

WSQN

connecting local meetings



December 2025
FINAL ISSUE

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INSPIRATION

INDELIBLE, MIRACULOUS

Friend, think of your breath
On a cold frame of glass

You can write your name there
With an outstretched finger

Or frosted, untouched grass
In the early morning, a place

Where you can dance alone
Leave your footprints there

A deep pool of silver water
Waits for you to make waves

The beach is clean after the storm
The tide has washed away yesterday

We all matter, we are all here
Indelible, miraculous, here

Julia Darling 2004 in her collection- Apology for Absence

The last meeting for Church affairs of West Scotland Area Meeting (WSAM) - a personal view, by Jane Mitchell, Argyll

The meeting was hosted by Ayrshire Meeting on 11 October. About 36 Friends took part, half of them online and half in the Stair Community Centre. I was online, and can say that my experience was very good; there were just a couple of occasions when people in the hall started answering each other, and then the ones online couldn't hear well enough what they were saying. There was a place in the hall for those who wished to speak so that they could be seen and heard by everyone.

The meeting was one of the culminations of many years' work in which our clerk, Kate Gulliver, has played a leading role. The Area Meetings of North and East Scotland flagged up several years ago that they had difficulty in finding people to maintain their meetings and requested help. Kate, along with Ayrshire Friend Peter Christy (who died in May 2024), were on a Scotland-wide group that considered various options and eventually became convinced that it would be good to move towards a single area meeting for Scotland. And so Quakers in Scotland has been founded. It has already taken over the work of the former General Meeting for Scotland.

The main business of the morning session was the pleasant job of welcoming of no fewer than four very long-term Friends into membership.

We heard that Ayrshire Meeting is doing well, and in particular has developed blended meetings (that is, with Friends both physically present and online). I think we have to thank Kate again for her technical input to this. Dunblane too is flourishing, and like Ayrshire has a regular program of learning opportunities. Lanark reported that the highlight of their year was a Quaker Communities weekend for all ages at Wiston Lodge, a few miles from Lanark. People from a wide area took part in this. You can view a 4-minute video about this, fronted by Zoe Prosser (Scotland's Local Development Worker) here :

<https://youtu.be/xYJtrik8iJU?si=GWTHpi-7cV-YWwy7N>

A buyer has been found for 38 Elmbank Crescent (which has been the Glasgow Meeting House). The building (the property of WSAM) will be transferred to Quakers in Scotland soon so that they can complete the sale.

Most of the office holders of WSAM will continue in the same roles within Quakers in Scotland for their agreed duration, though other arrangements have been made in the case of clerks, treasurers and trustees.

We approved the budget for the rest of the year. Funds are available from the Area Meeting and the Canfield Trust to help Friends to travel to meetings of interest. We thought we might invite other Scottish Friends to attend the

Kindlers' day "Deepening Worship" that has been arranged by the WSAM Learning group on 15 November. This will be in Glasgow and online. We thanked all the people who have served WSAM over many years. Finally we agreed we were content to lay it down at the meeting of Quakers in Scotland to be held on 8 Nov

REPORT: Meeting For Sufferings Residential, 3 – 5 October 2025.

Elaine Millar: GM/ Quakers in Scotland and West Scotland Area Meeting Representative.

Please refer to the Quakers in Britain website, [Meeting for Sufferings papers and minutes | Quakers in Britain](#). Note also the annual review, annual report and financial statements which were spoken to by BYM trustees [Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees | Quakers in Britain](#).

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) residential happens every two years and is special, not least to me because at the previous one, during Sunday breakfast I was tucked in a corner on the phone, and afterwards a Friend asked, "Were you just talking someone through her contractions?" Yes! I was! And my darling granddaughter Maisy was born a few hours later, the news arriving as I journeyed home. But I digress!

As storm Amy threatened, Friends from all corners arrived at High Leigh conference centre in Hertfordshire, and, as always, dived almost immediately into business. Significantly, throughout the weekend, all the prepared readings from Quaker Faith & Practice and elsewhere were about listening to each other and opening to the Light.

It was not the first item on the agenda but is likely a headline many Scottish Friends will look for, that Meeting for Sufferings accepted the laying down of East Scotland, North Scotland and West Scotland Area Meetings, and uphold Friends, "as they develop new structures that aim to help Quakerism in Scotland to thrive". They request that Quakers in Scotland (QiS) send four representatives to serve at each Yearly Meeting (YM) as it moves to become continuing YM - where alternates are no longer required to be nominated because all Friends may attend, and in the event of a rep being prevented, alternate representation may be organised within QiS.

(See papers, pages 22 & 23; minutes, pages 7 & 8).

Alongside our usual MfS business - dealing with Quaker Recognised Bodies and updating the Court and Prison Record, as well as receiving reports - there were three main themes for our consideration and discernment:

1. The 'theological and community aspects of online and blended worship'.
2. The 'faithful relation of church and state', referring to the loyal address to the king.
3. 'Faith, inclusion and growth', an exploration of our strategic priorities into the 2030s.

For our first theme Simon Wood, a Woodbrooke staff member, and Paul Hodgkin, a YM elder gave us their reflections. As they spoke, I came to realise my thinking on the matter has become polarised:

1. on the one hand, there is wonder at the connectedness technology offers, over-riding geographical distance, enabling inclusion for those with disabilities or other responsibilities, as well as reducing costs on the wallet and the planet.
2. on the other hand, there is frustration at the fallibility of said tech, a difficulty finding Friends confident to work it, and the challenge of tuning in to a true gathered ness between those physically in the meeting room and those in attendance online.

For the first time I was encouraged to think of blended meetings for worship in the context of history. Just as Friends nearly 400 years ago perhaps baulked at, or embraced the novel notion of purpose-built meeting houses, rather than glorious (exposed) hills and the (draughty) shelter of barns, so we are similarly placed at the very beginning of a major change in our history. Five years ago, Zoom was simply a sound effect for a rocket but look at us now! Therefore, give it time; faithfully apply the discipline of our Quaker processes such that all may listen and be heard; network with Quakers here and across the world to find out what might work best; be open to a different experience of gatheredness; keep working at it.

(See papers, pages 10-14; minutes, page 10).

Our second theme concerned the controversy among Friends surrounding the 'loyal address' to the monarch -in March 2023, to King Charles III. Young Friends General Meeting acting on principle declined the invitation to be involved, but a delegation of Quakers accepted. Stuart Masters, a Woodbrooke Associate Tutor offered a carefully researched and fascinating historical and theological context against which to consider our position. In worship our ministry questioned whether the exercising of this privilege is counter to our

testimony to equality, and aligns us with state rather than divine rule, but balanced against this was the recognition of an opportunity to speak truth to power - not that the king has power as such, but he does meet with influential people, including weekly with the prime minister. In 2023 the address was used to speak of the damage and futility of all wars, the climate crisis, transgender inclusion and reparations for the transatlantic slave trade: we heard that the king himself afterwards remarked that the Quaker delegation was the one with something different to say. Our minute states, "We hope that in retaining this privilege, we will use it boldly."

(See papers, pages 53-64; minutes, page 10).

Our final theme used the 'Radical Hearts, Open Minds' workshop format, led by Rachel Matthews from Quaker Life. We were challenged to be creative in imagining how our Quaker communities in Britain will look and act ten years hence. Different activities were offered, some groups working on a local meeting newsletter, another writing minutes for a hypothetical future Area meeting business meeting, there was a visual allotment of the things which Quaker communities currently do which help them to thrive. One group included Lego building – perhaps a strange choice for a blended meeting, and yet it provided an opportunity to literally model thoughts, where a 'mystery box', not yet opened was a fun and somehow optimistic inclusion! Similar workshop sessions have taken place across Britain this autumn, including in Edinburgh on October 26, and there is still an online only session to come on 22 November - see [Radical Hearts, Open Minds | Quakers in Britain](#).

(See papers, pages 32 - 39; minutes, pages 10 & 11).

I finish with some welcome news that refers back to the final item in my July report, about the need to tackle polarised division within Quakers: Fred Langridge (YM clerk nominate) informed us about the proposed agenda for Yearly Meeting next May (1st - 4th), where a key theme will be handling conflict among Friends, working to overcome divisiveness and polarisation and, as a Spirit-led community, looking at ways we might work to build connections and foster acceptance and belonging. Addressing such a sensitive matter will take thought, care, time and dependence on the Light in us all. There will be preparation work ahead of YM, where I hope that as Quakers in Scotland we can wholeheartedly embrace and contribute to this work.

(See papers, page 29; minutes, page 9).

PS! Quaker World Relations Committee ask that Friends with a curiosity about, or a connection to other YM within Europe please notify Central Nominations of your interest as it may be possible for you to attend as a BYM representative.

Book of Discipline Revision Committee - October 2026 update

Mary Woodward

For our final meeting of this year, your committee assembled at Aston University in Birmingham over the weekend 10-12 October. Having dealt with routine business on the preceding Wednesday evening, we plunged straight into a huge amount of business. Instead of going home after lunch on Sunday, we had been asked to stay on for an afternoon session: we were delighted to finish slightly early, having done everything we'd intended to do.

My own BDRC workload this year has been lighter than in previous years - largely because I was doing so many other things that I couldn't commit to taking on any major projects. Other committee members, however, had a staggering amount of writing to complete in time for our meeting, while all of us had a huge amount of reading to do - with some papers of necessity coming to us very late in the day.

After our July meeting those of us who chose to receive hard copy were presented with a 400-page book containing everything we've written and banked so far, to read, digest, and comment on by the end of September. In addition, various committee members had been working on producing new material on our testimonies, while another small group continued its work on writing new Advices and Queries. These all arrived uncomfortably near the date of our meeting...

I have to confess to being unable to do any in-depth reading of all this material. I was relieved to learn that others had been similarly challenged - but some people had managed to read, digest, reflect and consider this vast amount of prose. We all concentrated on upholding ourselves and the process as we worked through our agenda: and were led to make good progress with this first draft of our new Book. I had been feeling overwhelmed as I contemplated the vast amount of work ahead of us and seriously questioned what on earth I might be able to contribute to the next phase of our work. Blessedly, being with my Friends over this weekend restored my quiet joy in their company and my knowledge that, whatever I'm called to do, I will be given what I need to do it.

On the Wednesday evening we were delighted to meet our External Reader, who has been recruited to do the incredible task of turning our massive tome into a workable draft text which we will consider at our February meeting. He has already begun working with the Review of Banked Text [RBT] group who themselves had had the massive task of looking at all we've written and identifying gaps, repetition and overlap therein....

One of the first points to be made by the RBT group was that we are NOT going to produce any more new text! We have already assembled a massive amount of text which needs to be wrestled into a more coherent form – we simply can't keep adding more to what we already have, no matter how strong the temptation. We considered whether we needed to take account of how many extracts from the writings of a particular author, past or present, are used in our text: we decided that the important thing is that the quotation is the most appropriate one for the passage it's illustrating, not who the author is.

Not everyone will read the Book from cover to cover: many people will dip in and out. We obviously want to minimize the amount of duplication of "voice of the book" [narrative voice] and extracts, but sometimes things might need to be said in more than one place rather than filling pages with potentially off-putting extensive cross-referencing. It is probable that the more coherent the Book becomes, the less need there will be for repetition.

Our Communicating with Friends [CwF] group felt we needed to discern a working title for the draft, which will reinforce the message that we are not simply re-working *Quaker faith and practice* but are creating a totally new book of discipline. A new working title for the draft will help us get this across. We kept returning to this question throughout the weekend – it was fascinating to see the gradual emergence of clarity.

We also talked to some degree about how to get Friends interested in, excited about, and engaged with the new draft when it is released at the end of next year. Much of this work will be done by the CwF group, of which I am a member: we were delighted to learn that almost everyone on the committee was happy to be involved in some way. Central Nominations committee are looking for new names to join the committee, and Woodbrooke and Friends House staff will be supporting us in this work.

After a very long and hard day's work, more than half the committee relaxed on Saturday evening with that evening's *Strictly*: a wonderful way to unwind before another full day on Sunday...

Sunday morning began with the Advices and Queries group's work – reading some of the new advices aloud, responding with *appreciations and questions*, and reassuring the members of the group that what they have produced is already very good. The group will continue to work on their As&Qs in the light of our responses, and bring them back to our February meeting.

We spent time in worship together, heard our external reader's initial reflections, and looked briefly at the work of various other working groups. Our final session gave us time to review how we felt the weekend had gone, both

the work involved and being in a venue not previously used by any Quaker groups. The general response to the venue [Aston University's conference centre] was extremely positive, and the overarching feeling of the committee was that they felt a lot happier about the work ahead than they had been feeling prior to our meeting. *Finally, we are beginning to edge towards a book!*

That said, we still need your prayers and upholding as we near the end of the first phase of our work as your committee. We are working on your behalf: we can't do this without you!

BDRC 2025-10-26 Key messages

The key messages from this meeting are:

4. *Our newly appointed External Reader has begun the task of reviewing current versions of all texts which the committee have written.*
5. *We have agreed our sixth and final report to Meeting for Sufferings which will go to their meeting in December 2025. This will include sharing information about our working title and structure of the new book.*
6. *We remain on track to have the first complete draft of the new book ready by late 2026 for inclusion in Documents in Advance ahead of Yearly Meeting in July 2027.*
7. *Our work to create resources that will help prepare Friends to engage with our first complete draft in early 2027 is being supported by both Woodbrooke and Quakers in Britain staff.*
8. *Drafting the new version of Advices and Queries continues.*

**To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.
(Wendell Berry)**

Quakers in Scotland

From: QiS Administrator (Jane Booth) <admin@quaker.scot>

Date: Wed, 26 Nov 2025 at 11:16

Dear Friends,

I am contacting you all to introduce myself, Adwoa Burnley, and Pleasaunce Perry as your incoming clerks of QiS. We don't officially begin until 1st January 2026 but we would like to say "Hello!", share some thoughts on how we might proceed as QiS and give you some dates for your diaries.

I have been a Quaker in Scotland all my life, apart from 6 years when I lived below the border in Cheshire. I grew up in Dunblane meeting and now attend both Perth and Dunblane LMs.

Pleasaunce has recently moved to Scotland from Belfast where she was actively involved. Pleasaunce attends Dunblane LM. We have both clerked reasonably sized meetings for worship for business and clearly understand the servant role that we have accepted.

We are both keen to serve as QiS clerks to the very best of our abilities. We have big shoes to fill following Michael and Susan but we will do our best.

Having looked at the business to cover and the exciting opportunity to build on the community feeling that we already have across Scotland we thought it would be a grand idea to have more meetings than the 4 already planned as blended meetings. We suggest that we meet on some Saturday mornings online only to get to know each other while conducting some business and learning, worshipping and sharing together. This is an experiment and if Friends don't like it we will not continue!

See the dates for next year at the back of the newsletter for easy access.

We are feeling so enthusiastic about the opportunities before us. We hope as many as possible of you can attend. We would particularly like at **least one person from each LM** to join us so we have lots of communication in all directions in our new structure. The first few could be about guidance from you about what you need and what you hope for. We are very open to being guided by Friends. Elders have already asked for QiS meetings to be a place where Elder and Pastoral care teams meet either in person or in break out groups to share and progress their business. This feels like a great idea and we would like the last hour of every meeting to be dedicated to smaller group meetings. Maybe people in Nominations would like to meet, or treasurers, or people with responsibility for children's meetings. Any sharing of resources, troubles,

and worship would be great. Obviously, people wearing more than one hat may have to move about or join one group one meeting and another the next time!

We have a **request...** Do any of you know of places in your town that could host QiS? The most important box to tick is very good tech facilities for holding blended meetings.

We are keen that **young people** come to our meetings and are as welcome and included as possible. We are keen to talk about agenda setting, social times etc with all generations. Please just get in touch.

On 31st Jan I am hosting people who are in a role in QiS. So far we have 12 from SESAM, 3 from the east of the country, 4 from the north and 8 from the west. If you would like them to bring any particular thoughts email me and I will send you the email of the person most suited to your idea. Or just email me with it. This meeting is not agenda setting or decision making and holds no authority. It is for role holders (or reps thereof) to get to know each other and to be able to support each other and all of us over the coming years.

There is much to say! Come along on the 7th Feb to hear and share. More formal welcome and calling letters will be sent out in January.

In Friendship, **Adwoa and Pleasaunce**

A Glasgow Childhood

When ah wis a wean, ah went tae the park,
An' played wi' a fitba' until it wis dark.
An' then a went hame, tae ma drunken aul' Da,
Who hit me a skelp, an' fought wi' ma Ma.

Ah went tae the Kirk, they said ah wis bad,
An' God up above, wis jist like ma dad,
If ah didnae' dae, whitever He said,
Ah wid end up in Hell, an' be rightfully paid.

Wi' a' that abuse, it's a wunn'er ah'm sane,
Whit a hell'uva w'y, tae bring up a wean!
But when ah wis big ah thought, stuff this fur a lark,
Ah wish ah wis back, wi ma pals in the park!

Ah canny go back 'cause ye see ah'm too auld,

Mah legs are aw stiff, an' ma heid it is bald.
But ah still return, (and often I do),
Though ma memory's faded, ma hert is is still true.

Tae wee Cherlie an' Tam an' the brithers McNab,
Who played wi' a ba' , in the City sae drab.
Ah sometimes reflect, oan why things should be so,
In this troubled auld world, (or are we 'doon below' ?)

Huv we lived 'afore, an' are back fur auld deeds?
Ye'd hiv' tae be mad, tae follow yon creeds!
Ah sensible thing, the Lord wance said mild,
Ye'd better no' herm, whit ah ca' ma Child.

T'wid be better fur ye, if ye drooned in the sea,
Ye'd better know that, if yer comin' wi me!
Noo often ah've wondered, whit is it we've done?
Wi' the teachin's o' Him, they said wis God's Son.

Tae threaten a wean, is no' whit He said,
If you believe that, then yer hert's surely dead.
For Love wis His plan, (and it always has been).
If you kin learn that, ye'll be BORN AGAIN!
W.J.B.

What is a Concern?

It is more than a worry. Margaret Fell says, when the Spirit moves it hakes you powerfully. When Mohammed received the Koran, he was shaken traumatically. Early Quakers giving ministry would shake intensely, hence why they called us Quakers.

Traditionally, we see the Spirit entering, and speaking, even if there are no words. Notoriously it speaks briefly.

It lifts us from our habitual path making demands on us that may not suit our life's direction at that point – think of George Fox and James Nayler who up and left his plough. It can call us to difficult actions. Here we seek the assistance of our Meeting for Worship to 'test our leading' and to uphold us in our concern. We become 'Friends acting under concern'.

It may take over our whole life.

How can Quakers in Scotland uphold those acting under concern?

In the last few years our newsletter has given space to four main concerns: Scottish Community Justice Network, Gender-based Violence, Climate Crisis and Sustainability, and Peace. What follows is our last update on these.

SCOTTISH QUAKER COMMUNITY JUSTICE NETWORK

Where Now in Penal Reform?

Quakers in Criminal Justice (QICJ) is just over 40 years old, a Recognised Group in BYM, albeit one mostly focussed on England. It has been a very successful in terms of attracting, supporting and informing its members, while the penal situation outside remains bleak. England and Wales are contemplating an unprecedented prisoner population of over 100,000 people per day by 2030. Scotland is at a similar breaking point in terms of prison capacity, and is spending close to an unprecedented £1billion to replace a decrepit HMP Barlinnie with the new, 2000-bed HMP Glasgow. England and Wales and Scotland still vie with each other to top the Western European league tables for prison use, just as they did when QICJ was first formed.

Independent authorities in both countries, notably the Prison (and in England and Wales, Probation) Inspectorate document declining levels of service for prisoners, under-resourcing, and intolerable strains on staff. Good people continue to do good work in some places, but as a rule the lingering presence of good people in bad or broken systems does not redeem those systems, or signify that “one day” all will become well again. PACT’s recent report, *Picking up the Pieces*, sums up the sombre experience of third sector and faith groups working in prison.

Both England and Wales and Scotland established Sentencing Reviews to identify cost- efficient ways out of a difficult, politically-induced situation. In the former, the Gauke Report, published in May 2025, has emphasised making probation services more punitive, with a much greater use of monitoring technologies in supervision, in the forlorn and frightening hope that this will make sentencers use prison less. Scotland’s Review is due in December 2025. Interestingly neither punishment nor technology have figured in its deliberations to date, and it has usefully asked its consultees to consider why earlier sensible, evidence-based and *necessary* reforms to the penal system have been proposed, time and again, for decades, and yet never implemented. The same urgent question could and should be asked of England and Wales.

Back in 2008, Scotland’s impressive McLeish Report set out a clear road map to reduce the daily prison population from 7500 to 5000 over ten years, warning of dire consequences for communities, crime victims and taxpayers if new approaches were not soon set in place. And so it proved. A little-cited line in the Gauke Report (p9) - somewhat at odds with its own recommendations - says the same to our generation: “The punitive approach of recent governments is fiscally unsustainable, but it is also not keeping the public safe”.

Friends, what can we say and do? William Penn once said of us “They have a right to censure who have a heart to help”. We remain good at helping: our humanitarian relief work will never cease to matter. But are our current forms of critique censure enough? Our pacifist friend Albert Einstein may not actually have said “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”, but it is true all the same, especially for penal reformers, especially now. **Mike Nellis, Glasgow Lm, Clerk of QICJ**

An Online Webinar. Quakers, Protest and Criminal Justice 4th December 2025 7pm – 9pm

This online event, organised by Mike Nellis (Clerk, QICJ) and Oliver Robertson (Head of Witness and Worship at Friends House), creates an opportunity to reflect on a particularly challenging year for Friends and the criminal justice system. Westminster Meeting House was raided by the Metropolitan Police and a number of Quakers across Britain Yearly Meeting have themselves been prosecuted, criminalised, remanded and/or punished for their involvement in non-violent demonstrations in support of environmental and political causes, notably via involvement with Defend our Juries (on which see Kevin Snell’s valuable article in *The Friend* 14th November 2025). Responses to aggressive policing - and the legislation which supports this - are being made at all levels of BYM, and the Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, has publicly articulated deep moral concern about them. This turn of events, and the broader penal context in which they are occurring, provides Quakers in Criminal Justice, and its public voice, the Justice Interim Group, with a useful occasion to review their ways of operating, and to assess the challenges and opportunities that this moment offers for reflection, campaigning and collaboration. There will be several speakers, including Oliver reviewing the policing challenges that 2025 has posed for Friends, a legal adviser from Friends House and a person with lived experience of arrest, charging and stringent bail conditions. The meeting is open to members of Quakers in Criminal Justice, QPSW Central Committee and the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network. **A Zoom link will be sent nearer the time. There will be no need to register in advance. For now, please keep the date.** Kevin Sell’s article is here:

<https://thefriend.org/article/judgement-call-kevin-sell-on-campaigning-with-defend-our-juries>

The Barlinnie Special Unit: Shredding Light on Criminal Justice.

The launch of this book took place in Govan on 22nd October. Hosted by the Galgael Trust and Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network, it was

addressed by Sara Trevelyan, Karyn McCluskey and Mike Nellis as well as members of the GalGael Community.

Originally intended as part of World Quaker Week, our Friend Mike Nellis, a retired professor of criminology and I organised a Glasgow book launch of the edited volume, *The Barlinnie Special Unit: Art, Punishment & Innovation*. This was a joint event of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network and the GalGael Trust in Govan, and held in the GalGael workshops on Wednesday 22nd, with guest speakers Mike himself, Karyn McClusky the CEO of Community Justice Scotland (and formerly of the police Violence Reduction Unit), Sara Trevelyan the psychotherapist who was married to the prisoner Jimmy Boyle, and a response from the GalGael Trust by “Livi” (John Livingstone). The event started at 3.30 prompt, and those arriving a little early joined a community meal and they could take a look round the back to see our community gardens. Some books were available at a special price of £10, though the priority for these ones should be low income people locally if wanted. All were welcomed, especially Friends given the historical links with penal reform.

Alastair McIntosh, Glasgow

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Sunday Post was once regaled as the paper of the common folks of Scotland, not quite a red top (that was the Sunday Mail). Most recently it has done much to campaign for one of the concerns of the ‘ordinary’ people. i.e. Violence against Women and Girls. Misogyny. One of its most recent front pages in VERY large print points to **59** women killed in the last 5 years of SNP government. Inside it printed photos of these 59. See opposite.

Recent statistics by Police Scotland state that 45 homicides took place in 24-25, 12 fewer than the 57 in the previous period **BUT** . . . Whilst male homicides have fallen, 31% from 44 to 30, those of women have risen 15.8% to 15 from 13. Given the numerous femicides that cross our TV screens each night in ‘crime’ dramas, these figures may seem tiddly! In 24-25, more than half of the female victims died at the hands of an intimate partner or ex-partner. Domestic Violence. And this does not take into account Domestic Abuse as we have come to realise that the domestic scene may be more subtle, more verbal than physical, and more controlling and/or belittling of Others. And we need to remember that it is not just women who are then subjects but also men and children.

Hence some of us have taken to redefine the Peace Testimony to cover not just war and armed conflict. In the 39 armed conflicts in the world today a major weapon is sexual assault and rape, female and male, and even children, that humiliates and demoralises whole communities. It is said that prisoners of torture are welcomed back into their communities, helped and even fated as heroes. Those who have experienced rape and sexual violence live in shame. Women may be unmarriageable. Any offspring, as a constant reminder, is often shunned. Communities are destroyed.

In our own society, and even in Quaker scenes, abuse is common. What! It is more subtle. Whilst we may believe that God is in everyone, yet that is not what we act upon. We expect conformity. To what? We understand it is a tough call to genuinely love some of our neighbours but listen to the hatred in the voice that speaks of Trump. It is not easy to be compassionate and understanding to all. Yet we are deeply passionate people who want the best. If we don't agree it may be difficult to hold back. Some unkind, unthinking words may slip out. We are only humans who can't be super good all the time. The heart does not always meet the tongue. Yet, if we really want to change our society we need to pay attention to ourselves in relationship, to be aware of these subtle prejudices that ultimately lead to violence or sour the atmosphere of a meeting.

The problem is that we often characterise someone as a 'badie' on just ONE or two aspects, 'the good is oft interred with their bones....' and so we even condemn or seem to ignore the whole person who may otherwise do great good! Is it just ignorance or insensitivity, or laziness that causes us to abandon our rationality and meet someone where we find them, diversity? Is there a desire not to take sides but to seek deeper understanding, even speak out if we disagree but not vent our spleen?

Our learning from Domestic Violence is that violence can be subtle, soft and I would contend that this is the real challenge of the Peace Testimony today. How do we become patterns and witness to change Society. Quakers have much to offer Society in these violent times. And that is turning inward in reflection to own our acts and thoughts that contribute to our Society. Do we try to use our heart consciousness to seek that which unites us. Paul in the Bible, and Margaret Fell and Early Quakers, were very aware that the Lamb's War was two sided and it started with inner awareness of our own nature. There are so many reasons why we lash out, or are selfish and unkind, the main being insecurity and fear. Why would we want to belittle and put another down? A case of removing the beam from your own eye.

Margaret Roy

Women who have suffered violent deaths in Scotland are, top row, left to right:

Lauren Wilson, 34
Esther Brown, 67
Jane Fitzpatrick, 48
Diane Michel, 57
Fawziyah Javed, 31
Yvonne Barr, 47
Ander Gibson, 16

2nd row, left to right:

Claire Ingalls, 28
Mary Felt, 73
Emma Baillie, 26
Dawn Truster, 45
Sherry Bruce, 58
Aimee Cannon, 26
Ananda McAlear, 50

3rd row, left to right:

Mairi Doherty, 41
Jill Barclay, 47
Stacey Warnock, 51
Jacqueline Merr, 54
Darrell Buchanan, 37
Danielle Davidson, 33
Elizabeth Watson, 58

4th row, left to right:

Amy Rose Wilson, 27
Kelsie Donnelly, 32
Mareille Sturrock, 35
Margaret Parker, 78
Maxine Clark, 36
Phoenix Spencer
Morr, 21
Megan Hughes, 31

Not pictured are

Nicola Kirk, 45
Catherine Stewart, 54
Patricia Batters, 84
Susan Turner, 41
Margaret Hanson, 84

And six women who we have not named as their alleged attackers have yet to stand trial.

**WE SAY
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List of names of those women who were killed in domestic violence from the website of Jess Phillips, MP

Alesia Nazarova	Monika Wlodarczyk	Mandy Barnett
Beryl Purdy	Kinga Roskinsa	Denise Steeves
Holly Bramley	Natasha Morais	Mehak Sharma
Susan Turner	Felicia Cadore	Caroline Gore
Bernadette Rosario	Nelly Akomah	Sian Hammond
Sara Bateman	Sarah Henshaw	Michele Faiers
an unnamed woman	Elizabeth Richings	Christie Eugene
Lucy Lee	Lynette Nash	Perseverance Ncube
Maia Dee	Elizabeth Watson	Sharon Butler
Rina Dee	Carol Baxter	Dawn Robertson
Elise Mason	Fiona Holm	Victoria Greenwood
Marelle Sturrock	Colette Law	Salma Alshara
Suma Begum	Rose Jobson	Kiesha Donaghy
Johanita Kossiwa	Ann Blackwood	Alison Bowen
Dogbey	Hazel Huggins	Taiwo Abodunde
Maya Devi	Sharon Gordon	Milica Zilica
Susanne Henry	Claire Orrey	Lianne Gordon
Georgia Dowey	Christine Emmerson	Kamaljet Mahey
Holly Sanchz	Kelli Bothwell	Glenna Silviter
Hayley Burke	Liwan Breket	Kacey Clarke
Katie Higton	Chintzia McIntyre	Keotshepile Issacs
Kelly Pitt	Amy-Rose Wilson	Tia Simmonds
Christine Sargent	Gabriela Kosilko	Maya Bracken
Danielle Davidson	Claire Knights	Alison McLaughlin
Stephanie Hodgkinson	Nhi Muoi Wai	Tara Kershaw
Sandra Harriott	Carrie Slater	Kanticha Sukpengpanao
Fiiona Robinson	Susanne Galvin	Claudia Kambanza
Debra Cantrell	Helen Clarke	Michel Romano
Emily Sanderson	Ruth Hufton	Claire Leveque
Michelle Hodgkinson	Elianne Andam	Sam Varley
Chloe Mitchell	Charlene Mills	an unnamed women
Chloe Bashford	Alison Dodds	who wa 40
Tejaswini Kontham	Deborah Boulter	years old from
Grace O'Malley-Kumar	Celia Geyer	Beaconsfield

Please hold them all in the Light.

PEACE

Northern Friends Peace Board Meeting 27 September 2025 :

Brief report by Barry Mills (representative for West Scotland)

Rachel Julian, Professor of Peace Studies at Leeds Beckett University and Chair of the Peace Museum at Salts Mills, Bradford has joined us and talked on the theme of Although things are very troubled at present, times are always turbulent. If you can find peace you can share it and build it. There are 4 components; keep our eye on the long term, peace is everywhere, we learn and challenge the language that excludes peace and which enables the dominance of the military intervention and violence being seen as the only solution to conflict, and peace is about accepting others.

The Peace Museum is a space for peace which is very powerful and reflects the history of the peace movement. She has been involved in creating safer spaces in communities around the world. Rachel has written a book entitled Transforming Protection and a theme in the book is that non-violence is being used to protect civilians in places of violence. She has a podcast (Peace Wanted) where people speak directly about non-violence. She stated that resistance is fundamental to change and has found from working across 26 projects and 11 countries that listening and working collaboratively is vital. NFPB has supported the recent Quaker statement on Gaza, calling for:

1. An Immediate, Permanent Ceasefire & Full Humanitarian Access
2. The Application of Robust, Targeted, and Timebound Sanctions
3. Respect for International Law and Accountability
4. Protection of Free Speech and the Right to Protest
5. Dismantling of Oppression and Establishing a Just and Permanent Peace

See the full text at [quakers-discern-genocide-is-occurring-in-gaza-and-urge-courageous-action-2025-07-25.pdf](#)

SUDAN

30 Million in urgent need of humanitarian assistance after one and a half years of conflict between the RSP and SAF.

Origins of a brutal conflict – and the role of UAE. From Guardian Weekly written by Aamna Hohdin and Kaamil Shmed.

Who are the RSF and what are the origins of Sudan's civil war?

The RSF was officially formed in 2013 from the remnants of the Janjaweed militia, deputed by Sudan's former authoritarian leader Omar al-Bashir to suppress a tribal rebellion in Darfur. That operation ended with the genocide of up to 300,000 people. A civil war between the RSF and the Sudanese army began in April 2023 after a power struggle between the two forces.

Both sides have been accused of a litany of human rights violations and war crimes against civilians. The US, UN and others also determined that the RSF has committed genocide and mass rape against ethnic Masalit and non-Arab communities in Darfur. In August 2023, famine was declared in the Zamzam refugee camp, south of El Fasher. This April, the RSF killed as many as 2000 people when it seized the camp, which at the time housed 500,000 people.

Sudan earlier this year when a conference held in London brought together 17 countries, as well as the EU and African Union, to discuss the conflict. It was billed as an effort to build a new consensus on a way forward. But there was wide spread criticism that some of the countries at the conference were allegedly involved in the conflict, most notably the United Arab Emirates.

Sudan's military government has accused the UAE of supplying arms to the RSF, which the Emirates have denied. In April, a leaked UN expert's report found "multiple" flights from the UAE, as transport planes made apparently deliberate attempts to avoid detection as they flew into bases in Chad, where arms smuggling across the border into Darfur has been monitored.

The UAE's relationship with the RSF can be traced back to the 2015 Yemen war, where RSF was used to recruit fighters who were sent to Yemen to fight for the Saudi and UAE forces. The UAE's interest in Sudan is also down to its gold, most of which has ended up in the UAE in recent years.

A LITTLE HELP FROM FRIENDS

Friends House Moscow needs a Helping Hand: Our Friend Daphne Sanders of Preston Meeting is a keystone figure in holding together the Friends House Moscow British Committee (FHMBC). It plays an important support role in supporting Quakers in Russia, as I know from having worked with Daphne over the past year to have one of my books on climate change translated by them and made available both in print and free online.

However, their important work which includes the translation of Quaker materials on a Russian language website is in jeopardy because they have an elderly committee and, especially, have need for somebody to do their book-keeping. Daphne has written about this in last week's issue of The Friend. A photo of the page is attached, describing exactly what is needed.

If you might be able to help, please email her at:

daphne.sanders@inglewhite.ne

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Quaker Earthcare Gathering 2025

24th to 27th October at The Hayes, Derbyshire

Epistle agreed as a minute in the concluding session on 27th October

We are 114 Friends of all ages from Britain and continental Europe, gathered to explore how our Quaker faith and communities can help us to meet the Earth crisis with hope, strength, and compassion. Our time together has been deeply rooted in worship, and has included a children's programme, a Quaker Quest session, workshops, discussions, practical activities, music, art and much more. As we meet, Hurricane Melissa approaches Jamaica. Climate catastrophe is forecast to cause billions of human deaths this century amid ecological collapse and ongoing mass extinction.

Our residential is part of a year-long extended gathering process, braiding streams in our Quaker Earthcare engagement, especially the Living Witness worshipping community and the Quaker Support for Climate Action community. We have been blessed by the contributions of Quakers in Britain staff and committee members as organisers and participants. We have upheld Friends going through the courts for their Earthcare witness.

The extended gathering will continue to the end of 2025 and beyond, with online sessions and networks open to all Friends everywhere.

We are nourished by our deep-rooted corporate testimony on the Earth, by Yearly Meeting commitments over many years and the work of successive committees and groups.

This is our epistle in written form. But we are all epistles from the gathering, through the ministry of our lives, actions and relationships as well as words. A thread through our gathering has been learning from the work of Vanessa Andreotti and the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective, on practices for "hospicing modernity". The words of poet Deena Metzger resonate with us:

There are those who want to set fire to our world,
we are in danger,
there is only time to move slowly,
there is no time not to love. *

*These were the words shared in ministry in our meeting and agreed in the minute. Deena Metzger's poem on her website reads "There are those who are trying to set fire to the world"

In our Quaker Quest session we considered the question:

What has been your journey of relationship and entanglement, of seeking to

answer that of God in the other, of being shown our darkness and led to new life? How has it changed you? How does it still challenge you?

The gathering heard ministry from Friends experiencing “intensive struggle” with the brokenness and cruelty of modernity and its culture of uncare. We are filled with admiration for those Friends’ capacity to sustain themselves and those they love, and still to bring their witness to the world.

We carry fragilities and we are at different stages of grappling with our grief. We need to listen, support and uphold each other.

We feel a strong sense of gratitude to our children, present and absent, and everything they give us. We have heard that for young people, climate change is not ‘change’. They have grown up with heatwaves and floods; “for us it feels normal but it should not be normal”. This is not how it is supposed to be, and it is frightening.

We joyfully celebrate the diversity of nature and are grateful for the time we have been able to spend in nature over the course of the gathering.

We have heard about the diversity of our experience and how our lives are entangled with the systems of modernity.

We all take different roles at different times. We can be mystics, activists, builders, upholders, artists, prophets and reconcilers. We are all of us a rainbow and the colours move around. The spirit shows us where we are led.

We must ask ourselves what is mine to do, and what is my capacity? We can recognise all forms of courage – physical, emotional and spiritual. We uphold all Friends’ contributions. We need all of it: those who are called to take nonviolent direct climate action; those who hold space for a shift in consciousness; those who lend practical support and spiritual presence to those undertaking climate action; those who show a path forwards through living out their witness through sustainable lifestyles; those who are working to strengthen community resilience; and those who work towards changing the policies and politics that maintain our broken system. We are more than the sum of our parts.

We have heard about the Palestinian concept of sumud or steadfastness: living every day nonviolent resistance in the face of violence. We are asked to consider how we are called to bring travelling minutes back to our local meetings and beyond, to witness to the power of love and truth in the face of the climate crisis.

How does Quakerism need to change in these turbulent and uncertain times?

We must live with the bravery of not knowing, of not having answers, of not having safety. We are like a caravan moving across the desert, with the vanguard leading the way, and the stragglers at the back who are grieving for

what we are leaving behind. We need each other.

There are outliers here of all kinds, who may feel lonely. Polarisation happens in our community.

Quaker unity is not about consensus. It is about recognizing the diversity as we are called to accompany each other on our spiritual leadings and journeys.

In small groups we have considered how we can walk the talk: in our homes, in our meeting houses, in our property portfolio. How can we reinvigorate and fully resource our 2011

Canterbury Commitment to becoming a low carbon sustainable community? And other Yearly Meeting commitments since? We have heard strong calls for our Yearly Meeting to drive its commitments forward with adequate funding and programmes.

How can we support each other to progress towards sustainable lifestyles? We know that many elements of modern life such as taking flights and eating meat are not compatible with the future we want to see. We need to challenge ourselves and our society with gentle compassion to go further.

We need to ask questions about our corporate structures to understand how our money is being used. Work has been done on this and there is more work to do. We have been challenged to consider our own attitudes to money. If we knew we would lose all our assets in six weeks' time, what would we do? What stops us from doing it now?

We trust that further action, meditation and reflections will flow out of this gathering. We have heard how we can make a difference. Not every hurricane has to make landfall if we can nudge the direction of travel.

Caro Humphries and Pennie Quinton, clerks

CLIMATE CAFÉ in Glasgow Meeting House

This continues to meet on usually 7pm and by Zoom.

On 1st December the speaker was Ben Richards, a local paleoclimatologist and climate communicator. He is there partly through his connections with a Christian interdenominational initiative aiming to help minority and marginalised voices be heard. He gave us a very useful report last year, explaining how COPs work and why they are structured the way they are as well as highlighting key aspects of the event.

Further information from Doreen Osborne
glasgowquakers.climatecafe@gmail.com

Small steps: what can you do?

Eat locally produced food in season. Grow your own !

Monitor your energy needs. Avoiding the scams: electric cars may be clean in our environment but elsewhere the extraction of rare earths etc destroys and pollutes local communities.

Lower your home temperature by 2 degrees and wear a warm woolie.

Move about (if you can) to keep warm and fit and healthy.

Buy clothes you need. Non natural fibres often come from the petro-chemical industry. Wash less, iron less.

Avoid unnecessary packaging.

Share with friend and neighbours. One casserole can last days.

Big Tech's Secret

AI data centres across the planet are draining entire communities of water, devouring electricity, and driving up energy bills. But there's an even darker truth that almost no one is talking about.

Right now, the world has *no* testing, *no* reporting requirements, and *no* public transparency on the dangerous chemicals data centres pump into our air and water. Companies are not required to disclose how much they use or release. Communities living next to these facilities — from the US to Brazil to the UK — have no way of knowing what they're breathing in or drinking.

Environmental scientists are sounding the alarm and Ekō is launching a global push to expose this crisis — but we need your help.

Many data centres use PFAS gases ("forever chemicals") and other f-gases — potent greenhouse pollutants linked to severe health risks. Some of these gases don't just warm the planet — they later transform into dangerous compounds spreading rapidly across the globe, accumulating in water, soil, and human bodies.

The industry knows this. That's why it's fighting transparency at every turn. Which is why it's essential that we come together to fight back and expose what's happening behind their high security doors. If enough of us chip in, we could:

What could you do about it?

Help EKO Commission independent water and air testing in multiple countries — Brazil, the U.K., the U.S., and beyond — to uncover the true scale of

contamination.

Help EKO Run global, hard-hitting campaigns exposing the chemical footprint of data centres and the corporations behind them. And Hire researchers and investigators to dig into chemical usage, supply chains, and documented community harm. Pressure governments and regulators to require public reporting, ban the most dangerous chemicals, and rein in AI's runaway environmental destruction. Support local communities fighting for their right to clean air, safe water, and the truth.

Together, we could confront this emerging disaster before it's too late. Can you chip in today to expose Big Tech's secret and defend people and our planet from toxic chemicals?

And you could look at your use of the Internet.

Do you need to send thank you or received to everyone on that list? Cut down nonessential emails.

Anything stored in the cloud uses these huge servers.

Wee Snippets

2025 Reith Lectures was Tuesdays 9am BBC4 now iPlayer.. Historian Rutger Bregman talks about the Moral Revolution. Very Quakerly – worth a listen.

The Metro received an award for its This is Not Right campaign on domestic violence. Presented by UK based charity End Violence Against Women Coalition. Since November 24 they have published 350 articles, now available at METRO.co.uk

Inverness Ness bridge was lit up in honour of **For Women All** vigil. This annual event is led by Scottish Women's Aid to remember women and children whose lives have been taken by domestic abuse – as well as women who lost their lives to suicide or other trauma stemming from their experience of abuse.

George Fox's great insight.

EXTRACT FROM AN ARTICLE BY Rex Ambler in the Universalist, Oct 2025

Having come to this sad conclusion about Christianity I was able then to see more clearly what George Fox was doing in response to it. He was not revising the official story so that it was more believable, as I had been given to believe. Nor was he re-interpreting it in the light of some very modern, secular concerns about freedom and equality, as I have heard many Quakers say. He was saying what other sages were saying in other religions: that they must give up their dependence of this story altogether and learn to experience the reality for themselves. Let me give you a few quotes from Fox which make this clear – just in case you suspect I am making this up or importing it from elsewhere!

First, Margaret Fell's account of what George Fox said when he came to her church in Ulverston in 1652. He had asked the minister if he could speak to the congregation after the minister had finished. Then he stood up on a pew and told them that what they had just heard would do them no good if it didn't arise from their own experience. You will say, Christ saith this and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of the light and hast walked in the light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God? (1)

He was not questioning the truth of what Christ and the apostles said, was he? He was questioning their relationship to it. Does what they say, Christ and the apostles, reflect what you yourselves have experienced? Does the preacher you've just heard know this for himself? And if you don't feel sure of this from your own experience, are you listening to the preacher so that you can at least have an idea of the truth? Is that what faith for you means, believing what other people say? And if so, does that really help?

Do you feel free of guilt or shame or confusion by hearing how these things were resolved 1600 years ago? My question is not really about what other people say. It's about whether you are believing what they say because you have no way of knowing for yourself. That's not what Christ did or the apostles. They had the experience – they felt the light within them and 'walked in the light'. Unlike preachers today, who have it all sown up in a book!

Here's another piece, another warning about trusting what other people say: Keep within. And when they shall say, 'lo here', or 'lo there is Christ',

go not forth; for Christ is within you. And they are seducers and antichrists which draw your minds out from the teaching within you. (2)

To bring that point home I have translated those (difficult 17th century) words into modern English (also in the Anthology):

Stay inside. And when they say 'Look here', or 'Look, there is Christ', don't go out there, for Christ is inside you. And those who try to seduce you and draw your minds away from the teaching inside you are opposed to Christ.

Finally, words you will also be familiar with, I'm sure, from early in the Journal. He is now speaking of his own experience of the Christian story as told by the people he met on his travels:

As I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me or tell me what to do, then, O then I heard a voice which said 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition' Jesus Christ... enlightens and gives grace, faith and power. Thus when God doth work, who shall let it? This I knew experimentally. (3)

The story that Fox had been told was about God sending his son into the world to reconcile the world to God. It was a story of what had happened in the past. So, what people had to do now to experience reconciliation and find peace with God and themselves was to believe this story and live accordingly. Fox's experience, however, was that believing the story didn't have that effect. He still felt himself to be the same anxious person, who was unable to live the good life he wanted to live and unable to understand why he couldn't. What the preachers were saying about Christ in the past may have been true – he's not questioning that, as we moderns might – but it did not address the situation he was living in now. It 'did not speak to his condition'. It was 'outward', that is, outside him, external, whereas his problems were inside. They were about his desires and needs, and the conflicts these evoked. It was these inner conflicts that needed to be addressed and resolved. And only he could really appreciate this. No one else could know him in the way he knew himself or could know himself. Others could tell him how they understood life, or as was more common at the time, how things had happened in the past, as they had been described in the Bible.

Fox knew this in some sense already, of course, as we all do. He knew his condition well enough to know that the preachers did not speak to it. But he had not paid attention to it. He had been too pre-occupied with what others said about it. But now, when he stopped looking to others for answers to his questions, he found the answer within himself. He makes a special point of that, doesn't he? It was 'when I gave up... that then, O then, I heard a voice...'. But the voice within was not his normal voice, not his normal self, not the thinking, anxious self that was trying to work things out rationally. It was a deep self, that disclosed it quietly to him. It was a 'light' that revealed to him what he needed to know – about himself, his relation to others and to God. This indeed was 'Jesus Christ', not as he had been taught to think of him, as a God-man, exalted in the heavens, but as a spirit within himself. That indeed is how Paul had described him in the New Testament, though that was rather forgotten by later Christian thinkers who wanted to make the Christian message a little more understandable and accessible to the people of their time, who didn't understand what this inwardness was about. It was too 'esoteric', too 'spiritual'.

Fox's great contribution to Christianity, we might say, is to have restored the inwardness that properly belongs to it. We don't have to think of Christianity as something to be believed, accepted on trust; we can think of it and experience it as an ongoing witness to a reality directly available to us, now. This had happened already, to some extent, in the monastic movement that began some 12 centuries before, with Christians abandoning the church in the cities, where it had become too worldly, and looking for God in the desert – and indeed in themselves. But this movement, vital and healthy as it was, was limited by two factors which ensured that it was not to threaten the church in the city, the church of the Roman Empire. The church insisted that these spiritual practices be limited to officially recognised 'orders' and kept literally within the walls of a monastery. The other factor was the interpretation officially given to this mystical life: it was said to be concerned with purely spiritual matters, which had little bearing on the material life most people had to live. Theirs was the *vita contemplativa*, to be separated from the *vita activa*.

Fox's innovation, though anticipated by some later monastics in the 13th and 14th centuries, was to bring these two things together, and to make this spiritual practice workable in everyday life, and for everyone. The practice. It was workable because Fox soon found a way of accessing this light.

DISAGREEMENT AMONGST FRIENDS

The future of British Quakerism is up for debate, as the movement updates its most important text. The biggest question: keep or dilute God?

Grace Spenser from Prospect, October 2025

On a weekend trip to Brighton, three friends and I are watching some standup comedy in a small, hot room. We're almost the only people there, and the comedian picks us out and asks how we know each other. A friend next to me answers, and I can hear the smile in their voice; we like telling this story. "Christian camp!"

It's a good conversation starter, let alone a good comedy starter, because it feels like a complicated story. The camps we attended almost every summer from the ages of 11 to 18 were run by Quakers—or the Religious Society of Friends—a group with Protestant roots. About 50 of us from across the country would spend a week at a boarding school, exploring big questions about spirituality and social justice.

Workshops and talks were punctuated by talent shows, bouncy castles and fancy-dress discos. One year, we were taken out to the field and taught the mechanics of peaceful protest—a core Quaker practice—spending an hour or so learning how to resist being moved by police by locking our arms together and lying limply on the ground.

I loved these gatherings. How could I not? I'd found a community and a way to get in touch with spirituality, and that meant that I definitely felt like a Quaker. But I was very unsure whether I believed in God. Describing my experience there as Christian has never felt quite right to me.

This same tension has been rippling through the wider Quaker community in recent years. Many Quakers today describe themselves as agnostic, nontheist or atheist—a contrast with Quakerism's explicitly Christian roots, and one which has prompted questions about the group's future.

Founded amid the religious and social tumult of the mid-17th century by George Fox, a preacher from Leicestershire, Quakerism emerged from a profound disillusionment with the established church. Intervention by ritual or priests was not required, Fox believed, for humans to access God. Since then, the group has had an outsized impact on British political and social life: the first religious movement to condemn slavery, Quakers went on to champion prison reform and, more recently, carry out pioneering work in international conflict mediation and humanitarian aid.

The belief that every person can experience God directly means that Liberal Quakerism—the most common kind in Britain—has no fixed creed and no ministers. Quaker Meetings are mostly silent, and attendees, known as Friends, stand and speak when they feel moved to, without preparation. Quakerism has also used a range of terms for God since its foundation, including "Christ", "Spirit", "Light" and "Truth", acknowledging that everyone's experience of the divine is different.

Today, "no British Quaker would really imagine that how they define their spiritual experience would be right for anybody else," says Ben Pink Dandelion, professor of

Quaker studies at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and the University of Birmingham. (Ben became “Pink Dandelion” while living at an anarchist peace camp, in protest at the practice of passing down fathers’ surnames.)

British Quakerism’s main commitment, he says, is to the ambiguity itself: “It’s very much a ‘perhaps’ kind of organisation, but it’s dogmatically ‘perhaps’.”

In the last few decades, a form of “liberal-Liberal Quakerism”, or “hyper-Liberal Quakerism”, has emerged. There’s no explicit expectation to believe in God or the divine in this tradition, which actively welcomes those who don’t and people who follow other faiths. Today, there are Friends who identify as Buddhist Quakers, Muslim Quakers, Pagan Quakers and more.

A form of ‘hyper-Liberal Quakerism’ has emerged

This was the Quakerism I grew up with. I certainly heard people use biblical language, and read and discussed texts which referenced God, but there was plenty on offer for people who didn’t necessarily connect with that. There was plenty on offer for me.

It was a rare chance, outside the usual structures of party politics and school, to think seriously about spirituality and have proper conversations about important ideas. Along with summer camp, I attended my local Meeting on Sunday mornings, in a beautiful cottage-y Meeting House with flowers around the door. A few dozen people, of all ages, would sit together and settle into an hour’s silence. Sometimes the quiet would be broken, often by Friends offering reflections on politics, or their personal lives, or something they’d read. These Meetings were energising and full of warmth, but I found the stiller ones the most powerful. Even as a small child perched on a knee, I was aware of a deep sense of togetherness that went beyond anything I’ve since experienced in secular group meditation.

This is an experience shared by Miriam Yagud, who identifies as atheist and Jewish, as well as Quaker. In 2011, she co-founded the Nontheist Friends Network, a group which regards “religion as a human creation” and advocate for “an open Society of Friends, confidently embracing a radical diversity of understandings”. For her, Quaker Meetings provide a connection with something beyond the self: “We are social beings, and there’s a matrix that is created every time a group of people gets together... it’s not a religious experience, it’s a human experience.”

“To me,” she continues, “that is what the Quaker practice honours and acknowledges —the thing that we have no words for. That’s why I’m comfortable in Quakers as an atheist.”

Nontheism in Quakerism isn’t new—the first official organisation to cater to this demand, the Humanistic Society of Friends, was founded in Los Angeles in 1939—but it is growing. In 1996, a survey by Ben Pink Dandelion suggested that “so many [British] Friends use non-Christian language to describe their religious experience that it would be intellectually dishonest to claim the group as Christian”. In 1990, one in every 29 British Quakers stated that they did not believe in God, rising to one in 14 in 2003, and doubling again to one in seven in 2013. By 2023, it was one in five.

That year, the proportion of British Quakers who stated that they did believe in God was almost identical to the national average, at just under half. In a different survey of British Quakers in 2008, which did not offer a “not sure” option, 90 per cent of respondents said they believed in God. Semantics matter with such a slippery subject, then, but beliefs within Quakerism are clearly shifting. The Society has always been radically open—but is it losing its identity?

This question has been pulled into sharp focus recently by plans to rewrite British Quakerism’s core text, which was first issued in 1738 and is known as the “book of discipline” (or the “big red book”). Different Yearly Meetings (large gatherings of multiple local Meetings) across the world produce their own versions of this book, outlining the beliefs and practices of their particular Meeting; there are more than 40 currently available. They are revised roughly every generation—Britain Yearly Meeting’s current version, titled *Quaker Faith and Practice*, was published in 1995. The revision currently underway will, though, be the most comprehensive since 1967.

Made up of extracts from Quakers’ writings, as well as descriptions of structures and practices, the big red book is designed to describe—rather than dictate—what it means to be a Quaker. As a result, the revision process is collaborative, with British Quakers invited to submit comments and pieces of writing for consideration. Since Quakers make decisions in a collective, spiritual way, with no voting or hierarchy, the process will also be long: deliberations began in 2018 and will run until at least 2030, when a final draft will be presented to Britain Yearly Meeting for approval.

There’s a lot of discussion around the way the book deals with God. In part because it is mostly anthropological, it has always used multiple spiritual terms—some explicitly biblical and some not, like “the Inner Light” or “love”. This language has changed between editions, too; although it is fundamentally a God-centric book, the current edition removed a number of references to “Christ” from the previous version.

When the new revision began, many British Quakers felt uneasy around how the edition would approach biblical language, says Paul Parker, who for the last 14 years has acted as Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain—or the “closest Quakers get to a chief exec”. “There were simultaneously Quakers who stand in a firmly Christian framing for their Quaker beliefs, who were anxious that that might get lost,” he tells me, “and there were nontheists who were feeling that, if the book of discipline was revised, it might be revised in such a way as to put them outside the Society.” He continues: “On both sides of that debate, I think we had people who were fearful about whether they would still be seen as proper Quakers.”

The committee tasked with managing the book’s revision acknowledged these worries, writing in 2022 that it was “aware that there are tender issues to be addressed, particularly around the question of how we describe our experience of the divine”, and that “we don’t expect everyone to agree about how we have chosen to approach this.” The next year, a report by the Nontheist Friends Network

suggested that for some Quakers, a “religious vocabulary” centring on God is “problematic”. It hoped that the new book would reflect that “we are no longer an exclusively Christian church but an inclusive religious Society, a society of active seekers rather than satisfied finders.”

There is particular pressure around the wording of the marriage declaration used in British Quaker weddings, which is detailed in the book. As it stands, partners choose between two phrases—“through divine assistance” or “with God’s help”. It’s the only time when Quakers are required to make any kind of theological statement out loud. In 2022, questions were raised over whether to allow Quakers to use neither of those expressions, and responses were gathered from local Meetings across the country.

Some were supportive of the proposed change, suggesting that since Quakers who do not believe in God can be accepted as official Quaker members, they should not be required to use that language when they are wed. “Integrity is more important than superficial conformity,” asserted one Meeting’s minutes.

Others felt strongly in the opposite direction: that a Quaker wedding without reference to the divine would be no different to a civil marriage; that altering the wording would put British Quakers at odds with Quaker communities in other countries, in which biblical language is central; that core Quaker practices were at risk. Another set of minutes read: “We cannot be all things to all people; this will fail.”

Several Meetings had more fundamental questions about Quakers’ theological approach to marriage. In 2009, Britain Yearly Meeting decided to campaign for the right to marry same-sex couples. This was based, in part, on the Quaker belief that it is God, not the state or any individual, who joins two people together—or, in the words of founder George Fox, “we marry none; it is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses” (Quaker Faith and Practice, 16.01). God was already giving this gift of marriage to same-sex couples, the Yearly Meeting felt; Quakers’ task was to recognise that and celebrate it. But if supporting same-sex marriage was based on Quakers’ commitment to God’s work, would erasing reference to Him in some weddings destabilise the theological basis of that decision? Might it even “undermine public trust” in Quaker judgement? One Quaker committee was concerned that “other churches might question on what basis Quakers can really say they are led by God in their discernment on marriage, or, indeed, on anything at all.” Some feel that broadening out available theological positions like this might fragment British Quakerism’s identity. Author and theologian Ben Wood, a self-identified “liberal conservative” Quaker, tells me he understands why many Quakers are uncomfortable with biblical language, but encourages them to connect with it on their own terms. This “is not about orthodoxy—it’s not about saying ‘nontheist Quakers should start believing in the vision of God that I have,’” he says. “It’s rather that, unless we have a shared space through which to be and feel Quaker... we’ll be very alone, while being together, which I think would be a great tragedy.”

Quakerism might not be best served by prioritising inclusion at all costs, he suggests: “Being Quaker may not be for everyone.”

Others feel that the Society is not in need of this kind of rigid definition, since Meetings are themselves a powerful binding agent. As Paul Parker puts it: “I think we need to focus on the quality of that experience, because that’s the thing that will hold us together as a community.” “If you want to keep your flock together,” he says, “don’t build a fence—dig a well. The moment you start putting up a fence and saying, ‘If you’re the wrong side of that fence, you can’t drink at our well,’ you damage the integrity of that community.” The question isn’t settled; a working group is still examining the wording of the marriage declaration. What is “definitely not” happening, though, is a wholesale removal of God—either from the declaration or from the book in general—says Parker. Instead, the book aims to reflect the range of viewpoints present among the community: “Hopefully every Quaker will be able to see something that speaks for them.” A rare point of agreement between everyone I spoke to was that this question about God is more a discussion than a debate—something shaped by conversation rather than argument—and one which Quakers are finding illuminating and useful.

A new cohort of young people is looking for a definitively religious community

In many ways—structure, decision-making, theological positions—Quakers are unique among Christian churches in Britain. But the Society is subject to the same general forces, one of which is a new cohort of young people who are looking for a definitively religious community. Unlike the majority of young Friends a few years ago, Ben Pink Dandelion explains, they see biblical language and a traditional, Christian framework as the Society’s core purpose—“younger Friends are saying, ‘Well, look, this is what we’re here for.’”

This is in step with broader patterns: a recently published Bible Society report found that monthly church attendance among 18- to 24-year-olds in England and Wales quadrupled, from 4 per cent to 16 per cent, between 2018 and 2024. They are now the second most likely age group to attend church regularly. The report links this rise to a cultural shift in which “having a Christian faith is again being normalised and is arguably even culturally attractive” and—in the context of a generation dealing with 21st-century pressures—to young people’s desire for “healing and community as well as a deeper sense of meaning in their life”.

There is another difference with the younger Friends, too, judging from my conversations with them: whatever their own approach to God, they are particularly tolerant of different views on the matter. As one put it to me, “older Friends find it easier to tolerate difference when it comes to things like sexuality than to tolerate differing views to their own when it comes to theism,” while the younger generation finds it easier to accept a range of interpretations.

“I think in future,” they added, “there will be less of a divide between theists and nontheists... people will start to care less about that distinction.”

The future of Quakerism as a whole is another talking point. The number of people

attending Meetings in Britain has almost halved since records began in 1965, down from 30,209 to 17,937 in 2024. At a time when many people identify as “spiritual but not religious”, some feel that opening Quakerism up to a wide range of views is an essential adaptive strategy. The Nontheist Friends Network suggested in 2023 that inclusivity of different views on God is “appropriate and necessary if we are... to survive in the 21st century”.

The Society is grappling with the need to maintain its fundamental identity while also moving with the times—whether that means welcoming a diverse range of views on God or responding to political events (as Britain Yearly Meeting did this May by stating its belief that genocide was being perpetrated in Gaza). Quakerism exists somewhere between a “movement” with a “shared concern for something”, and a more rigid “organisation”, thinks Parker: “If we become purely movement, we’ll dissipate, and if we become purely organisation, we’ll go out of date and everyone will leave.”

But he’s optimistic: “If we can embrace the creativity in that tension, and say... ‘How do we do both those things together and keep those things in balance?’, then that’s really exciting.”

There’s a lot to indicate that Quakers are already combining stability and adaptability pretty well: not least the fact that the impassioned conversation around God and the big red book has been designed to take place over 12 years—and possibly longer—at which point it will have involved input from more than 60 Quaker Meetings and groups. This meticulous process does, though, call to mind one young person’s comment, submitted to the Future of British Quakerism Conference: “May future British Quakerism stop having committees about committees.”

Thoughts on the Future from members.

Following seminars held throughout Britain by Quaker Life, one of which was held in Edinburgh, we asked members to submit their thoughts and visions of future Quakerism. Here are some:

This is my thought for the Newsletter:

With the media’s seemingly continuous focus on dysfunctional aspects in our society, e.g. children’s aggression, domestic violence, etc. it may be good for us to revisit, and celebrate George Fox’s message “The Light of God is in everyone”. (John 1:9) Quakers have a wonderful opportunity to share that everyone is of worth, and worthy. If this was universally realised, it could change our society.

Future of QiS

There has always seemed to be little interest locally in the re-structuring of Scottish Quakers. It looked to be a done-deal, a fait accompli. And all happening far away.

Becoming a single charity was something of a no-brainer, but was there a need to go further, especially without a roadmap or destination?

To be honest, I don't think most people in Dumfries will notice any difference, because, for them, or should I say us, Local Meeting is where it all happens. It's no good for the architects of change to decry congregationalism, without providing any alternative.

Congregationalism seems to me to be a natural way of arranging things anyway.

Most of us live, love, work, play and worship locally. So why go any further?

To be fair, I've never been much of a planner myself. As the character CJ in the Reggie Perrin tv programme might have said, "I haven't got where I am today by having a plan!" And perhaps QiS will be saying this one day. But I can't begin to imagine what the future holds for QiS. However, I have met some extremely capable and committed young Quakers, and I trust them to find their way and establish the movement they want and need. The future is theirs.

Our thoughts on the future

We are optimistic about the re-organisation of Quaker in Scotland. This is welcomed by us, as it will streamline much that was unnecessary and duplicated before. We see it as an opportunity to relinquish some of the burden of business and to concentrate on some of the things that are eternal.

Hopes and Vision for Q.I.S. A personal view from Edie of Castle Douglas MFW

The print copy of the Scottish Friend and all QIS publications as well as online publications and versions to be available in large print and an appropriate font to be more easily read by tired and or aging eyes.

A budget for providing new role holders with a book appropriate to their role. One example might be the excellent Pendle Hill pamphlet on Spirit Led Eldering.

A separate budget to encourage every role holder each triennium whether new or serving again to participate in appropriate Woodbrooke courses.

A budget to support those office holders who are required to communicate in writing to participate in training provided by the Plain English Campaign.

These suggestions are based on a strong desire to facilitate full participation by all Friends in our community. Also to support all role holders to be as comfortable as possible and as supported by their community as possible in their role so that they can support their community. Finally to build stronger communities by practical support to widen participation.

I love my local meeting. I help where I can, with the coffees after worship and I visit and keep in touch with members who can't make it to meeting in person.

REVIEWS

Criminal Justice in Scotland. Buchan J, Anderson S and Morrison K (2025).
London: Routledge.pp267. pb £33.99. ISBN978-1-03-244580-9.

The multi-university Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR), founded in 2006, is internationally renowned and strongly engaged with post-Devolution policy-makers. But as three of its rising stars show in this book, while it may be engaged, it is not vastly influential - otherwise Scotland would surely not have persisted in pole position (or second, after England and Wales) in the league tables of *Western* European imprisonment rates. Nor, one can argue, would Scotland have recently surpassed its 2012 record for daily prisoner numbers, when so much research evidence points to the adverse and costly consequences of imprisonment for so many who are still sent being there. In late October, just a few days before this review was written, the prison population stood at 8,430 in an estate with a capacity for 7,800. Morale among prison officers was understandably collapsing (again!), and an emergency early release programme was being contemplated (again), pending the report of a Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission which had been established at the start of the year. How to make sense of this continuing, deteriorating penal scene in *a putatively liberal, progressive country*?

Criminal Justice in Scotland shows clearly that our current penal dilemmas cannot be understood in isolation from Scotland's history, structure and culture, and carefully questions its proclaimed liberal credentials. It builds on earlier edited books with similar or identical themes, but updates and systematises their arguments. It takes account of changed institutional arrangements, such as the creation of Community Justice Scotland. It incorporates new theoretical developments (especially in the sociology of punishment) and accumulating empirical evidence on sentencing and service provision.

The book begins and ends with a look at the alleged distinctiveness of Scottish criminal justice, recognising that, among other things, its pioneering "public health" approach to violence reduction has met with some success. But it systematically dismantles the prevailing myths of liberal exceptionalism which sustain the impression that progressive policy is somehow easier to achieve here than in England and Wales. The evidence shows, ironically, that despite devolution and the nationalist/nation-building discourse of the present Scottish government, criminal justice processes in Scotland are becoming *more like* England and Wales, not less. Shared socio-economic insecurities in the two

countries, and similar political dynamics, call forth similarly harsh and irrational penal responses.

The book ranges widely, containing chapters on crime prevention and community safety; policing; courts, prosecution and sentencing; fines and financial penalties; electronic monitoring; prisons and imprisonment; life after punishment (which remains, unsurprisingly, punitive); youth justice: and “community justice”, a term used in Scotland primarily to organise political discourse and executive practice around community sentences, but which encompasses alternatives to prosecution, post-release supervision, restorative justice and community safety. A penultimate chapter looks at crime control in Scotland from a transnational perspective, which is essential for understanding actions taken against organised crime and online child sexual abuse.

Numerous text-boxes interspersed throughout the book helpfully elucidate specific - and often topical - issues, e.g. the presumption against short sentences, resistance, restorative justice, transgender people in prison, the age of criminal responsibility and stop and search measures. Each chapter formally poses pertinent questions to invite further reflection, many of which could usefully be pondered by all Scotland’s citizens – and certainly Quakers interested in this area - not just its students.

Scotland’s increasingly militant (and often punitive) victim advocacy organisations may be furious that no specific chapter is devoted to crime victims. Their concerns are noted at various points in the book, but it may be argued that their disproportionate representation in tabloid media, and their salience to penal-policy making, has been underestimated here. Future editions of this book will probably need such a chapter, given the way that the voices of “failed and angry victims” are used to make judicial and penal-decision making look weak and inadequate.

In addition, future editions will surely be considering the imminent infusion of AI into criminal justice policy-making and public services more generally. While the unnerving novelty of this technology is undeniable, it is but the latest phase in a longstanding, ostensibly apolitical, managerial/technicist approach to public policy which the book does acknowledge. Annual, commercially-sponsored, “digital justice (and policing)” conferences have been heralding a bright future for AI in Scottish criminal justice (and other public services) for over a decade, but more recently, just a few days before the last such conference in October, Community Justice Scotland sounded a healthy sceptical note at a professional event of its own.

Criminal justice in Scotland is not in itself a radical critique of Scottish criminal justice, but it’s clear, evidence-based *moderate* critique is quite

sufficient to register the depths of the crisis, and to constitute a wake-up call. The authors acknowledge the existence of more radical, abolitionist critiques without endorsing them, but accept that so many liberal aspirations in penal reform remain unrealised, that it may well be time to question their efficacy. So where now? Almost inevitably the authors turn in their own conclusion to the 2008 Scottish Prison Commission - pointedly called *Scotland's Choice*- which at the time represented a hopeful moment for penal reformers. The Commission offered a cogent, detailed strategy for reducing prisoner numbers – down to 5000 over ten years, via more parsimonious sentencing, a new reparative philosophy, and much improved community provision. Oblivious of the pandemic to come, which exacerbated but did not cause the present crisis, the Commission warned of further penal deterioration if a conscious and properly resourced political choice was not made to avert it. Too little was done to achieve this, and Scotland is now living with the dire consequences, whilst awaiting the recommendations of a new Commission (in December 2025). *Criminal Justice in Scotland* has arrived at a timely moment, and Quakers active in this field should be among its readership.

Mike Nellis, Emeritus Professor of Criminal and Community Justice, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow LM

Islam and the Making of the Modern World Mustafa Briggs 2025,
Briggs & Co, ISBN 9798308957447

A most interesting new book that aims to rebalance history to show the great debt the Western world owes to Islam. It is full of facts and challenging concepts. Well worth a read.

There is a rash of such genre. Rehman Anwar, *Fundamentals of Islam* wrote to bring Sufiism back into the fold of Islam. William Dalrymple in his *The Golden Road, how Ancient India transformed the World* wrote to show India was once the centre of civilisation and trade connecting by sea China and the West through the Roman Empire. This was before the Dutch and the Portuguese went as traders to the East. Tea and silk were their commodities which they bought with silver. Later British had nothing to trade so started the Opium wars! And Archaeologists have recently shown that there was a thriving and civilised culture underlying the Roman world in the west. Different values. And it is Roman culture that underlies 'the West'.

It was one of my disappointments with the book that although renouncing western values Briggs still used them as criteria. As well as colonialism and imperialism, he could have attacked the patriarchal economic

system of wealth hierarchy. Maybe he couldn't because it is this culture of 'growth and development' that is key to values today even in the Moslem world. And he didn't mention the Vikings that new historians have shown were not all maunderers but through trade linked west and east cultures. And another new book by Paul Moorcraft tells of the role of persecution of the Jews through history *Israel's Forever War.....*

Whilst I liked the easy reading style of the book, I still take umbrage at his research, or lack of it. His chapters on the Crusades and the Moors were enlightening and helped in understanding the Moslem's general hatred of the West. When he talks of the squabbling nation states of Europe he forgot, although he mentions it, that the same squabbling brought down the Ottoman Empire.

Yes, the Moors brought a vast knowledge from the East that exploded into the Renaissance, especially after the Crusades. He doesn't mention that the big factor that kept Europe in the 'Dark Ages' was the control exerted by the Catholic Church that, for example, only allowed education in the monasteries, etc. After the Crusades knowledge flowed into hungry Europe. One need only mention the Arabic numbers and the concept of Zero that allowed western science to advance. However, there were also volumes of lost Latin and Greek literature: the science of Aristotle, Ptolemy, Pythagoras. What was lost when the Library of Alexandria burned? This was our Greek inheritance that Alexander had brought from the East, from Persia and India even. Subtly he admits the Moslem debt to the Persians and Chaldeans. The Moghals merged with Ancient India. Yes, Islamic architecture has geometric precision and very great beauty that see see in northern India and Andalusia. When the Roman Empire split into West and East, the West did indeed enter the 'Dark Ages of feudal times where the economy was based on fiefs that funded a knight and his horse but there was still an underlying Saxon, Celtic, etc culture that we are now rediscovering that is alien to that patriarchal war machine. One could indeed argue that the Moors brought other ideas of medicine and health even if that led today to germ theory (which Pasteur denounced in favour of the terrain) and the tyranny of the drug companies. Look at Dubai and the Oil economy and tell me that the 'developed West' did not pay back.

But a thumping good read that challenges much you assumed and thought you had learned. My last comments must be for my 'African women' who have been teaching me that there is another kind of 'democracy' to the West – Ubuntu – and another kind of economy that is more sustainable and people orientated still found amongst indigenous peoples. **Margaret Roy**

Deepening Worship Kindlers Workshop

Held at Glasgow Meeting House and online on Saturday 15th November. 1015 -4PM
Participants comprised of 7 Friends online and approximately 13 Friends in the room and 2 facilitator Friends from Kindlers

Below is a summary of the day from an individual perspective.

This whole day blended workshop was an opportunity to explore the central role which our local meeting for worship plays in deepening both personal and community worship. There were plenary sessions led by the Friends from Kindlers and small group sharing on set topics which were shared in the larger group after most of the sessions. It worked well as a blended experience with the online and at the venue Friends feeling comfortable and able to share as a whole community throughout the day.

In our first session we explored why we came to MFW, how we prepared for MFW and what we came hoping for in MFW. Our small groups of 3/4 gave us plenty of time and opportunity to share and discuss as we felt appropriate. In our next small group session, we discussed how to make space for the Living Spirit, and we might describe a covered and or gathered meeting and how we experience what some would call God.

In the next plenary session, we considered what types of things might get in the way of reaching the depth of experience we seek in meeting. There were a range of things which Friends felt might get in the way and we were asked to consider what is asked of each of us to help the meeting achieve a gathered state. What could each of us bring to help the meeting work for us all?

We discussed the role of ministry and afterward and how what we receive in meeting is translated into what we take out of meeting to nurture and help us lead our lives as Quakers.

We were then invited to think about our personal Quaker journey and what might lie ahead for us personally. This we did individually in specific allotted time.

The final breakout session was an exploration of how we let our Quaker life speak including being able to articulate who Quakers are and what we believe if we were asked. Finally, we considered how meeting for worship shaped our life.

The final plenary session considered what we might be taking away from the workshop experience.

The small group sessions were very positive with a lot of opportunity to share deeply with Friends aspects of their Quaker lives and experiences. The plenary sessions set the framework for the discussions and offered further insights and

suggestions for growing communities further at this time of change for QIS. The central role of meetings was reinforced but so too was the importance of the wider Quaker community of which we are all a part.

Thanks to the organisers and facilitators and to Friends who shared freely and deeply. It was good to be amongst Friends.

Laura McMurtrie, Ayrshire

Kindlers at Glasgow Meeting House, Deepening Worship 15th Nov 2025

Responses of the group in a plenary session to consider the questions:

What can stop us reaching the depth of worship we seek?

9. Distractions from outside or in the room
10. Not enough silence, too much ministry
11. Cluttered mind, speaking to people on the way in (Quaker business) or about things which are not of the essence of worship
12. Feeling judged/not safe
13. Friends checking their watches
14. A feeling of worthlessness, caused by society, creates a barrier to worship
15. Internal chatter/monkey mind (linked to the above)

What is asked of us all to enable the meeting to become gathered?

3. Mentally welcome each worshipper
4. Our presence
5. We each have a responsibility to centre down, to enable others to do so
6. "Budge up" to create the space for everyone, to create the soil for the spiritual space
7. Stubbornness/faithfulness to bring your mind back when it wanders
8. Come 5 mins early to centre down so Meeting starts on time and we are prepared in heart and mind
9. Beforehand write down everything cluttering your mind, put it in your pocket- then go in to Meeting for Worship
10. Let go and accept that part of the discipline
11. Quaker faith & practice 2.41-(Alexander Parker "the first that enters into the place of your meeting...")-having a good start, Elders settling
12. What can we bring, what can we give to help the meeting work?

'Body Prayer'

This practice was shared by one of the attendees at the workshop

When we come to meeting the first thing we do is sit down, shuffle into a comfortable seating position, we are aware that we are physical beings, taking up space....**EXPAND** (sideways)

But we are also thinking beings and our thoughts range far and wide to begin with.....**EXPAND** (upwards)

Eventually, slowly, we centre down.....**CENTRE** (bring hands together and down to middle of body)

At some point we are ready to open ourselves up to receiving, new insight etc.....**RECEIVE** (push cupped hands forward)

And what we receive we take into ourselves, incorporate.....**ABSORB** (bring cupped hands in and lay flat on chest)

Now we are ready to share what we have received.....**GIVE** (stretch arms/hands out in giving gesture)

The Quaker tapestry

Statement on behalf of Trustees

It is with regret that we announce the closure of the Quaker Tapestry Museum on 13th December 2025. The financial stability of the museum has become more difficult to sustain in recent years and income received from paying visitors and other sources has failed to keep pace with regular leaps in running costs. As a result, we have no option under our obligations to the Charity Commission but to look into an orderly winding down of the museum and sadly will say goodbye to our staff and to our visitors. Despite this sad news, while the museum is closed we will be working very hard to find a financially sustainable future for the Quaker Tapestry. It is the firm intention of the Trustees – many of whom are Quakers – to ensure that the Quaker Tapestry itself continues to serve a vital role by illustrating the traditions and values for The Religious Society of Friends. We would like to acknowledge all the offers of help we have received, these are very much appreciated. We hope to work with many of you both in terms of fundraising and defining the way forward to ensure there is a bright and sustainable future for the Quaker Tapestry.

For enquiries please contact info@quaker-tapestry.co.uk

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET AND LEARN TOGETHER

West Coast Friends Gathering will take place at Crianlarich Youth Hostel on 13 –15 March 2026.

The Gathering gives Friends from small, island and mainland coastal meetings the opportunity to get together, to meet new and old Friends, to learn more about Quakers and to experience a larger Quaker Meeting. This year the theme will be "Let Your Lives Speak" looking at our experience of concerns and leadings - more information is attached. Children are very welcome and there will be a children's programme for them.

Join a group of Quakers at home!

As Glasgow meeting prepares for a big move and a period of meeting in a less-than-fixed home, Glasgow learning group elders and pastoral carers would like to offer smaller groups for friends and attenders to gather together more informally and get to know one another as a community.

We hope and plan to enable people to meet monthly in small fellowship groups for roughly 1.5 to 2 hours. These sessions will be opportunities for sharing and learning from one another. We hope they provide a space to develop spiritual friendships and will be enriching for us all and for our Quaker communities. **So, we are looking for people, Quaker members and attenders, who could physically host a meeting in their own home -or have suggestions for other places to host one, and for people prepared to at least facilitate the first meeting** and ensure the group has a life -though as the group emerges it may well be that there's shared responsibility for it from among the others in the group. We will try to mix groups so there are seasoned and supportive friends scattered within them. We are optimistic that the variety of times and venues offered will mean most people can join a group; each will follow the same format.

In the past we have specifically offered discussion groups, and there are other informal creative listening and light groups. Why people get together doesn't matter, it's that we do get together! So, as well as days and times we hope people will gather for different sorts of groups. These could be drop-in Zoom; pick a topic out of a hat and share ideas/creative listening about it and around it; study discussion e.g of the recent Emily Provance lecture; creative listening; or indeed art or craft .

The groups will first meet probably early in the New Year.

News from Local Meetings

Wigtown Meeting

We have recently changed venue again, having moved back into the room we used before. It was then in the Parish Church Hall but this has now been taken over in a community buyout and extensively refurbished and renamed The Merse. We hope that we are now settled there. Meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at 11a.m.

We have welcomed a number of visitors across the summer, including familiar faces. Quakers have a wonderful opportunity to share that everyone is of worth, and worthy.

If this was universally realised, it could change our society. Of Friends who holiday regularly here. We have also welcomed a Friend from Seattle who hopes to move to this area.

We maintain a presence in the local community. One member represents us at the Machars Churches Food Bank helping in this sadly necessary organisation. Another member regularly leads the Ninian Moment. This is an ecumenical ten-minute worship held in the Catholic Church in Wigtown at noon each Monday. The local churches take turn about to lead, and it is our turn when there is a fifth Sunday in the month.

Glasgow

MINISTRY IN MEETING

Words, children and all of us. It's rare for there to be any spoken ministry after children and adults have joined us in worship from our Children's Meeting for Worship, but we are all aware of two things, hopefully.

Firstly, vocal ministry should not be directed at the children, but be for the whole meeting, including our children.

Secondly, any ministry at that time should use 'wee words' and be simple and short so that our children might understand. But might we not hope that spoken ministry before the children arrive has the same characteristics? Simple language, concepts honed to clarity, not too long, carefully discerned. Of course, that is not always possible, but might it be a useful discipline for us as adults offering vocal ministry in love and service to our worshipping community?

MOVING FROM ELMBANK CRESCENT

As most of you will know, we have agreed to sell the Meeting House and need to vacate it by the end of January. Unfortunately our preferred permanent location will not be ready for a few months after that and temporary premises are being sought. The latest details will be posted on our website as they become available.

<https://www.quakerscotland.org/glasgow>

POT LUCK LUNCHES

These are held on the second Sunday of each month and will usually be followed by a speaker or theme. Please bring food to share if you can.

No Longer With Us

Obituary of **Francesca Mary Ball** (nee Woodhouse)

20th August 1924 to 2nd October 2025

Francesca (or Cesca as she was known by her friends) was born in S.E London on 20th August 1924. She had 2 siblings, Charles who was 4 years older and Stuart who was 4 years younger. Her parents were both Quakers, her father was a musician and a conscientious objector in the WW1 as was her brother in WW2.

She attended the first Rudolph Steiner School in Britain aged 6 years then Saffron Walden Quaker School aged 13 years where she stayed only a year. She wanted to be a violinist so had to get lessons in London. At 16 years she was accepted into the Royal Academy where she received a gold distinction and being war time there was fortunately a lot of work for musicians as the government had 2 projects for promoting music and the arts.

She met her husband Keith in Aylesbury at a Quaker discussion group when she was aged 16 having moved from London after the windows at home were blown out twice. He was 9 years older than her and was working as a doctor at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. 5 years later they married at Westminster Quaker Meeting. They had 4 children two of whom predeceased her, Rachel just 3 months before Francesca died.

Francesca continued to work as a musician though mainly deputising for orchestras as she was also busy being a mum. Later she spent a lot of time playing in Northern Ireland with the BBC Orchestra. Besides music she always had other interests and took up learning Czech in her early 40s and maintained close friendships in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She also qualified in teaching English to foreigners and enjoyed teaching and meeting people from different parts of the world. As part of her interest in people she did an MA in Peace Studies with Bradford University and her dissertation was based on Gypsies in Slovakia, and she tried to find ways of supporting their cause. This wasn't always straightforward!

She took a huge interest in supporting Keith in his medical interests of preventative medicine and coronary heart disease often searching and cutting out relevant articles for discussion.

When Francesca moved to Glasgow about 14 years ago she very much valued developing friendships in both Glasgow and Milngavie Meetings. She never took much interest in attending the business meetings but preferred and was more confident in one to one discussion on topics such as world peace, what is truth, philosophy, simplicity, sustainability, music and the arts. She tried to live by the truths she believed in.

Phillida Ball. November 2025

Randolph Smith

It was pleasure to know Randolph. He came to Glasgow Quaker Meeting over a number of years and was a much-loved attender. He appointed himself with another Friend to what he called 'the washing up committee'. Their service made a chore into a delight!

For a while I worked in Oxford Street in the Gorbals where he lived in a lodging house there. He had his own space at the back and a room bedecked with his artwork. He was 'artist in residence' at a community project in the East End of the city where he produced paintings of the property to be presented to visiting dignitaries. I was fortunate to be one of the few friends he welcomed in his room in the lodging house.

When he moved on to a group housing project in Bearsden, one of his delights was to use the nearby library. He was in the habit of hiding the book he was currently reading at the back of the shelf to ensure it was still there the next time he visited. Two other lovely memories of Randolph:

We met him at a Sunday afternoon chamber music concert, at which he told us proudly that he was the only vagabond in Glasgow who loved chamber music. I encountered him once on the suspension bridge from the Broomielaw to the Gorbals and enquired how he was. He replied (using an old Quaker phrase) 'I am well -but it is possible that I am mistaken'.

Rest in peace Randolph. Your friends will remember you.

Philip and Felicity Bryers, August 2025

Anne Rado

It is so long since Anne was able to attend meeting that few remember her but she stayed in touch with Friends till the end. She lived her later years on Arran so there were the ferries to negotiate. However I do not want our last issue to miss her. When I first came to Quakers in Newton Terrace in 1972, Anne and her family were one of four families that made up the meeting – the Peacocks, the Lathams and another that I can put a face to but not a name. The Sunday School I taught must have had ten kids in it. Quite a different atmosphere. Anne's kindness was remembered as she befriended and took in many overseas students that called her home their's. **Margaret Roy**

Dates for Your Diary

February 7th Online

February 28th Blended. Perth (change from 7th March as that is Meeting for Sufferings)

March 28th Online

May 16th Online

J June 6th Blended Glasgow?

August 22nd Online

September 19th Blended North

October 24th Online

November 7th Blended SESAM

6th Feb 2027 Online

6th March 2027 West

At this stage we are not clear on timing for the online only meetings. Probably 9.30 to 1pm. February 7th Online

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

Bill Bingham just turned 87 but suffering health problems.

Gisela Creed just out of hospital and recovering at home.

Co-workers Meg Sloan and Edie Phoenix.

And others you may know in your Meeting.

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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 editorial team Margaret Roy. Laura McMurtrie and Edie Phoenix, and of course our proof reader Ruth Bacon.

Our final newsletter. We thank you for staying with us and hope you enjoyed it.

And apologies for the presentation format and no page numbers. The Editor lost her WORD programme when she went over to Windows 11 !!!