

# Tayside Quaker

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**Tayside Quaker** is available by email and on paper. If you would like to be added to the email list, please contact the editor at [\*\*felicitybryers@virginmedia.com\*\*](mailto:felicitybryers@virginmedia.com)

If you get Tayside Quaker by email, you have the advantages of receiving it earlier and seeing the pictures in colour. It also saves the AM money.

**Closing date for the next edition is Saturday 25 July 2020**

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East Scotland Area Meeting  
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All opinions in Tayside Quaker are those of the individual writers and not necessarily of The Religious Society of Friends.

## **East Scotland Meetings during the Covid crisis**

### St Andrews

There are no Meetings for Worship in St Andrews at present. Friends have been invited to send contributions to Carolyn Burch under the title 'Sharing together'. These are sent out by Julia Prescott by email each day, with paper copies being sent to Friends without email.

### Dundee

Dundee Friends are meeting each Sunday at 11.00 in their own homes, guided by the spirit. 'Afterwords' in the form of thoughts, reflections, poetry, readings, photographs, news and notices are collected by email and circulated. Those not online receive copies by post. Further information from Pamala McDougall. There is also a Zoom Meeting for Worship each Thursday at 11am (greetings), 11.15 (Meeting for Worship) with Afterwords at 11.45, followed by social time. This replaces the usual midweek meeting. Further information from Norman Alm.

### Perth

Perth Friends are meeting using Zoom at 11.00 on the Sundays they usually meet (second and last Sundays of the month). Further information from Sue Holland-Smith. They are also holding occasional Zoom 'coffee mornings' for social time together. Our newsletter, Meeting News, has been augmented with thoughts and ideas to help us through this time.

### Area Meeting (9 May)

Our Clerks are exploring the possibility of using teleconferencing to hold a short Area Meeting. Please see the message on the next page.

### General Meeting (13 June)

General Meeting will meet using Zoom for about an hour and a half on Saturday, 13th June, starting at 10.30 am. Details of how to join this meeting will be circulated nearer the time. The Journeymen Theatre performance scheduled for that day will not now take place.

## East Scotland Area Meeting, Perth, May 2020

### A message from our Clerk

Dear Friends,

I hope you are keeping well and managing to find ways to cope in these strange and challenging times. As my heart and thoughts are with all those affected by the coronavirus, I'm wondering if perhaps some good may come out of it as we realise how much is precious about our everyday lives and how friendships, family and community so enrich us.

You will not be surprised to learn that our Area Meeting on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May will not be able to go ahead in its usual way. Although unavoidable, it is disappointing as we were looking forward to an interesting meeting, including an update from Martin Mansell concerning the work of the planning group for COP26 and to a performance from the excellent Journeymen Theatre. COP26 is now postponed to 2021 and we look forward to seeing the Journeymen Theatre at another time. In the meantime, we do hope you can still support the appeal for Women's Aid (see the appeal on page 8 of this edition of the Tayside Quaker).

**We are therefore currently exploring the possibility of using teleconferencing to hold a short Area Meeting. This is still in the planning stage as we learn new skills and ways of working and we will circulate more information about this nearer the time. We are aware that not everyone has access to a computer, and we will do what we can to keep everyone involved.**

I thought I might just bring your attention to a couple of items: firstly, following the closure of Woodbrooke in March for residential courses, the tutors have been working hard to develop online courses, perhaps with a bit more time on your hands you might consider one of these. Please take time to check it out; financial support is available.

Secondly the Friend publication is offering free copies to isolated Friends who can't access it digitally and can't afford a subscription; perhaps you know of someone who could benefit (see the Friend 27<sup>th</sup> March).

Finally, on a personal note, I have been watching a neighbour leaving to drive the school bus. Latterly with the schools closed he has just a few children to transport on a long circuitous route, taking him up Glenesk, round Edzell, Stracathro and rural Angus. I have a real urge to ask him to take me with him. The glens will slowly be moving towards spring and while my walks around Brechin provide adequate exercise, it is the fresh spring growth, the smells and the sound of the curlews that I am really pining for. To quote Seamus Heaney “if we can winter this one out, we can summer anywhere”.

In friendship and peace,

*Pam Apted*

*Clerk*

## **East Scotland Area Meeting, Perth, 15 February 2020**

### **A witness to the living truth – East Scotland Area Meeting hears the testimony of an Extinction Rebellion Friend**

At the start of our East Scotland Area Meeting on 15 February, we heard a reading from Faith and Practice. 23.12:

The word ‘testimony’ is used by Quakers to describe a witness to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life. It is not a form of words, but a mode of life based on the realisation that there is that of God in everybody, that all human beings are equal, that all life is interconnected. It is affirmative but may lead to action that runs counter to certain practices currently accepted in society at large. Hence a pro-peace stance may become an anti-war protest, and a witness to the sacredness of human life may lead to protests against capital punishment. These testimonies reflect the corporate beliefs of the Society, however much individual Quakers may interpret them differently according to their own light. They are not optional extras, but fruits that grow from the very tree of faith.

*Harvey Gillman, 1988*

Just over 20 Tayside Friends had gathered in Perth and we were joined by our guest speaker Cath Dyer (Polmont Local Meeting) to talk to us about her support for and engagement with the work of Extinction Rebellion (XR). XR, established in 2018 by academics and others, including Friend Ian Bray, is a global movement that uses non-violent direct action (NVDA) and civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse. Cath spoke of her personal involvement with XR, which has led to her arrest on two occasions. She told us that she grew up in Zambia and seeing and hearing what is happening there now is first-hand evidence of climate change. She also told us about how, growing up in central Africa, she saw the effectiveness of NVDA. Now, consciousness of the responsibilities of our generation and the urgency of the climate situation has led her to see that NVDA is essential. Cath's working life as a GP has informed her activism; global heating and our mistreatment of the earth is the biggest ever threat to life and health on earth. Cath's Quakerism is also central to her support for XR: she pointed out how the climate crisis, and our failure to act on it, runs against all our testimonies. It was interesting to hear how she had found that XR culture and practice (non-violence, truthfulness, reflectiveness, mutual support, persistence, lack of hierarchy) is very familiar to her as a Quaker. Cath provided 3 questions – currently being trialled by XR to sound out opinion and potential support -



*Cath Dyer speaking at Area Meeting*

interesting to hear how she had found that XR culture and practice (non-violence, truthfulness, reflectiveness, mutual support, persistence, lack of hierarchy) is very familiar to her as a Quaker. Cath provided 3 questions – currently being trialled by XR to sound out opinion and potential support -

which we worked on in small groups:

1. What is the biggest challenge facing the world?
2. Why is this problem happening?
3. If we are serious about tackling this problem, what should we do?

We came up with too many answers to list here but some key ideas in answer to Q3 were: create conversations; build confidence in the possibility and desirability of change; support a just transition; call those in power to account; encourage a shift in investment (corporate, national, personal); continue doing small things as well as thinking big.

(Friends who have not already seen it may want to read the statement from Quakers on 2 March:

<https://quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-seek-a-climate-budget> )

We felt inspired by Cath's talk.

In a closely connected context we were reminded about the work being done by Friends in the West of Scotland (but not only there) in preparation for COP26 in Glasgow in November. COP26 (the 26th Conference of Parties UN Climate Change Conference) is likely to attract around 30,000 delegates and 200 world leaders. A COP26 Hub group has been set up, convened by Martin Mansell for communications and organisation for Quaker interest in COP26. *(Edit: COP26 has now been postponed till next year though preparations will continue.)*

Philip Bryers gave the financial report for 2019-2020 and was thanked for his long and conscientious service to ESAM, as he hands over to the new ESAM Treasurer Richard Raggett.

We heard from Richard Raggett in his role as acting Clerk of Dundee Friends Property Trust (DFPT) about the good progress with the refurbishment of Dundee Meeting House. The building project has gone well and will come in close to the budget of £190,000, and roughly on time. Fundraising locally and throughout the Quaker community in Britain has been an inspiration for Dundee Local Meeting and DFPT. Richard explained that the project leads to

significant, welcome change for both Dundee LM and DFPT. There are financial and organisational challenges to be resolved, but DFPT has financial reserves to enable time for solutions to emerge. It should be noted that the Trust has taken a £25,000 loan, interest free, repayable over 5 years, from the Quaker Meeting House Fund in order to protect reserves during this period of change. Richard read for us the Minute from the Meeting for Discernment held by LM and DFPT on 1 February. We support the enthusiasm and vision which is inspiring Dundee Friends to their return to their Meeting House to both strengthen the Meeting itself and to serve Dundee's community.

*Carolyn Burch*

*Assistant Clerk*

## **Appeal for Women's Aid in Dundee**

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel the performance by Journeymen Theatre in Dundee in June. They were going to perform their play about domestic violence, 'Rock and a Hard Place' – this is their description of the play:

*"Kayleigh is a talented teenager whose life should be full of promise. Instead, she finds herself in a cycle of domestic abuse from which there seems no escape until Aunty Jan helps her find a way out, after twenty long years of 'put up and shut up'. Based on a true story, together with the combined true-life experiences shared by other women, the play explores the complex nature of domestic abuse, ranging from coercion in its many forms to women's deaths at the hands of abusive partners.*

*Rock and A Hard Place also reveals the impact of funding cuts on the refuge system and on support available for women like Kayleigh and is an appeal to all of us to both recognise and highlight this major human rights issue in our own communities."*

We had arranged for a speaker from Women's Aid in Dundee (DWA) to speak to us before the play, and the plan was to raise donations for Women's Aid on the night. In the confining circumstances of Covid19 lockdown, there is likely to



be all the more need for the work that Women's Aid does, as women may be more trapped than usual with their abusers. We encourage Friends therefore to make a donation to the charity, as they might have done if the performance had gone ahead.

Pam Brunt of St Andrews Meeting, a DWA trustee, says "donations are used to provide direct help to women and children in refuge and in the community: for example, emergency supply packs when the women come into refuge, starting credit on the electricity meters, travel costs if they need to go to another town, even simple things like birthday cards."

Donations can be made here:

<https://www.goldengiving.com/charity/search?searchCriteria=dundee+women%27s+aid>

Or via their website, <http://www.dundeeomensaid.co.uk/supportus.php>

*Carolyn Burch*

## **Meeting for Sufferings, Friends House, London, 1 February 2020**

The term "Brexit" was seldom used during the day long Meeting at Friends House. (Prior to this however, my sleep was disrupted on the Friday night by loud cheering, clapping and singing at exactly 11pm by noisy "Leave" supporters in Tavistock Square!). The departure of the UK from the European Union on January 31st did still hover over the days business. Soon after opening worship a Friend quoted the late MP Jo Cox,

'...there is more that unites us than divides us.'

Very appropriately we then listened to an excellent report from Josh Habgood-Coote on the work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs. Josh explained that QCEA works with the Council of Europe, NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the EU. Josh commented that "...the need for peace in Europe did not lessen at 11pm last night".

( [www.qcea.org](http://www.qcea.org) )

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) welcomed a joint statement on the UK exit from

the EU from Britain Yearly Meeting and Ireland Yearly Meeting.

Caroline Nursey then reported from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Trustees on their planned work in the coming months. A key area of work will be the setting of strategic priorities guided by the work of Meeting for Sufferings in Our Faith in the Future.

Before lunch BYM staff members David Loxton and Alex Fulton led discussion and activity on Speaking Out. Two questions were put before the Meeting:

1. Where is the right balance between being compelled to witness and compelled to achieve change?
2. Is it better to be distinctively Quaker or to voice all concerns equally?

Many Friends who spoke agreed that priority should be given to speaking out when there is a distinctive Quaker view.

In the afternoon session, time was spent discussing and considering Diversity and Inclusion. We heard reports from the recent gathering at Woodbrooke from Sophie Bevan and Sam McNair. Following group discussions, it was agreed that, although progress has been made, there is much still to be done.

The day concluded with news of preparations for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020. (*Edit: Yearly Meeting Gathering has since been postponed.*)

Agreement was given to the Meeting for Sufferings Annual Report.

Time was also spent during the day on the Prison and Court register, Membership, Appointments and Quaker Recognised Bodies (one new - The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust).

The first MfS of 2020 saw Margaret Bryant in the Clerk's chair for the first time along with new assistant Clerk Robert Card. Both, assisted by BYM staff and a team of Friendly volunteers, conducted the busy day with great efficiency.

Minutes and full reports on BYM website and reported in the Friend 7 and 14 February.

*Robert Thompson*

## Flowers for Mohandas

I rarely if ever manage to sleep away from home  
But had actually drifted off when through my hotel  
Window came the sound of loud cheering and singing.  
I did not need to look at my watch - 11pm 31st January.

I knew that back home people would be gathering in  
Cities and towns for candlelit vigils,  
The light from which would one day guide us back to  
Our friends.

I do not usually feel lonely in London but I did then.  
The next morning as I walk to Friends House  
I take a few minutes to stand at the Gandhi statue  
In Tavistock Square.

Someone has placed four bunches of flowers.  
My mood lifts as I see that in the midst of the cheering  
And chanting, the divisions and toxic flag waving  
Someone has brought flowers for Mohandas.

Later in Meeting someone quotes from Jo Cox.  
" There is more that unites us than divides us"  
I hope so.  
I hope so.

*Robert Thompson*

## Meeting for Sufferings, 4 April 2020

This meeting was cancelled completely. No alternative arrangements were made for the participation of the Representatives of the Area or General Meetings. All of the documents are available on the Quaker website as usual for you all to read:

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

There are one or two things that I would like to highlight.

As you all know, I have been asking that Meetings for Sufferings (MfS) reduce the number of journeys to London by holding some meetings by Zoom. This is the result of sitting next to Sue from Shetland and Mike from Mull and being asked by other Representatives “What time will you get home tonight?” As face to face meetings are discerned to be essential for the work of Meeting for Sufferings, a decision has been made to reduce the number to four a year and look at the possibility of holding some meetings outside London, possibly with an invitation to local Friends.

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees reported on simplifying structures and practices. You may know the name Suzanne Ismail – she is our ‘Head of Networking and Engagement’. She is the person who listened when I pointed out that the lines on the map that she had drawn showing the Area Meetings with a small triangle around Perth, Dundee and St Andrews labelled ESAM, was inaccurate. This was followed up by our Parliamentary Engagement Officer as it was true of the other three Area Meetings in Scotland as well and showed a lack of understanding of Scotland in Friends House. She was invited to attend the part of the Trustees meeting where they discussed practical plans to decentralise. Initially, this is setting up the first pilot hub with a local development worker. The Trustees have formed a Simplification Group who will report to MfS in June what a simple church and a simple charity might look like. They want to improve communication with local Friends generally rather than solely through role holders. Clerks are ‘snowed under’ already with e-mails and written reports to the extent that it’s impossible to pass most of it on

to local Friends, who often find out too late that a decision has been made about something of great interest to them and about which they have a great deal of knowledge. How this can be achieved is something that has been discussed by Quakers for as long as I've been going to Quaker Meetings.

Bristol Area Meeting would like us to become involved in the campaign to criminalise ECOCIDE under international law. Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee discussed this but recommended that our focus in 2020 should be on supporting Friends to get involved in action for climate justice in the run-up to the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow. The concern from Bristol Area Meeting will be discussed at a later date. A full report is in the papers under the heading 'Minutes received from Area Meetings'. If you would like to comment on it reply directly to [sufferings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sufferings@quaker.org.uk)

Quaker Life Central Committee reported on a 'meeting-centred' approach to supporting us from the centre, involving the integration of BYM and Woodbrooke. The difficult bit for any of us who have been role holders and have tried to adapt has always been and still is 'How do we adapt our organisation and structures in response current needs while **remaining true to Quaker discipline and practices?**'

*Alyson Buchan*

## **Book of Discipline Revision Committee update, March 2020**

Your committee met in January at Friends House in London.

We spend time listening to each other as we worship-share: this time we spoke about how we ground our work in the Spirit and how gradually we move towards clarity and a better understanding of our task. It's a long slow process...

How are we getting on? Well, I invite you to consider the size and the scale of the project – it's not just a matter of getting a copy of Faith and Practice, cutting it into bits, rewriting some of them, and juggling the order a little bit! We are spending a lot of time discerning our way forward – what needs to be

in the book; what's not currently in Quaker Faith and Practice; the importance of explaining WHY we do things as well as HOW we do them; how we do that explaining; how to be inclusive; and how everything fits together.

The key messages from January's meeting are:

- *We feel daunted and excited by the size and importance of our task. We continued to seek ways to make it more manageable to approach. We are thinking about how to make our book of discipline more inclusive. We are also working out what is central to explaining the Quaker way.*
- *What passages of Quaker Faith and Practice are significant to you? We talked about parts that are personally meaningful to us and will invite everyone to do the same during YMG.*
- *Keeping in touch with Quakers is very important to us. Many thanks to those who helped us by attending the Woodbrooke conference in November. We will be active at Yearly Meeting Gathering when it happens and hope to accept other invitations to engage with Friends. Our current communications channels are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) reports on our work through Quaker News and other BYM channels.*

Updated to add:

We are not currently meeting face-to-face, though we shall have a committee meeting via Zoom at the end of this month. Also Yearly Meeting Gathering has been cancelled, though there are hopes that some sort of gathering may happen later this year, in which case the committee will hope to have a presence there.

Once again, please uphold us all as we do this complex task on your behalf – we can't do it without you.

*Mary Woodward*

## Quaker Life Representative Council, October 2019

### ‘Building Inclusive Quaker Communities – Mental Health: Embracing the elephant in the room’

This was the fifth time I’ve had the pleasure of going to Quaker Life Representative Council (QLRC). Each year Anneke Kraakman and I (your current QL reps) take it in turns to go to Woodbrooke for the April and October weekends to meet up with nearly 100 other QL reps from Area Meetings all over Britain. And for two days we delve into a theme which has been brilliantly prepared for us by Marleen Schlepers and her team – with plenaries, workshops and home group sessions, interspersed with opportunities for worship, good conversation, walking in the grounds, delicious meals and entertainment. This weekend continued the theme of Inclusive Communities, with the focus on mental health. Much of it was filmed and I’ll include links to short videos that will bring it alive for you.

This is no ‘us and them’ topic. Any of us might struggle with mental distress and any of us can make a difference for someone who is struggling. During the weekend, many people spoke of their difficulties. Our main plenary session consisted of four courageous speakers telling us about what it’s like to live with autism, schizophrenia or depression, or the strain of being a carer. You may have seen Jacinta White’s description of her experience of autism in *the Friend* (14 November 2019) and how encountering Quakers made such a positive change for her. Catch up with it on video here if you didn’t

<https://vimeo.com/374169833/cc97a06c0a> . Saturday evening’s entertainment included stand-up comedy from Daisy talking about living with neurodiversity (she has a diagnosis of Asperger’s). And in workshops and home groups others felt able to disclose their struggles with anxiety, depression etc., some of it temporary, some longer term.

I arrived at Woodbrooke feeling quite apprehensive, wondering whether what would be needed to be more inclusive would be overwhelming. How can we possibly fulfil the needs of everyone? Clearly some people have needs that go beyond the regular resources of a meeting. But most of the time it isn’t

difficult to be more inclusive. Just being willing to notice, to listen, to show compassion, to make time to talk, to ask what would be helpful – in other words, being a human being alongside another human being - these are the things that our speakers valued almost more than anything. The Snakes and Ladders game underlined the simple sort of things that can make anyone feel welcomed or, on the other hand, excluded. (See <https://vimeo.com/374162124> )

My own concerns about being overwhelmed were partly addressed by the version of the Boundaries Game that I took part in. The video here is actually of me talking about it! ( <https://vimeo.com/374161556> ) What can we do when more active support is required? Elders, overseers and/or others can discern what could be done, e.g. taking a meeting for worship to someone at home, accompanying someone in the regular meeting, checking for ways in which our meetings may be excluding for someone with a special need. Quaker Life offers resources for meetings that can't come up with what's needed or when a person's needs go beyond the reasonable resources of a meeting. These include the QL Network Mental Health Cluster (contact [oliverw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:oliverw@quaker.org.uk); 020 7663 1007).

I hope this report on QLRC has increased your confidence that we can become more inclusive of those experiencing mental distress. If you have time, do watch the short videos and look out for the copy of 'Mental Health Conversations' that should be in your LM library. It's a report by Alison Mitchell based on conversations with Friends during 2018 and it gives voice to people who have experience of mental health problems. All these resources, and more, are available at 'Mental Health in Quaker Communities' on the [quaker.org.uk](http://quaker.org.uk) website.

*Alice Curteis*

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

*J.R.R. Tolkien – The Fellowship of The Ring*



## **Northern Friends Peace Board Meeting, Derby, February 2020**

Northern Friends Peace Board met in Derby at the end of February, just about as far south in the Board area as you can get. Thanks are due to Derby Friends for making us very welcome and to Barbara and David for kindly providing me with accommodation.

The board meeting was well attended by both representatives from Area Meetings and local meetings. The two major items in our morning discussions were both connected with 2020 being the seventy fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

We had some reflections on the historical and planned celebrations to commemorate Victory in Europe Day which marked the end of the war in Europe. These included a concern to remember all of the victims of war, an appreciation of the hope and optimism present at the founding of The United Nations and a wariness of triumphalist celebrations of victory. Our coordinator Philip Austin hopes to draw these reflections together later in the year.

The second item was about a play that has been written by Michael Mears. 'The Mistake' is a title taken from words on the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima. Michael is a well-known actor and playwright; some of you may have seen his earlier play 'This Evil Thing' which was about conscientious objectors in the First World War. The new work will be performed by Michael Mears and the Japanese performer You-Ri Yamanka; it will be directed by Jatinder Verma. As Michael says, 'The subject of Hiroshima and the events leading up to the first atomic bomb is one that I am passionate about – believing it be ever more important and relevant today, as tensions increase around the world.'

The play takes the interweaving stories of three people caught up in the story, Shigeko Nomura, a young woman in war-time Hiroshima, Leo Szilard a Hungarian born scientist working on creating the atomic bomb, and Paul Tibbets, the American pilot chosen to fly the plane that drops the bomb. Telling them uses verbatim testimonies and reminiscences from eyewitnesses.

Szilard 'How can I sleep - convinced that the world is now heading for grief'.

Shigeko 'Would you do it again if you have to?'

Tibbets 'Morality doesn't enter into it. There is no morality in war'

Unfortunately, some hoped for funding failed to materialise and there is now a crowd-funding campaign. More details are available at

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/the-mistake-a-play-about-hiroshima> .

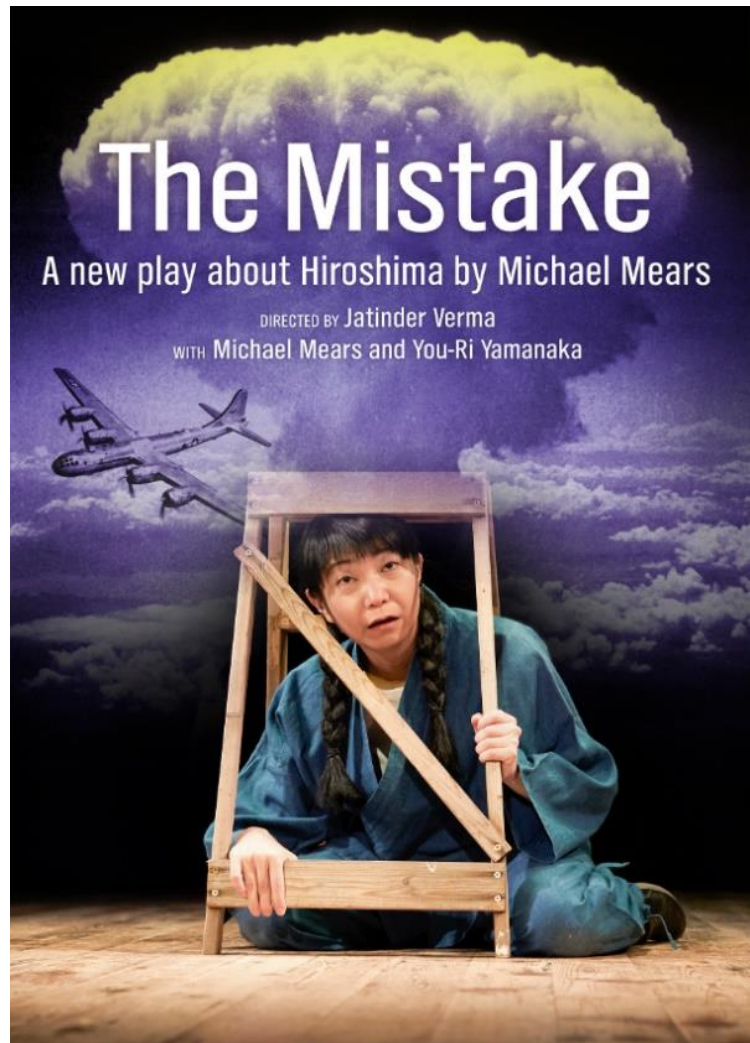
Planned performances of the play this summer at the Edinburgh fringe have now been postponed. The

website says: 'We are all committed to bringing this new play about Hiroshima to performance as soon as is realistic. Meanwhile we will be looking at ways of putting some material connected to this project, some extracts from the play, perhaps, readings etc., online this summer as a 'taster' of things to come.'

This item tied in very well with plans being made by Perth Meeting. For the last two years we have organised a Hiroshima Day Peace walk in Perth from the Peace Pole

outside the St Ninian's Episcopal Cathedral on Scott Street to the peace pole in the Rodney Gardens. In previous years it has been a modest event but still successful on its own terms. With this year being the seventy fifth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing Perth Friends are hoping to organise a more substantial event including the involvement of other groups. Planning is at an early stage and as our ideas develop, we will keep Friends informed.

*Peter Cheer*



## News from Local Meetings

### *St Andrews*

On Saturday 1 February we held a “January Resolutions” meeting at the home of Joyce and Huw, aiming to focus in ideas, hopes and aspirations for 2020. This followed on from our Climate Conversations and Economic Justice discussions which all were invited to participate in.

We started off with a bring and share lunch which certainly prepared the way for open and interesting conversations.

Five questions were posed:

1. As individuals what encourages us in spite of our fears?
  - Four sources of encouragement were identified – science, growing awareness and action, nature and sustainable solutions. Specific responses spoke of spiritual encouragement.
2. Any good news, or inspiring encounters we can share?
  - Good news about activism where Friends in West Scotland are actively planning to play their part in good time to support representatives from disadvantaged countries to get to the conference COP26/Glasgow.
  - Good news about long term solutions.
  - Inspiring encounters with nature and art.
3. Any individual hope or plans for the coming weeks/months?
  - Personal actions/behaviours identified, common actions already practised (eating less meat, using public transport, reducing or stopping car use, using an e bike)
  - Activism or policy related projects (finish the Directory of Environmental Groups in N.E. Fife, maintain connection with Sustainable Cupar)

- Attitude and outlook: consider being witness to the truth when the truth can be difficult; imagine the impossible! Raise the sails in readiness for the winds of change! Support and encourage.
4. How does friendship strengthen us?
    - This particular issue was explored in depth with many examples of how friendship can be spiritually strengthened.
  5. What aspirations do we have for our Meeting for 2020 in relation to Climate Justice?
    - We drew on a Clitheroe Area Meeting scheme of “Small Steps to Sustainability” whereby small groups of Friends agree on small changes, reviewing their progress on a 3 monthly basis and making new commitments.

Since then we have had another follow up to collect specific ideas and plans that we hope to act on as and when we can. Some of the points about General Meeting COP26 have been overtaken by events though we will want to take stock again when we can.

The full notes can be requested electronically from Carolyn Burch [ecarolynburch@gmail.com](mailto:ecarolynburch@gmail.com)

Saturday March 7 was National Quaker Day of Healing. Unfortunately, General Meeting for Scotland was held in Edinburgh on that day and so many Friends who might have attended were at GM for Scotland.

The Meeting House was open from 11am to 3pm. It was open to all for an extended Act of Worship for Healing. Positive feedback was given by those who attended. They valued the space offered for meditation and prayer.

### Keeping in touch

Soon after restrictions on movement were introduced due to the coronavirus Elders and Overseers recognised the importance of keeping in touch with Friends within our Meeting during the time we could not meet for Worship.

We have all been asked for contributions, one each day by e-mail under the title “Sharing Together”. A varied selection of stories, poems and experiences

are being shared. Each morning we look forward to opening an e-mail to discover a new gem. Those Friends without e-mail have a paper copy.

*Buša Cochrane-Muir*

## **Dundee**

### Dundee Meeting House Update

Building work completed except for snagging and official handover, fundraising on target, goods are chosen and purchased for the fittings and furnishings, Opening Welcome events arranged and guest lists prepared. Then the coronavirus struck and all is 'on hold' like most of our normal lives. The decision was made to close the whole building except for the tenants on two floors, and all plans for the move back into the Meeting House are postponed.

### New arrangements

Meanwhile, we continued to worship in the Steeple Church until that too, was closed. Guided by our clerks, elder and overseers we started to hold virtual Meetings for Worship at 11am on Sunday mornings sitting in our own homes and being connected by the Spirit. For some, this has been a powerful experience and has attracted some who have not attended Meeting for Worship for some time. 'Afterwords' in the form of thoughts, reflections, poetry, readings, photographs, news and notices are collected on email, collated and circulated later the same day. These have been moving, tender, thoughtful, fully appreciated and even humorous at times! Those not online receive copies by post.

Meanwhile, led by the experience and enthusiasm of our IT guru Norman Alm, we tentatively dipped our spiritual toes into Zoom. First, a few of us made up of clerks, elder and overseers, experimented with the technicalities 2-3 times, and after a few minor blips felt confident enough to invite all the meeting.

Because many of us were keen to continue our virtual Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings and others enjoyed seeing faces and hearing ministry live, we now hold a shorter Zoom Meeting for Worship on Thursdays to replace our

midweek meetings with the added attraction of social time over (our own) coffee!

Both are well attended.

We look forward to welcoming you all to our Meeting House when the time is right.

In the meantime, we hold each other in the Light, send virtual hugs and pray for the world. It has been said that things will never be the same again - but as 'the same' was not good enough before, we hope there will be a climate change for the better.

*Pamala McDougall*

## **Perth**

Perth Friends have been meeting for worship online using Zoom. We were joined in our first meeting by Johanna Babbs, at present in lockdown in France. She and her husband, Jerry, were staying at a 'WorkAway' when France went into lockdown. Luckily their hosts were happy for them to stay, though they aren't allowed to travel to the smallholding where they should have been working.

We have also used Zoom for informal social meetings. It is good to be able to meet up with other – distance is no object!

Philip Bryers has been helping to keep us up to date, and entertained, with extra material in our newsletter, Meeting News, which is sent out before each Meeting for Worship.



## Jocelyn Bell Burnell in St Andrews

St Andrews University Chaplaincy invited Jocelyn Bell Burnell to preach in St Salvator's Chapel on Sunday 1st March. The title of her sermon was *A Quaker Astronomer tries to make sense of it all* and a number of Friends were amongst the congregation. In the evening over 20 local Friends met with Jocelyn in Ceres for a wide-ranging conversation. Here is a collage of Friends' comments and reflections on Jocelyn's visit: they have been assembled by Barbara Davey and are presented anonymously, alongside some of the readings and quotations we heard...

*I wanted to hear from Jocelyn about what the experience of discovering pulsars was like. So often science is presented as dry and lacking in creativity compared with the arts. But what drives me as a scientist is the creativity within the science. In the evening Jocelyn described her experience which was great, and it resonated for me with something she had said in the morning. Many are familiar with the idea that we are made from 'star dust'; however, Jocelyn pointed out that this also means that we are 'nuclear waste', a product that is so abhorrent, especially to many Quakers. Is it not wonderful that all the beauty we observe in the world around us and all human kindness comes from nuclear waste?*

I am so pleased I came to both the chapel and the evening discussion: it was such a privilege to meet Jocelyn Bell Burnell.

*There was a comment in her sermon that we are both 'cosmic junk' and also 'stardust'.*

It will be 48 years since I last attended a Sunday Service at St Salvator's Chapel, when I was a student there. This past Sunday was really something special with an inspiring and informative address by Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell on the universe from its beginning to its end wrapped up in hope and love.

The other and unexpected treat was listening to the Chapel Choir singing Motets from Bach's Cantata *Jesu meine Freude* BWV 227

throughout the service. It would have been worth coming for that alone.

The Chaplain made Friends particularly welcome even including periods of silence in prayers, a kind gesture even if very short on the silence.

*Jocelyn told us of her deep concern with the opportunities for people to study science. The disciplines are biased towards recruiting and rewarding white males – they are patriarchal. This is not just a ‘ceiling’ for women, women of colour and any other marginalised groups but it also systemically diminishes the store of imagination and knowledge amongst scientists.*

I very much appreciate the fact that Professor Burnell has donated the £2.3 million Prize won for her work in radio pulsars to funding women, under-represented ethnic minorities and refugee students to become physics researchers. Living simply so that others may simply live.

*Jocelyn talked about scientists’ attitude to certainty and how the discipline is always recognising that there will be horizons of knowledge and significant unknowns, but she expressed her belief that science can and will continue to discover. She gave her own searches as an example. She described how she had recognised areas in which she did not fully understand the background of some of the equations that she was taught and had to use. She then linked this awareness of gaps in knowledge to a positive discovery in which she started noticing patterns that were unexpected in her data.*

I didn't attend the sermon but there was reference in the evening to Julian of Norwich and the hazel nut. I thought that this was used to suggest that the small and immediate is what matters. This can then grow... Consider the huge oak tree: it grew from a little nut WHICH HOLDS ITS OWN.

*In her Horizon Scanning Jocelyn noted some features of our willingness to trust and belong, citing the decline of church attendance and yet the maintenance of interest in matters spiritual. She offered two examples of this trend in the decline of Quaker Membership yet the maintenance*



*of Attenders, and the decline of churches yet the continued popularity of Cathedral footfall/worship.*

Jocelyn pointed out that our world/galaxy is not the centre of the universe and this is a major challenge for some. She used the phrase 'divine discontent'. She also gave the example of exo-planets - the fact that there are thousands of planets around other stars, which helps us to gain some perspective.

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

*Matthew 4:1-4*

Despite being caught out by it being the beginning of Lent, and having challenging readings, Jocelyn felt she was reaching for hope and love, asking, 'How can we live in the face of the knowledge of the eventual disintegration of Universe?'

*Stars have a finite life, a one-way street*

*The lights will go out*

*In this context, can we hope?*

*What is hope? It is our ability to work for something good*

*Quaker meetings support us and act through us*

*Referencing Jacob in the Old Testament, "In love, only the wounded can serve"*

*Love is born of a dark place where hope has died*

*Love is born with a dark and troubled face, when hope is dead*

*and in the most unlikely place, Love is born, love is always born*

There is a crack, a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.

*Leonard Cohen*

Inspirational!

*“And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, ‘What may this be?’ And it was answered generally thus, ‘It is all that is made.’ I marveled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God. In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it.”*

*Julian of Norwich*

It was a good night and I really enjoyed it.

## **In praise of dead hedges**

It’s a small issue but our brown bins are only going to be collected once a month for the time being. Usually by now it’s a fortnightly collection until growth in the garden slows down as winter approaches. My solution to this small problem is my dead hedge.

A dead hedge is much more exciting than it sounds. It’s very ecological, providing a habitat for small mammals, bugs and overwintering bees etc, and cuts the need to burn or to transport waste elsewhere. It can cover an unsightly part of your garden – mine hides a dodgy fence – and is a special feature in its own right, even if it’s not particularly tidy.

I started mine about 10 years ago, inspired by a piece by my favourite gardening columnist Alys Fowler. It helped that I’m the kind of person who hangs on to bits of what other people might class as rubbish. I had enough old broom sticks, lengths of metal from who knows where and a few old golf clubs (it’s a very St Andrews kind of dead hedge!) just lying around to start me off.



You drive these items into the ground forming two rows about two feet apart - the dimensions can fit your own requirements - and then you just start to lay your twigs, branches and other cuttings along inside the rows.

You don't have a good selection of suitable items

for posts? Now is the time to put out a call to the community via whatever local group has sprung up, like the CASA Facebook group (Community Action St Andrews). Or maybe this is not for you but instead you could match up with a new dead hedge builder and find a home for that unsightly pile of poles that is littering your house/shed or garden!

My other photo isn't just daffodils and grape hyacinths – look closely and you'll see a bee hovering there. I like to think it spent the winter in my dead hedge.

*Alice Curteis*



## Experiment with Light

An introductory workshop on Experiment with Light (EwL) was held in Dundee some 9 years ago. From this a Light Group was established in St Andrews for those of us that were interested in taking this forward. In the early days we had members not only from East Scotland but one member from Aberdeen who said how much she valued the journey on the train and bus to have time to reflect.

Friends have come and gone during this period. We remain a small cohesive group always open to welcome new members. We acknowledge that we are all on a spiritual journey and all benefiting from the opportunity of having this space in which to explore and deepen our spirituality.

Here are some reflections expressed by members of the group.

*Being a member of the Light Group has been a thread running through my life as a Quaker for many years now. Sometimes it feels as if the thread is rather thin and frayed, tangled even, but nevertheless I keep with it. It doesn't let me go.*

*We meet to practise the Experiment with Light together and to witness the work of the Light in each other's lives. It grounds me and enriches me; it is humbling and precious. Thank you, Friends!"*

For my part the monthly meeting is both supportive and enlightening. We are a diverse group, our sole purpose to experience pathways not always explored or given the necessary time to do so. Sharing our innermost thoughts in a safe environment where trust has grown over the years. Worship Sharing can be challenging for some, including me but one is comfortable in sharing thoughts and hopes, on our journeys which can have many turns.

*Of all the various activities branching from our Quaker Meeting, the Light group is the most important one for me. There is a lot of information concerning Experiment with Light but for me it seems simple: 'where two or three are gathered together in my Name, I am there in the midst of them'.*

*It is essentially a meditation to invite the Light into our awareness; we are guided in steps to Mind the Light, Open to the Light, to wait on the Light and submit to the Light.*

*Light and Peace and Warmth seem to pervade the space where we sit, creating a still, open, creative and holy presence.*

*It is a healing space where confusions, upsets, anxieties, problems can be brought to the Light and transformed.*

*There is time to creatively assimilate the transformation through writing, drawing, contemplation or whatever is meaningful and then to share this insight confidentially.*

*I see this as the work of the Holy Spirit, but the naming is not important. It is not so much the experimenting but experiencing the Light. That is what experiment means in modern day language.*

I am grateful for the introduction to this. I am still relatively new to it, so my thoughts so far reflect that. But this time of quiet reflection which differs from Meeting for Worship has been really helpful. It allows me to reflect on my own personal situation in terms of my wish to deepen my spirituality knowing that what I share with the group will be held in confidence – it allows me to address personal issues which can often dominate my thinking in a negative way.

Perversely though I do not find the tapes helpful – beyond the initial guidance about relaxation. They can intrude on my thinking and often feel quite negative in content. My hope is that I shall become increasingly more sensitive to spiritual thought as an influence in my life.

The St Andrews Meeting House library holds a store of information on EwL and all are welcome to join us. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at St Andrews MH from 7 – 9pm. Please contact me for any further information.

*Buša Cochrane-Muir*

## Loving Earth Project

The Loving Earth Project started about a year ago for an art exhibition at Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, organised under the auspices of the Quaker Arts Network. It celebrates people, places, creatures and other things that we love but which are threatened by growing environmental breakdown. It offers a way to help people engage with the issues without being overwhelmed.

You are invited to explore these questions creatively,

- Is there something, someone or somewhere that you know and love which is endangered by environmental break-down?
- How does your lifestyle contribute to that threat?
- What could you do, or are you doing, to help reduce that threat?

Then, if you wish, you can make a textile panel illustrating your answer to one of these queries and share this with others, a creative occupation for this period of isolation.

Further information is available from <http://lovingearth-project.uk>

*Barbara Davey*



## **Holocaust Memorial Vigil and Pier Walk**

**St Andrews, 30 January 2020**

The university's Student Interfaith Society, in conjunction with the chaplaincy, once again organised a Holocaust Memorial Vigil and Pier Walk during the first week of the Candlemas semester. Speakers came from across the community - there were Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and representatives from a variety of Christian churches as well as from the Pagan group, the Humanists and the Student Union. Holocaust Memorial Day was particularly significant this year, marking not only seventy-five years since the liberation of Auschwitz- Birkenau, but also twenty-five years since the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

We gathered down at the harbour on a cold and windy night, listening for almost an hour to a series of contributions - readings, poems, prayers, personal and heart-felt thoughts. At the close, the Madrigal Group sang one of Rachmaninov's Vespers and then we walked with our lanterns in silence out along the pier. At the far end, there was a bowl of saltwater and we were invited to take a handful and cast it into the sea - an intermingling of tears.

The theme of the events nationwide was 'Standing Together' and this inspired a brief reflection that I offered on behalf of Quakers and which is reproduced below. It is always so difficult to find the words on these occasions. I wanted to give space to mark in some way those who have been killed, and I also wanted to encourage us to think about the present, and the future.

I've been reading and listening to some of the testimonies from Holocaust survivors and I'd like to focus on two of the things that struck me powerfully.

One was the simple comradeship the survivors speak of — a whisper of kindness or sharing a crust. "I would not have survived if I had felt I was on my own" one of them said.

A memorial to those who were killed bears the words

*Du bist nicht einsam*

*You are not alone*

So it is fitting that we gather here this evening with the theme of standing together to bear witness in community to the horrors of the holocaust and the genocides that have followed and to find a way of showing fellowship with the memory of so many who have been slaughtered.

*Du bist nicht einsam*

*You are not alone*

Standing together gives us courage to speak out against all that feeds suspicion and hatred but the power of a crowd can also foster our capacity to slide into acts of great cruelty and these acts too begin with a simple gesture.

May we have the strength, each of us, to search our conscience, bringing into light those attitudes which lie at the root of indifference and inhumanity. May we support each other to live our lives in wholeness, our outward actions reflecting our inward beliefs.

The second thing that struck me in those survivors' accounts of the camps was the unbearable noise, the harsh and incessant clatter, the shouting of orders, the cries of pain.

In humility, can I ask you now to hold for a moment to the quiet by way of an offering from our hearts to those whose lives have been shadowed by fear and were ended in horror — a gift of peace for the babies, the children, the girls and the boys, the men and women and the old folk.

May light surround you.

May love enfold you.

*Barbara Davey*



## Where have all the people gone?

The song “Where have all the flowers gone” by the group Peter, Paul and Mary is a favourite of mine from all those years ago. The tune runs through my mind as I write.

St Andrews town centre is normally almost overflowing with people - townsfolk, students and many, many tourists. In summer it is often hard to get along the street, particularly in a hurry. Just now, in the school and Easter holidays the town should be brimming with people. Instead, as one man commented today as we passed (safely distanced) “This is a ghost town.” A cliché perhaps but true. Almost all the shops are closed and the streets empty, both of people and traffic. No cheerful chatter of schoolchildren, no coming or going from the many cafés, no risk of being run into by a student intent on their phone, no possible chance meeting with a friend.

The weather has been kind; blue skies and just a gentle wind most days when I take my daily walk to where I can look across at the West Sands. And this perhaps is the strangest sight. The sands are almost deserted. The largest daily number I have seen over the past two weeks has been 11 people and a couple of dogs. Yesterday just one, though today four and a horse! Apart from the ever-present screech of the seagulls there is only the sound of the waves, some days louder than others. No children calling excitedly, none paddling happily and no-one swimming or surfing. Walking back past the aquarium I watch the seals swimming round and round in their small pool, purposeless now that there is no-one to entertain. I long to release them to swim freely, unconstrained by grey walls. Almost most haunting are the handsome Victorian and Edwardian houses which look out over the sea; such a wonderful view. They are coveted by students and well lived in. Now they too are purposeless, standing empty and lifeless, their students scattered all over the world, mourning their St Andrews friendships as we find ourselves missing their lively presence in the town.

Back in town I can cross roads with impunity and walk some way before I meet a person or a car. And there's the rub! Few people, few cars spell out the massive impact on the town's economy, based as it is on university and

tourism. And not just the economy, closer to home the devastating impact on personal lives. I cannot easily contemplate for long the awfulness of this - mirrored throughout the country. I shy away from these bleak thoughts and seek some kind of solace in the comfort of home and a cup of tea.

Much comfort does come when I remind myself of the outpouring of compassion and care everywhere in the country - not just our awe-inspiring NHS staff but ordinary folk doing what they can, often against their own personal odds such as unemployment. I need to hang on to the positive things which are emerging from this crisis, to balance out the negatives.

And then, thank God, there is prayer. That is something which as an 80 year in lockdown I can do. The knowledge that I am not alone in this is in itself sustaining. The Zoom experience of Meeting for Worship from Woodbrooke, the unity of others across continents stays with me on a solitary sun-lit walk. People may not be visible, but they are not gone. They are there unseen around me. We are upheld together.

*Kate Douglas*



## **And people stayed home**

And people stayed home  
and read books and listened  
and rested and exercised  
and made art and played  
and learned new ways of being  
and stopped  
and listened deeper

someone meditated  
someone prayed  
someone danced  
someone met their shadow

and people began to think differently  
and people healed  
and in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways,  
dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
even the earth began to heal

and when the danger ended  
and people found each other  
grieved for the dead people  
and they made new choices  
and dreamed of new visions  
and created new ways of life  
and healed the earth completely  
just as they were healed themselves

*Kitty O'Meara, 20th March 2020, Wisconsin, USA*

## Lockdown

*(This poem has appeared on social media.)*

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality  
To how big we really are.  
To how little control we really have.  
To what really matters.  
To Love.  
So we pray and we remember that  
Yes there is fear.  
But there does not have to be hate.  
Yes there is isolation.  
But there does not have to be loneliness.  
Yes there is panic buying.  
But there does not have to be meanness.  
Yes there is sickness.  
But there does not have to be disease of the soul  
Yes there is even death.  
But there can always be a rebirth of love.  
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.  
Today, breathe.  
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic  
The birds are singing again  
The sky is clearing,  
Spring is coming,  
And we are always encompassed by Love.  
Open the windows of your soul  
And though you may not be able  
to touch across the empty square,  
Sing

*Brother Richard Hendrick*

## Reflection

Now as I have to stay in a small radius of Aberfeldy Town I often look at some of the photos I have taken recently. In January and February, I travelled to Amsterdam and Basel. Here are two pictures that made my time there very memorable.



At the end of January, I visited the Surinam Exhibition in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. Because Surinam was a colony of the Netherlands there are a lot of Surinam citizens still living in the Netherlands. This exhibition was special because it was made by Surinam communities themselves.

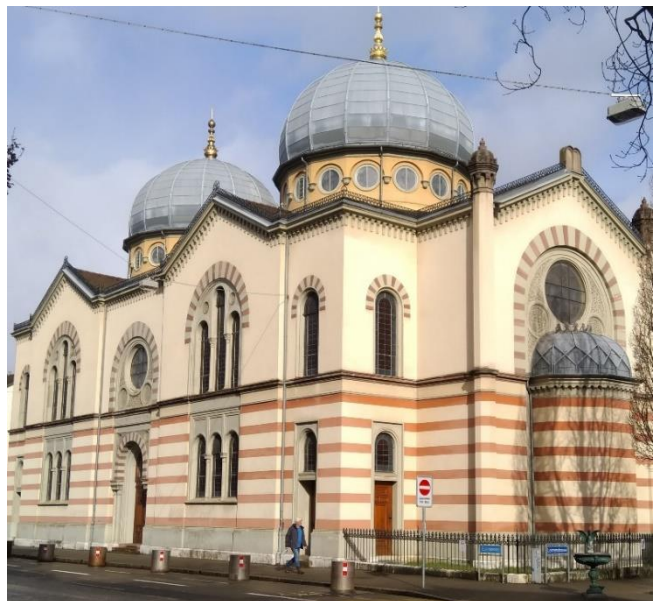
The headdresses in the photo are called Kotomisi. They are a part of the traditional dress of Creole women. There are different Kotos for different occasions. They are still used, for example for the koto-dansi, a traditional dance party.

At the beginning of February, I stayed in Basel. I got stuck there for two days longer when there was a storm over Europe delaying my journey back to Scotland. I went to look for the Jewish Synagogue in the Leimenstrasse, not far from the City centre of Basel.

My walk to the building was exciting because the synagogue is quite hidden in the streets of a neighbourhood. I could at first not find it at all.

This building reminded me of the mosque in Cordoba with the same colours used in the arches as here in Basel.

*Anneke Kraakman*



## Listen

Fling wide the window  
and listen!  
Listen to the throb of Spring,  
as Nature joins in chorus  
to greet the sun.

Listen to dire warnings  
and heed them!  
But let them not engulf  
the spirit, which longs for freedom  
to embrace the world.

Fling wide the window!  
Breathe in the air  
of Calm and Peace which Nature  
does bestow on troubled  
hearts and minds.

*Barbara Legg*



## Meetings for Worship

**Please note that alternative arrangements are in operation at present.**

**Dundee:** Wederburn Room, The Steeple Church, Nethergate,  
Dundee DD1 4DG (adjacent to the Overgate Centre).

Sundays 11.00 am

The Meeting House, 7 Whitehall Crescent, Dundee DD1 4AR  
Thursdays 12.30 – 1.00 pm (followed by social time)

**St Andrews** Meeting House, 2 Howard Place, St Andrews KY16 9HL

Sundays 10.30 am

Children's Meeting - each Sunday during school terms

Enquiries: Genevieve Orr (01333 360396)

Midweek Meeting, Thursdays 1.15 – 1.45pm

**Perth:** The Subud Centre, 7 St Leonard's Bank, Perth PH2 8EB

Second and last Sundays of each month 11.00 am

Children's Meeting usually last Sunday of each month

Children's contact: Anneke Kraakman (07746 117 762)

### **East of Scotland Area Meeting**

Saturday 9 May 2020, *possibly online*

Saturday 22 August 2020, *St Andrews*

Saturday 21 November 2020, *Perth*

### **General Meeting for Scotland**

13 June 2020, *online*

12 September 2020, *East Scotland (Dundee)*

31 October 2020, *West Scotland (Dunblane)*

6 March 2021, *North Scotland*