

Making an impact

Six stories from our work

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Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Britain



Helping a small local meeting revitalise



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The impact of the Covid pandemic was particularly felt by smaller Quaker worshipping communities. Tweeddale Local Meeting in Scotland was one such community. With their numbers reduced after the pandemic, members of the meeting felt worried. Meeting for worship had been paused and hadn't restarted despite the easing of pandemic restrictions. It was a critical moment for them.

United by their clear desire to restart their meeting, they reached out to their Local Development Worker, Zoe Prosser, for help.

Zoe met with the Friends and helped them to evaluate their needs and wants. Together, they identified that they wanted:

- A powerful united meeting for worship that enriched them. They felt that this was possible with small numbers, but ideally they would love for more Friends to attend to ensure the sustainability of the meeting.
- A sense of community. They felt that this had been significantly damaged in the past few years, particularly over the pandemic, with the loss of several members of their meeting but they wanted to build this back.

Zoe offered some possible ways forward. The Friends decided to trial a model used by Young Adult Friends worshipping groups. They agreed to meet for worship one evening a month in one of their houses, followed by a shared meal. In the two years since this decision was made, the evening meeting has continued, though the shared meal has evolved into tea and cake, which was felt more accessible. They have changed in other ways to adjust to the needs of their community, adding an additional monthly Sunday meeting at another Friend's house.

Their commitment to meeting regularly, along with their flexibility and adaptability, have allowed the meeting to thrive. They continue building their community and strengthening their meeting for worship and are pleased to have welcomed new attenders. They report feeling optimistic, with their increased numbers showing that they are 'going in the right direction!'

Peacebuilding response to targeted violence in the summer of 2024

In July & August 2024, some of the worst racist, anti-migrant violence for decades broke out in 35 locations in England and Northern Ireland after the tragic deaths of three children in a stabbing in Southport. This violence targeted Muslims, asylum seekers and visible minorities. Peacebuilding in Britain were able to respond at this very challenging time. As always, the Quaker peacebuilding we do is sensitive and complex, often working in collaboration, through networks and behind the scenes.

We provided accompaniment, support and resources to organisations and networks engaged in relevant work, some in areas most affected by the violence. This allowed practitioners to express and share feelings, thoughts, and where appropriate, next steps. They heard about relevant but new to them concepts such as “the two hands of nonviolence”. Those working in areas where there was the potential for further violence received practical resources on civilian protection.

We also undertook substantial analysis of the factors that contributed the violence spreading, including the role of far-right organisations and disinformation. We shared this analysis with colleagues and external peacebuilders, allowing them to use and build on this work in their responses and use it to ensure a conflict sensitive approach.

We facilitated Quaker reflection and action, working with Northern Friends Peace Board to hold an online meeting in which 85 Quakers came together to share their immediate thoughts and feelings. We also brought forward the launch of the Quaker Peacebuilding Network.

Finally, we worked with three national organisations – Belong, British Futures and the Together Coalition – to host *After the riots: A Cohesion summit* at Friends House on 20 November 2024. This powerful event brought together experts, practitioners, and policy makers to reflect on what had happened, why, and what they'd like to see happen in response.

We hope the impact of this work is that the people and organisations we accompany have felt supported and bolstered in the diversity of their responses, whether they are working on the ground in communities or at a national, policy level. We also hope that the government will develop a considered and resourced cohesion strategy in partnership with civil society alongside other relevant measures. We hope connections made at the national cohesion event lead to ongoing conversations about the role of faith organisations in fostering good relations.

Paul Parker, Sunder Katwala (Director of British Future), Wajid Khan (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Faith, Communities and Resettlement). Photo: Michael Preston for Quakers in Britain.



Strengthening family participation in Quaker camps



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Quaker Camp has been a cherished part of the life of Chilterns Area Meeting for over 65 years. Generations of families return year after year—many now bringing their children and grandchildren to experience the same rich community they enjoyed in their youth. Three area meetings—Herts & Hitchin, Chilterns, and Luton & Leighton—collaborate annually to rent a shared field, erecting communal structures such as latrines, a kitchen, and a large marquee for use across their three successive camps. The viability of this arrangement depends on all three area meetings continuing to participate. If even one were to withdraw, the burden on the others would increase significantly, threatening the sustainability of this much-loved tradition.

Broadening and strengthening participation in these camps has required collaboration across area meetings, with the concerted support of two local development workers: Moya, for Chilterns AM, and Aileen, for Herts & Hitchin AM.

Both Aileen and Moya spent time visiting the camps, gaining insight into the distinct cultures of each camp and how they might learn from one another. Wanting to attract new families to the camps, particularly Herts & Hitchin, which had experienced a concerning decline in numbers, they identified London as a

key area for outreach. Focusing on meetings with children's programmes and good transport links to the camps, they organised and promoted an open day at Herts & Hitchin Camp. This attracted some new visitors, including a young adult Friend from North London. Encouraged by their presence, the camp held a business meeting where Friends reached unity on simplifying their organisational structure—an important step toward making the camp more accessible and sustainable. Herts & Hitchin Camp is now on firmer ground and is slowly growing again.

Moya and Aileen's work has also opened the door to greater collaboration and learning between the three camps. Simple practices like Herts & Hitchin's communal jigsaw puzzle could be shared across camps as an easy and effective way to build connections. Jordans Camp offers another model that could inspire others – they keep teens engaged by providing communally supervised peer tents so that “tent-agers” don't have to camp with their parents.

The future of these camps now looks more assured. With continued support and shared learning, we hope they'll remain a vital source of community, spiritual nourishment and Quaker identity for generations to come.

EAPPI: Protecting the olive harvest

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) has long provided a protective presence for vulnerable Palestinian communities. Our trained volunteer human rights monitors, known as Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs), serve as witnesses and advocates during times of heightened vulnerability. This protection is especially vital during the annual olive harvest, when approximately 100,000 Palestinian families harvest the crop that sustains their livelihoods. These farmers often face harassment and violence from extremist Israeli settlers attempting to disrupt their work. The EAs' presence helps deter such incidents, allowing farmers to safely harvest their olives.

When the war in Gaza erupted, it created unprecedented challenges for Palestinian farmers. In some regions, up to 75% of olives remained unharvested, resulting in the loss of 1,200 metric tons of olive oil worth approximately US\$10 million (£8 million).

In 2024, Palestinians faced a critical situation. Heightened violence from extremist settlers and their increasing impunity created dangerous conditions, while few international organizations remained operating in the West Bank. We recognized that EAs alone could not safely provide the necessary protective presence. Therefore, we partnered with

Rabbis for Human Rights (RfHR), a Jewish Israeli organization also committed to protective presence work. RfHR conducted specialized training for both Israeli volunteers and EAs. Together, we developed a coordinated plan for vulnerable yet accessible areas around Bethlehem.

Rana, whose family participated in the harvest, explained its significance: "Harvesting the olives makes us strong and brings us back to the land and nature." She added, "They can't erase us. They may try but our roots to this land are strong, like the roots of the olive trees."

An EA said, "The olive picking went well. There was a group of volunteers working alongside Rana and her family and some of their children. It was hard work, but all was carried out in good spirits and a sense of joy."

This initiative enabled communities to harvest more olives safely. Farmers expressed gratitude for the support and felt reassured they had not been forgotten during this difficult time. It also strengthened our solidarity with Israeli peace groups—upholding EAPPI's long-standing commitment to supporting both Palestinian communities and Israeli activists working for peace and justice.



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The Insure Our Future Campaign inspires action in Edinburgh



©David Somerwell

Many Quakers want to make change around the climate crisis, but acting in isolation can be dispiriting. The problem is so large, it's difficult to know where to start. As Janet Saunders from Central Edinburgh Quaker Meeting writes, "Climate disruption can be depressing. With [...] huge planned fossil fuel projects all over the world, my individual efforts felt like trying to bail out the Titanic with tea cups."

Insurance companies insure fossil fuel extraction and transportation projects like pipelines and oil drilling. These projects are inherently risky – without insurance, they cannot go forward. That is why the Insure Our Future campaign was set up - to pressure insurance companies to stop insuring these climate damaging projects. And that is why we started an education campaign within the Quaker community to raise awareness of this issue. We wanted to bring Quakers into the Insure Our Future campaign because we know that Quakers have a powerful voice when acting together and with others.

Janet got involved after she read about the Insure Our Future coalition in an update we placed in the



Quaker newsletter Quake! The approach made complete sense to her, and she immediately decided to get involved.

She then recruited a group of like-minded individuals with various skills and backgrounds to form a campaign team of Friends and allies in her area. With our support, they are now actively campaigning against the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), targeting insurer Tokio Marine.

They have already seen a measure of success: in March 2024, Tokio Marine updated their environmental policy. However, Janet's group, as well as the broader Insure Our Future coalition, feel the update is not sufficiently ambitious. Therefore, Janet and her team are continuing to find creative ways to encourage further action, including looking together at other ways to put pressure on climate finance.

This shows how our work is empowering Quakers to make positive change in bringing about a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Teaching children about Quakerism through Faith & play

How can we support children to learn what it means to be Quaker? Many adult Quakers are eager to reach out to the younger generation and share the spiritual practices that mean so much to them. But they may need support to do this in a way which resonates with children.

Faith & play is an approach to teaching children about Quaker faith and practice through a set of stories based on Quaker history and values. Using visual props and a specific method of story-telling and engaging children, *Faith & play* allows children to access their spiritual lives and gives them words and images to express what they experience of the Light, or the Divine. It enables the adult mentors to create and maintain an open, safe, and welcoming environment that nurtures wonder and loving community.

Friends from Lancaster Area Meeting reached out to the Youth, Children and Families team because they wanted to deepen their work with children through *Faith & play*. They were keen to develop confidence in this approach but needed support. We worked

with them in a number of ways including providing training opportunities, facilitating conversations with a practitioner, sharing props, and demonstrating the techniques to deliver *Faith & play* effectively.

As a result, the Friends have used *Faith & play* storytelling at the meeting's retreat weekend at Glenthorne and at their regular children's meeting. They found that children were more engaged and interested. Seeing first-hand the value of this approach, they are now working on producing more story sets of their own to use, as well as borrowing one of the larger story sets from our supply kept at Friends House.

We are delighted to see interest in the approach spread further – we have already loaned out two more *Faith & play* kits since the training took place! We hope that this approach becomes a staple of the children's meetings in the area, enriching the spiritual life of children and strengthening their connections with their Quaker communities.



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Making an impact

Quakers in Britain are making a real difference—within our own communities and across wider society. This collection of six case studies offers a glimpse into that impact, from revitalising a small meeting in Scotland to protecting the olive harvest in Bethlehem; from supporting children's spiritual development, to taking action on climate justice.

Each piece of work shared here has been shaped through careful discernment and collective commitment. We hope you feel inspired by and proud of this work. These stories are a testament to what's possible when Friends act together in faith. None of this would be achievable without your continued support. Whether you contribute time, energy or financial support, we thank you deeply for enabling this work to flourish.

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Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Registered charity number 1127633
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

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