overall SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                          | - 40        | - 101                           | - 52         | - 22         | -                      | - 106                | - 57         | - 25         |
| <b>KELSO QMH</b>                                   |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| <b>Income</b>                                      |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| Lettings   | 10          | 10                              | 10           | 10           | 10                     | 11                   | 11           | 12           |
| Quaker use ( <i>estimated</i> )                    | 2           | 2                               | 2            | 2            | 2                      | 2                    | 2            | 2            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>12</b>   | <b>12</b>                       | <b>12</b>    | <b>12</b>    | <b>12</b>              | <b>13</b>            | <b>13</b>    | <b>14</b>    |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                                 |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| Running costs                                      | 6           | 6                               | 6            | 6            | 6                      | 6                    | 7            | 7            |
| Investment in building                             | 5           | 3                               | 2            | 2            | 2                      | 3                    | 2            | 2            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>11</b>   | <b>9</b>                        | <b>8</b>     | <b>8</b>     | <b>8</b>               | <b>9</b>             | <b>9</b>     | <b>9</b>     |
| Routine SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                          | 6           | 6                               | 6            | 6            | 6                      | 6                    | 7            | 7            |
| Overall SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                          | 1           | 3                               | 4            | 4            | 4                      | 3                    | 4            | 5            |
| <b>AREA MEETING (<i>excl. buildings</i>)</b>       |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| <b>Income</b>                                      |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| Donations  | 113         | 114                             | 114          | 114          | 114                    | 120                  | 126          | 132          |
| Legacies   | -           | -                               | -            | -            | -                      | -                    | -            | -            |
| Investment income/loss                             | 9           | 20                              | 16           | 11           | 7                      | 21                   | 17           | 13           |
| From charitable activities                         | 22          | 22                              | 22           | 22           | 22                     | 23                   | 24           | 25           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>144</b>  | <b>156</b>                      | <b>152</b>   | <b>147</b>   | <b>143</b>             | <b>164</b>           | <b>167</b>   | <b>170</b>   |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                                 |             |                                 |              |              |                        |                      |              |              |
| Administrative expenses                            | 13          | 15                              | 16           | 16           | 16                     | 16                   | 18           | 19           |
| Quaker use of QMHs ( <i>estimated</i> )            | 27          | 27                              | 27           | 27           | 27                     | 28                   | 30           | 31           |
| Room hire for local meetings                       | 10          | 10                              | 10           | 10           | 10                     | 11                   | 11           | 12           |
| Contribution to BYM                                | 36          | 50                              | 50           | 50           | 36                     | 53                   | 55           | 58           |
| Contribution to GM/QiS                             | 7           | 10                              | 10           | 10           | 10                     | 11                   | 11           | 12           |
| Contributions to other bodies                      | 4           | 4                               | 4            | 4            | 4                      | 4                    | 4            | 5            |
| Other grants                                       | 20          | 20                              | 20           | 20           | 20                     | 21                   | 22           | 23           |
| Learning, bursaries, hardship fund                 | 1           | 4                               | 4            | 4            | 4                      | 4                    | 4            | 5            |
| Other work ( <i>Sesame, outreach etc.</i> )        | 20          | 20                              | 20           | 20           | 20                     | 21                   | 22           | 23           |
| Projects ( <i>e.g. youth work, Wiston</i> )        | -           | 20                              | 40           | 40           | -                      | 21                   | 44           | 46           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                       | <b>138</b>  | <b>180</b>                      | <b>201</b>   | <b>201</b>   | <b>147</b>             | <b>189</b>           | <b>222</b>   | <b>233</b>   |
| SURPLUS (DEFICIT)                                  | 6           | - 24                            | - 49         | - 54         | - 4                    | - 25                 | - 55         | - 62         |
| <i>Projects not yet allocated (building/other)</i> | -           | 25                              | 50           | 50           | -                      | 26                   | 55           | 58           |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                                | <b>298</b>  | <b>318</b>                      | <b>324</b>   | <b>329</b>   | <b>335</b>             | <b>334</b>           | <b>357</b>   | <b>381</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>                           | <b>331</b>  | <b>465</b>                      | <b>471</b>   | <b>451</b>   | <b>335</b>             | <b>488</b>           | <b>519</b>   | <b>522</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>                     | <b>- 31</b> | <b>- 147</b>                    | <b>- 147</b> | <b>- 122</b> | <b>0</b>               | <b>- 154</b>         | <b>- 163</b> | <b>- 141</b> |
| <i>Available reserves at year end</i>              | 665         | 518                             | 370          | 249          | > 200                  | 511                  | 348          | 207          |

[Cont'd from page 49] and to raise grants towards building improvements.

The third block is for activity other than meeting houses. Investment income has been based on a 3 % return on reserves, so falls over the three years. One line provides for projects to be funded from the recent legacy, in addition to building work. **Proposals are invited from Friends.** These should state the intended benefits, project plan, how the project will be managed, and indicative costs. Employment of a part time youth worker and increased support for the Wiston weekend are given as examples. Projects must be fixed term, to suit the funding source, without creating future obligations or (as far as possible) expectations.

The guidance of Area Meeting is sought on the balance between such projects and investment in the sustainability of our buildings. Some money has been left unallocated and could be spent either on further enhancement of our buildings or on other projects, depending on proposals submitted.

The final lines show overall income and expenditure and the effect on reserves. Trustees advise keeping reserves sufficient to cover six months running costs and 2 % of the insurance value of our buildings, *i.e.* a minimum of about £200k currently.

Three key results by 2029 are envisaged: Edinburgh Meeting House breaking even, Area Meeting as a whole breaking even, and reserves remaining above £200k.

## Quaker Asylum & Refugee Network – Questionnaire

### *Finding out what Friends are doing alongside refugees and people seeking sanctuary in the UK*

QARN (a Quaker Recognised Body) is keen to learn about activities by individual Friends and Local Meetings to assist refugees and people seeking sanctuary, so as to help it put people in touch with each other and strengthen our collective witness. It plans to publish a report in 2026 drawing on the responses to the questionnaire, which is at

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe84jkXpQis-i1W5CJWjgAD8LTZIOCy8ud9vYu9wnAzXGj1tA/viewform?pli=1>

The survey should take up to 15 minutes to complete. **Please submit responses by 25 January.**

The Network's website is at [www.qarn.org.uk](http://www.qarn.org.uk);  
for further information, email: [info@qarn.org.uk](mailto:info@qarn.org.uk).

**A** REPORT from Together With Refugees on the economic case for a humane asylum system is at <https://togetherwithrefugees.org.uk/welcoming-growth/>.



# SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 1 November 2025  
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and by remote videoconferencing**

## **2025/11/01 Worship and introductions**

During opening worship we heard a reading on the right ordering of meetings for worship for business, held in the Quaker tradition. These seek the guidance of the spirit to discern together the way forward, with the usual practice of allowing silence between speaking, and asking all to consider whether their ministry is necessary.

...

*[The full minutes are included in both the print edition of Sesame, and in the PDF emailed to Members and Attenders on the circulation list, but are redacted in this publicly available version. – Editor]*

[*Redacted*]

**2025/11/13 Closing minute**

53 Friends (49 members and three attenders) and three children have been at all or part of this meeting, either in person or by Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

|                                   |   |                                 |                                  |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Central<br>Edinburgh<br><b>16</b> | Central Fife<br><b>1</b>                | East Lothian<br><b>3</b>        | Falkirk &<br>Polmont<br><b>5</b> | Kelso<br><b>5</b>                  |
| Penicuik<br><b>-</b>              | Portobello &<br>Musselburgh<br><b>8</b> | South<br>Edinburgh<br><b>15</b> | Tweeddale<br><b>-</b>            | <i>Visitors/Others</i><br><b>-</b> |

We record our thanks to South Edinburgh Friends for their engagement in hosting today's meeting, and for a lovely range of additional food and baking, and to the Meeting House staff for their support today. We thank Alastair Cameron and Madeleine Harding for leading the children's programme all day. We thank David Sterratt for managing the Zoom and breakout options today.

We meet again on Monday 19 January 2026 at 7.00pm at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House.

(Signed)

**Sara Davies, Clerk**

**Esther Shreeve, Assistant Clerk this time**

## ***Recommendation: a book from the AM Library***

***Fighter for Peace: Philip Noel-Baker, 1889-1982 by David J. Whittaker, Sessions Ltd, 1989***

WHEN WE READ biographies of Quakers it is no surprise that working for peace should figure largely through family influence and religious leadings. The Baker family became manufacturers of flour-milling machinery and had a factory in Peterborough which flourished, and so gave Philip the opportunity to go to university, where he applied his energies to sport and the study of international law. He believed both of these could foster the friendship between nations which was the key to working for peace, hence his efforts at the League of Nations and at the United Nations. The later part of the book deals with the work of these two bodies. Philip Noel Baker remains the only person to have won an Olympic medal (silver in the 1,500 metres at the 1920 games in Antwerp) and the Nobel Peace Prize (in 1959, for his work on disarmament – he donated the prize money to the UN). This is an interesting book about an interesting life.

**Rachel Frith**

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.