

Quaker News



An update on Quaker work in the care of Britain Yearly Meeting



Together in worship and witness

No. 95 – Summer 2016

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Cover image: One of Rob Pepper's illustrations from the new book about Quaker faith and practice developed by young Quakers, *Living our beliefs* (see page 6).

Editorial

"For a Quaker, religion is not an external activity, concerning a special 'holy' part of the self. It is an openness to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self... In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present."

Harvey Gillman, 1988
(from *Quaker faith & practice* 20.20)

As Quakers from across Britain gather for Yearly Meeting 2016, this edition of Quaker News has much to tell us about how we live our beliefs – how we bring the insights given to us in our meetings for worship and for church affairs to bear in our daily lives, our political activities, our work in the world, and our acts of witness.

The call for equality in minute 36 of Yearly Meeting 2015 encouraged and emboldened many meetings around Britain to act. The range of Quaker witness described on pages 12 and 13 is inspiring and humbling.

For young Quakers, thinking about how faith leads to action has led to the publication of a new book, *Living our beliefs: An exploration of the faith and practice of Quakers* (page 6). This anthology was compiled and edited by the young people themselves, and is accompanied by web-based music and video clips.

The example of Quakers who came before us continues to be instructive, whether it's Waldo Williams – the Welsh Quaker poet whose 'Mewn Dau Gae' has inspired the design of the new garden at Friends House (pages 8 and 9) – or the brave men who objected to military conscription on grounds of conscience during World War I (page 7).

The seeds of war are all around us still; our work is still needed, as Quaker action on challenging the military presence in Scottish schools (page 4), promoting peaceful conflict resolution (page 5) and resisting the renewal of the UK's Trident nuclear weapons system (page 10) shows. Here are instances of what we can do today.

All of this work is supported by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM), the national organisation that belongs to us all. I hope it is helpful to meetings to have all the services BYM provides set out so clearly in our exciting new *Directory of services* (page 14). As ever, BYM is grateful for Friends' support, both financial and through personal service; all your contributions are received with thanks and enable us to live out our beliefs in the world together.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk

Quaker News

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Britain Yearly Meeting works on behalf of Quakers in Britain, supporting the Quaker faith and putting Quaker values to work in the world. It is a registered charity, number 1127633.

Quakers try to live simply and sustainably, promoting peace, equality and truth. Putting faith into action is central to their way of life and they gather weekly for quiet worship, usually on a Sunday, in around 480 locations across Britain.

You are welcome to any Quaker meeting for worship. Find your local meeting, and more information about us, at www.quaker.org.uk.

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Quakers and the EU referendum

The EU referendum will have a real impact on issues that matter to Quakers in Britain. As well as casting our votes we can encourage discussion and make space for debate.

Jessica Metherringham, Parliamentary Engagement Officer

On Thursday 23 June, the British people will have the opportunity to vote in a referendum on membership of the European Union (EU). The question that every voter is asked is whether the UK should leave the EU, or remain a member.

Britain Yearly Meeting does not hold a discerned position on the question itself. We want an open and honest debate. Many people know very little about the EU, and the run-up to the referendum should be about helping everyone to find out more.

The EU has an impact on many issues of concern to Quakers in Britain, such as climate change and the refugee crisis. These issues affect multiple countries: airborne pollution does not recognise national borders. What our neighbours do in terms of burning fossil fuels has an impact on our lives here. Neither does the refugee crisis stop at national borders, although there are attempts to contain people inside countries. Finding a safe path for those fleeing war and violence is something that countries need to do together. The question is whether these issues are best addressed by the UK being part of the European Union, or through a network of individual relationships with other countries.

There are also concerns held by meetings that relate directly to the EU. One example is the militarisation of the EU, held alongside our concern for the militarisation of society within the UK. Another example is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), currently being negotiated behind closed doors between the EU and the USA. A key question for us to consider

when voting on 23 June is whether we believe the UK government would make better decisions without the EU.

In such a wide debate, different people put different emphasis on different issues, and so may come to different conclusions. As Quakers, we can help each other to discern which of these concerns are most important to us, to our meetings and to our neighbours.

Since the start of 2016, debate around the referendum has been dominated by a call for facts. Sometimes a desire for facts can obscure the wider issue, and there is a risk that the main point is lost in considering the specific. While easily accessible information is important, we need to be wary of oversimplifying. Sometimes there are straightforward answers, and sometimes subjects are by their very nature complicated. Even those things that we sometimes think of as simple can be incredibly complicated. Our testimony to simplicity should help us recognise when complexity is authentic.

As Quakers, we have an opportunity to improve the debate around the referendum. One thing we can do is to open up our meeting houses as spaces for discussion. There is guidance on how to run events on www.quakervote.org.uk.

We can also seek to engage others in discussion about the referendum – whether those be neighbours, work colleagues, or members of our own families. More than facts, we need open discussion about what we want and why we want it. Most importantly we can encourage everyone to vote. Those not already registered must register by 7 June to take part. This can be done at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

The EU has an impact on many areas of our lives here and the way in which nations make decisions. Deciding whether or not we want the UK to be a part of this institution is important. For more about what your meeting could do ahead of the referendum, visit www.quakervote.org.uk.



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Challenging the military presence in Scottish schools

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Petition calls for greater scrutiny of visits to state schools in Scotland by the UK armed forces.

Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer

For the past year I have been working with ForcesWatch to submit a petition to the Scottish Parliament calling for greater scrutiny, transparency and guidance on visits by the armed forces to state schools in Scotland. The petition is now closed and collected 1,027 signatures.

It is shocking that the UK is the only country in Europe that still uses child soldiers (children can apply at 15 and be recruited at 16). We believe the armed forces are visiting schools as part of their recruitment agenda. These recruitment activities do not always take place with parental consent and often glamourise military life. This is inappropriate in what should be a safe space for children.

Throughout 2015 we were submitting Freedom of Information requests about school visits and collating the answers. The information we got was patchy due to the armed forces not keeping reliable records, but we did recover

enough information to get a picture of what is happening in Scotland:

- Across Scotland, 83% of all state secondary schools were visited at least once during the two-year period (2010–12).
- 31 state secondary schools in Scotland were visited 10 or more times during the period. Six were visited over 20 times.

The most shocking thing we found out was that representatives of the RAF and Royal Navy had visited primary schools in Scotland, contrary to claims that the armed forces only visit secondary schools.

The petition calls for records of school visits to be kept and to be made accessible to the public, for parents and guardians to be informed of visits in advance, and for guidance on balance to be given to all schools.

ForcesWatch has organised a series of events across Scotland on the petition, which have been

Advocacy in Scotland

The post of Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer was created in response to the significant and growing differences between the Scottish and UK (Westminster) parliaments. The post became active in January 2015 and is funded jointly by Britain Yearly Meeting and General Meeting for Scotland.

The first year of Scottish advocacy work has been a great success, addressing issues including fracking, divestment and militarisation, as well as building relationships with parliamentarians, faith groups and peace organisations.

attended by political activists, with the moving accounts of members of Veterans for Peace being recorded in the Scottish press.

In the autumn the petition will go in front of the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee, which will decide on the next steps. We hope that it will follow the path of a similar petition in the Welsh Assembly and that an inquiry will be held. If you'd like to be kept informed about how the petition progresses, please get in touch.

You can view the petition at <http://bit.ly/armedforcespetition> and read the ForcesWatch briefing at <http://bit.ly/ForcesWatchpetition>.

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www.quaker.org.uk/militarism



Photo: Wellington College / Flickr CC BY-NC 2.0

Giving children the tools to resolve conflict peacefully

Two decades after pioneering peer mediation, Quakers are still needed to promote peace in our schools.

Isabel Cartwright, Programme Manager: Peace Education

5

Violence is sometimes described as 'resourcelessness': people resort to violence when they don't have the capacity or skills to find another response. Despite widespread concern about violence in our schools and communities, the vast majority of children are given no specific training in conflict resolution. The same is generally true for teachers. There are inspiring projects that build conflict literacy, and they're growing in number, but they still operate in only a few places across Britain.

Quakers in Britain, with their tradition of seeking active methods of dealing with conflict, pioneered peer mediation – conflict resolution by young people for young people – in the 1990s. Peer mediation was taken up by community mediation services, as well as independent organisations and trainers.

Today, despite the evidence that peer mediation can help develop valuable life skills and have a transformative impact on creating more peaceful schools, it continues to receive virtually no government backing. In some areas schools that would like to develop mediation have little access to the necessary support. To help remedy this Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) and Peacemakers (the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project) teamed up to offer Quakers who felt called to make a contribution in their local schools and communities a chance to develop their own skills and understanding.

Over 20 Quakers from across Britain responded and in February we met in Birmingham for a weekend of games, exercises and roleplays, skilfully facilitated by

Jackie Zammit from Peacemakers and Ellis Brooks from QPSW.

We explored how conflict escalates and practised being assertive about our needs. "Children love learning this," Jackie explained, "it makes a real difference to their lives." We practised mediating conflicts and reframed 'blaming language'. We considered the differences between arbitration and mediation as we struggled to resist the temptation to 'get to the bottom of things' and establish the 'facts'.

When an adult arbitrates a conflict the 'story' of the students' conflict is told to them, reinforcing the notion that the conflict is something over which they have little control. But when a conflict is mediated the students create a shared story and feel more able to participate in its resolution.

"My headteacher is keen for me to go ahead and introduce peer mediation to the whole school. Hooray!" was the news from one

participant following the training. But none of this work is easy. Introducing peer mediation to schools is often a countercultural process and requires a genuine reassessment of power relations between adults and children. We hope that the training was a small step towards increasing our resourcefulness, both as individuals and as a faith community.

If you are interested in getting involved you can join the Peace Education Cluster of the Quaker Life Network – please contact Isabel Cartwright (details below). For more on Peacemakers see www.peacemakers.org.uk. For the Peer Mediation Network, visit www.peermediationnetwork.org.uk

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Peer Mediators in Handsworth, Birmingham, provide a safe space for children in conflict to find a win-win solution. Photo: Peacemakers

A fresh approach to expressing who we are

6

Young Quakers have compiled a book that makes our faith and practice accessible for all.

Olivia Sewell Risley, London West Area Meeting

Living our beliefs is a new book created by and for younger Quakers. It was compiled and edited by Graham Ralph in partnership with young Quakers and features illustrations by Rob Pepper. It is designed to fulfil the desire for a book that explores similar topics to those in *Quaker faith & practice*, but approaches them with concision and simplicity, and – most importantly – includes the insights of younger Quakers.

The idea originally emerged at a consultation day about the possible revision of *Quaker faith & practice*. A host of young Quakers met to discuss the potential benefits and difficulties of such a task. Though many of us felt that regular revision helped the book to reflect the evolving beliefs of Quakers in Britain as each generation grows, we were also struck by the challenges of changing and especially removing passages or quotations. This was highlighted when we were asked to consider parts that were particularly meaningful for us, and then others decided whether they would want to keep them too. However, we were all interested in establishing another document, one shorter than *Quaker faith & practice*, with a focus on accessibility for all – particularly for young people and newcomers.

Living our beliefs explores various topics,

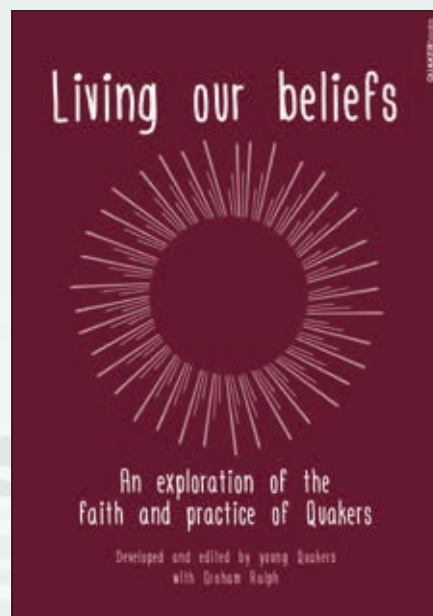
ranging from Quaker testimonies to membership to the many roles and responsibilities within the Society. Most chapters end with an assortment of quotations chosen by young Quakers. These come from an array of cultures and traditions, from literature, and from young people describing their own journeys and convictions.

The book was put together over about a year and a half, and during this time hundreds of young people were consulted at events such as Junior Yearly Meeting and the Young People's Programme, as well as at regional summer events. Sessions were held to facilitate discussion of our thoughts and feelings about topics that feature in the book. The questions raised stimulated plenty of thoughtful debate!

We were challenged to rewrite the advices and queries, identifying the heart of each passage and making them as simple and succinct as possible. We also chose pieces of music that speak to us about

Quakerism – you can find these online at www.yqspace.org.uk/living-our-beliefs, along with videos of young Quakers talking about their favourite parts of *Quaker faith & practice*.

Once all the Quaker youth events had been visited, and all thoughts noted down, the editorial board began to condense the information and weave it into the book.



As a member of the board I was struck by how challenging it is to capture and reflect the experiences of so many. Attempts to blend similar ideas together or to rewrite phrases for the sake of brevity proved surprisingly hard. What was really striking – though not unexpected – was the amount of passion, wisdom, wit and insight on the pages before us.

Living our beliefs is a book designed to open up the faith and practice of Quakers to a wide audience. However, it is also a testament to the vitality of young people in the Quaker community, and to the enthusiasm we feel for engaging with and contributing to the Society, whether in words spoken at a summer event or in the actions we undertake in our lives.

You can buy *Living our beliefs* from the Quaker Centre Bookshop (020 7663 1030, www.quaker.org.uk/shop) or download the free e-book at www.yqspace.org.uk.

A matter of conscience: Quakers and conscription

On 2 March 2016, 100 years after the Military Service Act came into force, we launched our latest online exhibition, *Matter of conscience: Quakers and conscription*.

The exhibition tells the story of how Quakers helped to get conscientious objection to military service recognised in law as part of the act, and what some of those who refused to fight did instead.

Quakers have a long history of pacifism. At the outbreak of World War I many Quakers resisted the call to bear arms but did volunteer for alternative service such as providing medical assistance. However, the introduction of the Military Service Act in 1916 forced men to either enlist or resist, and these choices would divide families and the country at large.

The exhibition was put together by the Library of the Religious Society of Friends at Friends House, London. The past two years have been busy for the Library, which holds a wealth of material relating to World War I – from the archives of the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) to the private papers of individual conscientious objectors.

The Library has produced several displays on World War I and on conscientious objection, including one at the Houses of Parliament for an event to mark the centenary of the Military Service Act. Quakers visiting Friends House for Yearly Meeting in May can see a display to complement the online exhibition.

Library staff have also launched an online database of FAU personnel cards, catalogued the papers of the Friends Emergency War Victims Relief Committee, and digitised material for the British Online Archive. The Library is a valuable resource for anyone researching Quakers, World War I and conscription and has made material available for local displays organised by Quaker meetings.

You can view the exhibition at www.quaker.org.uk/conscription.



1. Many Quakers joined the army during WWI – this 1917 news clipping reports the deaths of brothers B, E and A Warner, who were members of the Society of Friends.
2. Quaker Howard Marten (right) was one of around 250 conscientious objectors sentenced to hard labour breaking rocks at Dyce Camp, near Aberdeen.
3. Badge worn by Terence Lane whilst imprisoned for refusing military service – he later became a member of Chelmsford Meeting.
4. The Friends Ambulance Unit at work in Paris, circa 1915.
5. Postcard raising awareness of conscientious objectors held in British prisons.
6. Quakers were amongst those working at the Sacré Coeur Hospital, Ypres, circa 1915.

Bridging the generations

8

A transformed garden makes Friends House accessible to all and takes passers-by on a journey through Quaker history.

Anne van Staveren, Media Relations Officer

*“O ba le’r ymroliai’r môr goleuni
Oedd a’i waelod ar Weun Parc y
Blawd a Parc y Blawd?”*

“Where did the sea of light roll from
Onto Flower Meadow Field and
Flower Field?”

From ‘*Mewn Dau Gae*’
(‘In Two Fields’) by
Waldo Williams, quoted in
Quaker faith & practice 21.33

Quakers’ newly relandscaped garden at Friends House in London is a welcoming space for reflection. With planting and design inspired by a poem by Waldo Williams, it speaks of Quakerism, of peace, equality, simplicity and truth. The redesigned garden also gives easier access for all to Friends House, with gradients suitable for wheelchair- and pushchair-users.

The idea for this major improvement came from the need to install an electricity substation, as a way to make the best possible use of the inevitable upheaval and earthworks. Out went the steep ramps. Now, gentler slopes and a lift enable all visitors to access the lower ground floor – and the restaurant – while a glass bridge takes you directly into the Quaker Centre Café and worship space.

The new scheme also provides outdoor seating, cycle-parking and a recycling bin store.

Paul Grey, head of the hospitality company that manages the building to generate income for Quaker work, welcomed the completion of this two-year project: “Our new garden is a physical manifestation of the Quaker testimony to equality. It is an exciting addition to the hugely improved facilities we offer at Friends House.”

The project is in line with Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees’ vision to provide an accessible place of quiet in the bustle of central London. The cost of just over £1 million has not come out of donations, but was largely funded from proceeds of the sale of a lease on Courtauld House, another building owned by Quakers.

Trustees have said Friends House is to become an increasingly significant resource for the local community as plans for redevelopment around Euston progress. The garden welcomes many visitors – including passengers heading through on their way to Euston Station – who will now tread a pathway inset with carved stones forming a timeline of more than 20 key Quaker dates. These include:

- 1647 – George Fox recognises God’s light is within everyone.
- 1661 – Quakers present their peace testimony to Charles II.
- 1755 – Quaker marriage becomes legal.
- 1813 – Elizabeth Fry starts her prison reform work at Newgate Prison.
- 1938 – Quakers evacuate children from Nazi Germany on Kindertransport.
- 1997 – Quakers work at the UN to bring about landmine ban treaty.
- 2009 – Quakers in Britain campaign for same-sex marriage.
- 2014 – Quakers in Britain disinvest from fossil fuels.

Stories around these significant events will feature on www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-history in the coming months. Visitors to the website will be able to read and watch as the garden matures through the seasons.

Wendy Price, of Headington Local Meeting, a horticulturalist and design consultant, developed the concept of the garden as “a piece of visual outreach celebrating Quakers”. She took her inspiration from the poetry of Waldo Williams in *Quaker faith & practice* 21.33.

The Quaker timeline

Set in stone, the timeline tells the story of Quakers over three centuries. It pinpoints Quakers’ involvement in tackling issues around slavery, landmines, war relief, equality, commerce, mental health, sexuality and sustainability.

It also marks key dates in the development of Quakerism, from George Fox’s vision of recognising God’s light in everyone, to persecution, to permission to worship and marry. Throughout the year, stories will unfold at www.quaker.org.uk/timeline.

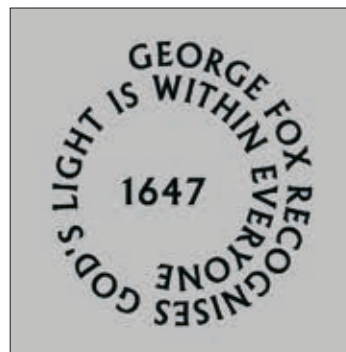




Photo: Anne van Staveren

His reference to light and fields spoke to her about early Quakers. Wendy's vision to create a space for reflection has been developed by John McAslan + Partners, whose gardening work has been overseen by Melissa Jolly.

The choice of plants is informed by the poet's "sea of light" quotation and, through spring days, as hard landscaping has been softened by planting, existing mature trees, magnolias and olive trees (symbols of peace) have been joined by blossoming *Amelanchier lamarkii* (emblematic of Native Americans). Around the entrance to Friends House heavily scented plants like rosemary (for remembrance) will engage visitors' senses. Lavender plants will be particularly attractive to the two thriving colonies of bees that have been kept on the roof of Friends House since last summer, producing honey. Rainwater will be collected to help water the garden.

The garden speaks of the ways Quakers put their faith into action. The words 'peace', 'equality', 'simplicity' and 'truth' are

inscribed on a central stone set in the pathway. Young Quakers have created a time capsule for burial in the garden during Yearly Meeting in May. At Junior Yearly Meeting in April, they looked ahead 100 years and chose contents to illustrate the kind of world they want to see in 2116. The contents include:

- copies of *Quaker faith & practice* and *Living our beliefs* (see page 6)
- a peace flag (symbolising world peace, no nuclear weapons)
- a solar charger (our energy will come from renewable sources)
- a badge saying "I'm a Quaker, ask me why" (more awareness of who we are and what we do)
- campaigning T-shirts (working for a just and fair society)
- a packet of *Lunaria* ('Honesty') seeds (for society to have grown and changed)
- ...and a copy of Quaker News.

Together, the timeline and time capsule will bridge the generations: past, present and future.

Quakers decided in 2011 to become a low-carbon community, campaigning for an energy system and economy not relying on fossil fuels. Three years later Quakers became the first faith body in Britain to decide to disinvest from companies extracting fossil fuels.

QUAKERS IN BRITAIN
DISINVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS
2014

QUAKERS IN BRITAIN
CAMPAIGN FOR SAME-SEX MARRIAGE
2009

QUAKERS WORK AT THE UN
TO BRING ABOUT LANDMINE BAN
1997

STORATION OF THE M
TIC PERSECUTIO
RS
60

QUAKERS BEGIN
CAMPAIGNING TO ABOLISH SLAVERY
1758

Quakers played a significant role in the campaign to abolish slavery. In 1727 London Yearly Meeting expressed outright disapproval of the slave trade. Quakers campaigned with others worldwide, wrote literature and were among the first to lobby Parliament. By 1792, the campaign led to 400,000 Britons boycotting slave-grown sugar.

ELIZABETH FRY STARTS
NEWGATE PRISON REFORM WORK
1813

Take action on Trident

10

It's not too late to stop the renewal of Britain's nuclear weapons programme – and you can make a difference.

Jane Pearn, South East Scotland Area Meeting

The UK government's 'main gate' decision on the renewal of Trident is scheduled for later this year, probably October. There is still time for our voices to be heard, and with our long history of working for peace, Quakers have much to say.

There are many arguments against the replacement of Trident: it goes against the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (as a signatory, the UK has committed to pursue nuclear disarmament and to negotiate in good faith); the money could certainly be used in more productive ways; many question Trident's 'deterrent' function in the light of current threats to peace and security. But fundamentally, this is a matter of faith.

Quakers recognise that, despite our differences, there is a divine spark in every person – something of God that we can try to respond to. We hold that it is not only desirable but possible to find more peaceful ways to live together. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate example of the will to shape the world by violence. They threaten

indiscriminate mass murder as a means to achieve political goals. They represent the mistaken idea that a 'balance of terror' can achieve true peace between nations.

Many Quakers have campaigned tirelessly on this issue for years, and may be feeling disheartened. But there are some reasons to be hopeful. The Marshall Islands are taking the nuclear states to the International Court of Justice – including the UK on the grounds that renewing Trident is in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the United Nations a working group of 139 countries is talking about a ban on nuclear weapons, in the same way that the world has banned chemical and biological weapons. The Labour Party and the Lib Dems are reconsidering their policies, and not every Conservative MP is in favour. The Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the Greens are firmly opposed to nuclear weapons.

There are many different ways to speak out. For example, you could:

Reaching for the truth

The truth about Trident is a new book exploring issues around Britain's nuclear weapons. What would be the impact of their use? Are they really necessary? Are there better alternatives? The book aims to peel back layers of confusion and deceit to reach the truth about Trident. It was written by Tim Wallis of Quaker Peace & Social Witness and published by Luath Press in association with Quakers in Britain. You can buy a copy from the Quaker Centre Bookshop – phone 020 7663 1030 or visit www.quaker.org.uk/shop.

- organise a public meeting
- invite your MP to visit your meeting, as a group of concerned constituents
- hold a public vigil and collect signatures for the Scrap Trident petition
- join the letter-writing network – contact Tim Wallis at timw@quaker.org.uk
- talk to friends, family and neighbours
- join Scottish Friends in worship at the gates of Faslane – phone Alison Burnley on 0131 229 4481 for dates and times
- visit www.quaker.org.uk/trident to download the *Stop Trident action briefing*.

Friend, what are you led to do?

Jane Pearn is clerk of the Peace Education, Campaigning & Networking Subcommittee of Quaker Peace & Social Witness.



Quakers from all round Britain were at the Stop Trident national demonstration in February, said to be the biggest anti-nuclear march in a generation. Photo: Ellis Brooks

Building a new economy

How the New Economy Project is supporting Quakers to explore ways to transform our economic system.

Suzanne Ismail, Programme Manager: Economic Issues

The need for a more just economic system has been a recurring theme at Yearly Meeting over the past five years. Quakers in Britain are committed to exploring how we are influenced and constrained by the current economic system and to working towards building an economic system in which Quaker testimony can flourish.

Many Quakers and meetings have been taking action in response to this commitment – holding conferences and events, campaigning against social security cuts, seeking accreditation as Living Wage employers, divesting funds from fossil fuels and more.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness staff and committee members have been glad to offer support to these and many other initiatives. But in doing so it has become clear that while Quakers are – for the most part – agreed about what’s wrong with the current system, we are still in the process of discerning what a better economic system might look like and how we might get there.

It is often said that having a clear vision is the first step towards bringing about long-term change. Recognising this, and with the aim of informing and supporting further discernment, the New Economy Project was born.

The first step in the project was to draw on contributions and insights from across the yearly meeting in order to identify the key features of an economic system that might be compatible with Quaker values. The outcome of that process, to which hundreds of Quakers contributed, was *Principles for a new economy* – a visionary document outlining ten principles that could underpin such a system.

This document does not claim to have ‘the answer’ – nor is it an official statement or the discerned position of the yearly meeting. It is offered in the hope that it will stimulate further discussion, reflection and discernment. The ten principles suggest that we need to work towards a more equal economic system, in which economic power is less concentrated and the stewardship of the natural world is valued over purely economic measures.

The next stage of the project will be to produce a series of resources exploring what some of the principles might mean in practice. Drawing on thinking and practical examples from around the world, these will aim to support Quakers to think about how we could choose to structure our economic system differently and identify the kinds of things we could do to help make economic change a reality.

The first of these resources, looking at the purpose of the economy and the role of work and business in the new economy, will be published over the summer. As the project develops we hope to offer workshops, events, and practical support for those seeking to take practical action to help build a transformed economy.

If you’d like to get involved with this work you can:

- find out more and read *Principles for a new economy* at www.quaker.org.uk/neweconomy
- watch a video introducing *Principles for a new economy* at <http://bit.ly/ESP-economy>
- see other Quakers’ ideas for a better economic system

and share your own on the Quakernomics blog: www.quakerweb.org.uk/blog

- sign up for our monthly *Earth and Economy* e-newsletter for updates on our work for economic justice and sustainability: www.quaker.org.uk/eartheconomy.

If you have an idea for a project that could help build a better economic system, you may be able to apply for a Sustainability & New Economy Grant to help fund it – visit www.quaker.org.uk/grantmaking for more information.

Contact:

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020 7663 1035

www.quaker.org.uk/neweconomy



In 2015 Exeter launched its own local currency. The project was supported by a QPSW Sustainability & New Economy Grant. Photo: Steve Jones

Quaker witness is alive and kicking!

12

Quaker meetings across Britain are living out their faith in the world by taking action against inequality and injustice and promoting peace and sustainability.

Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk

Over the three years from 2015 to 2017 our Yearly Meetings are following the theme of 'Living out our faith in the world'.

In 2015, Yearly Meeting encouraged Quakers around Britain to take action together to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live. But what are we actually doing? A recent survey of Quaker action paints an inspiring picture, revealing a huge amount of active witness. Here are just a few of the stories you told us about.

Refugees and asylum seekers

With terrible stories about the plight of refugees in the media daily, it's no surprise that Quakers are deeply concerned, and that there is action in over a third of our area meetings.

- Leeds is just one of several meetings that provide financial support to local refugee and asylum support groups. They regularly collect food, clothes and funding for refugees in

Yorkshire and in Calais.

- New arrivals from Syria are being welcomed in Hertfordshire, Colchester, Cornwall, Norwich and Oxford.
- In Lancaster, Quakers coordinate care for eight refugees living in the area.
- In Middlesbrough and Darlington, Quakers are helping to offer up to four people a hot meal and a bed for the night on Sundays.
- Meeting for Sufferings has spoken out on behalf of all Quakers in Britain, most recently calling on the British government to ensure that refugees can travel safely.
- Quaker Asylum & Refugee Network provides support to people actively involved in supporting refugees, seeks to inform other Quakers and campaigns. It's working with Quaker Peace & Social Witness to explore what more can be done nationally.

Housing and homelessness

As we heard at Yearly Meeting 2015, the Quaker concern for housing is longstanding and well-tested.

- For more than three years Gloucestershire Quakers have supported a housing project for young people in Cirencester.
- In Devon, Quakers have joined a local churches' initiative caring for the homeless in the coldest months, and are active in street-pastor and night-shelter work.
- Quaker Housing Trust – our yearly meeting's own housing charity – offers practical responses to a spiritual concern. It helps with loans, grants and advice.
- Nationally, we have addressed the Housing and Planning Bill, making a submission to the House of Lords that focused on the proposals to reform right to buy.

Peace

The recent survey showed peace to be a particularly active concern for Quakers in Britain, with peace-related witness in at least 21 of our 70 area meetings. Much of this work is supported by staff in Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

- Quakers are organising peace vigils in Staffordshire, Sussex, Devon, Cornwall and Yorkshire.
- There are meetings for worship at military bases in Scotland, Yorkshire and the Midlands.
- In South East Scotland, Quakers are tackling militarisation, with public



Quaker meetings are helping to provide food, clothing and shelter for refugees in their local areas and in Calais (pictured). Photo: Christian Payne / Flickr CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

witness on Armed Forces Day and dialogue with local councils about military funding for projects.

- In Mid-Wales, Quakers are delivering peace education programmes in local schools.
- Young Friends General Meeting is working against the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system: attending demos, organising peace witness, writing an open letter, and learning together.

Economic justice

Many Quaker meetings are taking action against economic injustice, either through their own initiatives or by working with other groups.

- A house bequeathed to Chelmsford Local Meeting is being used for the benefit of local residents in economic need.
- Stone Meeting only uses Fairtrade tea and coffee.
- In Norwich, Friends have been involved in a Mental Health March and a People's Parliament.
- In Herefordshire, Quakers are working with the Anti-Poverty Alliance.
- At least eight meetings are supporting local food banks.
- Other meetings are learning, holding discussion groups and finding out about ethical finance.
- Both locally and nationally, we're campaigning against proposals that will further weaken our social security system.

Sustainability

There has been a huge amount of activity around sustainability across the yearly meeting.

- Lots of Quaker properties have been reviewed and improved with insulation, solar panels, better heating systems and cycle racks.
- Meetings have planted fruit trees and taken other steps to make their gardens and green spaces productive and wildlife-friendly.



Quakers from South East Scotland Area Meeting made a public witness for peace during Armed Forces Day 2015 in Edinburgh. Photo: David Somervell

- Two meetings encourage car-sharing and use of public transport.
- Many Friends work collaboratively with other local groups, organising workshops, speaking with elected representatives and joining demonstrations.
- One meeting offers a venue to the local Transition group at no cost. Another has divested from companies involved in fossil-fuel extraction.

Criminal justice

We have a long history of being active in criminal justice and this is another area in which Quakers find opportunities to work closely with other faith groups.

- There are many Quaker prison chaplains and individual Quakers visiting prisons – Britain Yearly Meeting supports them by providing resources, convening gatherings and networking.
- At least one meeting has set up a 'Circles of Support and Accountability' group locally, working to prevent sex offenders from reoffending.
- Another is supporting newly released prisoners to resettle in the community.

The survey also told us about other areas of concern. For example, one meeting has corresponded with political figures in the US, Russia and Ukraine in relation to the

Ukraine crisis. Another supports a local literacy project that provides tuition for adult learners who can't access other provision. A third supports a junior school in Kenya.

Sharing our stories

This May, Yearly Meeting will celebrate the many and diverse ways Friends are living out their faith as we hear their stories. The survey could only tell us a fraction of those stories. What else are Quakers doing in your area? If your meeting has a story to tell there is a special area on our website where you can share it: www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories.

Help with taking action

If your meeting wants to take action on issues like those featured in this article, you may be able to get help and resources from central staff. Check your meeting's copy of the *Directory of services* (sent to every Quaker meeting in Britain in April) for a complete picture of what is on offer.

Projects focused on sustainability or economic justice could be eligible for a Sustainability & New Economy Grant, and projects to help refugees and asylum seekers could be eligible for a QPSW Relief Grant. Find out more at www.quaker.org.uk/grantmaking.

Yearly Meeting Gathering

Planning is underway for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, which will be held from 29 July–5 August at the University of Warwick. More info will start to appear at www.quaker.org.uk/ym later this year.

2017 will be the last year of our consideration of the theme ‘living out our faith in the world’, and we expect to be looking at movement-building. How and why do we build movements, what do we contribute that is distinctively Quaker?

Clare Scott Booth of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee said: “We hope to create a gathering that is loving, inclusive and all-age; to have space to make connections; to share skills and experience; to ‘live now as if the Kingdom of God were already fulfilled’ – and we look forward to seeing you there.”

Swarthmore speaking tour

Swarthmore lecturers Cécile Nyiramana and Esther Mombo will be speaking at Quaker meetings outside London after Yearly Meeting 2016. Cécile and Esther will give a joint evening talk at Abingdon Meeting on 31 May and a lunchtime talk on 1 June. Esther will then continue on to Jordans Meeting for an evening talk on 3 June. She will be speaking after meeting for worship in Bristol on 5 June and then give an evening talk in Cambridge on 6 June.

Cécile Nyiramana is Clerk of Rwanda Yearly Meeting and founder of Women in Dialogue, a peace programme bringing together women genocide survivors and perpetrators’ wives. Esther Mombo is a member of Bware Yearly Meeting, Kenya. A Professor of African Church History, she has focused on the development of Quakerism in Kenya with special reference to the role of women. Their talks will focus on Quaker peacebuilding in East Africa.

For more information see www.quaker.org.uk/events.

Directory of services

Copies of the new *Directory of services* were sent out to local and area meeting clerks in April. The directory lists all the support, resources and training that is available from Britain Yearly Meeting staff to help you with your local responsibilities and witness (see also pages 12 and 13).

The directory is also available via the website at www.quaker.org.uk/dos. We hope it will make it easier to find out what help is available centrally, and who to get in touch with. As this is an entirely new resource we would be particularly glad of your feedback: please contact Rosie Carnall at rosiec@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1066 if you have any comments.



Local support for meetings

The Vibrancy in Meetings Pilot Programme is doing something new for Quakers in Britain – exploring whether locally based staff can help meetings to thrive.

After a period of discernment and development, the programme took a step forward in March by appointing Rachel Matthews, from South Wales Area Meeting, as Programme Coordinator.

Rachel has been busy meeting local Quakers, taking part in local and national events, getting to

know colleagues at Friends House and Woodbrooke and learning about the life and work of Quakers in Britain.

A team of local workers will be recruited this summer. They will work in four pilot areas, to be announced shortly. They will be based in or near Quaker meetings, creating connections to the support provided by Britain Yearly Meeting, Woodbrooke, other Quakers and the wider community. They will spend time with meetings, be alongside them, share good ideas and best practice, and put them in touch with help.

The team will also be looking out for innovative and experimental initiatives within meetings, to see whether these can help enrich and grow Quaker worship and witness.

Do you want to know more? Could you help champion the Vibrancy programme locally? Are you interested in local worker job opportunities? Could your meeting benefit from or contribute to the programme? If so, please contact Rachel Matthews on 07419 991 638 or at vibrancy@quaker.org.uk. You can find more information at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/vibrancy_in_meetings.html.

Online bookshop

The new online Quaker Bookshop was launched in the spring and is already proving popular with customers. It features a wide range of books on Quakerism, ethical living, activism, personal growth, religion, politics, sustainability and other related topics, including a sizeable children’s section.

You can browse the ‘Books of the month’ and ‘Bestsellers’ sections or use the search bar to find exactly what you want. With secure payment and reliable delivery, the new online shop will help Quakers across Britain access resources with greater ease than ever before.

You can find the shop at www.quaker.org.uk/shop.

Contributions make the link between faith and action



Quakers and others hold a meeting for worship at the DSEi arms fair. Quaker Peace & Social Witness helped to form the Stop the Arms Fair Coalition and supports Friends and meetings to take direct action. Photo: © 2015 Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

On behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees I would like to thank Friends for their financial support of Quaker work in 2015. Contributions from meetings, individuals and trusts totalled just over £2 million.

These contributions make the vital link between each one of us and the work that is described in Quaker News and in the *Trustees' annual report* and *Financial statements*, published this spring. They also confirm that Friends feel engaged with our work in the world and with the support and resources offered to meetings.

At Yearly Meeting 2015 last May, we heard ministry urging us to demonstrate our backing for the work that is being done on our behalf by increasing our financial contributions. Part of minute 36 reads: "We ask Friends and meetings to engage with the evil of social and economic injustice which creates a world in which the wrong things are valued. To do this requires owning and upholding the work that is already being done by Friends and in our name; helping to fund that work as generously as possible."

Because of the substantial income from investments and

from our hospitality company, the running costs of Friends House are largely covered. This enables contributions to go almost entirely to Quaker work. In light of the scale of the challenges in the world today, and the support expressed by members at Yearly Meeting, we are encouraged to set our sights higher and seek to raise the regular giving to £3 million a year. If this can be achieved and sustained it will enable us to commit resources to the long-term, consistent work that we know is the best way of achieving our aims.

Giving to Quaker work has always been seen as a prime duty of members. Because of our way of discerning and uniting behind concerns, we know that this work is in line with our spiritual leadings. We also know that the work is overseen by Friends to ensure that it is done effectively, and in line with Quaker values and testimonies. We can be confident that our money is well used and making a positive difference to our own meetings, but also to the world.

What can you do to help?

Peter Ullathorne
Britain Yearly Meeting Treasurer

Contribute to Quaker work

Serve on a Quaker committee: phone 020 7663 1121, email nominations@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/givetime.

Make a donation or leave a gift in your will: phone Leslie Bell on 020 7663 1019, email leslieb@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/givemoney.

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Phone us on 020 7663 1000, email enquiries@quaker.org.uk or write to Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Enter your postcode at www.quaker.org.uk/meetings to search for a Quaker meeting near you.

Find us on Facebook and Twitter: click the icons at www.quaker.org.uk or search for 'Quakers in Britain'.



Quakers: committed to caring for peace and planet

Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Their unity is based on shared understanding and a shared practice of silent worship, where they seek a communal stillness.

Quakers seek to experience God directly, within themselves and in their relationships with others and the world around them. They meet together for worship in local meetings, which are open to all who wish to attend.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity. This means speaking truth to all, including people in positions of power.

The Quaker commitment to peace arises from the conviction that love is at the heart of existence and that all human beings are unique and equal.

This leads Quakers to put their faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violent conflict.

Quakers try to live simply. They are concerned about the excesses and unfairness of our consumer society and the unsustainable use of natural resources.

To find out more about the Quaker way visit www.quaker.org.uk or request a free information pack using the form below.

Request a free information pack:

Name

Address

Postcode

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Please send completed form to:
Quaker Outreach (QN)
FREEPOST QUAKERS

FREEPHONE: 0808 109 1651

E: outreach@quaker.org.uk

Meet Michael Eccles



Michael Eccles is a member of Central England Area Meeting. He recently travelled to Peru for the World Plenary Meeting – an event at which representatives from Quaker meetings across the globe gather to share traditions and form connections.

Although I grew up in a Quaker family I did not become a formal member until I was about 25. It was important for me to join a meeting where I was my own person, and not only someone who had grown up in the meeting. What actually prompted me to join was going to live abroad (in Russia) for 18 months to study and work. Fortunately there was already a small Quaker meeting in Moscow that I could attend.

I feel I am a member of the world family of Friends, not just of my local meeting, area meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting. I was recently at the World Plenary Meeting of Friends World Committee for Consultation in Pisac, Peru. For me this contact with Friends from other countries is an essential part of my Quakerism. Sitting in the plenary hall with over 300 Friends from 37 countries singing and listening to 'How great thou art' in Spanish, Hindi, Aymara, Kiswahili and English was a powerful experience, as was sharing something of our everyday lives in smaller groups. Being with Friends in different ways is important to me, so sitting in my local meeting

can be just as moving as sitting in that hall in Pisac.

I work at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre as the Young Adult Programmes Co-ordinator and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Tutor. In this role I helped set up the Young Adult Leadership Programme, a one-year course for 19- to 30-year-olds, which is currently recruiting for its fifth cohort of participants. The programme helps develop not only future leaders, but some of our current leaders. I also work with people who are preparing to be one-year peaceworkers or ecumenical companions in Palestine and Israel. It is a real privilege to spend time alongside these people and to get to know them and their work.

I attend my local meeting with my wife and children; we feel very lucky to have a lively children's meeting so close to home. I hope they will continue to be involved with Quakers as they get older – each year they really look forward to the Children's Programme at Yearly Meeting (YM). We attend YM as a family – it is an important marker in the year: I have missed very few during my life.