

# **wsqn**

**connecting local meetings**



**August 2025**

# The West Scotland Area Newsletter

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Frontispiece

Hyndford Bridge, outside Lanark

## **Living Fire - *the fire has not gone out.***

Oxford young adult Friends gathered at Wallingford Meeting House in March to listen together to our Guide. In times of worship, conversation, rest and discernment, we felt a new willingness to be led, to name and exercise our gifts, and to support each other to live faithfully. Our hearts were softened, our ears were opened to our Teacher, and our eyes were made more able to see God's healing hand.

As the early spring sunshine streamed in through the windows, the sweet power of the Spirit helped to come into the slower rhythms of grace, where we can hear and rely on the Guide's voice. We heard a call to the peace of abiding in the Vine, the source of our faithful work in the world. We must allow ourselves to be pruned so we can bear the fruit we are called to bear. We are called, not to lives of busyness, but to give over our own willing and running, resting in the Presence, the tasks that are truly ours come into view, and as God has God's way with us, we find that our lives are given new depth and new meaning.

We reflected on where we see the gifts and leadings of the Spirit in our lives. We considered how we can encourage each other to sing, in our own ways, the song we hear God singing. We were reminded of the value of friendships in which we ask each other how God is working in our lives. We felt the need to nurture each other into nurturing each other. There are many gifts in our community, and by appreciating the gifts God is giving us, we can become more willing to live adventurously.

In a living Meeting, we need elders: spiritual midwives with a sensitivity to the conditions of Friends and Meetings. We need gospel ministers willing to bravely and vulnerably speak the words they are given. We need the gift of care that enables us to see more in others than they see in themselves. These gifts are given for the good of our community, so it is our responsibility to help each other deepen in them. We feel a concern to invite Friends into this deepening work.

We are comforted to know there is a lasting Power that can join us to each other, whoever we are. We heard a call to offer fellowship to those who may not yet know our ways, whom we may not yet know, but who are reached by the love we feel for each other. Can we challenge ourselves to open our doors and hearts more widely, allowing ourselves to be helped and changed by this? Are we listening for the new life the Living Teacher is calling us into?

We have strengthened our bonds of friendship. We will carry from this place the love we have for each other. We have felt close to many who were with us in spirit, aware that our Precious Friends rejoice in our unity.

As we have encountered the Presence in this Meeting house, like many Friends before us we have witnessed the thread of Living Fire that runs from the prophets to Pentecost to the early Friends. That fire has not gone out. It will not go out. We seek to know this Fire for ourselves, in our time. We have found it roaring here. This gives us hope for the future of our Religious Society. We have gathered around this Fire in worship, and we plan to leave it burning.

**Epistle from Oxford young adult Friends** *(as printed in The Friend)*

# **Area Meeting Report 26 April 2025**

**Jan Lethbridge, Dumfries**

When friends first gathered in Dumfries for Area Meeting on 26 April, the early signs were not promising. Few people had indicated their intention to attend, and a long time was spent trying to establish, or re-establish the Link. (I didn't dare ask what the problem was!)

But come the appointed hour, and a healthy number had appeared, including a strong contingent from the host meeting. Plus over a dozen attending online. They, of course, will have chosen their own comfy seating, whereas there was much re-arranging of the chairs in the room, as several folk, myself included, sought to avoid the rigid plastic chairs, which had been carefully positioned to give uninterrupted views of the clerks at the table!

During the opening worship passage 27.01 from Quaker Faith & Practice was read – William Penn's description of people of faith as being “.. everywhere of one religion”. This was our own wee acknowledgement of the death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday, being aware that his funeral was taking place as we met together.

It was interesting to hear that the single application for membership received had been prompted, in part, by the recent police raid at Westminster Meeting House. (I've been wondering, who tipped the police off?)

The name of Bryan Bowes will be familiar to us all in the Area Meeting, frequently appearing in the AM newsletter, which he formerly edited. His death, on 13<sup>th</sup> April, was recorded, with memories of him being central to the Gospel of Thomas Group. A fuller appreciation will no doubt be given in due course.

The Local Meeting Reports were possibly the most interesting part of the day. Edie Phoenix reported that Castle Douglas is feeling positive about the future in their new venue, The Gordon Hall, and the new time of 2pm. They have extended their booking until the end of the year. The timing allows friends from the other SW Cluster Meetings to support them without missing their own morning Meetings. Looking ahead, it is hoped that good weather on the first Sunday in July will attract several from Dumfries and Wigtown to Castle Douglas in the afternoon to perhaps enjoy some outdoor fellowship.

Peter Morton reported too that Dumfries Meeting is enjoying a positive time just now, with increasing numbers. New friends particularly enjoy the discussions over coffee after worship, (roughly fortnightly), and seem to soon feel at ease in the Meeting. But we feel rather reluctant to take up the suggestion that we share the reasons for the current growth. Not because we are precious about this, but we feel that to start probing and analysing might risk destroying the joy and wonder of the current boom, which, incidentally, we have not done anything consciously to

achieve, apart from providing chocolate biscuits, of course! I am also reminded of the story of the Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs.

Wigtown friends reported that a core of 4/6 now meet in the County Buildings on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, and are using Advices and Queries constructively.

It was refreshing, to me, to hear a brutally honest report from Glasgow Meeting of the situation concerning the Meeting House. Sadly, the plan made a couple of years ago, to “give it ten years” has served only to further entrench the opposing viewpoints on whether to sell or not. The possibility of a resulting split of the Meeting is not actually on the agenda of the Extraordinary Local Meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup>, but has been raised in some quarters.

But on a positive note, it turns out that the ideal place to hold a Quaker Meeting is actually a Day Care Centre for ‘older people’. Who knew? For one friend, today’s Meeting in just such a place had been something of a revelation, demonstrating that suitable places, other than Glasgow Meeting House, do exist, if only they can be found.

The afternoon provided relatively little opportunity to discuss Advices and Queries. The breakout group that I was in wandered slightly off-piste, and being almost wholly made up of Dumfries friends, we didn’t really find anything to add to the submission already made to Nuala Watt.

As we cleared things away afterwards, there was a certain sadness among the hosts in the knowledge that this may be the last time Area Meeting will happen in Dumfries. Will it be RIP for AM?

## **Report of AM held by Zoom, 2 June 2025**

**Bronwen, Currie, Islay & Jura**

It feels something of a privilege to be writing this report of what I felt to be a historic Area Meeting, held on 2 June. 37 Friends, of whom 18 were from Glasgow LM, gathered by Zoom to consider the two very significant items on our agenda.

After a period of opening worship, during which the Epistle from Yearly Meeting was read, and after the usual welcome and roll-call, Assistant Clerk Jay Wilkinson took over the clerkship so that Kate Gulliver could don her Quakers in Scotland (QiS) Coordinating Group hat and outline to us the process that might be ahead, should we make the decision as North Scotland and East Scotland have already done, to wind up West Scotland Area Meeting as a charity and join the new SCIO, Quakers in Scotland. We heard that trustees had carefully considered the preparations already made, and the advice that has been received from OSCR (the charity regulator) and are comfortable that the proposed move is a prudent way forward for West Scotland Friends. The first step required will be for trustees to apply to OSCR for permission to wind up West Scotland AM as a charity before our assets can be transferred to QiS.

We agreed to ask trustees to do this, in the hope that the process of transfer can be completed by October if possible, or at least by the end of the year.

We then turned our attention to the future of Glasgow Meeting House. We had before us two minutes, one from the Extraordinary Local Meeting held on 11 May, and one from the Glasgow LM held on 1 June. Following the ELM of 11 May, trustees had considered the minute, in which Glasgow Friends had confessed to being “stuck” and asked for guidance. Trustees, in their minute that was then sent to Glasgow, pointed out that by making no decision, Glasgow Friends were effectively choosing to stay in the building but without any commitment to its future which could justify the effort and expenditure it needs. Trustees put three questions to Glasgow Friends: were there sufficient Friends, both now and in the future, with the energy and commitment to manage and develop the building? was there a realistic financial and business plan for its future? and were Glasgow Friends content with a building that was maintained but not developed, with its current limitations in terms of accessibility and environmental performance?

These questions were before Glasgow Friends when they met on 1 June. Circumstances appeared to have changed, and a minute emerged which acknowledged the lack of active Friends willing and able to manage and maintain the Meeting House going forward, and expressed the realisation that the best investment in the future of the community of Glasgow Friends might be achieved by putting the building on the market and moving worship elsewhere. As the minute put it, “our community exists independently of its material home”, and some enthusiasm was expressed for a move to the Unitarians’ building, which might be available by the end of the year.

We considered Glasgow’s minute worshipfully and with compassion. In ministry we heard anguish and disappointment expressed, but also of the struggle to find Friends to fill essential posts. We heard of frustration, and of sadness and a sense of compassion for those who will be hurt, but an acknowledgement that hurt is inevitable in whatever decision is taken. However we also heard of the surprise felt at the way in which Glasgow Friends had felt led to that minute, and a sense of lightness which had emerged.

Ultimately Area Meeting accepted Glasgow’s minute, upholding and supporting Glasgow Friends in the difficult decision they have made, and trustees were asked to form a small group to take forward the marketing and sale of Elmbank Crescent, with the proviso that no sale should be completed until Glasgow Friends have found alternative premises to hold worship. In the meantime AM elders and overseers were asked to meet to consider what support may be needed.

Our final piece of business was to appoint Gill Reid once again as Clerk of Nominations, until the end of this year. Let us hope that Gill can then be released from this role which she has fulfilled with such commitment for some considerable time!

The Meeting was clerked with patience, perception and deep compassion by our amazing clerking team, for whom I for one am extremely grateful. There is much healing to be done and much compassion and listening needed. But at the same time let us hope and pray that we can go forward with energy, joy and commitment to serve both our local LM communities and the wider family of Friends in Scotland.

## **Glasgow Local Meeting: Extraordinary Local Meeting held**

**11/05/2025**    50 in the meeting room, 10 online

### Minute

We are thankful for the careful preparation for this meeting and the loving care of Friends in upholding it, and for much deeply considered ministry.

It is clear that our absolute priority is our love for each other as a worshipping community. We have heard that we come together as a strong community, bound by our common spirit. We are reminded that we can worship and maintain our witness as Quakers anywhere. Glasgow Quaker Meeting is the people, not the building; and we wish to look outward, not inward.

We have questioned whether the maintenance of the building in Elmbank Crescent is worth the investment of time, effort, energy and money that it takes. We are reminded that we have struggled to find Friends willing to serve on Property or Wardenship & Lettings committees, and that we are currently reliant on the tireless work of just a few highly committed Friends: if we are to stay, we need to be willing to commit together to investing properly in the building in order to bring it as far as possible up to standard. While we are assured that we do have the funds available, there is uncertainty as to whether this is what we are called to do as our Quaker witness.

We recognise that there is great affection for the building within the Meeting, and appreciation of the value of having a permanent home and visible Quaker presence in the city. We value the fact that the Meeting House is used for so much more than just regular Meetings for Worship, and that visiting groups appreciate its welcoming atmosphere. There is also frustration, however, at its failings: its current rather poor state of repair, its inaccessibility for some disabled Friends including those with hearing impairments, its lack of ecological credentials, and the size and shape of the Meeting Room.

Several Friends have encouraged us to “live adventurously”. We have been asked to think beyond the confines of the current Meeting House and explore other possible options.

We appear to be stuck, and need to address why we are in this position rather than simply talk about the building. We agree that the current state of indecision has not been good for us. However we have not reached a clear discernment in the direction either of attempting to sell, or truly committing to staying. We cannot in the circumstances offer an unequivocal request to Area Meeting to pursue either course of action, and ask AM to consider if there is any guidance they can offer.

*Ruth Wilkinson, Clerk, and Joyce Taylor, Assistant Clerk, 11/05/25*

## ***Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting***

*Held at Friends House, The Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire, and online from 23 to 26 May 2025*

*Dear Friends everywhere, we send you our love and greetings. Gyfeillion annwyl ym mhobman, anfonwn atoch ein cariad a’n cyfarchion.*

*What is your message of peace for the world? What brings you a sense of inner peace? To explore these questions, around 1,000 Quakers met at Yearly Meeting this weekend as an all-age community. We are encouraged that for many this was their first time at Yearly Meeting. The contributions to our discernment from the thriving young people’s programmes have lifted our hearts, as have the gurglings of the infant with us in our worship.*

*Recent Yearly Meetings have focused on Church Governance. We now see ways forward, as we develop structures that we trust will help our shared discernment. This year’s agenda is firmly rooted in our historic peace testimony, and we have asked ourselves deep questions about what it means for us today. We have listened in hope, and have opened ourselves to new learning, trusting in the leadings of the Light.*

*We are reminded that the central message of the New Testament is one of love. We are called to challenge tyranny; and to love everyone, even those who do bad things.*

*This is an anxious time for the world, even more so now than when we met last year. We have been challenged to welcome, accept, and nurture the radical peacemaker in ourselves and in others. We have also explored how we, as Quakers, address violence and conflict in our communities.*

*To help our discernment, we have seen a film about the different ways in which Friends are called to bear witness to our Peace Testimony. We have also heard prepared ministry from a number of Friends, including those who have seen violence*

*and oppression at first hand while giving service in Palestine and Israel as human rights observers. Reflecting on what we hear and read about each day has inevitably stirred deep and painful emotions.*

*We have spent much time praying about the situation in Gaza. Quakers have a long tradition of speaking truth to power. We have done some heart-searching and some heart breaking, and our discomfort contributed to deeply gathered worship. We have been moved by the Spirit to speak out. We urge Friends to read the full minute, which has been written in love for all those affected.*

*This year's Swarthmore Lecture, A Testimony of Community, has nourished our discernment. We have spent time in worship considering how we live together in our various communities; there are many things we might do to build peace within them. The work begins by finding peace within ourselves.*

*The promptings of love and truth in our hearts are pushing us to step outside our privilege, comfort and security. Can we do this in a spirit of adventure and joy? How radical can we be while retaining tenderness and not doing harm? We each have a different appetite and capability for radical peacemaking; we can all contribute.*

*We recognise that to secure lasting peace we must address the complex causes of conflict, including poverty and hunger, injustice and distrust, fear and disempowerment. To create a fairer world, we must get better at sharing. In doing this work we remember Jesus' advice to his disciples to be "as wise as serpents, as gentle as doves" (Matt 10:16).*

*As a final shared activity, many of us who were in London have taken advantage of being together to stand in silent worship around Friends House. We held signs which had messages of hope for world peace on the outside and hopes for personal peace on the inside.*

*This Yearly Meeting has been one of great joy at meeting each other in the spirit, deep sorrow at conflict in the world, and determination to live out our Quaker witness.*

*Signed in, and on behalf of, Yearly Meeting*

*Adwoa Burnley, Clerk.*

## ***BYM Minute 30 on use of term Genocide***

*Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain At the Yearly Meeting in London at Friends House and online, 23–26 May 2025 Minute 30: Gaza*

*Our clerks have prepared the following statement on the current situation in Gaza drawing on our discernment earlier in our Yearly Meeting. We are deeply distressed*

*by the conflict that we are praying over, and we have struggled with how to find unity. We are led to unite with this statement, as amended in our meeting.*

*“‘Fear is what happens in the absence of love.’ (Emily Provance, Swarthmore Lecture 2025)*

*Radical peacemaking requires us to engage with and to acknowledge truth in all its discomfort, complexity and cruelty. Quakers historically have spoken truth to power. We need to heed the promptings of love and truth in our hearts and speak up now.*

*Last year, Meeting for Sufferings minuted its alignment with the International Court of Justice rulings that the term apartheid was an accurate description of the situation in occupied Palestine and that there was a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza. Meeting for Sufferings felt compelled to speak out following decades of direct Quaker witness and peace work in Palestine and Israel.*

*Since then, we have watched with horror as the Israeli government has deepened its collective punishment of Palestinians for the heinous, unjustified crimes of Hamas on 7 October 2023.*

*Over the last three months, we have witnessed the deliberate mass starvation of a people and dismantling of almost all life-sustaining systems within Gaza. We have seen the forced movement of Palestinians and a stated intention to expel them from Gaza. We have heard Israeli government ministers incite hatred against and dehumanise Palestinians. We have heard language and witnessed actions that cannot be justified and strike at the core of our common humanity.*

*In a world where we are seeing cases in many countries of outrageous inhumanity, dehumanisation and the cruel actions that follow from denying the worth and dignity of all, what is being done in Gaza is no less terrible for not being unique. Our long history of witness and peace work in Palestine and Israel gives us particular experience from which to speak on this issue. The fact that we are speaking about Gaza does not absolve us of our responsibility to learn about and respond to other atrocities around the world.*

*We understand that genocide under international law must meet certain strict criteria. It means specific acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Genocide scholars are clear that genocide does not constitute one overwhelming, horrific act only, but is a process with many stages.*

*With this in mind, and guided by the testimony and judgment of Palestinians, Israelis, and genocide and legal experts we look to and work with, we are therefore led to say that we believe that genocide and mass displacement are underway in the actions of the Israeli government and its military towards the population of Gaza, recognising that a legal judgment on this is a matter for the International Courts.*

*We know that for many in the Jewish community, this word brings deep and real fear. Fear that the term 'genocide' fuels antisemitism, that it attacks their core Jewish identity and safety. That it reduces a complex, existential conflict to a simple story of 'good' and 'bad'. We acknowledge the historical weight of this term for Jewish people, set against centuries of anti-Jewish hatred and crimes, and the ultimate horror and genocide of the Holocaust. We acknowledge the history and present day reality of anti-Jewish hatred in the UK, a hatred that was exported worldwide by British and other European colonial powers. We acknowledge the historic and current role of the British state in creating the context of this conflict and the tragedy we see playing out now.*

*Central to Quakerism is the experience that there is that of God in everyone. From this belief – that all people are unique, precious, children of God – all others follow. We therefore abhor racism, including antisemitism, in all its forms. We grieve the pain and fear that our friends in Jewish communities are experiencing at this time.*

*We see and uphold those in Jewish communities and in Israel working for peace and justice for Palestinian people.*

*And so, we cannot say clearly enough: it is this current Israeli government that we are led to say we believe is committing genocide. Jewish people are not committing genocide. The Israeli people are not committing genocide. We abhor, and will challenge, any attempt to exploit our words to incite, fuel, or commit anti-Jewish and antisemitic hatred or violence. We abhor, and will challenge, any attempt to use our words to question the existence of Israel or the Israeli people's right to live in peace and security.*

*It is also a tenet of Quakerism that violence can never be the answer. That the means are just as important as the ends. This is our peace testimony that has led us for more than 350 years to eschew all war and all violence at all times. We cry out for the violence in Gaza to stop – for an end to the killing of Palestinians and for the Israeli hostages to be returned home. We cry out for Palestinians and Israelis to be safe and to live thriving, joyous lives in their homelands. Everyone deserves a place to live where they don't feel scared. Our long work for peace tells us that security for some bought with the insecurity of others tears at our collective humanity and is only ever temporary. Peace can never be brought about by the systematic oppression of others.*

*We therefore use the word 'genocide' after deep discernment. We use this word with the aim of opening eyes, minds and hearts. We use this word in the deep hope that the actions it describes will stop."*

*We know that making a statement is not enough. We draw Friends' and meetings' attention to Meeting for Sufferings minutes S/11/04/4 from April 2011, which asks Friends throughout Britain 2 Yearly Meeting to boycott settlement goods, until such*

*time as the occupation is ended, and MfS/18/10/19 from October 2018, which asks BYM to avoid investing in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine.*

*We ask Friends and meetings to reach out in love to Jewish people and communities they have connections with, and to understand and learn about atrocities across the world.*

*We send this minute to Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and uphold them as they communicate this statement to partners working for peace in the region.*

*We send this minute to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, and uphold them as they communicate this statement and seek to reassure our friends in the Jewish community and in other faiths of our continued support and love.*

*We hold in the light the people governing Israel and Palestine and pray that they are moved towards peace and compassion.*

*We uphold those in positions of power and pray for them as they “seek light on the road to peace.”*

## **Quakers in Scotland**

**On 20<sup>th</sup> September, General Meeting for Scotland will be laid down.**

**The new charity has already been set up. Kate Gulliver will be the Treasurer and other role holders will carry on in the meantime, e.g. Michael Hutchison and Susan Mitchel as Clerk and Asst Clerk. There is a group of Foundation Trustees who will see the changeover. Subjects such as the continuation of Area Meetings are still to be decided.**

**Do you have questions? Do you know how this will affect you? Many discussion papers were prepared and are available on the GM website.**

## **Silence**

Silence is our real nature. What we are fundamentally is only silence.

Silence is free from beginning and end. It was from the beginning of all things. It is causeless. Its greatness lies in the fact it simply is.

In silence all objects have their own ground. It is the light that gives objects that shape and form. All movements, all activities are harmonised by silence.

Silence has no opposite in noise. It is not positive or negative. It dissolves all objects. It is not related to any counterpart that belongs to the mind. It has nothing to do with Mind. It cannot be defined but can be felt directly because it is our own nearness.

From an interview in The Friend with

## **Marissa Johnston, clerk to BYM Trustees**

*As Meeting for Sufferings is laid down and Trustees take on a more important role, it may be important to get to know the personnel. The full interview with editor, Joseph Jones, is available in The Friend, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025*

### **You used the word ‘leadership’. Does it feel like leadership?**

Oh, absolutely. But there are many forms of leadership, and I do not aspire to anything ‘top down’. I think of it like midwifery. It is the art of making something safe, but you do not take away from the person – the people, the body – who are actually doing the creative work.

### **It is interesting that you frame your theism as if it might be a problem.**

Well we are talking about an ultra- modern Britain Yearly Meeting. . .

### **And what effect do you think it has on us here, that there is less theism?**

I think people have to maintain their own integrity. If people find certain concepts difficult and cannot believe in them, then they need to have the space to say, it’s OK. If we are in an environment where we can actually talk to each other, and share our experiences with each other, then there is room for movement, there is room for understanding things for which we did not have the words.

People have less trouble understanding ‘Spirit’ because that’s the energy that gives us life. My concept of God is Life with a capital L: life in all its forms, life in all its abundance, and the creative power that can bring new things out of nothing, and can bring haling out of terrible brokenness.

### **At Meeting for Sufferings I have seen you in your keffiyeh, wrestling with whether we should use the words ‘genocide’ and ‘apartheid’ about what is happening in Palestine. I could see the pull in your between the experiences that you had there (as an ecumenical accompanier, 2005/6), and your institutional role, in terms of what effect using those words was going to have on our ecumenical partners.**

My anxiety was that we project too much of the blame onto the other. And that we fail to acknowledge the very real responsibility that we bear for the disaster that has befallen the Palestinian people. That has its root in the genocide that the European world perpetuated against the Jewish people, and the persecution that Jewish people have suffered for centuries. Not to put a spotlight on that seems to me to be a failure in communication and in acknowledgement. There is an absolute connection between that and the existential fear that motivates a lot of Jewish people to support Israel, to see Israel as liberation and the promised land. Meanwhile I cannot bar to see the images of the utter destruction that has been meted out to Palestinian people – which is not to say that I don’t also think that Hamas is to blame for knowingly carrying out atrocities that they knew would bring

hellish retribution on the whole of their people. What were they thinking? What were they thinking?

**Are there any particular issues that you've found challenging?**

Well, the obvious one, which keeps on cropping up, is what is meant by Minute 31 of 2021 Yearly Meeting, affirming and welcoming our trans Friends. It is, for me, and for that body of Trustees, and for the senior management team of the Yearly Meeting, crystal clear that it means that we work towards making our communities a safer place for people who are transgender or questioning their gender in whichever way. We are absolutely determined that it is the voice of the Spirit that spoke to us at that time.

There is a little bit of sophistry going on in saying, well, we can accept and affirm a person without affirming their gender expression. There cannot be anything more intimate than the way a person decides to express their gender, particularly when it was not what is expected of them. So affirmation, which means validation – look it up in any dictionary – and encouragement, and support, is what is wanted and needed at Local level, at Area Meeting level, and that is what we will seek to deliver.

**Does that mean that a Quaker under discipline must believe that a Friend who says they have changed their sex has in fact changed their sex.**

I don't think they have to believe anything, because we don't have a doctrinal approach. People can believe anything they like . . .

**Just to double down on this, because I am sick of the letters, when the minute says we have to keep on listening, you don't believe that it means listening to people with gender-critical view?**

I am not talking about gender-critical, I am only talking about transphobia. There's a difference. Beliefs are beliefs and they are fine. But I will not stand by if there is any attempt to marginalise people or make them feel uncomfortable or to discriminate against them.

**. . . I believe I see a willingness to learn in some people. And I suppose I worry about the psychological effect on an organisation, on those willing people, when they think some part of it is not heard. I suppose someone says they are scared to use a woman-only space because there might be someone they think of as a man in there, isn't that their experience?**

It's not experience though is it? The fear is a fear. The transphobia is in assuming that trans people are dangerous. It's akin to saying I don't feel safe with a Muslim person, because there are terrorists among Muslims. What does that say? It is prejudice and discrimination. We have robust safe-guarding practises, which are there to protect us all.

QF&P: 31 Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war.

## Northern Friends Peace Board Update July 2025

### Barry Mills, representative for West Scotland Area Meeting

The Peace Board met in Edinburgh on Saturday 28 June with 20 members present in person and a similar number online.

Our invited speaker for this meeting was Dixie Wills, peace worker for Quakers in Britain. He outlined his work and introduced a brand-new pamphlet for local peace walks, visiting the addresses of World War 2 Conscientious Objectors to provide information & stimulate reflection & discussions on the topic. For the maps, look at the website [conscienceww2](http://conscienceww2) based on my own research – we hope to add Scotland in the next few months. Quakers in Britain are supporting modern day COs, two of whom are featured in the new pamphlet Regrettably neither Russia nor Ukraine allow conscripts to appeal as COs and men of conscription age are forbidden to leave either country. Further information from [qpsw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:qpsw@quaker.org.uk)

NFPB has just published a new booklet 'Responses to War', with contributions from NFPB members and others. There are further responses not included in the booklet but the full range of responses will soon be available on the NFPB website.

We then spent some time looking at the future of the Board. The group I was in thought the Board was needed now more than ever. We especially valued the reliable and helpful information at a time when it is increasingly difficult to discover the truth the networking with Quaker, Christian and other peace organisations and the chance to meet and get to know others who are standing against the rising tide of militarism.

You can find out more from the NFPB website & if you would like to be on the NFPB email list or want to buy the new publication, please email Philip Austin [nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org)

If you want to discuss the work of the Board or find out more about World War 2 COs, please contact me at [millsbcp@protonmail.com](mailto:millsbcp@protonmail.com).

Editor's note: many thanks to Barry Mills, West Scotland AM's representative at Northern Friends Peace Board for his update (see above). Prompted by Barry's report and update, we take the opportunity to offer a beginners guide to Northern Friends Peace Board, taken from NFPB leaflets, website and a summary of their activities in 2024.

## **More info from their literature:**

Despite the archaic language of the title, this Quaker Recognised Body is as relevant and needed today as when it was founded from a Quaker concern in 1913, immediately before the First World War.

The conference that set up the NFPB minuted that the Board was to.... *'advise and encourage Friends in the North, and through them their fellow Christians and citizens generally, in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.'*

NFPB aims to work alongside other Quaker groups – from Local Meetings to international Quaker bodies – to promote and seek alternatives to war and violent conflict, and to speak out on peace at all levels. Supporting and linking up with individuals, Quaker Meetings and other Quaker and non-Quaker groups and networks taking action for peace.

Representatives are appointed by Area Meetings across the north of Britain – including North Wales, northern England, and the whole of Scotland. Key parts of their role include being a two-way channel of communication between Area Meetings and NFPB.

These AM reps, together with NFPB trustees and other Friends coopted to serve for specific purposes, historically are called Board members. They meet 3 or 4 times a year at various locations within northern Britain, usually at a Friends' Meeting House and also on zoom. Through inviting speakers and linking up with local Friends' concerns and activities, the meetings also serve to strengthen Quaker and non-Quaker peace networks.

Individual Friends and reps from Local Meetings are welcome to attend.

Discussion takes place and decisions are made in a quiet spirit of worship in the manner of Friends. Decisions are minuted at the time.

Funding comes chiefly from Area Meetings and Local Meetings, with additional support from grant-making trusts, legacies, sales of resources, and donations from individuals

## **.What they do**

- Organise conferences, workshops and other events, for Friends and others.
- Produce written publications, both printed and online.
- Publicise opportunities for engagement and action on peace concerns,
- Organise and participate in acts of witness.

## **What you can do?**

- attend any meeting as an individual, or as a rep from your local meeting.
- join one or both of their two mailing lists on updates, activities and resources.
- join one of their workshops or learning days on peace-related themes for your Quaker Meeting or other group.

- join local Quakers in a Meeting for Worship at the gates of the Faslane naval base, home of the UK's Trident nuclear-armed submarines on the Gare Loch, in the Firth of Clyde near Helensburgh.

The November 2020 strategy identified some specific areas for action. Thus, in the period ahead, we plan to:

- *use the framework of rethinking security to link together work on challenging militarism, peace in society and sustainability*
- *develop activities that enable exploration and understanding of new issues and concerns*
- *pay attention to processes that encourage broad participation, from nominations to outreach events*
- *build on already good links we have with other Quaker work so that we can most usefully complement and collaborate.*
- *further strengthen our use of web and social media resources*
- *support the contribution of representatives from Area Meetings, and ensure that our communications and links with Friends across the north are working well.*

### **Networking and communications**

We aim to develop and maintain appropriate and effective communication – to and with Friends and beyond – and to build relationships and partnerships with other organisations, networks and key individuals. Through our membership being rooted in different parts of the UK, we have explored the differing perspectives, experiences and opportunities in England, in Wales and in Scotland.

We maintain working links with a number of other bodies, Quaker and non-Quaker. For example, we are members of the [Rethinking Security](#), the [Network of Christian Peace Organisations](#), [Network for Peace](#), the [International Peace Bureau](#) and [Scotland's for Peace](#).

Particularly important is our relations with [Quaker Peace and Social Witness \(QPSW\)](#), where we have cross-representation on its Peace and Disarmament and Peace Education programmes. We also attend Britain Yearly Meeting (at which we offer talks or interest groups when appropriate) and the annual [Peace and Service Consultations of the Europe and Middle East Section \(EMES\)](#) of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). Other relationships with individuals and organisations arise through our work.

## **Northern Friends Peace Round-up: 15 May 2025**

**courtesy of Elmbank News**

A selection of items from a range of sources. Inclusion here does not imply full endorsement, but is based on current concerns of Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) and its members.

*To join the mailing list for these bulletins, please contact [nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org)*

If fear is the goal, solidarity is the antidote

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2025/04/if-fear-is-the-goal-then-solidarity-is-the->

antidote

Why does “national security” always mean more war and not more health care?

<https://truthout.org/articles/why-does-national-security-always-mean-more-war-not-more-health-care>

### **Ten years of Peace Hub**

<https://peacehub.org.uk/news/2024/11/26/10-years-of-peace-hub>

Quaker statement urging the UK Government to recognise the state of Palestine

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quaker-statement-urging-the-uk-government-to-recognise-the-state-of-palestine>

### **International Cooperation: 80 years on from 1945**

<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2025/05/01/international-cooperation-80-years-on-from-1945>

How Conflict-Sensitive Water Management Builds Peace

<https://www.cgiar.org/news-events/news/how-conflict-sensitive-water-management-builds-peace-lessons-from-cgiars-training-with-egypts-nwrc>

### **Moving with dignity: rethinking migration in the UK and beyond**

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/moving-with-dignity-rethinking-migration-in-the-uk-and-beyond> 1945 and the Military Pandemic

<https://seurescotland.substack.com/p/1945-and-the-military-pandemic>

VE Day and the hope for Peace

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/ve-day-and-the-hope-for-peace>

Israel's peace movement offers a ray of hope amid the pain of Gaza conflict

<https://theconversation.com/israels-peace-movement-offers-a-ray-of-hope-amid-the-pain-of-gaza-conflict-2560309>

### **Never again war! Pope Leo calls for peace in Gaza and Ukraine**

<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/05/11/europe/pope-leo-vatican-balcony-prayer-intl>

Peace & Disarmament Education: A Strategy to Prevent Dystopia

<https://indepthnews.net/peace-and-disarmament-education-a-strategy-to-prevent-dystopia>

### **What does the global arms race mean for climate action?**

<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/what-does-the-global-arms-race-mean-for-climate-action>

### **In a World of Chaos, Gandhi's Truth and Nonviolence Still Offer a Path Forward**

<https://www.citywatchla.com/voices/30661-in-a-world-of-chaos-gandhis-truth-and-nonviolence-still-offer-a-path-forward>

### **7 actions to take now to defend our right to protest**

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/7-actions-to-take-now-to-defend-our-right-to-protestUn7rlfv3pWkPaL-h8>

### **Trump is repeating one of the darkest chapters of US History**

<https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/5242442-trump-aliens-enemies-act>

### **Letter: As British Jews we can no longer stay silent on the war in Gaza**

<https://www.ft.com/content/6a506d98-40a0-48e7-8e98-2882beb30914>

Friends General Conference joins over two dozen religious groups in new immigration lawsuit <https://www.friendsjournal.org/quakers-join-new-dhs-lawsuit>

### **Bonhoeffer and the challenge of pacifism**

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/bonhoeffer-and-the-challenge-of-pacifism>

### **End Israel's Unlawful Occupation of Palestine, Quakers Urge World Leaders**

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/end-israel-s-unlawful-occupation-of-palestine-quakers-urge-world-leaders>

### **World military spending hits \$2.7 trillion in record 2024 surge**

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/world-military-spending-hits-27-trillion-record-2024-surge-2025-04-27>

### **Military cosyng up to Trump in Yemen cannot end well for the UK**

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/02/trump-yemen-uk-global-pariah-houthis-strike>

### **RAF's new armed drone given approval to fly over UK**

<https://dronewars.net/2025/05/12/rafs-new-armed-drone-given-approval-to-fly-freely-over-uk>

### **UK Nuclear Deterrent: The mutual defence agreement is at risk in the Trumpian age**

<https://theconversation.com/uk-nuclear-deterrent-the-mutual-defense-agreement-is-at-risk-in-a-trumpian-age-252674>

### **The police raid of a Quaker meeting house has backfired, not surprisingly**

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2025/04/quaker-police-raid-arrest-london>

### **Capitalism Eating Itself by Fuelling Climate Mayhem, Warns Capitalist**

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/capitalism-climate>

**Northern Friends Peace Board - <http://nfpb.org.uk>**

**Quaker Meeting House, 50 Silverwell St, Bolton BL1 1PP**

**[nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org) - 07730 070167 Charity: SCO 24632**

**World Bank states that 1 Billion people are starving, facing famine, in 39 countries involved in armed conflict, mainly in Africa.**

# Human Rights for Palestinians

I was privileged to listen to representatives of Christian Aid partners from Israel, Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory when they visited Scotland on Wednesday 19 March 2025. It was surprising to learn that these four Palestinians met for the first time in Scotland being unable to meet together in the Middle East. Hearing personal stories from four different perspectives emphasised the hardships and complexities of the ongoing situation. Although each speaker was here representing an NGO, the views reported here are their individual ones.

**Leila El Ali**, the Executive Director of [Association Najdeh](#), a development charity that works with Palestinian women and children refugees in Lebanon, is herself a refugee living in a refugee camp in Lebanon; **Dr. Hassan Jabareen**, the General Director of [Adalah](#), The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, is also a lecturer at Tel-Aviv University; **Peter Nasir**, General Secretary of [EJ-YMCA](#) (The East Jerusalem Young Men's Christian Association), which is a Palestinian community-based organisation working to empower youth and communities, has fragile residency rights in East Jerusalem but no citizenship; and **Ahmed Sourani**, the Coordinator of Gaza Urban Agriculture Platform ([GUPAP](#)), left Gaza in 2023 and since then has not been allowed to return to be with his family there. Each of them spoke

Leila spoke of life in the refugee camps, established more than 70 years ago by international and host countries supported by UNWRA. Refugees have no rights and there is no freedom of movement. The recent cuts to UNWRA and USAID funding have been devastating for local NGOs like Association Najdeh. Bank charges make it challenging to support the poorest and now, if you are over 60, you are not entitled to open heart surgery should you need it. Association Najdeh advocates for the right to work, and now, since the cut to UNWRA for basic services; Social Workers and Psychologists offer psychosocial support for those displaced outwith the camps. Her plea was for refugees to be given citizenship.

Hassan is an impressive human rights lawyer who set up the legal centre for Arab minority rights 30 years ago when the government in Israel was more favourable towards Palestinians. Now, Hassan told us, there is the most racist right wing government ever. Have a look at the [Adalah](#) website and you will find a list of all the laws that diminish Palestinian citizens rights in Israel. Since this recent war all Palestinians are seen as the enemy and their lives are oppressed with no right to language or heritage. There is no equality - Israel is not a state for all its citizens although Iran and Saudi Arabia are. Working for Adalah he has to use a strategic approach with clever arguments to find cases where there is a hope of winning. This is not easy in a setting where family reunification is not allowed, villages are unrecognised allowing demolitions to occur but he has had some success with the return of bodies to their families for burial - all Abrahamic faiths respect this right

but Israel has been holding on to bodies to use in bargaining with Hamas. In view of all the injustices of the current situation it is perhaps not surprising that the crime rate amongst Palestinian Israelis is one of the highest in the world, second only to central America

Peter is a Christian tracing his ancestors back 1700 years. He joked that if his ancestors had not converted we would not have Christianity. 25% of Palestinians are Christian and the Palestinian YMCA was founded in 1948 by some Palestinians returning home from London. It works in 56 communities across the West bank and aims to build spirit, mind and body - but gyms and swimming pools are not enough. Other support is needed and Christian Aid has helped EJ-YMCA develop the methodology for their support programmes, for psychosocial rehabilitation of children who have been detained and work with women's protection and empowerment.

Peter gave examples of his own family's experience of detention. 'Administrative detention' is arrest without due process – his cousin was arrested just because she was in a dance group. He told a harrowing story of the arrest in a dawn raid and subsequent torture in prison, of his 15 year old cousin for having banged the boot of a car with his fist. After pressure from his family he was eventually released to house arrest but not allowed to go to school. The conviction rate in these military courts is 99.4% – that is only 6 in 1000 not convicted - and arrests can be made from the age of 4. Children from the age of 12 are treated as adults and have no representation in court from either parents or lawyers. Peter believes in the right of Palestinians to be treated equally, to refuse to be second class citizens, or to be treated like animals as they are made to feel from birth. He believes people are inherently good but there is a need to work hard to stop children hating. He is pleased that his own daughters are able to attend the Friends School in Ramallah.

Ahmed described how he was physically with us but mentally and emotionally he was with his family in Gaza. His organisation works with five partners building and supporting much needed community initiatives such as: supporting local urban farmers, home gardens, safe spaces for women and children, vaccination of children, supporting women, children and older people, managing social disputes and in general building capacity and resilience of local communities. Urban farming and home gardens are a vital part of food provision in Gaza.

The principles of this work include respect, peace, love and justice where diversity is seen as a source of power.

Asked by the audiences what we can do to help the speakers came up with these actions

1. Speak truth to power by asking MPs and MSPs to:
  - Press for human rights for Palestinians in Israel.

- Ask the government to press the Israeli government to freeze the law stopping UNWRA for the sake of human dignity.
  - Give refugees citizenship
2. Campaign for human rights
  3. Give support and solidarity for local NGOs
  4. Use social media to press Palestinian case

The YMCA has an Olive Tree Campaign you can support [here](#).

Thank you to our allies Christian Aid for arranging for their partners to come to the UK and share their experience with us. Sadly Peter Nasir said that the most disappointing aspect of the trip was a meeting with government officials at Westminster.



**NO TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

**A CHRISTIAN ECUMENICAL GATHERING COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATOMIC BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI. ALL WELCOME.**

  
**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**August**

  
**10.30AM**

  
**Faslane, South Gate,**  
**Maidstone Road**

**FEATURING READINGS, PRAYER AND REFLECTION LED BY:**



**MOST REV. WILLIAM NOLAN**

Archbishop of  
Glasgow and  
President of Justice  
& Peace Scotland




**RIGHT REV. ROSIE FREW**

Moderator of the  
General Assembly of  
the Church of  
Scotland



**MOST REV. MARK STRANGE**

Primus of the  
Scottish Episcopal  
Church

 **FREE BUS AVAILABLE**

**EDINBURGH:** Departing Waterloo Place, beside Waverly Station, at **7.45am**

**GLASGOW:** Departing Gordon Street, outside Central Station, at **9.15am**



## Climate Change and Sustainability

### Quaker Earthcare Gathering: Nurturing Radical Worship and Witness

*An all-age residential gathering will be held at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, DE55 1AU; Friday 24th – Monday 27th October 2025. Adults £375, 6-16 year olds £120, 0-5 year olds £20. Financial support available.\* Contributions invited for a bursary fund.*

We are writing as the planning group of the upcoming [Quaker Earthcare Gathering](#). This group currently comprises individuals from BYM staff, Living Witness and Quaker Support for Climate Action.

You are invited to reserve your place for the residential weekend [here](#) (if you have not already done so!). Many thanks to those who have reserved places.

The event will be accompanied by a broader community building process including online sessions in the months before and after, designed to nourish our Quaker faith and communities to meet the Earth crisis with hope, strength, and compassion. You are welcome to take part in the community building process or the residential weekend, or both.

Our intention is that the gathering will be deeply rooted in worship and will include a children's programme, short talks, workshops, discussions, practical activities, music, dance, art and much more.

You are welcome to come to one of the following Zoom meetings:

10.00 – 11.30am Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March

7.00 – 8.30pm Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March

4.00 – 5.30pm Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82622604700?pwd=CyY0w4qmuzb3IazLC0KY3HTI8uCmag.1>

Meeting ID: 826 2260 4700 Passcode: 241025

These are open to all Friends, whether they are able to come in October or not, so do encourage others to come along and help identify our community needs at this time and what gifts people might want to contribute. This will start to shape the gathering programme and be part of discerning what it means for us as Quakers to live through this moment in history.

We hope you can join us for the Zooms; if you are not able to, there will be other ways to contribute to shaping the gathering. Please let us know what would suit you.

In Friendship,

**Gathering planning group: Sarah Shaw, Paul Hodgkin, Laurie Michaelis, Gerry Winnall and Ailish Carroll-Brentnall**

\* Ask about financial help by emailing [info@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:info@livingwitness.org.uk). Please check first whether your local or area meeting can support you, or for 18-35 year-olds whether you can get support from the [Quakers in Britain young adult grant scheme](#). All

contributions to the gathering bursary fund are gratefully received. You will be able to donate via the event payment form.

**Laurie Michaelis** 5 Hutchcomb Road, Oxford, OX2 9HN 07421 083 950

[www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk)

## **Letter to the Friend 28/3/25 Daphne Wasserman**

The report from the recent Meetings for Sufferings (14 March) refers to net zero targets.

These will be based on the same criteria as government targets, considering our territorial emissions – that is, those emitted in the UK. On that basis it is claimed that our emissions have halved.

Since the baseline date of 1990, our manufacturing has contracted considerably and we now import many more goods. The emissions from manufacture and transport of these goods are not generally included in the calculations of emission reductions.

If you look at the consumption-based emissions, they reduced somewhat but have now levelled out and may now be increasing again. This is shown clearly in a World Wildlife Fund report of March 2020, which can be found by searching online for 'WWF consumption-emissions'. That states that 'Between 1990 and 2016 the UK's consumption-based emissions (carbon footprint) declined by 15%.

We need a better way to measure our greenhouse gas emissions.

## **Oh What Lies We Live!**

Our so clean society rests on the backs of poorer, less powerful countries.

Electric cars use very rare metals that devastate the countries they are mined in, and often poison the inhabitants in the process.

Data storage for our IT habit uses as much fuel as aircraft. Don't ask me how they calculate that but pay attention to the cries of locals whose water supply is gobbled up trying to cool down these search engines. A BBC4 programme on e mails was enlightening, or maybe just frightening, in saying that one email could take as much energy as to burn a light bulb for 6 minutes – might depend on whether the e mail has attachments or presumably if the light bulb is energy saving! But can it be true that one famous footballer's message that went viral used as much energy as six (or was it 10) houses for one year.

You may doubt where all these figures come from but the fact remains that we live a lie re our use of Earth's resources and do not live blame-free.

And I haven't even mentioned the 20,000 extra satellites at lower level that facilitate data exchange from your smart XXXXXX that needs many many micro transmitters only several hundred feet apart (usually on lampposts) that work on a microwave frequency that burns to death all insects in the vicinity. *See review in previous newsletter.* Living simply is no longer a religious devotion.

**Margaret Roy**

## Gender-base Violence

### Domestic Violence in politics and law in Scotland

Margaret Roy

This is a huge hole in our work towards a more just and equal society. It is a bit like the cobbler's children, too close to home to elicit a strong response or is it simply an example of the dyed in the wool misogyny of a patriarchal society that is based on status of 'wealth' creating a hierarchy of haves and have not's?

October 2019, the First Minister stated, 'within this parliamentary term, we will introduce a new law to establish emergency protective orders'. In September 2020, the Government 'reiterated the importance of protecting women and girls facing domestic abuse'. October 2020, the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act was introduced in the Scottish parliament and became law in March 2021 – passed without opposition. This introduced *Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders (DAPO)* and *Domestic Abuse Prevention Notices (DAPN)* that would give powers to police and landlords/landladies to act when women were in serious danger.

Then the Westminster parliament did likewise when it introduced its own Domestic Abuse Act in April 2021. Since then pilot schemes have been in operation in Manchester, London, Cleveland and North Wales. But not in Scotland where the parliament set up a Justice Committee in January 2021 saying more work was needed to make the Bill practical.

In 2021 Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf is quoted as hailing it 'transformative legislation' that would help 600 to 3000 families each year.

In September 2023, Justice Secretary Angela Constance stated 'detail being worked through'. A working group was set up to discuss Part 1. This was held in March 2025. but by June 2025 Part 1 was shelved indefinitely as a new working group was set up for 2026.

Meanwhile in England and Wales the pilot studies are up and running and already convicting abusers under DAPOs.

A DAPN would allow police to order an abuser from a shared home where there is a risk of physical violence or psychological trauma 'escalating. This could happen speedily before a case came to court when a more serious DAPO could impose many more restrictions including a GPS tracker or even demand to attend drug or alcohol programmes.

***I am indebted to Mark Howarth of the Sunday Post for his article on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Indeed I congratulate the Sunday Post for their championing the cause of Domestic Abuse, including their aim to publish good role models for young men thus identifying one important cause of Domestic Abuse and violence against women.***

PLEASE WRITE/E MAIL YOUR MSP, FIRST MINSTER AND CURRENT JUSTICE SECRETARY, ANGELA CONSTANCE. ASK, WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THIS ACT. ASK GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND OR ITS SUCCESSOR, QUAKERS IN SCOTLAND TO ADOPT THIS INJUSTICE AS A CONCERN ENCOURAGING ACTION FROM OUR PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT PERSON.

*Also, please support Pam Gosal MSP who has lodged her own bill calling for a register of domestic abusers, I.E akin to that already in existence of sex offenders.*

**From The Friend, report of our WSAM concern at a prep meeting for BYM – Joseph Jones writing.**

In **The war within our own society**, fifteen Friends looked at gender-based violence with a group from West Scotland Are Meeting, where a concern for this subject took hold eight or nine years ago. It was a 'deep and enormous subject' said Margaret Roy from the group. They had tried various ways of pushing it up the agenda, but found what they thought was little support from Quakers. 'So we changed tack,' said Margaret, beginning with what the Peace Testimony might say about the subject. 'Then we got hold of the subject of the Lamb's War,' the term used by early Friend James Nayler to approach 'the war without and the war within'.

'We want you to harken to the Lamb's War,' Margaret went on, to the violence within our own society. That is mostly violence against women. Sh asked the gathered Friends to consider two questions: Does our Peace Testimony cover violence in our society? Is misogyny violence?

The two questions are quite straight forward, thought one Friend. But 'they're different areas that require different kinds of work'.

Another was grateful for the conversation, and recognised Quakers' failure to witness. 'If we don't work on this we'll continue existing patterns rather than become new ones.'

Friends struggled to bring the issue into sharp focus, but left with a sense of a big issue that they had need to work on further.

The number of rapes and attempted rapes in Scotland soared by 15% last year and domestic abuse offences leapt by 25% in an 'epidemic' of violence against women. Actual figures? In 2018 domestic abuse offence was 2573 of which 94% victims were female. Justice Secretary Angela Constance puts the rise down to 'Multiple factors (*including*) our action to tackle sexual offending (which) includes increasing confidence in the justice system so more victims come forward, improving support for victims and moderating the law on sexual offences'.

**A woman's voice is her nakedness** *from the Talmud*

*What is the difference between rape and torture? Torture victims are often welcomed home as heroes and received medical and social help to 'resettle'. Rape victims may receive further censure because of the shame.*

## Scottish Community Justice Network

### **Modernising Criminal Justice-2025- The Coming of Artificial**

#### **Intelligence**

**Mike Nellis, Glasgow**

**Precis by Laura McMurtrie**

The following is a precis of Mike's report on the above and his summary of the salient points made at the conference. It also touches on his assessment of the likely impact of the direction of travel indicated at the conference. As Mike says, Quakers have a long and honourable tradition in working in criminal justice and penal reform which is, grounded in spiritual and humanistic values and we are grateful to Mike for keeping us abreast of developments in this area of Quaker interest.

Mike expresses concern, that the reforms proposed, and the use of A.I. will do little to humanise our criminal justice system. They will not tackle or build back an infrastructure capable of reversing the increasing prison population, will not tackle recidivism or address the continued lack of rehabilitation services. Mike's fuller report is available on request.

Mike has been attending this Annual Conference for almost 20 years and has been considering the development of technology and its uses in the Criminal Justice sector for many years now. Latterly his attention has been focused on the use and impact of AI in criminal justice systems. As Emeritus Professor of Criminal and Community Justice at the University of Strathclyde Mike was asked to speak at the conference this year. Mike's Quaker values are clearly in evidence in his approach to the issues of Criminal Justice and his evaluation of A.I. in this context.

The conference was held in London at the large QE11 Conference Centre and was attended by hundreds of senior and middle managers from government and non-governmental agencies, tech companies, A.I. specialists and experts from academia in the fields of A.I. and Criminal Justice.

The Keynote speakers included David Gauke (former Lord Chancellor), who was recently commissioned to undertake a Criminal Justice Sentencing Review, and he spoke on the report of his findings and recommendations. Lord Timpson the minister for prisons, parole and probation spoke of strengthening the probation service, whilst Sir Brian Leveson spoke of the unprecedented backlog of cases in the English Criminal Courts.

One of the major issues is that we in the UK have yet another crisis in our criminal justice system which basically consists of a shortfall of around 14,000 prison places given our current incarceration policies. Secondly, we have a shortage of probation

officers and thirdly a shortage of rehabilitation options. Whilst we are building more prisons and attempting to rebuild our probation service, we are seeking more efficiency in our over stretched service and are looking to A.I. to try to help solve/alleviate these problems. This is the heart of the challenge as outlined at conference.

So, Mike informs us that the potential of A. I. is being sought/ to attempt to modernise and 'force' efficiency into a system that is overstretched and short on humanity big on punishment and light on rehabilitation.

The fact that we have the largest prison population in Western Europe and why this is the case was not addressed.

Mike questions the fundamental assumptions of our criminal justice system and its structures and processes, arguing that A.I. will simply consolidate everything that is currently dysfunctional about it. In the absence of a review of the underlying value base of our criminal justice services we will more efficiently reinforce the inequalities and significant tendencies towards recidivism inherent in our current system.

He further argues that the use of A.I. in the ways proposed at the conference may not even achieve a permanent reduction in the prison population. If we are utilising it as a stop gap until more prisons are built, then no reduction will be achieved in the longer term. Furthermore, if the vision for probation services is as (as was indicated at the conference) a punitive alternative to custody option- 'a prison at home service' with significant restrictions on movement and very high levels of checking and surveillance utilising A. I. with little or no rehabilitation, we have simply exported prison to the community. We will have no reform, and the modernisation will consist of extending the punitive lack of humanity in our penal system to prison at home monitored by highly efficient and effective A.I. systems.

These are developments we need to be aware of and have a view on. Quakers in Criminal Justice have recently begun considering these issues at a conference in London this year whilst in the USA the Quaker Institute for the Future has begun addressing the issues of A.I. As Mike says these are the first steps in a long journey.

Compassion, to be effective, requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works. Any social system in turn requires men and women in it of imagination and goodwill. What would be fatal would be for those with exceptional human insight and concern to concentrate on ministering to individuals, whilst those accepting responsibility for the design and management of organisations were left to become technocrats. What is important is that institutions and their administration be constantly tested against human values, and that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is.

# HOLY WISDOM

Somewhere, we are told that Jews of the time considered Jesus to be an incarnate of Holy Wisdom, imaged as the dove descending at his baptism. Certainly much of his teachings are in the manner of Holy Wisdom. Much he takes from Isaiah and Jeremiah but the foundation text must be in Leviticus where God states that he does not want burnt sacrifices but that he should be worshipped in the Heart. Through the ages that has been translated as worshipping God in the Spirit. You could argue, what is meant by Heart and Spirit. All that has life and/or form.

Hokma, Chokmah, Hakima, Sophia was seen as feminine. She came into being in Genesis where she is the *modus operandi* of the Creation hence she is seen as the creative spirit of the universe. You will find her in Proverbs and in the Song of Songs. And somewhere it says you will know her by her children, i.e. by all that she has created.

I have struggled with Feminine Spirituality almost all my days. I was very disappointed in Cynthia Bourgeault when she declared, with many others, that the feminine of God was simply the Holy Spirit of the Trinity. That seemed to perpetuate a duality where I was looking for Oneness.

For many years I was working within a Matriarchy Study Group searching through older civilisations and cultures for feminine divinity. Neumann's *The Great Mother*, Robert Graves and Joseph Campbell lead the way to study the feminine in myth, art, etc. Esther Harding in *Psychic Energy* and the Zurich (Jungian) School led by Marie Louise van Franz encouraged an inner study of myself.

With the Study group we looked at witchcraft, the Triple Goddess of the Celts. Three phases of the Moon and a Horned God who being male ??? What happened to the Fourth phase of the Moon, the Dark Phase? Of course, she might be Lilith the first wife of Adam who told him where to jump. But, if you had a Triple Goddess with a face as maiden, mother and crone, then where was the Queen as in Queen Maub that Yeats writes about? The power of the feminine had been diluted to sit opposite the masculine as the three sexual phases of woman. OK the Wicca was strong in working with Mother Nature but why disempower women? Or indeed, restrict them to healing and midwifery. Where was the wisdom and power of the Queen. For a time I worked with Druids who had the male equivalent of (xxx), Warrior, King. And we used our homoeopathic remedies according to the male stage of evolution of the patient.

## Prov 8.22 -4

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no foundations abounding with water.

## John 1.1-5

*From the Aramaic*

*In the very beginningness was, is, and will be existing the Word-Wisdom of the One, the on-going Word and Sound, the Message and Conversation that has not stopped and has never started because it is always Now. This Wisdom existed with the One. This Wisdom existed as the One. To repeat: this same Creative Sound, embodied like word embodies wisdom, was and is at the head of everything along with the Holy One. By this and through this everything and being is being born. Without this nothing can be born. In this, with this, comes all livingness, and this energy is the light and consciousness of all humanity. First Consciousness shined with Unconsciousness, Light shines with the Darkness, Knowing will shine with Unknowing, and one has not and will not overcome the other.*

Enough! All this led me to work on power, and especially how we give away or own power or endow it in others. We may feel safer and less anxious endowing another with our responsibilities and decision-making processes but it is never the less a symptom of immaturity (or laziness) OK as we are growing up and are less experienced.

With Holy Wisdom, I feel I have got it!

The Chinese call the Creative Force around us as the Dragon and I do a Qi Gong exercise teaching us to feel the Dragon all around us, feel it touching our skin, feel each breath draws it into our being so we are not separate from it, so we are one with the whole Creation. It is our Life and Power (Energy). But this is the FEELING ZONE.

As with Jung, the Buddhists divide the aspects of the mind. There is the thinking Ego Mind that works through dualism and there is Feeling that is very different from Sensing. Feeling was something that was explained to me by one Lama as what an animal does. Do you ever see an animal looking at its feet? Yet it knows where it places each one. A horse gallops with only one toe on the ground! When you did Scottish Country Dancing, where were your feet? An animal has a concept of inner wholeness, like the human child, which we lose as we grow older *then stumble and fall in old age!* Where is Feeling? Is it simply a proprioceptor sense? In Buddhist meditation we are taught to 'rest in the true nature of the Mind, which is the One Mind. We relax and let go of the thinking mind to enter Heart Consciousness. And that is where our Soul is.

Heart consciousness is not about sentimentality or even emotion. It is beyond personality. The key is through Feeling Tone, wholeness, to allow a sense of self to appear and dissolve into All. The thinking mind is only a small section of Mind. Alas, the way we are schooled in the West means that letting go of it is like a Little Death. It is very frightening to enter into the silence. And, as Margaret Fell once said, it can shake you violently when the spirit moves. But this is where Quakerism begins. We seek to know the Divine. When the Heart opens, we lose our separateness and in that unity is real Love, Oneness. It is worth the death to experience that.

And as Jesus taught, we are no longer male or female, as we are beyond duality.



## **Holy Wisdom In Judaism:**

### **THE WELL *from 13<sup>th</sup> century Zohar***

*When the desire of the Holy One,  
begins to move actively,  
the One engraves signs,  
the primordial letters, into the  
shimmering sphere around itself.  
From the most hidden place  
inside of nonbeing then arises  
a dark flame from the mystery  
of the sacred No-thing-ness,  
that which is, was, and will be.  
The dark flame rises like a mist  
enclosed within the circle of that sphere:  
it has no colour, not white or black,  
nor red or green, none,  
As the flame starts to  
have its own size and shape,  
brilliant colours gush out  
of a well deep within its centre,  
covering everything below it.  
This flow of colour breaks through -  
and yet does not break through -  
the fog of nonbeing around it.  
It doesn't dazzle us  
until the secret thrust of  
First Knowing, Holy Wisdom,  
breaks through, shining.*

## **Holy Wisdom in Islam**

### **HIDDEN TREASURE *Ibn Al-Arabi 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi***

*When the One Being wanted to  
contemplate  
its beautiful names and qualities  
all the doorways and addresses of Unity -  
which are, of course, without number -  
it desired to create one being  
that would embody them all. One being  
that could hold within itself  
and reflect back the whole mystery  
of divine Reality.  
If you look at a thing in reflection,  
for instance, your own face,  
it is quite different from the view  
you behold of yourself  
in your heart of hearts.  
Which is more real, more true?  
Your own heart-picture of course.  
And yet, looking outward,  
we get a snapshot of our  
that would not existing  
as much as the reflection needs it.  
in your heart of hearts.  
Which is more real, more true?  
Your own heart-picture of course.  
And yet, looking outward,  
we get a snapshot of our reality  
that would not existing  
if we didn't open our eyes.  
To see requires something to see.  
The seer needs the reflection  
as much as the reflection needs it.*

***Quotations from The Genesis  
Meditations of Neil Douglas-Klotz***

## ***A Prayer to Holy Wisdom, Sophia***

As we witness the intolerable suffering of the people on this planet that is inflicted by War, may the Holy Spirit of Wisdom awaken us to a deeper sense of our relationship with the Earth, with each other, and with the hidden dimensions of the Cosmos still veiled from our sight.

May her Light and Love shine through our hearts and illumine our minds. May She help us to be aware of the oneness and sacredness of life and to care for our neighbour as ourself, to know that the hurt of one is the hurt of all.

May She inspire us to be protectors rather than destroyers of life. May She forgive us for the sacrifice over many centuries of the lives of billions of men, women and children and may their souls be released from the terror, grief, loneliness and despair in which they died in the recent and distant past. May they be welcomed with love and care in the world beyond.

May She help us to recognise and transform evil and to respond to the torments of all persecuted peoples as if it were our own. May She help us to see that evil is the infliction of terror, pain, humiliation, torture, or death on other human beings.

May She heal those who are unable to love: whose hearts are frozen by rage, hatred and revenge. May they be released from the compulsion to inflict pain and suffering on others.

May She free us from bondage to political and religious fanaticism whose devastating legacy we witness today. May She guide us to choose conscious leaders who serve the true needs of all peoples and all species on this planet.

May She inspire us to offer our lives in service of the great web of living relationships that is Her life and the life of the Cosmos. May She give us the humility, wisdom, strength, and compassion to accomplish the Great Work of transmuting our nature from base metal into gold.

**We Friends continue to seek the healing presence of the Light, both inwardly and outwardly, as we walk our spiritual journey. For us, the healing power of the Light is not confined to the past; it is an active and living presence. Whether through personal experiences of divine love, the silent worship of a gathered Meeting, or the work of justice and reconciliation, healing continues.**

***Barrie Mahoney, quote from The Friend 4/4/25***

# ***Breaking a Butterfly Upon a Wheel***

## Preface

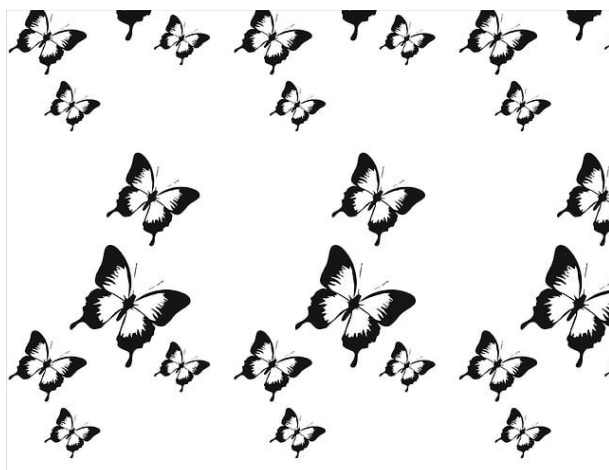
This is a saying coined by A. Pope about the use of massive force against a relatively trivial issue. I do not use the phrase in this manner. I feel sure that a man with the sensitivities of Pope would approve of my extension of his concept to describe the horrors unleashed upon the innocent and fragile.

### **The Butterfly.**

I saw the young girl, traumatised, thin beyond belief, and tears pouring down her face,  
A tiny child, a starving child in a war zone,  
She should have been playing,  
Wrapped in the bosom of her family and community,  
Healthy, with no care about food, apart from knowing that her dinner was nearly ready.  
But there she was staring, grief stricken and traumatised,  
I hope she lives; I pray she lives,  
How can we allow such a precious butterfly to be broken  
upon the wheels of a brutal war?

## Afterword

The beauty and fragility of a butterfly in a war zone recalls the closing lines of All Quiet on the Western Front. Another time of madness and brutality. As the boy reaches out to touch the butterfly and to try to retain his humanity, the sniper kills the boy in an act of supreme pointlessness. The Banality of Evil; (Hannah Arendt). A brutal pointless war of competing colonial empires which reaches into the future and manifests itself in Gaza. And breaks butterflies upon it's wheel.



**Laura Mc Murtrie,  
Ayrshire**

# The Problem of Evil

## **Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:**

In conversation with him, one virtually feels that one is dealing not at all with him as a person, but with slogans, catchwords, and the like that have taken possession of him. He is under a spell, blinded, misused, and abused in his very being. Having thus become a mindless tool, the stupid person will also be capable of any evil, and at the same time incapable of seeing that it is evil.. This is where the danger of diabolical misuse lurks, for it is this that can once and for all destroy human beings.

***Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran priest, spoke out against Hitler & Co and was hung at Flossenbug***

## **Paul Levy writes in his book *Wetiko*:**

. . . Arendt writes “ The greatest evil perpetrated is the evil committed by nobodies, that is, by human beings who refuse to be persons”. As if no longer home, these people so possessed become automatons. These people are so disconnected from their authentic selves that something else, of which they are completely unaware, uses them as its unwitting instrument to fulfil its agenda. Dialoguing with them is like talking to a single algorithm that is running the brains of millions of other people. It is like a computer program that is implanted in their brains to react to stimuli. The people so programmed have no idea of their situation.

## **And again:**

. . . It can be hard for us to conceive of people who actually intend and ‘get off’ on performing acts of evil, but our difficulty in seeing this is due to our lack of, in Jung’s words, an ‘imagination for evil’. Our inability to imagine that such people actually exist serves evil, as it gives them the cover of darkness and obscurity that they desperately crave. . . .

We are all inevitably fated to become aware of a darkness within ourselves . . . .

Postponing dealing with the darkness – just like putting off dealing with an addiction – only strengthens it. As Jung reminded us, we don’t become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. Light is ultimately revealed through darkness; it needs darkness, for otherwise, how could it appear as light and shine. We tend to think of illumination as seeing the light, but seeing the darkness is itself a form of illumination.

Shadows are simultaneously an expression of the absence – as well as the presence- of light, for we can never have a shadow without light near by. The darker the shadow, the brighter the light. Light informs, gives shape to, and is itself the projector of shadows. Hidden and encoded in the darkness is a higher form of light that transcends the light v. dark duality: the light of awareness itself. This formless light has the property of not only being invulnerable to the negative forces of

darkness, but of touching and transfiguring everybody who 'sees' it. This is the light of self-reflection, lucid, primordial awareness that awakens us to the dreamlike nature of reality.. The power of darkness has no choice but to immediately yield to the presence of this light.

In illuminating the darkness, we need to rely on a 'higher power', a strength in us that is greater than and transcendent to our own ego, which is the Self, our intrinsic wholeness. When we enter into relationship with the Self - what Jung refers to as the god within us – we are connecting with the part of us that is not subject to the distorting influence of the darker forces.

The value of bringing our attention to, putting our awareness on, and contemplating the multi-faceted ways that *[evil]* deviates the psyche is that, in so doing, we can discover and directly experience the part of ourselves that, being made of this higher order spiritual light, is incorruptible. This is the very place from which we can bring real and lasting change to both ourselves and the world.

***A psychological angle to the Lamb's War, the war within???? Ed***

### **Buddhist Sharing of Blessings**

Through the goodness that arises from my practice,  
May my spiritual teachers and guides of great virtue,  
My mother, my father, and my relatives,  
The sun and the moon,  
And all virtuous leaders of the world -  
May the highest gods and evil forces;  
Celestial beings, guardian spirits of the Earth  
And the Lord of Death;  
May those who are friendly, indifferent or hostile;  
May all beings receive the blessings of my life.  
May they soon attain the threefold bliss  
and realise the Deathless.

Through the goodness that arises from my practice,  
And through this act of sharing,  
May all desires and attachments quickly cease  
And all harmful states of mind.  
Until I realise Nibbana,  
In every kind of birth,  
May I have an upright mind  
with mindfulness and wisdom, austerity and vigour.  
May the forces of delusion not take hold  
nor weaken my resolve.  
The Buddha is my excellent refuge,  
unsurpassed is the protection of the Dhamma,  
The solitary Buddha is my noble Lord,  
The Sangha is my supreme support.  
Through the supreme power of all these,  
May darkness and delusion be dispelled.

## Book Review

### **The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth**

**Reviewed by Pamela Haines**

*Joë Schlanger. Harper, 2024. 304 pages. \$29.99/hardcover; \$19.99/paperback; \$14.99/eBook.*

**Buy from QuakerBooks**

The debate in the scientific community over the question of plant intelligence is fierce these days. Zoë Schlanger—who left an increasingly dreary job as an environment reporter to explore her unexpected and growing passion for plants—spent years researching this book and following individual botanists and their experiments all over the world. (She’s now a staff writer at *The Atlantic*, where she covers climate change.) As readers, we get the great gift of her clear-eyed descriptions of their work and her evolving perspective on this debate.

We learn that plants can feel—having electrical impulses run through their bodies when one part is wounded—in a system very like our nervous system. They can choose, as they have root ends moving unerringly both toward water and away from blockages or danger. They can remember, as they expect and prepare for the return of a pollinator. They can act in solidarity, by picking up the acoustic vibrations of caterpillars munching and then sending out finely tuned chemical emanations to alert their neighbors. Plant seeds can decide: to stay safe and enclosed on the one hand, or to risk the commitment of sending out a root on the other.

In a very sophisticated act of camouflage, a vine in the Chilean rainforest adjusts the shape and color of its leaves to mimic whatever plant is closest. Could this vine have some kind of vision that is beyond our understanding, or is a community of microbes somehow transmitting information from its neighbors? Scientists don’t know. Regardless of what they might ultimately prove, the flexibility and agency on display here is stunning.

Schlanger notes that human beings have defined what “intelligence” is and identify our species as the norm. Since our intelligence is organized, to a large extent, in our brains, the existence of a brain has become the definer. If we can’t locate what we can recognize as a brain in plants, then we are led to ask, how can they be intelligent?

But what if the real issue here is the limitation of our capacity to venture outside our own paradigm? As highly mobile mammals, perhaps we needed to centralize our intelligence. What if a plant, interacting with sun, weather, other life forms, and soil—all from one point in space—has an intelligence that is distributed throughout its whole body?

The Western mind, seduced by the lures of domination, has long struggled with equality. Scientific theories claiming the innate superiority of White men were only

definitively debunked in the last century. We have since come to understand the deep intelligence of our primate relatives: of other mammals, such as rats, dogs, whales, and dolphins. Even more recently, we've been initiated into the mysteries of octopus intelligence. The journey is far from over. We're still reaching for social equality for Black people and women, to say nothing of other mammals, and we still eat octopus. But the trajectory is clear. New discoveries of Western science keep challenging human exceptionalism and bringing us closer to the Indigenous understanding that we live among relatives. Schlanger is passionate in her suggestion that plants are among those relatives. Her overall plea is that we pry open our minds to the wonders of plants. If the rigidities of our anthropocentric framing can't permit us to welcome plants as fellow intelligent beings, perhaps we can take a step forward by using adjectives when we talk about plants: plant memory, plant sensation, plant communication, and plant choice, thereby acknowledging plant intelligence.

Though she only touches on it, basing diets on the sentience of what we eat is challenging to me. While I'm committed to challenging the centrality of meat in our diets—both on the grounds of cruelty and its impact on Earth—I have to wonder: Can we continue to kill plants and eat them without a second thought? Of course, we need to eat, but I hope we can dig a little deeper, acknowledging that we depend on other sentient members of this web of life in which we're embedded to keep us alive. The central issue then becomes not what we end up eating but the spirit in which we eat it and how we acknowledge reciprocity and express gratitude.

Ultimately for our lives, we are totally dependent on plants for their ability to transform sunlight and water into sugars. We owe them deep thanks and great respect. Perhaps we could have their companionship as well. This book, deeply rooted in both science and wonder, challenges us to expand our Quaker values around equality. Its message is a critical one for the future of all life on Earth

**.Pamela Haines is a member of Central Philadelphia (Pa.) Meeting. Author of *Money and Soul*, her newest titles are *Tending Sacred Ground: Respectful Parenting*; *The Promise of Right Relationship*; and a third volume of poetry, *Tending the Web: Poems of Connection*. Her blog and podcast can be found at [pamelahaines.substack.com](http://pamelahaines.substack.com).**

## **A Different Kind of Power Jacinda Ardern 2025, Macmillan**

**Review by Margaret Roy**

This is a memoir about a phase in the life of an extraordinary woman. It does not scream out at you although I am sure there are speeches and deeds that others will write in a biography. She is quiet and persistent and the watchword of her premiership of New Zealand was **kindness**.

The book starts with her childhood in small town New Zealand where her father is police sergeant and is able to see the humanity in his action of not openly arresting a miscreant but to give him dignity to turn up at the station next day, p 24. In her early years she wrestles with her Mormon faith and what society demanded of her. Her role models were . . . a mum who just got down to it, a motif reiterated by HM the Queen when Jacinda asked her how she juggled with being a mum, etc, and the job! Her other role model was her Gran , a devout Labour supporter 'who believed in looking after those who worked hard and had less and wasn't shy of taking on those who didn't'. She would call out to the road workers in her street to come in for tea and scones. 'Food was her love language, and sometimes she spoke it forcefully.' She was 'fearless, funny, and a little bit frightening'. She came from Scotland with but three things: her son, a pistol, and a violin. In the role as Prime Minister, and indeed as a signature tune through her political career, Jacinda attended to the little things. Even as Prime Minister she leafletted and knocked on doors. She went to supermarkets and schools where there were people. Her political interests were children, poverty, education and health.

At fourteen, her mum decided it was time for her to get a job so took her out for an interview. She got it but back at home her mum had her practising wrapping up a cabbage imitating the wrapping up of fish and chips she would have to do next day at the job. Throughout life she was always perfectly prepared from debating at school to her later speeches.

It is no doubt that the New Zealand attitude to its indigenous Maori people created an aura that fed her. In one incident she recalls at a new school, the teacher read the register and her name came first so she called out, Yes. But the other children responded with the Maori word, Ae. My heart warmed to how much attention was given to the place of Maori in New Zealand society and politics, and you will know that that extends to her name of Aotearoa – although you will have difficulty finding that on the internet re how to spell it!!! Kevin Davis, her deputy, was the first Maori to hold that role.

She was proud of New Zealand and especially of its role punching above its weight on many international issues: one of the first four countries to oppose Hitler after he invaded Poland, opposed to nuclear testing and the Iraq war, apartheid, human rights, labour laws, and the benefits of fair trade.

There is so much in the book about her struggles as a mother in politics. She found out she was pregnant (after much fertility treatment) on the same day she became Premier, and had to hide it for quite a few months till she got her feet under the table. There is much warmth in the book in the way Clarke, her partner, supported her in bringing up her daughter, Neve.

There is much deliberation on how to maintain the dignity of a premier and still be human.

As Prime Minister she coped with COVID, a volcanic eruption, the shooting at a mosque, where she cried and hugged people to the shock of more traditional politicians – *I would rather be criticised than stop being human.*

When she left New Zealand politics after five years as premier, it was because she felt it was a role that needed energy that she no longer had but she did not give up. She still works on many projects to support women and girls but now has a fellowship at Harvard University.

**Her advice:***if you have imposter syndrome, or question yourself, channel that. It will help you. You will read more, seek out advice, and humble yourself to situations that require humility to be conquered. If you are anxious, and overthink everything, if you can imagine the worst-case scenario always, channel that too. It will mean you are ready when the most challenging days arrive. And if you are thin-skinned and sensitive, if criticism cuts you in two, that is not weakness; it's empathy. In fact all of the traits that you think are your flaws will come to be your strengths. The things you thought would cripple you will in fact make you stronger, make you better. They will give you a different kind of power, and make you a leader that this world, with all its turmoil, might just need.*

***Quaker Quicks is a series of small books that bring alive some of our most influential Quaker predecessors, and some relevant modern issues of our beliefs.***

***I bring these old Friends to you at a time when we are becoming more and more secular and although we still use the quotes they are often without context.***

***The first I want to review is o Rufus Jones.***

***Margaret Roy***

## **Rufus Jones and the presence of God 2023 Christian Alternative Books**

He was born on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1863 in Maine, USA to a long-standing Quaker family on both his mother's and father's side.

Each morning **before** work on the farm, the family held silent worship so . . . 'we went to work, or we went to school, out of a living throbbing hush of silence in which something more than form or formal prayer had taken place'. 'Here it was that I learned the nearness and the reality of God as a spiritual process.' Even at 4 years old he joined the two hour long Quaker Meetings for Worship.

At 10, as well as two Bible readings daily with the family, an injured foot that went septic meant he was bed-ridden for nine months, so his family duty was to read the Bible to his Gran while she knitted. Yet, although his family thought the Bible as God-inspired, like Fox, they did not see it as God's final word so in later years he was able to 'embrace both science and biblical teaching'. He learned to 'articulate clearly and to get ideas across effectively to a body of listeners' as he read newspaper articles,

from the counter of the local grocery store, to 'men sitting on chairs and barrel heads and boxes'.

His appreciation of the surrounding natural beauty 'kept him morally and spiritually safe'.

When his schooling in Quaker schools and colleges was concluded, he travelled to Europe for a year, to 1887, before teaching at Quaker schools and colleges. From 1893, he taught psychology, philosophy and Christian history at Haverford College where there is still a society in his name 'to promote leadership informed by the principles and example of Jones' life and work'.

His second wife Elizabeth Bartram Cadbury spoke German so was able to help in his studies of the German mystics. He is credited with making mysticism more middlebrow. He wrote many books, two a year at one point, including a biography of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton in 1948.

Jones was often a very controversial figure.

He was involved in the internal conflict between liberal Quakers in the USA and more evangelical Quakers who favoured a more literal interpretation of the Bible. In this process he edited several journals eventually merging *The Friends Review* and *The Christian Worker* into *The American Friend*. In 1938, he led a Quaker delegation to Germany to plead the cause of the Jews to the Gestapo.. Unsuccessfully. In 1917 he was one of those instrumental in setting up the American Friends Service Committee which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 jointly with the British Friends Service Council.

Most controversy and criticism within Quakers comes from his idea of God and the Inner Light. The book goes into great detail of his dialogue with various influencers and it is worth reading these chapters if you are interested in the detail. In the current red book there are seven passages from his work – 2.16; 11.48; 21.01; 22.84; 24.56; 26.6; and 26.32.

21.01 is biographical.

26.32 illustrates how the meeting of science and religion was so important to him:

*Perhaps more wonderful still is the way in which beauty breaks through. It breaks through not only at a few highly organised points, it breaks through almost everywhere. Even the most minutest things reveal it as well as do the sublimest things, like the stars. Whatever one sees through the microscope, a bit of mould for example, is charged with beauty. Everything from a dewdrop to Mt. Shasta is the bearer of beauty. And yet beauty has no function, no utility. Its value is intrinsic, not extrinsic. It is its own excuse for being. It greases no wheels, it bakes no puddings. It is a gift of sheer grace, a gratuitous largesse. It must imply behind things a Spirit that enjoys beauty for its own sake and that floods the world everywhere with it.*

*Wherever it can break through, it does break through, and our joy in it shows that we are in some sense kindred to the giver and revealer of it.*

Well, I learnt little in the Red Book. 26.32 above is very like Moslem teaching but none of these entries touch upon the wealth of his experience as a mystic, of the Divine he called God. This book talks about the problem as agreement 'as what is meant by spiritual consciousness and on what experiences qualify as mystical'. Possibly he was a bit too psychological for his age? Perhaps it is time to look at his work again. This book is a good start.

*God is more truly like our spirits than like anything else in the universe, not remote, or absentee,, close as breathing., the normal environment of the soul, and therefore a real Presence to be found and known and loved , as the swimmer finds the ocean. And this attitude of faith may rise as it dos with me in my best and sanest moments, to a joyful consciousness of acquaintance, fellowship and love. Sometimes it is a flash of sudden insight, sometimes it is a quite assurance, sometimes it is an unspeakable joy in living, sometimes it is a dim awareness of a resource to live by and to draw upon for action.*

## **Learning Opportunity**

***Art thou in the darkness?** Mind it not, for if thou dost it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till Light arises out of Darkness to lead thee. Art thou wounded in conscience? Feed not there, but abide in the Light which leads to Grace and Truth, which teaches to deny, and puts off the weight, and removes the cause, and brings saving health to Light. James Naylor..*

These are James Naylor's words to help us in dark times, such as we are currently experiencing. **'stand still and act not, and wait in patience till the light arises out of the darkness to lead thee'**

How many of us have the courage or trust to wait?.

*And what are we waiting for?*

*Another way of asking that is: where does inspiration come from? Or, how do we relate to ourselves and the Divine?*

*I would like to start a book/study group meeting one evening each month for 10 sessions, covering 10 chapters of **A Hidden Wholeness: the journey towards an undivided life.** Written by Parker Palmer.*

The book is described on its jacket as: At a time when many of us seek ways, of working and living that are more resonant with our souls *A Hidden Wholeness* offers insight into our condition and guidance for finding what we seek – within ourselves and with each other.

**Interested? Contact [margaret.roy@btinternet.com](mailto:margaret.roy@btinternet.com).**

**I would hope to start any group in September.**

# Dementia

Some timely thoughts courtesy of Mary Cox Facebook. Copy and paste in honour of someone you know who has Alzheimer's

1a. Every time you enter the room announce yourself. "Hi Mom- it's Margaret."  
NEVER ask- Do you know who I am??? That causes anxiety.

1. If I get dementia, I want my friends and family to embrace my reality.

2. If I think my spouse is still alive, or if I think we're visiting my parents for dinner, let me believe those things. I'll be much happier for it.

3. If I get dementia, don't argue with me about what is true for me versus what is true for you.

4. If I get dementia, and I am not sure who you are, do not take it personally. My timeline is confusing to me.

5. If I get dementia, and can no longer use utensils, do not start feeding me. Instead, switch me to a finger-food diet, and see if I can still feed myself.

6. If I get dementia, and I am sad or anxious, hold my hand and listen. Do not tell me that my feelings are unfounded.

7. If I get dementia, I don't want to be treated like a child. Talk to me like the adult that I am.

8. If I get dementia, I still want to enjoy the things that I've always enjoyed. Help me find a way to exercise, read, and visit with friends.

9. If I get dementia, ask me to tell you a story from my past.

10. If I get dementia, and I become agitated, take the time to figure out what is bothering me.

11. If I get dementia, treat me the way that you would want to be treated.

12. If I get dementia, make sure that there are plenty of snacks for me in the house. Even now if I don't eat I get angry, and if I have dementia, I may have trouble explaining what I need.

13. If I get dementia, don't talk about me as if I'm not in the room.

14. If I get dementia, don't feel guilty if you cannot care for me 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's not your fault, and you've done your best. Find someone who can help you, or choose a great new place for me to live.

15. If I get dementia, and I live in a dementia care community, please visit me often.

16. If I get dementia, don't act frustrated if I mix up names, events, or places. Take a deep breath. It's not my fault.

17. If I get dementia, make sure I always have my favorite music playing within earshot.

18. If I get dementia, and I like to pick up items and carry them around, help me return those items to their original place.

19. If I get dementia, don't exclude me from parties and family gatherings.

20. If I get dementia, know that I still like receiving hugs or handshakes.

21. If I get dementia, remember that I am still the person you know and love."

## **WISTON WEEKEND 5 - 7 Sept    Friday through to Sunday**

Love alone can transform the present madness and insanity of the world.”

Krishnamurti

For at least 24 years Julian Hall has been preparing letters on behalf of Amnesty for individuals to send in support of prisoners of conscience. I have been doing this since 2001. About three times a year I get three letters, personalised for me, that I just have to sign and post. I find this a very convenient way to campaign on behalf of these people. There is a small fee for the service.

Julian is looking for more people to join the scheme and you can find out more on his facebook page.

[www.facebook.com/Writing-for-Rights-made-easy-106562801662492](https://www.facebook.com/Writing-for-Rights-made-easy-106562801662492)

If you would like more information or Julian's contact details please let me know.

Positive Male Role Models!

### **See WEE MAN in Chunky Jewellery at the Assembly Rooms Music Hall, part of Made in Scotland at the Fringe, 1 - 24<sup>th</sup> August**

This is an extraordinary group of lads described as: through dance they find joy, companionship and mutual benefit and escape traditional testosterone-driven male stereotypes and pressures in what is arguably the antidote to toxic masculinity.

Choreographer, Natasha Gilmore, believes ‘dance is not only artistic expression but can be harnessed to drive social change.

Davey Anderson, composer and music director says, when people ask what the show is about: I tell them it is a bunch of men and boys, reciting poetry and dancing together, and that always gets a chuckle. The fact it is amusing tells us something about how we still view what proper behaviour for men is. We hope it is a show that appeals to folk who wouldn't come to see another type of dance. For the people involved, it is a chance to do something different with men that is not competitive sport or in any competitive context.

He also said: while the performance is high energy and exhilarating, it also has moments of tenderness, gentleness and kindness. You get to see and be part of men dancing with each other in a caring way, and that is unfortunately super rare.

One of the dancer, Leo, 18, says: doing this piece has been an important part of growing up and learning about masculinity. . . I can see a very large difference compared to my brother's age group (16) . I have seen how the Internet has changed things in that short amount of time.

**Sourced from The Sunday Post and supporting their work to highlight more positive male role models in the media.**

# News from Local Meetings

## Argyll

Argyll meeting continues to meet in Lochgilphead at 1.30pm once a month. In recent months we have had our numbers boosted:

One person who has moved up to Argyll, has begun attending our Meetings for Worship, having not been to one before.

Another person, who has also moved to the area, is due to come to worship with us next month (this is thanks to Discovering Quakers the online national Quaker enquiry scheme, and her enquiry is the third to land in my email box since last December).

Another has also joined us, having moved to the area from North Scotland Area Meeting.

We are looking forward to hosting Area Meeting in August.

## Castle Douglas

Our little LM continues to gather monthly at the lovely Gordon Memorial Hall (attached to St Ninian's Episcopal Church) at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month.

On July 6th, our numbers were swelled once again by Friends from Dumfries. Sarah who lives in France was staying with her family in Galloway joined us with her grandson for afternoon tea after worship. We also welcomed Kate Gulliver from WSAM and Ayrshire who, like Dumfries Friends, had already been to Meeting for Worship in the morning! She updated us on Quakers in Scotland developments and gave someone a lift home.

We are very grateful to everyone who makes the effort to come along now that we meet in the afternoon. Our special collection was for Ramallah School in the West Bank and we will keep this going until September. We will meet again at 2pm on Sunday 3rd August 2025 and as usual will be pleased to welcome visitors from anywhere in the world! We may spill outside for tea again if it's dry as there's a pretty garden at the Hall. You might like to bring a cushion or fold up chair if you come.

**Clare Phillips, Clerk**

## Dunblane

One of the joys of not having a meeting house is that the meeting does not have to have a premises committee and worry about the building and lettings etc. BUT on the other hand when you rent you have to live alongside the other renters.

Dunblane Meeting uses rooms at the Braeport Centre run very efficiently by the Dunblane Development Trust but in the past year they have let an adjacent room to ours on a Sunday morning to a group called Rugbytots – ‘the world’s favourite rugby play programme’. The tots, their parents and the rugby coaches do not do ‘quiet’ but we manage to hold our stillness despite the shouting, whistle blowing and chatter outside. They are now on a summer break which for us is lovely!

Our meeting has grown a little in recent months with some transfers from other meetings and some younger attenders joining us. We aim to have a learning group each month and recently had an interesting discussion about AI. We look forward to Emily Provance's visit later this month when we have invited Friends from Perth and Polmont & Falkirk Meetings to join us for a blended conversation with her.

## **Glasgow**

### **Statement on Glasgow Meeting House**

West Scotland Area Meeting owns the Glasgow Meeting House. At the request of Glasgow Local Meeting, following discernment at a business meeting, the Area Meeting has agreed to sell the building at 38 Elmbank Crescent.

Glasgow Meeting will then move into rented premises, probably part of the building owned by the Unitarian Church in Berkeley Street. This is likely to happen early in 2026.

We anticipate that the activities of the Meeting will continue in the new venue but that this will give us the opportunity to look outwards and renew our spirit.

### **Labyrinth**

We are looking for some more volunteers to help maintain a community garden in Maryhill, developed by our friend Steve Koeplinger. We aim to garden once month on Saturday mornings 11-1 - the exact days to be confirmed after consultation with possible volunteers. No special skills are required, except a willingness to weed and get muddy! Tools are provided.

Can anyone interested email Charlotte Wright ([charlmorayplace@outlook.com](mailto:charlmorayplace@outlook.com)) and she will set up a doodle poll to identify suitable dates.

### **Climate Cafe**

The Climate Cafe is now regularly the 4th Monday of the month for our usual light shared supper at 5.30, followed by sharing news and views from about 6.30 until 8.00 pm. And a reminder that the WhatsApp group is the place to keep up with news and reflections in the meantime

Further information from Doreen Osborne [glasgowquakers.climatecafe@gmail.com](mailto:glasgowquakers.climatecafe@gmail.com)

### **Quaker Walks**

Lots of interesting walks proposed. All are welcome.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact Daphne Wassermann [daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com](mailto:daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com)

### **Mull & Iona**

Rob is just back from five weeks in Brasil so catching up on the croft. We'll hear from him next time!

### **Islay & Jura**

No meetings through the summer as holidays again.

## Bryan Bowes Eulogy

Bryan was the conscience of Milngavie Quakers being represented in Peace actions at the Faslane submarine base and marching in protest at the military interference in the Middle East. His was a voice of reason and societal justice that he represented so well breaking into the silence of Milngavie Meeting. But Bryan was also a man who deeply moved those close to him reaching out with a loving touch and huge loyalty, all leavened by a sense of humour and an appreciation of the absurdities of ordinary life.



Bryan was born in Beckenham, Kent in 1932 - the youngest of 3 sons for Hilda and John Bowes. It was a warm, lively, outdoor loving and politically socialist household. Bryan's father had been a conscientious objector in the first world war, and had been imprisoned for two years, which is where he met the Quaker socialist pacifist Dr Alfred Salter.

Bryan's earliest memory included watching Crystal Palace burning down from his bedroom window. Most of his primary school years were in war torn London and he remembered being in shelters during bombing raids, and so his whole youth was subjected to a world of fascist dangers.

He attended Beckenham grammar school and was a good but self-decrying student. His mother asked why he had not applied for a university place when many of his friends had, so, belated he applied and was accepted by Imperial College to study Botany. When aged 17 he had joined the Communist party, following his much admired older brother, Stewart. After graduating Bryan was called up for compulsory National Service. As a graduate he went straight into the Education Corps - but he was still a member of the Communist party and taking The Daily Worker! The Army decided he was a high security risk and demoted him to driving heavy vehicles. when he learned to drive but it took 5 attempts to get his licence and I believe he crashed on his first attempt! However he was soon promoted again to protecting a NATO fuel depot in Germany, the huge irony of which greatly amused him.

After national service Bryan studied for his PhD at Birkbeck College whilst teaching. There he met his first wife, Ruth, Swiss social worker,. They moved to Switzerland where Tanya and Adrian were born. Back to the UK in 1964, Bryan became a senior lecturer in Botany at Glasgow University which he was for the next 40 years, including sabbaticals in Harvard and Armidale, Australia.

His love of walking and camping remained and he never ever went out without his camera and rucksack!

When Ruth tragically died of cancer Bryan trained as councillor for the charity Tak Tent - helping others bereaved or suffering from cancer. During the months that Ruth was ailing, before her untimely death, Diane had frequently spent time with her friend and had been of great support to Bryan during all this difficult period. On the 10th of October 1986, Bryan married the second great love of his life, and they moved into a new house in Bearsden.

In 1991, Bryan and Diane decided to give life in Australia a go and spent 4 months living in the small country university town of Armadale, NSW, where Bryan had found a sabbatical position. Much as they enjoyed their time there, their hearts soon brought them back to their beloved Scotland. Bryan finishing his career at Glasgow University by retiring at the age of 65 in 1997.

When nearing retirement Bryan wrote 'A Colour Atlas of Plant Structure' based on his lectures and using his stunning electron microscopy photos. After retiring he continued to write a further three books which required him to buy and learn to use a computer as he had had a secretary to do that previously! What a huge challenge!

He loved trees and became an ancient tree verifier of the very large old ones in Scotland; identifying and measuring their girths and giving their precise grid locations.

Bryan began attending Quaker Meetings when he met Diane and although still an agnostic he had found his spiritual home there. As a member of Milngavie Meeting he soon became an Elder for six years. Later he edited the West Scotland newsletter which he expanded and enjoyed illustrating with his lovely photos leaving a lasting legacy there. He was a genuine "Seeker" in the Quaker tradition and he was a hugely valued contributor to the "Thomas Group" studying the words of Jesus through the Gospel Of Thomas.

Bryan's health declined in his 80s following prolonged treatment for prostate cancer and he became very disabled. But he bore the indignities with a natural grace and humour. His carers absolutely loved him. He always thanked them - calling them sweethearts - and offering a chocolate or an apple.

I know that Bryan's presence will live on with me all my days - with all his knowledge, kindness, humanity and integrity - and I know that this will be the case for many of you here.

**Bob Mandeville, Milngavie**



**In memory of  
Bryan's sense of  
humour!**

## Dates for Your Diary

11 <sup>th</sup> October	Area Meeting	Ayrshire
1 <sup>st</sup> December	Area Meeting	by Zoom

## Proposed dates and host meetings for GM in 2026/27

We suggest the following dates and host area meetings for 2026/27:

7 March 2026	West Scotland AM (already agreed)
6 June	East Scotland AM
19 September	North Scotland AM
7 November	South East Scotland AM

We expect these will be blended (hybrid) meetings.



## Hold in the Light

*There is a meeting of Friends Fellowship of Healing on first Monday of each month.  
Contact Nicola on <[nicola.james53@gmail.com](mailto:nicola.james53@gmail.com)>*

*Please support our healing ministry in these dark times.*

*Hold in the Light*

*Francesca who has lost her daughter and and Phillida Ball who has just lost her sister.*

*Nicola James and family on the death of Grandfather.*

*Bill Bingham just turned 87 but suffering health problems.*

*Co-workers Meg Sloan and Edie Phoenix.*

*And others you may know in your Meeting.*

**West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow G2 4PS. Telephone 0141 248 84 93**

**The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The deadline for contributions or the next issue of WSQN is 15<sup>th</sup> Novemberh 2025. Contributions are welcome. Articles no more than 1000 words should be send in Word format only to the editor at [margaret.roy@btinternet.com](mailto:margaret.roy@btinternet.com).**

**Helps for this issue are Laura McMurtrie and Edie Phoenix, and of course our proof reader Ruth Bacon.**

**We are still looking for a distribution editor who will deal with sending out the hard copies.**