

wsqn

- Connecting local meetings



October 2024

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Frontispiece The Five Pillars of Creation
Picture from the Hubble telescope

Born from the Beginning:

For she (Holy Wisdom) is the breath and power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: there can no defiled thing fall into her.

For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness.

And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets.

Wisdom of Solomon 7.25-7 KJV

And from Wicca, one of their chants:

She changes everything she touches and everything she touches changes.

Logon 50 from the Gospel of Thomas:

Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' say to them, 'We have come from the light, from the place where the light came into being by itself (literally, came into being by its own hand), established (itself), and appeared in their image.

Spirit of Truth and Love

Life-giving Holy Dove

Move o'er the waters face

Bearing the lamp of Grace

And in earth's darkest place

Let there be light.

Report on Area Meeting in Lochgilphead – 17 August 2024

Bronwen Currie, Islay & Jura

Twelve Friends plus the clerking team gathered “in the room” for Area Meeting in Lochilphead in August, but there were many more online, and thanks to skilful use of technology by the clerking team the “blending” worked extraordinarily well – at least for those of us in the room (I hope it was as good for those online). It was particularly helpful for the display to be turned to speaker view when someone online was speaking, so that we could really see their face.

Following opening worship we turned first to membership matters, which included an application from a young Friend. It was especially heart-warming that we were able to appoint two quite young Friends to visit the applicant. We also welcomed into membership of West Scotland Tara and Cathy Smith, transferring from South East Scotland, but sadly we had to record the resignation of a very valued Friend.

We dealt with a number of nominations, which included a small group of Friends to prepare a testimony to the grace of God in the life of our Friend Peter Christy, and then we moved on to hear from Friends who had attended Yearly Meeting, both in London and online. We heard how useful the exploration sessions for online Friends were, and that attendance in London was tiring (and hot!) and intense, but also enjoyable and beneficial. We also heard of the tensions that were apparent (though less apparent to Friends attending online) and of how well they were dealt with by the skilful clerking team. We were reminded, as expressed in the Epistle, that we seek unity, not uniformity.

We received a report from the Treasurer, noting that our funds are healthy and that the agreed additional donation to Britain Yearly Meeting from the remaining proceeds from the sale of Wigtown Meeting House had now been made, and then we moved on to hear short reports from the four LMs in the western cluster: Arran, Argyll, Islay & Jura, and Mull & Iona. Three of these Meetings feel stable, one is very small and fragile, but all have their challenges and joys. We also heard of challenges facing Castle Douglas Meeting, and of their new meeting arrangements. We were usefully reminded that although these rural, scattered Meetings rely from time to time on video-conferencing, it doesn't work for everyone, and meeting in-person is still something to be aimed at as far as possible.

After lunch we received an update on the work being done by the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group, a report on which will come to General Meeting in September, and then we embarked on a worshipful consideration of the wording used in our Quaker marriage declarations. We were asked to consider whether the phrases “with God's help” or “through divine assistance” might be made optional for those uncomfortable with the concept of God. A wide variety of reflections were heard, all of which were captured in the minute which can be read elsewhere, but fundamentally we were in agreement with the proposal from Sufferings that there

should be a choice of alternative options, whilst recognising that there has to be something within the whole process of preparation for marriage and support within the worshipping community that distinguishes what we have from that of a civil ceremony.

Finally we received a minute from General Meeting in response to our concern about racial justice, and agreed that the group which produced the report that had been sent to GM – the Race and Privilege in our Society Group – could now be laid down, as could the Glasgow Meeting House Funding Group, as all its members have reached the end of their term of service and there are currently no plans being considered which require funding.

Thanks were expressed to Argyll Friends for their hospitality and we then departed, many of us looking forward to gathering for a whole weekend in Ayrshire for AM in October.

A query from the Clerk ~ Are our business meetings boring?

Dear Friends, I have heard it said that Friends don't attend our area meetings and general meetings because 'they are boring', 'there is nothing that interests them', 'they are just business', 'there is nothing spiritual to consider', 'I don't get anything out of it'.

So I am wondering what agenda items they feel are not worth being part of.

Are matters of membership, welcoming Friends into our community, or reflecting on those who have departed not part of our upholding one another?

Are appointments of Friends to give service and represent us not worth being grateful for and appreciating those who are willing to serve?

Are reports from other parts of our Society not worth listening to and discussing?

Is the use and impact of our financial resources of no consequence to them?

What is it that Friends feel we are missing in our meetings?

For me they are our meetings for worship for church affairs, and I support and attend them as part of my discipline of membership to the Society. They are an opportunity for me to give support to the meeting. I gain strength from the shared worship, the sense of community and belonging, the belief in and understanding of the Quaker business method, the seeking of divine guidance and discerning the way forward.

I share the concern of others about the lack of awareness and understanding of how we make decisions within the Society at local, area and national level. Would it help

if Friends read <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/how-quaker-meetings-take-decisions-2006?>

I feel we must support and encourage local meetings to hold meetings for worship for church affairs to ensure they are giving newcomers a truthful experience of the Quaker process. Friends need to experience the Quaker business method and understand our Quaker way of discernment. How to come to meetings with hearts and minds prepared, not made up, willing to listen to the leadings of the spirit, so that the meeting might seek unity. These are not secular business meeting where matters are debated, and votes cast. They are meetings for worship in which we consider our church affairs, faithfully and prayerfully together to ensure we fulfil our spiritual purpose.

If we do not keep our house in order, how can we offer the Quaker experience to others and share that gather worship attending on what the spirit guides us to do?

I am looking forward to attending these meetings, joining with fellow Quakers seeking the will of God, creating a loving and caring community and 'helping one another up with a tender hand'. See *Qf&p 10.01*

In friendship

Kate Gulliver

Testing our Leadings Margaret Roy

We are going through a period of great change at the level of BYM and Meeting for Sufferings, and of course with Options for Scotland. Regards the last, I have heard the frustration of clerks that when we come together on an item of the agenda new voices are raised by individuals that may take us in a different direction. It makes it very difficult to find unity. And here is an ignorance of the Quaker process of testing leadings at Area Meeting level.

I have always valued the Quaker process as a guide and a support. If there was something bothering you, you could bring it to your local meeting for help, to be listened to with love. For example, as a young teacher in Glasgow I was concerned about corporal punishment and raised the issue after one Meeting for Worship. A lovely gentleman who was headmaster of Hutcheson Boys School took me aside and helped. Then again my concern for Violence against Women was held by Lanark Local Meeting and sent forward to Area Meeting as a concern.

That word concern is very misused these days. It is a disquiet raised by the Spirit, the Light, as to how we bring our spirituality to meet the secular world. We may be mystics but we are not hermits. There may be much bothering us as individuals that may not be considered properly as a concern that needs acted on. Thus we test it, we test our leadings is the phrase used. As we bring it to our local meeting and it is

forwarded to Area Meeting, we are supported and upheld by the strength of the worshipping community.

Area Meeting may bat it to and fro, discerning its place in our community. It is at this level that things are discerned so when an Area Meeting presents it at General Meeting level the hard work has already been done especially if we have truly discerned the spiritual motivation. If we have truly discerned the spirit's meaning, there is no further need to test but . . . in our current times, that process of discernment may not be honoured. Individuals may not be open to the spiritual process of the group and . . . may not attend Area Meeting. Membership is a responsibility to attend Area Meeting as the decision making body and the place of testing our leadings.

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting held at Friends House and online, from 26 July to 30 July 2024

Dear Friends everywhere,
we send you our love and greetings.

Gyfeillion annwyl ym mhobman, anfonwn atoch ein cariad a'n cyfarchion.

An all-age Quaker Community has gathered in Friends House and online. Video conferencing has enabled wider participation, but it can be harder to be aware of everyone in our sessions. Our time together has included programmes for children and young people, as well as Junior Yearly Meeting. We have welcomed representatives from other churches and faiths, and Friends visiting from overseas. Together we have celebrated the 400th anniversary of the birth of George Fox.

Change is a constant in life. As a faith community, we seek to follow the promptings of love and truth. As opportunities open, we try to adapt our ways and processes to meet the needs of living in a turbulent world.

We strive to be a loving body of Friends where we all support each other – but we often fall short. How can we open Quaker spaces so that everyone feels welcome? We know that we each have work to do if we are to hear voices that are unlike our own. We seek to be Spirit-led, as our experience and understanding permit. May we be aware of our limitations. May we be open to learn in love. May we be teachable.

How can we love those who do bad things? Loving is different from liking. It is an action, more than a feeling. Younger Friends invite us to say sorry to someone we love, even if we do not feel loving to them at that time.

In the Swarthmore Lecture we heard stories of people who had committed serious, violent crimes and all those who have suffered as a result. When we come close to people so hurt, there is no easy resolution to their anger, fear, disgust, shame, and

despair. Our responses may include those same emotions. If we recognise these as part of ourselves, we may be more able to answer that of God in others.

As Britain Yearly Meeting, we have minuted commitments in recent years: to care for our planet, to become an anti-racist church, to make reparations for historical injustices, to welcome and affirm those who are transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse. Much work has been done on all these by some individual Friends and Quaker meetings, as well as by our yearly meeting staff and committees. However, some have disagreed with the actions and approaches of others. This has been a cause of pain and anguish. We have heard in ministry that the strength of a church lies in how it is able to disagree with itself. In Quaker discernment, unity is not the same as unanimity. Minority views may well continue to exist. Among ourselves, we need to find kinder ground for our disagreements. Can we find joy? Can we bring joy?

At Yearly Meeting 2023 we recognised the need to simplify our structures to make them more transparent and release energy for practical ministry. We urged ourselves to be radical, courageous, and imaginative. The proposal to meet four times a year for church governance has been deeply tested, then accepted. In our discernment, our business method and the discipline this requires of us have proved robust. We look for the fuller involvement of all members and attenders in all our meetings. There are no observers in Quakers; we are all participants. Our work benefits when it is carried on by people who bring with them a range of lived experiences and spiritual insights.

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

Isaac Penington in 1667 (10.01 | Quaker faith & practice)

Signed in and on behalf of Yearly Meeting, Adwoa Burnley Clerk 2

Epistle Ireland Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends, As we share these parting words you find us back alongside the banks of the River Lee for the first time since 2013. This time around the city is awash with red and white flags and bunting as the Cork Senior Hurlers prepare to face Clare in Croke Park in Dublin on All Ireland Final Sunday. Between the 17th and 21st of July we have been nestled on the grounds of Cork College of Further Education and Training near Grand Parade, grateful for the hospitality and welcome shown by local Friends.

We were delighted to share our gathering with visitors and representatives from other Yearly Meetings and faith groups who joined us both in person and online. In the spirit of Ubuntu, four representatives from local faith groups played an active part in our gathering, with their contributions reflecting our shared experiences.

As Quakers around the world prepare to gather at the FWCC World Plenary in South Africa in August, we have taken this time together in Cork to consider the theme of Ubuntu. We began by looking inward at the state of our own Yearly Meeting, before looking outward to consider our approach to Ubuntu within the wider Irish and UK societies. Madeleine Pennington from Theos Think Tank and Johnny Currie from the Trussell Trust led us to consider how the theology of Ubuntu influences us as we grapple with economic inequality in our society, and how we must look beyond temporary fixes, such as food banks, towards solutions which empower those living in poverty to have more dignity and control in their own lives. With guidance from Tracy Martin of the Quaker Council of European Affairs, we continued to move outward to consider our role in Europe and the wider world. Sylvia Wigham from Churchtown Meeting highlighted the struggles faced by refugees and those seeking international protection in Ireland. With 1 in 69 people around the world displaced from their homes, befriending activities can provide an invaluable connection to those feeling isolated; from lending a listening ear to assisting with form filling to providing driving lessons, our own small actions can have a powerful impact.

Having looked outward, we came back to ourselves and our relationships with others. The imagery of a windmill was used in a Peace Committee toolkit provided by Aoife Reaper Reynolds of Churchtown Meeting to convey the steps required to understand and improve how we deal with conflicts which may arise in our interactions. Inward reflection can provide the push needed to start this cycle, while self-care and care for others are essential to sustain momentum.

Larry Southard of Cork Meeting spoke to his book 'Wayfaring' which he sought to link to the theme of 'Learning Together'. The fundamental theme of the book can be summarised as envisaging God as a verb rather than a noun and divine guidance as a process. If you truly want to be led you must put yourself in a position that allows following. ie Special Interest Groups before our gathering, Bible study and worship sharing each morning, along with the new addition of smaller base groups in our programme gave Friends many opportunities to share fellowship with each other and provided space and time to explore these issues in greater depth.

Although we had looked forward to the return of Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge to deliver our Public Lecture in person, unforeseen travel difficulties meant we had to return to the wonders of modern technology to hear her inspiring talk entitled Ubuntu: A Profound Universal Value and our Hope for World Peace. As a lifelong campaigner for human rights and justice, she highlighted a number of examples of this theme in action from an Irish perspective. She also challenged us to find ways to use it in our own lives and communities.

True to Irish form, it's been a mixture of sunny spells and scattered showers here on the south west coast over these past few days. Despite that, there was no shortage of places and things to explore and see in the wider Cork area during our free time.

As our time together draws to a close, our thoughts are very much with Friends around the world as they get ready to travel to South Africa for the World Plenary organised by the Friends World Committee for Consultation. We hold our Friend Simon Lamb in the Light in his role as Clerk of FWCC and we pray that God's guidance will give him the strength to carry out his work, and to foster a sense of unity in the very diverse worldwide community of Quakers. We also prayerfully uphold our two Irish representatives Dawn Marie Rafferty and Stephen Winder Baggot, as well our other Friends Lynn Finnegan and Margaret Fraser, all of whom will be present in person. We are guided by a quote from IYM General Christian Counsel, Organisation and Christian Discipline "Live in love with one another as commanded by Christ, watching over one another for good, bearing with each other's failings, upholding one another prayerfully in times of difficulty and sorrow, and sharing with each other's joys."

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting,

William Haire, Clerk Hugh O' Farrell Walsh, Assistant Clerk Dawn Marie Rafferty, Assistant Clerk Philip McDonagh, Assistant Clerk

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Epistle of the World Plenary Meeting 2024 15 August



Last week, around 500 Quakers from 53 countries gathered in business, worship and fellowship at the World Plenary Meeting in Johannesburg and online.

Participants enjoyed 75 sessions (and well over a hundred including those held in local hubs that joined online). In one of the e final sessions, discernment from the three thematic streams—ubuntu, care for creation, and healing and repairing relationships in light of historic and continuing injustice—was woven carefully together, leading to [the epistle](#) below as well as a [‘tapestry’ document with a prayer](#). (Follow the links to download the documents in KiSwahili and Spanish).

Friends around the world are encouraged to read the epistle below at their Friends meeting or church on [World Quaker Day, 6 October](#):

To all Friends everywhere,

We send loving greetings from the Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary, held August 5 to 12, 2024 online and in Vanderbijlpark near Johannesburg, South Africa, on the banks of the river variously known as the IHai!arib, Lekwa, iLikwa and the Vaal. We are truly ‘down by the riverside’ as we lay down our burdens and lift them up to God.

500 Friends have gathered at the river’s edge and online, coming from 53 countries and representing 95 Yearly Meetings, worship groups and Quaker organisations. Half of them joined the gathering online, individually and organised in 50 hubs all over the world, a first for a World Plenary Meeting. With joy we reflect on how great it has been to have the contributions from online Friends in the room. For those of us online, it was a joy to be included and to experience the togetherness. Sadly, some Friends were prevented from joining us. We regret their absence and hold them in the Light.

Our theme is ‘Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to God’s Call to Cherish Creation and One Another’. Ubuntu is a Zulu word that speaks to the power and ceaseless work of the Holy Spirit between us, enabling us to go beyond our individual selves and grasp that ‘I am because we are’.

In this joyous gathering, we have expanded our understanding and appreciation for who we – as Quakers – really are. What a gift. Despite our multitude of differences, we have celebrated that we share not only our Quaker founders – happy 400th birthday, George Fox! – but also deep Friendship, an openness to new Biblical interpretations, our structures and processes, our deep commitment to peace and justice, our love of the Earth, and our love of God.

Eager that all gathered Friends may participate as fully as possible, we have bridged geographical distance and differences in language with technology, patient interpreters, and God’s grace. We are thankful. In the inclusive spirit of Ubuntu, we have all – and particularly English speakers – been challenged to speak slowly and

clearly enough for our interpreters to do their work. We have all been challenged to find a Spirit-led balance between speaking and listening, between action and contemplation, between doing and simply being.

Prior to this gathering, 46 of the Young Adult Friends among us came together for four days of shared experience, conversation, reflection, laughter, worship, and song. Living in community, Young Adult Friends explored, held, and danced with commonalities and differences. In an exciting development, a world committee of eight Young Adult Friends from all FWCC sections was formed. This reflects a joyful commitment to keep nurturing the newfound sense of community. Aware of the magnitude of the responsibility, Young Adult Friends call on all of us for support and trust.

*We were warmly and joyously welcomed by our hosts from Southern Africa Yearly Meeting and the Africa Section of FWCC. A local Friend shared with us the South African greeting 'sawubona', which means 'I see you and not only you, but all who have made you who you are'. She also spoke of how coming to Quakers helped her to believe in life beyond racist segregation. Excursions both virtual and local enriched our programme. Field trips to the Cradle of Humankind and the Apartheid Museum grounded the gathering in the context of our host country's own painful and turbulent journey. We have been inspired by the Spirit-filled resilience of our hosts, emerging from the struggles of the past and present steadfastly to affirm that through God's grace, **we are still here. We are one.***

Together, we have worshipped, prayed, sung, been warmed by the sun, chilled by the evening frost, and, of course, we talked — and talked — and talked some more. We have sought to discern Spirit-led ways forward to honour our commitment to our three interconnected themes: care of creation, the healing of relationships in the light of historic and ongoing injustice, and nurturing Ubuntu. Our emerging concerns have been captured and woven together in a tapestry document.

*We are seized with the urgent need to do transformative work in the world. We are also called by that still small voice to pause, to listen deeply to one another and to creation. Jeremiah 29: 11-14 says: 'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.' God is with us. **We are here. We are one.***

We have been challenged, and many of us are called to join collective, global Quaker action to live out our concerns — to be, as George Fox said — "valiant for Truth". Others among us focus on local community. We are learning to expand our compassion for who we are, just as we find ourselves in all our brokenness and our beauty.

The variance in our perspectives, some large, some small, have become more apparent, at times painfully so. We have been able, with God's blessing, to resolve

some tension through compassionate conversation, while some was simply held in our midst. We are not discouraged.

*Our past and present reminds us of our capacity to be faithful, courageous changemakers. With radical hope, we trust in our collective ability to “recognise, repent, redeem and restore” and to work together in beautiful and transformative ways. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! We know that through Jesus’ invitation to new life, ‘All things are made new.’ God has no hands but ours, no feet but ours, no lips but ours, so we keep imagining a better world. I am because you are. I am because we are. I see you. We belong to each other. **We are still here. We are one.***

George Fox’s radical insistence on bringing the Kingdom of God to all aspects of our lives, invited what he called ‘the new creation’. Are we ready for what is to come? Are we prepared to do what is required of us to birth the new creation? How does our living Ubuntu change the world?

As we return to our homes, with renewed love for our international Quaker family, may God bless the spaces between us as we seek a better world for all creation. Let the new creation come.

In God’s love, with radical hope,

Simon C. Lamb, Clerk, FWCC, on behalf of all who were part of our World Plenary Meeting

Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary A Report for Glasgow Local Meeting: September 1st 2024

Mary Troup

From 5th – 12th August 2024, around 500 Quakers from 53 countries, representing 95 Yearly Meetings, worship groups and Quaker organisations, gathered in business, worship and fellowship at the World Plenary Meeting near Johannesburg in South Africa, and online. Approximately half of the participants joined the gathering online, both individually and in 50 organised hub groups from all parts of the world, which was a first for a World Plenary Meeting. Sessions were conducted in 3 languages: English, Spanish and Kiswahili. In the inclusive spirit of Ubuntu, we were all challenged – particularly the English speakers – to speak slowly and clearly enough for the interpreters to do their work. In so doing, we were all challenged to find a Spirit-led balance between speaking and listening, between action and contemplation, between doing and simply being.

It was an extraordinary week, filled with spirit, dance, worship, prayer, song, intercultural exchanges and the spirit moving through all of us - calling us to rise to the challenges of our times. Our theme was ‘*Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to God’s Call to Cherish Creation and One Another*’. Ubuntu is a Zulu word

that speaks to the power and ceaseless work of the Holy Spirit between us, enabling us to go beyond our individual selves and grasp that *'I am because we are,'* reflecting the interconnectedness of all living beings. It is interesting to note that the root 'ntu' in the word *ubuntu* can be taken to mean both 'human being' and the life force that is in all things.

In this joyous gathering, we were able to expand our understanding and appreciation of who we – as Quakers – really are. What a gift it was to be part of this experience. Despite our multitude of differences, we celebrated that we share not only our Quaker founders, but also deep Friendship, an openness to new Biblical interpretations, our structures and processes, our deep commitment to peace and justice, our love of the Earth, and our love of God.

We sought to discern Spirit-led ways forward to honour our commitment to our three interconnected themes: care of creation, the healing of relationships in the light of historic and ongoing injustice, and nurturing Ubuntu. Our emerging concerns were captured and woven together in a tapestry document.

We felt called to tap into the same deep power as did early Friends, to name our grief in the face of climate and ecological breakdown: to face that darkness, but to face it through the Light, with a deeper form of love. And we recognised that the spirit of Ubuntu, the power of community, can also drive us to dig deep into the pain and trauma of the world, to face up to climate crisis and the ongoing effects of historical injustice. For without justice – climate justice, racial justice, social justice, economic justice - there can be no true peace.

We expressed our compassion for, and our solidarity with, the poorest in society, acknowledging that ecological destruction is disproportionately driven by the rich, who must bear the greatest burden in tackling the climate emergency. We recognised the need to achieve radical transformative change, towards simplicity and sufficiency, and the need to challenge the corporations and governments which are failing to live up to their international climate and biodiversity commitments. During the week we heard about the valuable work of QUNO, Quaker agencies and other partners in taking our concerns forward and upheld those Friends who take non-violent direct action. We called on Friends across the world to prioritise climate and eco-justice; to map their actions for care for creation, to invigorate and encourage radical action, and to nurture a sense of togetherness.

The themes emerging from the Gathering captured Friends' grief for historical and ongoing injustice including the impact of colonisation, forced displacement, slavery, economic exploitation and racism and recognised how we are called to disrupt patterns of oppression and division, to acknowledge offences, to challenge false notions of white supremacy, to repudiate doctrines of discovery, to make amends and to work for reparative and retrospective justice. We were reminded how we are called in our Quaker communities to be patterns and examples, to share gifts and skills, to be brave, to become radically inclusive and to celebrate diversity. *Are we all*

ready, Friends, to take up these callings? Listening deeply, we drew hope from the examples that we heard, recognising the healing arising from the stories that were shared and the truths that were told that demonstrate and lead us to recognise, repent, redeem and restore.

In closing, we called on Yearly Meetings and FWCC to take up this work, asking them to begin by examining our own Quaker communities, to engage in dialogue across the FWCC Sections, to centre the voices of those who have endured pain, to take action with and alongside allies, to educate and train ourselves, and to share reports of what Friends are doing so that we can learn from one another.

Returning to our roots, we remembered George Fox's radical insistence on bringing the Kingdom of God to all aspects of our lives, and how it invited what he called 'the new creation'. Are we ready for what is to come? Are we prepared to do what is required of us to birth the new creation? How does our living Ubuntu change the world? We returned to our homes, with renewed love for our international Quaker family, asking God to bless the spaces between us as we seek a better world for all creation.

And we parted with this prayer:

God of love and grace, we are a beautiful and broken people, living in a beautiful and broken world. We confess that we have fallen short in caring for each other and for creation. As a faith community we ask you to forgive us for neglecting creation, and for inflicting grave injustices upon one another. Give us the courage and wisdom to move forward boldly. Grant us the strength to seek each other's forgiveness, and the love and courage to hold both pain and possibility in our hearts. We ask you to send us on a new journey with our fellow humans and all your creatures in the spirit of Ubuntu. Let the new creation come.

¹ This report has woven together threads of material from the World Plenary Epistle: <https://fwcc.world/epistle-of-world-plenary-meeting/> and the associated Tapestry Document with a prayer: https://fwcc.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/WPM-2024-tapestry-and-prayer_KiSwahili-Espanol-English.pdf

The Universal Light

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath different names; it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.

John Woolman

Thoughts from a Dust Mote.

I have 3 pictures in my dining room. One is of the earth and the moon. The second is of the Pillars or Fingers of Creation and the third is of The Milky Way. The space time and distances and age of these structures are mind blowing. They remind me every day of the staggering 'space' and complexity of where I live and all the mysteries as yet unsolved regarding the existence of -well -everything. They remind me that I am a biodegradable speck in a cosmic wonderland trying to make meaning and live at the level of a dust mote, But also that I am a conscious biodegradable speck who seeks meaning and is given meaning by my belief in the Light. The same Light which I believe is responsible for the mind-boggling wonderland of Space/ Time/ Infinity. The same Light which is available to all my fellow biodegradables and which plants a seed in everyone – that of God in everyone.

The pictures keep me grounded and hopeful. Their beauty and complexity on my wall. I think of our short earthly lives and want my days on the beautiful blue globe to count and to add to the beauty and knowledge of our messy complexities. They remind me not to get too bogged down in the day to day or utterly despondent about the violence and injustice all around but to look up and out and encourage others to look up and out and question the priorities that run our lives.

Laura McMurtrie, Ayrshire Meeting



Quaker Concerns

Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network

Review from Mike Nellis. Glasgow LM

The Barlinnie Special Unit: Art, Punishment and Innovation. Waterside Press

Kirstin Anderson (ed) (2024)

The Special Unit in HMP Barlinnie in Glasgow was unique *in its day* (1973-1994) as a therapeutic penal innovation which offered transformational opportunities to some of Scotland's – at that time - most violent and notorious male offenders. It is unique *today* in that it is the only British penal initiative from fifty years ago that anyone in Scotland (or England) cares to remember and celebrate as a remarkable event, whose positive lessons, nonetheless, were never properly learned. Not that everyone, then or now, was positive about it, and the controversy surrounding it as a very bold experiment in minimising punitiveness behind bars is an important part of its story.

A new edited book seeks to show modern readers what the Unit accomplished, how it was done, why it closed and why it had polarised opinion. Some of the contributors were personally involved with the Unit at its outset, some in its later years. Others are concerned commentators on the range of issues raised by the Unit, not least the place of creative arts in prisoner rehabilitation. Some are both. Full disclosure; I am a contributor to the book and was on the editorial group that first set it in motion, but there is much in it that I did not know beforehand, and I commend it to Friends on that basis.

Like many people, I first heard of the Barlinnie Special Unit when Jimmy Boyle's memoir *A Sense of Freedom* was published in 1977. I was working as a social worker with young offenders in south London at the time. It was his account of growing up in the violent culture of post-war Glasgow's Gorbals, the low expectations his teachers had of "kids like him" and the ease with which he was further brutalised in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems that initially gripped me. I decided that if a man as bad as Boyle had once been – an enforcer for protection rackets - could become the fiercely articulate man he now so clearly was, my work in south London really was worth doing. I resolved to become better at it, and to take greater interest in penal policymaking. I knew little in 1977 of the academic criminology that subsequently enthralled me, and if I could only pick one book that had a formative influence on the course of my life, it would be *A Sense of Freedom*.

Boyle's memoir also stimulated my interest in the place where his reform had occurred, the Unit itself. It was devised by a Scottish Prison Service working party in

1971, whose remit had been to find a response to a small group of prisoners who were unmanageably violent towards staff in the mainstream prison system. Violent responses towards them by prison officers just kept the cycle of savagery going. A small, loosely therapeutic Special Unit was devised to address this, drawing on practice in HMP Grendon in England and Dingleton psychiatric hospital in the Scottish Borders. The Unit's volunteer staff – officers who wanted to break with the violent discipline of the mainstream system - had preliminary training in these places. One of these contributes to this book, a man who once said to me, “What the authorities never realised when they set the Unit up to change the prisoners, was that it would change us as well”, and also, “if I had not had my horizons enlarged by the Unit I'd never have formed the view that I personally could become a prisoner governor” – which he did.

The Special Unit was a “proper” therapeutic community with a regular weekly meeting in which staff and prisoners alike had to frankly discuss issues of living in the Unit and resolve interpersonal conflicts *with talk*, initially a new experience for both parties. But the Unit's planners had omitted to think how the prisoners would occupy their days. Quite serendipitously, art filled the gap. Boyle describes beautifully in *A Sense of Freedom* how Joyce Laing (a trained artist and Scotland's first ever qualified art therapist) started coming in once a week to encourage clay modelling. Initially she got zero response from a bunch of men to whom all things artistic could not have been more alien, but after Boyle tentatively gave it a go, and others followed suit, art was what made the Barlinnie Special Unit a legend.

Boyle was the first of many prisoners in the Unit's first ten years to discover he had a real talent, for sculpture in particular, and writing. Joyce Laing, unfazed by the company of “Scotland's most violent men” (as tabloid newspapers called them, cynically doubting that they could ever be more than this) helped many of them to flourish. She gave her last interview, published in this book, just before she died. Taking advantage of the Unit's open and flexible visiting arrangements, other artists came regularly to the Unit - actors, painters, musicians. These included Joseph Beuys, at the time universally appreciated as Europe's greatest modern artist, who had a major influence on the Unit's ethos, and on Boyle in particular. Bill Beech's chapter here explains this.

Bill was himself one of the young artists who first went to the Unit (with a video camera!) and although he subsequently had a hugely successful career as an artist and academic it has been through knowing him that I saw how association with the Unit in its early days marked some people for life, opened their minds to new human possibilities, and gave them a mission. The Unit proved beyond argument that some people who had both suffered and done terrible violence could change for the better using tried and tested therapeutic techniques and creative arts. And those people could speak for themselves about what it took to change: the Unit remains unique in still being better known (if it is known at all now) by what

some of its residents wrote about it – Jimmy Boyle, Hugh Collins and Johnny Steele - than any academic or official study. Later social-psychological research, described in the book by the person who undertook it, did confirm the regime’s violence-reducing propensities.

As far as I can tell Daphne Brooke was the only Quaker associated with the Special Unit. As a visitor, she befriended Larry Winters, the only prisoner to die in it, of a probably accidental overdose using drugs smuggled in by less scrupulous visitors. She subsequently published a collection of Larry’s writing and poetry, whose title, *The Silent Scream*, summed up what his life had long felt like, whilst revealing something of what might have been had he survived long enough to engage fully with what the Unit offered. Bill Beech wrote the screenplay for an awarding winning movie about Larry’s life and death, one of numerous ways in which the Unit’s work, rather uniquely for a prison, has been explored in popular culture, albeit for good and ill.

There is more to tell about *The Barlinnie Special Unit: Art, Punishment and Innovation* but it will hopefully inform a new generation of Friends about it and spur new thinking on the art of penal possibility.

SWARTHMORE LECTURE

Each year a lecture is given at the time of Yearly Meeting.

The 2024 Swarthmore Lecturer, Ben Jarman has delivered his lecture: Getting what we deserve? Imprisonment and the challenge of doing justice. Ben explores the myth and reality in how society responds to serious crimes, charting the uses and abuses of society’s responses to crime: retributive punishment, rehabilitative intervention, public protection, and calls for incremental or radical reform. Drawing on personal and professional experiences, He invites Friends to reflect on where current prison conditions belong in the longer flow of Quaker witness on penal reform, and to ask: who (if anyone) gets what they deserve from the institutions we have?

The whole lecture can be watched on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwqolkC0nnc>

Ali Gohar spoke to SQCJN

Below is a short summary of the talk to give you a flavour of what was discussed by **Ren Wednesday**

"In his talk, Ali Gohar talked about the indigenous Jirga practices in his province of Pakistan, and how those old practices have adapted to the present day and now exist alongside the legal system in Pakistan.

Prompted by questions from the group, Ali discussed the role of shame in justice. Ali has co-written a book with the Australian academic John Braithwaite (Restorative Justice, Policing and Insurgency: Learning from Pakistan), and Braithwaite is controversial in his view that shame should be used as a tool to motivate the perpetrator to change. Ali said that traditionally in Pakistan shame would be attached to the victim of harm, and Jirga can be used to reapportion that shame.

The question of women's role in Jirga practice was also raised, and Ali said that while the traditional practice does not allow women to attend, there have been some innovations in urban areas where professional women have been allowed into the process. In aspects like this, it's clear that the culture of Ali's province of Pakistan is very different from that in the UK, and there was some discussion of how the lessons of Jirga can be translated to this country, considering that we do not have the same structure of community elders in place.

Ali said that while he has been doing practical work with his community, there are other models of Restorative Justice inspired by indigenous methods that have had some success in the UK and the US, including circles that are used by indigenous North American cultures and indigenous New Zealand methods. Ali believes that it is not difficult to start a circle, or a family reconciliation program, but the group raised the question of how that can be implemented on a larger scale, rather than relying on a single charismatic individual or committed group.

He also talked about the importance of faith in the work of the Jirga, and the practice of all participants placing a hand on the Koran to emphasise the witness of God in the work."

Here is the link to the Zoom recording of the restorative justice talk by Ali Gohar on 2nd September. https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/y4824I75TRwm672LsvBZ2VdPiSGkDy-rT6qWSb1RK6iEbKNXyXjb4Mp-jwL_8PqA.ZUg LZd80M0qu8eqK

Woodbrooke Course: Paths Towards Transformative Justice 7 October - 11 November 2024

The live Zoom sessions are at 18:00-19:30 (UK time) every Monday.

Nishma Jethwa will lead on How do existing systems of justice replicate patterns of oppression? What alternatives can we envisage? This course will unpack the topic of transformative justice with a view to understand abolitionist frameworks of justice and accountability.

Climate Change and Sustainability

Lots of opportunities coming up. There seem to be several overlapping weeks of action!

- The Global Week of action for Peace and Climate Justice **21-28 September** [Week of Action for Peace and Climate Justice - climateactivism.org](http://www.climateactivism.org) is supported by Northern Friends Peace Board and includes several digital events: webinars and online actions. Check their spreadsheet of events for details
- An opportunity to share **Stories for Change** in Scotland's Climate Week **23-29 September** -see [Climate Week | Net Zero Nation](http://www.climateweek.org)
- We have an action pack from the Friends of the Earth Scotland Campaign **Stop New Gas at Peterhead** campaign. Plenty of flyers to hand out and petition sheets to get signed. Petitions are due back by **25 September** so do ask if you want some.
- And you'll find on the Google drive a copy of Margery's letter to the First Minister about Peterhead and related potential breaches of the ministerial code
- Join in the **Eco Festival** at St Margaret's Episcopal Church, 353-5 Kilmarnock Road G43 2DS on **28-29 September** with workshops. Stall and activities, including Alistair McIntosh speaking on the Saturday afternoon <http://episcopalnewlands.org.uk/1007253-2/>
- Advance Notice from our Parliamentary Engagement Officer Sarah Komashko: **19 October, 10-1: Christians and Climate Change Event** in Perth – more info to follow
- For those able to travel even further, Duncan has let us know about a **Stop Rosebank** national gathering in **Manchester, 19 and 20 October**. You need to register by **20 September** – details on the Google Drive
- You might like to contribute to the Scottish Government consultation on the proposal for a 25p charge for single-use cups. You can [respond to the consultation here](https://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/2019/09/2019090101) (closing **14 November**).

I know there has been much activity on ongoing concerns, including supporting climate activists in prison, the Stop EACOP Scotland actions and campaigning around Peterhead. As ever, there are some updates on the Google drive

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1G98-18PHbhGg2hNAa0nyx98SgNXY4DK-?usp=drive link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1G98-18PHbhGg2hNAa0nyx98SgNXY4DK-?usp=drive_link)

Do send any news for sharing to this email address and we can add it to the Google Drive but we have also been thinking whether you would like a WhatsApp group, where any of us could contribute directly (and more immediately). Something to discuss when we next meet, which is on **Monday September 23rd** at our usual time of **5.30** starting with a light supper.

Hoping to see you again soon. In peace and friendship

Doreen Osbourne, Glasgow

Gender-based Violence

Silenced

Margaret Roy

I scoured the pages of the Friend reporting on Britain Yearly Meeting for a word on Violence against Women and Girls, not a jot. The news media is full of it, even the Government has declared its intent to tackle it; the royal family are in on it, the Duchess of Edinburgh on rape in conflict zones, Queen Camilla on domestic abuse. Quakers? Not a peep.

As sex crimes and rape figures rise and there are more female murders, as Legal Aid is withdrawn from many survivors of domestic abuse, not a peep.

Are WE totally free of violence?

No bad thoughts to murder anyone? Not even in road rage or garden disputes?

Do we really live in cloud cuckoo land?

One of the most violent words amongst Quakers is 'should'. When is that **not** coercion, or the same subtle dominance that is a core element of domestic abuse? *Possibly right minded, but not right active?*

Many Quakers today have not heard of the Lamb's War. To Early Quakers such as James Nayler or Margaret Fell, it may have been just as important to look inward as to seek peace without. It is a two edged sword. It cuts both ways. You could even say violence starts within. We don't like the word 'sin' yet it is a strong strand of Christians, even today, that sees human kind as imperfect and therefore dammed so needs saved. Quakers differed, even from the start, in seeing humanity as capable of transformation, i.e. capable of nearing perfection . . . to the horror of orthodox churches. There is that of God in everyone! Today it is a well established premise of the self-help industry. Externalised it is the urge to change the world, to bring the Kingdom of Heaven into manifestation on Earth, to work for a better world. One serious question might be, by what criteria do we assess perfection? What is the interface between human ingenuity and divine inspiration? You could say things have become a little more complicated without God. Before it was simply called GRACE.

Here I must refer back to the patriarchal economic system of exploitation, the values of which create a hierarchy in which women are at the bottom. That puts women centre to climate change/justice and economic and political exploitation, injustice and inequality, our core testimonies. Those of us who have received some status within the system are yet very aware of the number of ways we can be silenced or rendered worthless, even when backed by Equality Law. I am sure that happens to men too, but . . .

To bring women in from the cold needs a quantum shift in consciousness, how we think, hence why I have brought back the theme of the Lamb's War. In one way we can change our attitudes and thinking process by contemplation, hence our group has devised those little cards to aid the process. However there is a paradox. Whilst most **know** what I am talking about, others are too scared to make the leap.

Real change starts within. As Quakers we come into silence to engage Spirit, to be led or inspired. However we are very individualistic sticking with the polarity and analysis way of thinking of the ego mind. The early Christians practised **Kenosis**, emptying the mind before entering the Presence that is heart consciousness. If we talk of heart consciousness we become aware of unity, of Ubuntu, of LOVE. The kind of community that arises from that has different values, of co-operation, belonging, participation and inclusion.

Isn't it interesting that *Malkutha is not Kingdom but Queendom of heaven? It is feminine.*



White Ribbon Day 2024: It Starts with Men.

Together we can prevent violence against women and girls.

This White Ribbon Day, **Monday 25 November**, we're encouraging men to hold themselves accountable to women and to each other, so we can affect positive behaviour change to transform harmful cultures.

You will find many resources and activities on their website.

Iraq's parliament is about to vote on a law that would make it legal to marry girls as young as nine.

Thousands of people have been protesting in cities all across Iraq. But religious MPs are dead-set on passing this abusive law.

Iraq has had much success reshaping its global image post-ISIS, and **relies heavily on trade deals with governments and partnerships with corporations like GE and Honeywell which both have pending deals with Iraq.**

Let's quickly show just how seriously the country's newfound reputation is on the line.

[Tell Iraq's MPs: protect girls and scrap the child marriage law.](#)

The new proposal will tear families and society apart by handing over family affairs to religious clerics — allowing them to decide everything from marriage, divorce, inheritance and custody of children based on sectarian biases rather than civil law. This means that Iraq's 1959 Personal Status Law which set the minimum marriage age at 18, will essentially be defunct.

While Iraq is certainly not the only country debating child marriage (and we don't just mean in the Middle East – several states in the US haven't officially outlawed it!) – Iraqi women have spent decades fighting for equality, and won. **In fact, contrary to how the media depicts it, historically Iraq has some of the strongest protections for women in the Middle East.**

But now if this archaic law is passed, it will set Iraq back a century, and put millions of women, girls, and other marginalized individuals at risk of abuse.

Add your name to help protect women and girls in Iraq. Let's show that new and existing business deals could be at risk unless the parliament scraps this abusive law.

[Stop child marriage in Iraq.](#)

Our partners in Iraq told us that different versions of this law have been proposed in parliament over the years, but each time, these attempts were thwarted due to strong opposition. **Together, we can do this again!**

[Sign the petition](https://act.sumofus.org/go/703203) <https://act.sumofus.org/go/703203>

Thanks for all that you do,
Rewan, Falastine, Nish, Eoin and the team at Ekō

More information:

[Iraq: Parliament Poised to Legalize Child Marriage](#) Human Rights Watch. 16 August 2024

[Draft Iraqi law allowing 9-year-olds to marry would 'legalise child rape', say activists](#) The Guardian. 10/8/24

PREDATORS NEED SCAFFOLDING

I've heard a lot of guys visualise our social environment thus:

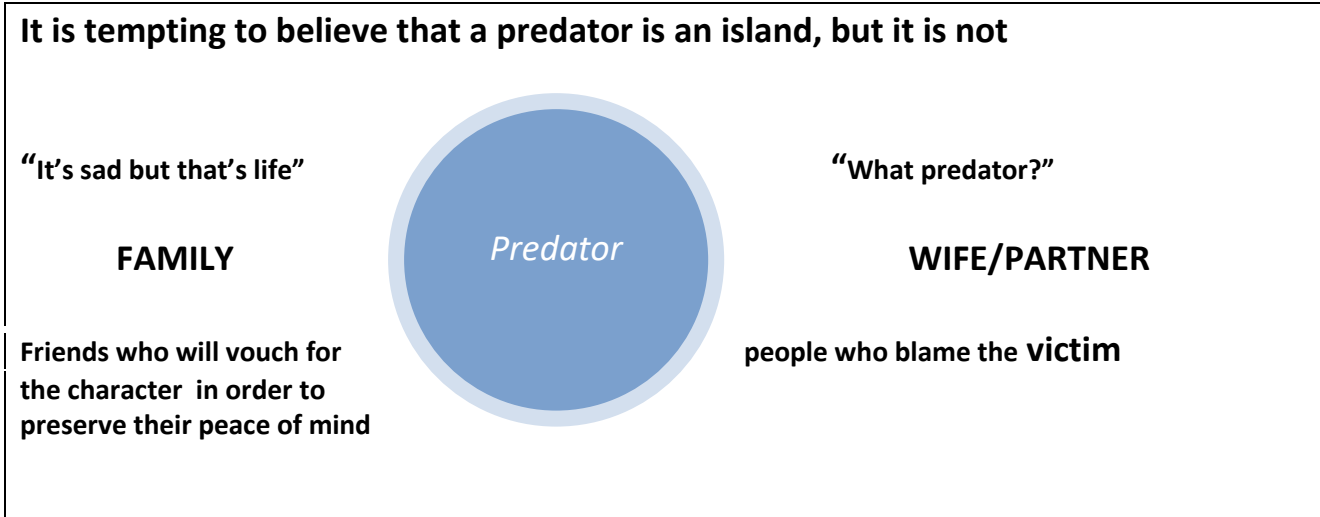
_____ >

Good men → | **Crazed evil men**

But it is actually closer to this:

_|_____||_____||_____||_____||_____||_____||_____ >

Heroic men who will intervene	Well-meaning men who underestimate the issue	Men who think predation is an unfortunate fact of life	Men who think certain women deserve it (but) aren't active predators	men who passively enjoy/consume/encourage predation	textbook predators we are all aware of	monsters who are so cruel we can't even fathom them
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Academic studies show that a consistent factor of men’s use of violence is their perception of peer support.

In other words: the extent to which they think the men around them condone, support and themselves use violence against women.

From Levelup.com

The cards

Our Gender-based Violence Group will print a range of these to go out to Local Meetings with the suggestion they are placed on chairs before Meeting for Worship. We are especially aiming at those Sundays within the UN 16 days of action on Violence against Women. The thought on each card arises from one of the Advices & Queries and hopefully will lead us to explore our inner tendency to violence.

GBV cards to stimulate thoughts re our own violence.

On the front

How can we love another if we do not love ourself?
But what is self-love?

Love doesn't make the world go round.
It is the courage to be kind.

Be honest. Who are you really angry with?
Dealing with frustration is a learned art.
DAY 1???

Hope things can be different.
Maybe hope needs a helping hand?

Patience? It's a gift of the gods.

Treasure it like gold. Store it.

Diversity starts at home . . . as an adventure
In discovery.

We are not the same, thank God, but what an
adventure to see the world through another's
eyes.

We are all in this together and sometimes our
survival strategy does not show us in the best light.

On the back

Cherish that of God in you that this love may
grow and guide you. A&Q 3

Hold yourself and others in the Light knowing
All are cherished by God. A&Q 3

Take time to learn other people's experience
of the Light. Appreciate that doubt and
questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to
a greater awareness of the Light that is in us all.
A&Q 5 and 11

Be aware of the living Spirit present in ordinary
activities and experiences in your daily life.

As we wait patiently for divine guidance, our
experience is that the right way will open and
We will be lead into unity.

Seek to know one another in the things which
are eternal, bear the burden of each other's
failings and pray for one another. As we enter with
tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each
other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it,
our meeting can be a channel for God's love and
forgiveness.

Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives
and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced
judgments about the life journeys of others. Do
you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and
forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us?
Remember that each one of us is unique, precious,
a child of God. A&Q 22

Do you recognise the needs and gifts of each
member of your family and household, not forgetting
your own. A&Q 26

Peace and Reconciliation

Quakers in Europe Prayer Group

Saturdays 08:30 to 9.30 am

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88555071012?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88555071012?pwd=WWRYT1Z0U1ZtMitvRnlyY0FwYVU3QT09)

[pwd=WWRYT1Z0U1ZtMitvRnlyY0FwYVU3QT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88555071012?pwd=WWRYT1Z0U1ZtMitvRnlyY0FwYVU3QT09)

Meeting ID: 885 5507 1012

Passcode: 42194

MEETING FOR WORSHIP AT FASLANE NAVAL BASE

Sunday 22 September

This forms part of our Quaker witness for peace. We hold a quiet meeting for worship outside the gates where Trident submarines are based. We hope that more Friends will be able to join us. We can arrange transport there.

Gather at the north gate at 11am for an hour of worship. Bring suitable clothing and something to sit on if you wish. (There are some large rocks there.)

Further information from Mary Alice Mansell (mamansell54@gmail.com)

or Daphne Wassermann (daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com).

The following date is Sunday 10 November.

Quaker Peacebuilding Network

This is a new informal online space that was convened jointly on Wednesday 7 August by the Peacebuilding in Britain team and Northern Friends Peace Board. It was a space to lament for those experiencing or fearing violent Racist, anti-migrant and Islamophobic violence and other communities caught up in the recent violence. It is open to practical suggestions from Friends who have been thinking about how to keep their communities safe whilst also acting in solidarity.

Convened by the Peacebuilding in Britain team it is *specifically* for Friends who are *active in peacebuilding* at a local level in Britain and Ireland (or have capacity to become active).

Though peacebuilding is often used in a catch-all way, it is *not* planned to use this new Network to support peace activism or discuss peace campaigning, disarmament, or international conflicts (except in relation to how they may be impacting on community relations). If this is where you are called, please instead connect with the [Faith in Action team](#) and sign up to the [Quake! newsletter](#), you might also want to connect with the [Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network](#) and [Quaker Roots](#).

The new Quaker Peacebuilding Network is focused instead on providing an online space for peer-support, for friends active or seeking to become active in peacebuilding at a local level (We also invite Friends with significant peacebuilding experience though you may no longer be active). This is work that tends to be long-term in nature and looks to strengthen or repair relationships and lay foundations to prevent future violence (in its different forms). If this network could be helpful to you, we invite you to sign up to via the link <https://quaker.us7.list-manage.com>. This is convened by the Peacebuilding in Britain team.

Open letter from British Jews to Archbishop Welby, September 2024

The letter below is being circulated to gather the signatures of UK Jews, before being delivered to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Archbishop of Canterbury
Lambeth Palace, London

Dear Archbishop Welby

The signatories of this letter are Jews from a wide range of perspectives, united in our outrage at Israel's savage war on the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We greatly welcome your recent statement (August 2nd) that, in the light of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19th July, Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territories is illegal and Israel should immediately withdraw.

We write now to urge you to take full account of the diversity of Jewish opinion on Israel and Palestine, both religious and secular, and to widen the range of Jewish organisations that you listen to and meet with.

We deplore the unfailing backing Israel receives from the supposedly official voices of British Jewry, the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BOD) and the Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. The BOD regularly insists that its is the sole legitimate voice, and that other Jewish voices, which it does not hesitate to denigrate, must be ignored. Equally concerning is the fact that mainstream politicians and media seem to accept the BOD's claim to be the sole representative of British Jews. The result is that British Jews are generally portrayed as supporting the occupation of Palestine, the proliferating illegal settlements, and, now, the mass killings in Gaza.

In fact, the BOD and Chief Rabbi Mirvis represent only a minority of the British Jewish community [i]. To be involved in electing Deputies to the Board, one must be a member of a United or affiliated synagogue, or be connected to one of the religious communal organisations (such as the United Jewish Israel appeal - UJIA - or Reform Judaism). Rabbi Mirvis is Chief Rabbi only of the United Synagogue, a union of Orthodox British synagogues, but not of the other Jewish denominations.

Jews who are not members of United or other affiliated synagogues have no means of representation. For example, the UK Haredi community, some 75,000 strong [ii], about 25% of all British Jews, along with secular Jews, are not represented by either Chief Rabbi Mirvis or the BOD, whose views on Israel many of us strongly oppose [iii].

We ask you to reflect on the shame and horror we feel at being represented as approving of the murderous oppression of Palestinians by the self-declared Jewish supremacist state of Israel. To be tarred with the brush of complicity in its programme of land theft, house demolitions, pogroms and, now, mass killing, connects us, viscerally, to our own historic experience as victims of pogroms and the Nazi genocide. In the light of this alone, we are resolute in our condemnation of Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their lands.

We are deeply concerned at the systematic deployment of the charge of antisemitism against those, including Jews, who criticise Israel. The charge of antisemitism has particular impact on members of Muslim communities who, as reported to us, too often feel unable to speak freely on Palestine and Israel. Their perspectives and concerns are being silenced by the amplification of establishment Jewish perspectives.

Many Jews dissent from the position of the BOD and Chief Rabbi Mirvis, as witness the array of Jewish organisations critical of Israel – Jewish Voice for Labour, Jewish Network for Palestine, Na'amod, Black-Jewish Alliance, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Jewish Socialist Group, as well as the Haredi communities [iv]. The national marches for Palestine incorporate a Jewish Bloc, sometimes more than one thousand strong.

Attributing, to all British Jews, the views of the BOD and Chief Rabbi Mirvis, perpetuates the misleading impression of the UK Jewish community as a monolithic bloc. This falsehood harms community relations, not least because it plays to the antisemitic trope that Jews, by our very nature, are of one mind in pursuit of self-serving and nefarious purposes. The British establishment's support for Israel, despite the steadily mounting evidence of genocide, strengthens the impression of sinister Jewish power.

The need to nurture positive relations between the Established Church and the Jewish establishment should not lead to the marginalisation of other Jewish voices,

and must not overrule the urgent need to recognise and denounce the evil of what Israel is doing to the Palestinians.

It is desperately urgent that dissenting Jewish voices should be heard. We write because we believe that as head of the Established Church, you should listen. We ask that you agree to meet a delegation drawn from the list of signatories below. The organisers of this letter would welcome the opportunity to facilitate such an engagement.

We are yours Sincerely

Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor, St Antony's College, Oxford University

Antony Lerman, Senior Fellow at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue, Vienna

Richard Kuper, co-founder of Jews for Justice for Palestinians

Jenny Manson, Co-Chair, Jewish Voice for Labour

Naomi Wimbourne-Idrissi, Media Officer, Jewish Voice for Labour

Jonathan Rosenhead, Chair, British Committee for the Universities of Palestine

Moshé Machover, Emeritus Professor, KCL

Miranda Pinch, Producer of documentary [From Balfour to Banksy](#), CAMPAIN

Robert A.H. Cohen (see [Writing from the Edge](#))

David Epstein FRS, Emeritus Professor, University of Warwick

Dr. George Wilmers, Mathematical Logician

Michael Rosen, Author

Alexei Sayle, Comedian

David Mond, CAMPAIN

Professor Ludi Simpson, Hon. Professor, University of Manchester School of Social Sciences

Israel/Palestine Online Retreat

Dear Friends,

We have now finalised details for the Israel/Palestine Online Retreat, which will serve as an educational day about the region, the history, the conflict, and more.

The Online Retreat will take place on Zoom on **Saturday 26th October** from **10.00-17.00BST**. We will hear from speakers, hold discussions and Q&As, and come together in worship. In order to book your place, contact qva.org.uk

The Zoom link and programme will only be shared with those that complete the booking form.

The fee for attending the event will be pay-as-led with a recommended fee of £10, but please pay what you are able to (whether that is less or more than our recommendation!).

As ever, if you have any questions please feel free to contact me via email or phone/SMS/Whatsapp: email: retreats@qva.org.uk phone: +44 7518 471678

Kit King Working Retreats Coordinator

Fishing

It's not about food and mostly you wait.

You watch and you wait. You watch the others.

You watch the water where the hook went in.

You watch and you wait until you learn

to sit by yourself waiting

for the tug.

You give up fishing.

You let the river run away to sea.

You sit quietly as in worship, your sport

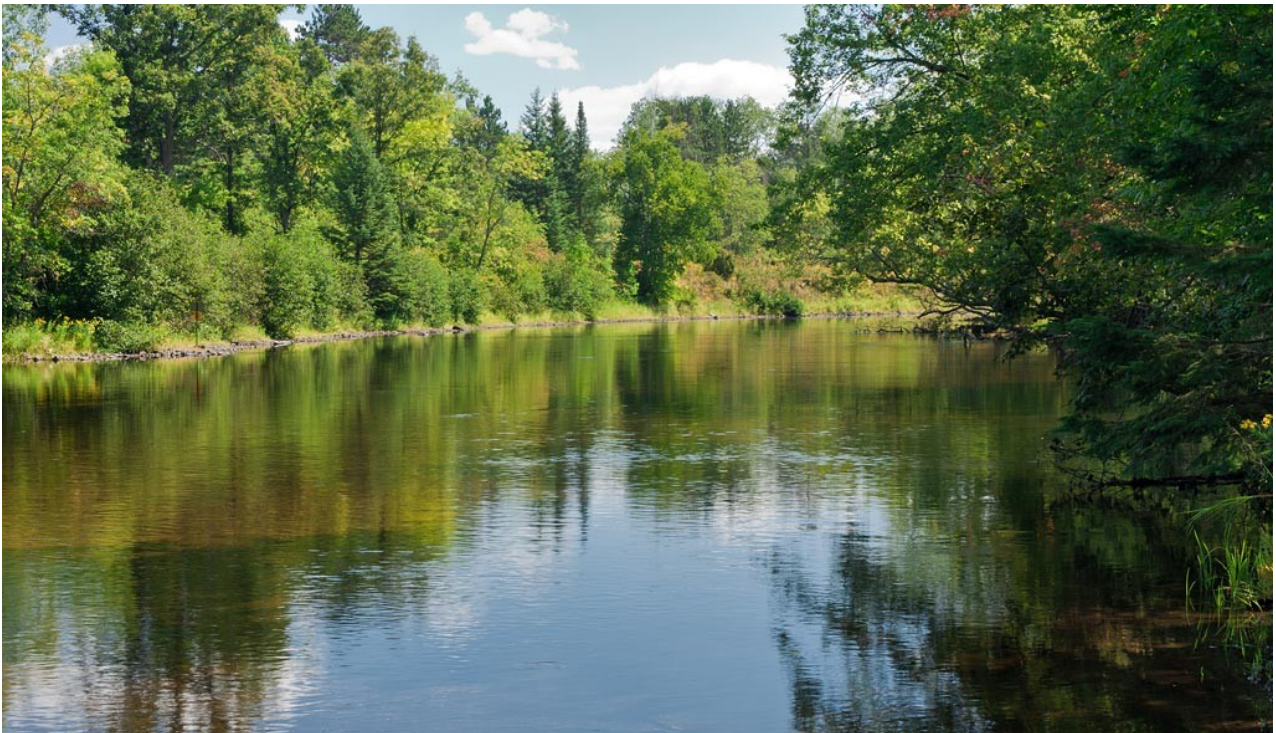
just to sit for love of a life waiting

for nothing. One day, if you're lucky, a salmon

will leap in your chest at sun flickering

on the alder leaves, the shoal

pooling to feed at your feet. **Clare Phillips, Castle Douglas**



Book Reviews

Plurality, the Future of Collaborative Technology and Democracy E.Glen Weyl, Audrey Tang, & Community; printed by Amazon

Margaret Roy

When we see the surrounding world as chaotic, threatening and difficult to understand, it is easy to feel frightened, angry or despondent, or all three. We can rail about the internet, social media, AI, etc. as out of control or plain negative..

This book challenges all that.

The internet started as a gift to open the world of knowledge and democracy. Something went wrong but it can be changed. The editors E.Glen Weyl and Audrey Tang have drawn together 67 contributors whose experience ranges from editing, translation, technology, video, PR, data, to research, etc.

E.Glen Weyl is founder of Radical Change, Microsoft Research's Plural Technology Collaboratory & Plural Institute and is co-author of Radical Markets.

Audrey Tang is the inaugural Minister of Digital Affairs in Taiwan.

The ethos is Daoist, non-competitive and participatory. Their aim is to restore the original intention of co-operative community.

'In the . . . boundless expanse of Plurality . . . let us take positive action to allow the seeds of shared goodness to break . . . earth and blossom into flowers of empathy, joy and harmony.' HH the Dalai Lama XIV of Tibet.

Chapters start by explaining the rift between technology and democracy. There are plenty of graphs and statistics for those so minded. The second chapter is the wonderful example of how Taiwan took up the gauntlet. [These sites became so popular that even government ministers used them]

' . . . arose from discontent with the quality of government digital services and digital services and data transparency. Civic hackers began to scrape government websites . . . and build alternative formats for data display and interaction for the same website, hosting them at g0v.tw. . . .

G0v built on this success to establish a vibrant community of civic hackers interacting with a range of non-technical civil society groups at regular hackathon, called jothons (based on a Mandarin play on words, meaning roughly 'join-athon'). While hackathons are common in many parts of the world, some of the unique features of g0v practices include the diversity of participants usually a majority of non-technical and with nearly full gender parity), the orientation towards civic problems rather than commercial outcomes and the close collaboration with a range of civic organisations.

These features best summarized by the slogan ' Ask not why nobody is doing this. You are the 'nobody'.

Other chapters include: the Life of a Digital Democracy, Connected Society, the Lost Dao, Identity and Personhood, Rights, Operating Systems and Community Freedom, Creative Collaborations, from Community to Reality and there are special chapters looking at Workplace, Health, Media, and Environment.

The last few chapters look at policy comparing different government arrangements, e.g. China, European and USA MODELS.

From the US model, Taiwan has drawn the emphasis on a dynamic, decentralized, free, entrepreneurial ecosystem open to the world that generates scalable and exportable technologies, especially within the open-source ecosystem. From the European model, it has drawn a focus on human rights and democracy as the fundamental aspirations both for the development of basic digital public infrastructure and on what the rest of the digital ecosystem depends. From the PRS model, it has drawn the importance of public investment to proactively advance technology, steering it toward societal interests.

Together these add up to a model where the public sector's primary role is active investment and support to empower and protect privately complemented but civil society-led, technological development whose goal is proactively building a digital stack that embodies in protocols principles of human rights and democracy.

It all sounds good as a way forward into the digital world using the gift of technology to reclaim the internet and to open up a participatory democracy centred on society needs. However, I have two disappointments:

It is the same old patriarchal thinking structures of us and them, me inside and the world out there. Deep down that leads to fear of existence manifesting as status and hierarchy. It is polarity rather than plurality. If we look at health for example, they do not talk of holism or personal integrity but start with insurance and how to make that fairer by balancing the needs of the rich and poor. There is nothing on cause: why are people ill; housing, food, pollution, etc; how we in the west have exported our problems of dirt to poorer nations, e.g. the mining for rare metals for batteries.

What happened to that patriarchal economic system of exploiting the Earth? What about our relationship to Nature? Where does the Dao come in? I am very conscious just how much power that computer uses to stay cool, and those extra 20,000 satellites for 5G . . . Whilst it recognizes the need for a better relationship to protect our environment, for me this is still the Anthropocene. Nature is still out there and we still do not see that we are part of it.

However, I recommend the book as very thought-provoking.

Gathering at Wiston Lodge 13-15TH September

Edie Phoenix, Castle Douglas

About 50 Friends from across Scotland gathered at Wiston Lodge, a non-profit Outdoor Center near Biggar in South Lanarkshire. The theme of our weekend was Building Community with a mix of activities, fellowship, and worship for Friends of all ages.

We were fortunate to have around 20 children with us over the weekend, and most of the activities were as family-friendly as possible.

The weekend began on Friday evening with a hearty supper of veggie chilli followed by wonderful home-made veggie berry cheesecake. "Just chilling out" was encouraged but for those who wished, a Wallace and Gromit film, followed by a film on rewilding Scotland.

Next day I was introduced to Xiang Gong (a cousin of Qi Gong) on the lawn, and afterwards attended a cacao heart opening ceremony in the beech grove. Then, thinking they were Quakers, I accidentally joined some Beaver Scouts (4 to 6 years old) round a wood fire, who kindly offered me freshly cooked marshmallow on digestive biscuits. A swing on the hammock in the trees and it was time for lunch – home-made soup, bread and cheese and more lovely home-made baking.

In the afternoon I enjoyed a creative writing class on the theme of gathering and connection. Other all-age opportunities on offer included working with clay, or creating a Quaker Town - 'a group activity creating an ideal town in miniature with recycled cardboard and natural materials' which amazingly by the time they had finished, covered the whole floor. A small group climbed the nearby Graham-classified Tinto hill. The weather was not good enough at the top to see the magnificent views in every direction, but luckily the cloud parted on the way down and glimpses were seen. A Nature Hunt was described as "Awesome" by one young participant.

After a supper of cottage pie and more wonderful baking, we gathered around the campfire for a ceilidh, one young person singing in Gaelic.

Sunday was also busy. More Xiang Gong on the lawn, followed by a worship sharing on 'How do we as Quakers experience Faith and God?' with attender Tali Brown and our local Development Worker for Scotland, Zoe Prosser.

Lanark Meeting arrived for their regular MfW and a joint all-age MfW was held.

After a soup lunch we left for home, tired but happy after an enjoyable and packed 48-hours.

Give me a summer and a bunch of matches and a sack of meal, and I will climb every mountain in the region – John Muir

Learning

Ayrshire Meeting Learning and Discussion Session

Laura McMurtrie, Ayrshire

On Wednesday evening 18th September Ayrshire Meeting began its Autumn learning and discussion sessions. For several years we have had an established pattern of learning together throughout Autumn/Winter and have used a variety of support material and have also engaged with Woodbrooke on a number of occasions. We offer those opportunities beyond our Meeting and enjoy and benefit from having Friends from other Meetings with us. This time we were joined by a Friend from Castle Douglas Meeting. Because of the dispersed nature of Ayrshire membership, we hold these learning opportunities via Zoom only which enables the maximum number of Friends to take part. The feedback we receive is that this works well for everyone.

The topic was Silence and Waiting and we used material from the Becoming Quakers Workbook. It was not led by anyone but facilitated by our Clerk and supported by all of us. We had a good session with Friends drawing on their own experiences in Meeting, we also considered the different traditions throughout history, different contemporary ways across the world of managing Meetings and the role and experience of Ministry in Meetings. We also discussed what a Gathered Meeting felt like. Friends expressed positive views about the evening, and we are looking forward to our next session. Details will be shared beyond our meeting shortly for other Friends who may wish to join us.

The Learning Group devolved from AM Elders

Several events have already been presented by the group.

On 5th September **Book of Discipline Revision Committee** presented an update lead by Nuala Watt and Mary Woodward. This took place at Glasgow Meeting House and covered in particular their recent work on relationships.

Following our successful course on **The Four Doors of Quaker Worship** and **The Quaker Way** we are preparing sessions on **Essentials of Quakerism** for one of the following dates: 19 or 26 October; 2nd or 23rd November (possibly also the 30th); 7 December. This will be led by Ben Pink Dandelion'. We are also looking for dates for the Kindlers to present **What Does Love Require of You?**

In the new year, we also hope to run a book study with the Quaker Quicks new book on **Exploring Isaac Pennington**, a very significant early Friend.

Experiment with Light retreat in June was held in Glasgow Meeting House. Andrea Freeman and Ann Bettys lead us. 11 attended, 3 being prevented. They came from

different parts of the AM and there were also some from across Scotland. Some who attended were new to the Experiment with Light. (See full report in last issue of this newsletter.) We are preparing for another all day silent retreat late in November, date to be confirmed later. No artwork this time. Contact Margaret Roy for details – margaret.roy@btinternet.com

Quaker Processes The group found a need to support learning on this topic and are looking at various ways to do this.

Reaching further afield two opportunities could be followed through. It may be possible to disseminate learning opportunities across Scotland through our development worker Zoe Prosser. Also Mary Troup circulated documents and plans for a potential Living Witness from the World Plenary to allow us to consider learning opportunities following this. She will keep us informed about developments.

Dunblane Meeting

Susan Mitchell

Learning groups

The question of how best to learn together and provide a forum for newcomers to learn about Quaker ways is not an easy one to answer. It would be good to know how other meetings address this. In Dunblane meeting we set aside the third Sunday of the month for a learning group for about an hour after Meeting for Worship. We agree the topic and a facilitator at a preceding business meeting. It is helpful to have a note taker as well as a facilitator and then to share the notes with the whole meeting.

So far this year we have had seven learning groups with participation ranging from eight to twelve Friends. Topics we have covered are death, dying and funerals; truth and integrity and QTIG; the marriage declaration; Quaker organisation; QiSCG community feedback; living our testimonies; and most recently, how should we organise pastoral care.

Next month we will experiment with having a Q&A learning group straight after a shortened MfW without a coffee break in between. We hope this will encourage more Friends to take part.

As you learn us from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained? Whilst respecting the experiences and opinions of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value. Appreciate that doubt and questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to a greater awareness of the Light that is in us all. A&Q 5

Local Meetings

Arran

Arran Friends currently meet twice a month on Sundays at 11.00.

The first Sunday is at the home of Judith in Dippen and the third Sunday is in Brodick not far from the ferry terminal.

We welcome Friends from other Meetings and also people on holidays. Friends from Ayrshire Meeting recently visited our Meeting and that was excellent. We have also visited Ayrshire Meeting and were made very welcome.

As a relatively small Meeting we fluctuate in our numbers but we maintain a presence on the island. A few of us also regularly attend different Meetings online which we find invaluable and worthwhile as sometimes we do have issues getting off the island.

Castle Douglas

September saw the start of our new arrangements for Sunday worship. We now meet at the Bowlers' Hall 1st and 3rd Sundays only and at the later time of 11.00 to make it easier for those who prefer extra time to get ready in the morning. There's even a 500 bus (Stranraer to Dumfries) arriving by 11.00 but sadly no Sunday service for those on other bus routes to Castle Douglas.

We have recently experienced the resignation of a much loved member.

On Sundays, numbers at Meeting for Worship *in the room* remain very small. Wednesday worship online and our discernment of what might be right for us in the future continue. It felt good to be one of 5 gathered on Sunday 13 September and we look forward to welcoming Wigtown Friends at one of our Meetings in October.

On the plus side, individuals remain close as personal f(F)riends and some of us attend other Quaker gatherings such as WSAM by Zoom, WSAM online worship on Sunday evenings or make the effort (usually with a joyful return) to support events arranged by neighbouring Quakers e.g. Ayrshire's extended Area Meeting weekend in October and SESAM's family weekend at Wiston Lodge. **Clare Phillips, AsstClerk**

Lanark

Lanark meeting continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at Wiston Lodge, a non-profit outdoor activity centre near Biggar. One recent meeting coincided with SE Scotland Area Meeting's annual weekend at Wiston Lodge, with more than 50 visiting including a large proportion of young people, and an enjoyable joint Meeting for Worship was held.

On 15 December, after Meeting for Worship, Lanark meeting are having Christmas lunch and carol singing to which all are invited.

Glasgow

Monday Quaker Community

For the last 2 years, a group of Friends in the West End of Glasgow have been meeting for chat and worship early on a Monday evening. It's now been agreed that this can be open to any Glasgow Friend (which includes attenders) who would like to take part.

We meet by Zoom only, from 5.15 to 6pm. From 5.15 to 5.40 we share something of what is happening in our lives, from 5.40 to 6pm we have Meeting for Worship, and during that time we may hold friends known to us in the Light. All are welcome!

To join the mailing list please contact Sheila.semple@btinternet.com

Young Friends Monday Night Epilogues

2nd, 16th and 30th September

Aged teen to 35ish? Please join us in person on alternate Mondays from 6pm in the Meeting House, Elizabeth Fry room, for a potluck or bring and share dinner. Please no nuts due to allergies. Followed by a worship in person and online at 7:30pm - 8:00pm.

Otherwise join us at 7:30-8:00pm in person at the Meeting House and online for our regular, fortnightly epilogue worship.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88133736587?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88133736587?pwd=dFZGNXpaSFhhUis4Ti8vcGJiYIVEQT09)

[pwd=dFZGNXpaSFhhUis4Ti8vcGJiYIVEQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88133736587?pwd=dFZGNXpaSFhhUis4Ti8vcGJiYIVEQT09)

Meeting ID: 881 3373 6587

Passcode: 623455

Organising WhatsApp group for this community:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/KjASIZWGm0xJ8SK7oDvz10>

Quaker Walks

On Saturday 31 August. Margaret Munro led a walk up Cloan Glen from Auchterarder. This was about 7 miles with 700 ft of climbing.

Some travelled by train Gleneagles or Bridge of Allan and were collected there.

Further dates are Friday 27 September, Saturday 19 October, 16 or 23 November and Friday 13 December.

For further information and to get on the mailing list contact Daphne Wassermann - daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com



CONGRATULATIONS

FRANCESCA

Here's a photo of Francesca on her 100TH birthday.

Francesca reached 100 years last month! She has been a member of Glasgow Meeting since she moved from London about 12 years ago to live closer to two of her daughters.

Recently she has been attending Milngavie Meeting regularly where there is easier access and due to her reduced hearing and mobility.

Happy birthday Francesca!

Area Meeting in Ayr 5th October

This meeting for worship for church affairs will take place on 5th October at Stairs in Ayrshire.

Over the weekend there will also be some social activities starting with a meal and social on the evening of 4th. Ayrshire Meeting is looking forward to welcoming you to Area Meeting and Gathering on 4th to 6th October.

There is a programme for the weekend and a list of activities and attractions nearby for those wanting to make the most of your trip to Ayrshire. This should already have been sent out to you via your LM clerk. Please fill in and return the booking form to Kate Gulliver so they can plan accordingly for numbers.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Area Meeting

5th October Ayrshire at Stairs

General Meeting dates

These will be blended (hybrid) meetings.

9 Nov 2024 East

Because of the long gap and much urgent business, look out for an extra meeting possibly by Zoom in December 2024.

2025 8 March South East



Hold in the Light

In these very difficult times our healing ministry has never been more important.

How much time do you set aside in the Light to hold friends, neighbours and your Meeting, and others. Do not feel you cannot make a difference. It takes only 25 of us, five minutes before Meeting, to create more peace in the world. During WW2, Winston Churchill set up one minute for peace at 9pm each evening.

There is a meeting of Friends Fellowship of Healing on first Monday of each Month at 7.30pm. Contact nicola.james53@gmail.com to add names.

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

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The deadline for contributions for the next issue is 15th November 2024.

Send articles in Word format, of no more than 1000 words, to the editor at margaret.roy@btinternet.com.

Helpers for this issue are Laura McMurtrie and Edie Phoenix, and of course our proof reader Ruth Bacon. We are still looking for a distribution editor who will deal with sending out the hard copies.