

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society
of Friends (Quakers)



Worship and action

Quaker work in 2015





What happened next?

Last year, our annual report front cover showed Friends at Yearly Meeting, people gathered at the 'Time to act' climate march, and a group of young Quakers who sailed from Liverpool to Belfast and back on a tall ship.

Since then, young Quakers have been involved in a number of adventures (see page 4). Quakers are becoming increasingly involved in climate actions around Britain (see page 16). And more than 1,000 people attended Yearly Meeting to explore the theme 'Living out our faith in the world' (see page 10).

How can I get involved with Quaker work?

You can find out more

Visit www.quaker.org.uk for our latest news, events and free resources or to connect with us on social media.

You can contribute time

Take part in the work we do by serving on a committee, volunteering at an event or joining the Quaker Life Network. To find out more visit www.quaker.org.uk/give or phone 020 7663 1121.

You can contribute money

Give to Britain Yearly Meeting directly or through your local or area meeting. To give online or find out about other ways of giving directly, visit www.quaker.org.uk/give. You can also phone 020 7663 1015 for help with giving.

You can leave a legacy

After taking care of family and friends, you can make a gift in your will to help sustain Quaker work for future generations. Visit www.quaker.org.uk/legacy for more information or phone 020 7663 1019.

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Registered charity number 1127633

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

This report is available as a PDF and for e-readers: please go to www.quaker.org.uk/annualreport. For a printed version of the financial statements that accompany this document, please contact publications@quaker.org.uk or write to the publications manager at the address above. The financial statements are also available as a PDF at www.quaker.org.uk/annualreport.

www.quaker.org.uk

From the Clerk of Trustees and the Recording Clerk



“We are all activists and we are all worshippers. Our worship and action spring from the same spiritual source. The light not only illumines us but pushes us to seek change... We are also called to be a community of Friends as a yearly meeting, pushed towards the important things we can only do together... We are in this for the long haul.”

*Yearly Meeting 2015, minute 36,
‘The call for equality’*

We need both to strengthen our worshipping communities and to act. The work of Britain Yearly Meeting, described in this report, helps us to do both.

Last year, Meeting for Sufferings approved *Our faith in the future*, setting out clear aspirations for Quaker work in the years ahead. It challenges us to seek a future where:

- meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker
- Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age
- all Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline
- Quaker values are active in the world
- Quakers work collaboratively
- Quakers are well known and widely understood.

Trustees, together with the committees that guide Britain Yearly Meeting’s work, are committed to aligning all Britain Yearly Meeting’s work with this vision.

Even as we look forward as Friends, we need to constantly remind ourselves of our Quaker discipline and heritage. The work of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, by taking us through a programme of reading *Quaker faith & practice*, is reconnecting us all to our history and deepening our understanding of the practices that help us to respond to the promptings of the light.

“All this work can only happen with the support of our Quaker community. It 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; and becoming involved in however small a way. For ourselves we need to find some action however simple to do now.”

*Yearly Meeting 2015, minute 36,
‘The call for equality’*

Dear Friend, what canst thou do?

Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of Trustees

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

Contents

Support for meetings	2	How our work is governed	22
Promoting Quakerism	6	Table of giving	23
Sustaining our church and faith	10	Thank you	24
Witness through action	14	2015 at a glance	25



Support for meetings

We work to deepen the spiritual life of Quaker meetings in Britain by providing support, training and advice. In 2015 young Friends explored justice and equality, we published books to support pastoral care and encourage engagement with mental illness, and we helped Friends access the central support we offer. In 2015 we spent £2.6m on supporting meetings.

Supporting pastoral care

“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, 1667.
Quaker faith & practice 10.01*



Since the early days of Quakerism, meetings have appointed elders and overseers. They are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the meeting and its members. This vital pastoral care has helped Quakers to remain a cohesive community.

In April we published a new book to support not just the 2,000 or so elders and overseers in Britain but all Friends and attenders interested in providing pastoral care. *With a tender hand* supplements and expands on the guidance given in chapter 12 of *Quaker faith & practice*.

Conceived as a resource that can be readily dipped into, the book provides a comprehensive introduction to the pastoral roles and a wealth of supplementary information, examples and guidance, and draws heavily on the wisdom and experience of Friends.

The book has proven hugely popular, with 2,000 copies already printed. It has fast become an essential addition to meeting house libraries and has made an impact well beyond Britain: in September the author visited Australia and spoke to Friends there about it.

“With a tender hand offers us... a comprehensive handbook for members of Ministry and Care Committees, and much wise guidance for us all.”

Rosemary Epps, Clerk, Hobart Local Meeting and Tasmania Regional Meeting

A linked online resource (at www.quaker.org.uk/tender-hand) allows access to a range of extension materials, further resources and links to other useful websites. We will regularly update and add to this site so that Friends can share good practice from their own meetings.

Promoting understanding of mental illness

The Quaker Life Network brings together Friends wishing to strengthen the spiritual life of the yearly meeting.

In May we published a book of personal accounts of mental ill health in Quaker meetings. *Encounters with mental distress: Quaker stories* was developed by a cluster of the Quaker Life Network, which asked Friends to anonymously share their experiences of mental illness.

The stories are written from the perspectives of individuals, carers and meetings, and they voice many of the sensitive issues around mental illness in meetings. We are aware that there can be difficulties around boundaries in meeting life that are sometimes perceived to be due to mental illness or related issues.

The book is being used by meetings as a way to begin reflecting on mental illness, and we have helped meetings to develop or deliver workshops on the subject. It can be challenging to find a balance between an individual's needs and those of the meeting. We are supporting meetings to find this balance and be inclusive of all Friends on their faith journey.



African peacebuilder exhibition visits prisons

This Light that Pushes Me is a powerful exhibition celebrating the work of sub-Saharan African peacebuilders and their work for reconciliation and trauma recovery. Among the

venues hosting the exhibition in 2015 were the male and female prisons at HMP Peterborough and HMP Long Lartin in Worcestershire.

Peterborough's Quaker prison chaplain organised a programmed meeting for worship to "celebrate the depth of spiritual experience" he saw in the exhibition's stories and in the prisoners he worked with.

The Quaker prison chaplains at Long Lartin then brought the exhibition to their prison chapel. It was shown there throughout August, and again incorporated into two Quaker-led worship sessions. Afterwards, prisoners were invited to write messages on postcards to the peacebuilders featured in the exhibition.

The prisoners were moved and inspired by the exhibition. Their messages express their determination to embrace forgiveness and demonstrate the importance of sharing these stories of spiritual activism: "If we too could learn to see 'that of God in our perceived enemy', then we would see the bonds of our common humanity, and the chain of hatred and cruelty might be broken."

"It strikes me that your words and belief have the power to reverse the polemic that has led to hatred and conflict. May they bring hope to those still struggling with conflict and suffering around the world."

Deepening the spiritual life of meetings

Being Friends Together is a comprehensive online library of resources, workshops and ideas to support and encourage meetings in their learning and growing together.

In 2015 we used legacy funding to grow the project, in particular to train and support a group of Friends who will work with meetings to use and explore the resource. We are also monitoring how the website is used and how it might be developed.

The website now has more than 200 subscribers from across Britain. Yearly Meeting, and the resources for deepening the spiritual life of the meeting have been the most popular. We facilitated a number of meeting visits, which have helped meetings to reflect on their life as a worshipping community and explore how they might best make use of our resources.

Being Friends Together encourages meetings to develop their shared witness in the world. By learning more about Quaker history and

spirituality, Friends can articulate their faith more confidently.

Using 'Being Friends Together' to learn about spirituality

We are a small meeting with an average attendance of eight. We have only one or two seasoned Friends and the rest of us want to learn about being Quaker. We decided to look at various aspects of spirituality. We had heard of Being Friends Together as a resource we could all access. We wanted to be rooted and practical and not just theoretical. So we came up with four aspects – worship, tradition, ecology and fellowship – all approached from the angle of spirituality.

One of us registered and the other three facilitators used the same access to choose appropriate units and methods for our group to lead a session. Usually six of us participated each time. One session was on Quaker traditions of spirituality. We used an extract by Quaker author Harvey Gillman as a starting point, each of us reading a part of it in turn. The timeline of Quaker history was circulated as a useful background document. We then each chose a Quaker from the past from the names offered. We shared with each other the reason we chose them and read out a relevant section from *Quaker faith & practice*.

It felt like a deepening and enriching experience. This came from our own sharing as well as discovering about Quakers past and present. One practical outcome of the session on fellowship was a commitment to explore offering a drop-in session for those who are lonely.

Terry Oakley (Leighton Buzzard Quaker Meeting)



Quakers worshipping together at Leighton Buzzard Local Meeting. Photo: Leighton Buzzard Local Meeting



Children and young people

Children and young people are a valued part of Quaker communities. We foster their engagement and spiritual development at local meetings and through regional and national events. 2015 saw a variety of opportunities for young Quakers to engage with issues around justice and equality. We encouraged them to see themselves as both activists and worshippers.

Young Quakers' participation day

Living the peace testimony faithfully can be challenging when you are the only Quaker in your school or the one young person in your meeting. In response to this, the young people on the participation day explored various ways to put their faith into action. This was followed by an opportunity to protest about BP's sponsorship of the British Museum. The group members expressed their concerns using the museum's feedback forms, and some also took part in a meeting for worship in the museum's Great Court.

"I'm really concerned about climate justice and want to take action. Today has given me the confidence to start doing that."

Young person



Young Quakers at the British Museum, witnessing against the museum's corporate sponsorship.
Photo: Britain Yearly Meeting

Journeys in the Spirit

The autumn issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* (youth work edition) was based on the theme 'Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly'. While we undoubtedly live in a world that is unjust, it is hard for us all to know what we might do about this. This issue provided ideas for those working with young people

to explore justice in the context of mercy and humility. It will enable young people to engage with and respond to Yearly Meeting's focus for 2015–2017, 'Living out our faith in the world'.

'Be the change' resource

At the participation day we launched 'Be the change'. This resource features a set of cards to help young people explore some of the issues Quakers campaign on, and a toolkit of suggested ways to take action.



It also gives links to additional information available on the young Quakers' website: www.yqspace.org.uk.

Junior Yearly Meeting

The 51 young people at this event explored the theme 'How do we as Quakers respond to injustice?'. Quaker Peace & Social Witness staff facilitated a creative challenge to illustrate how some countries have many privileges while others have very few. The young people learned about the pillars of power and ways to challenge injustice, and heard about Quakers' work for change.

"Our faith can guide us, not hinder us, when fighting injustice."

Junior Yearly Meeting participant

Young People's Programme

The 32 young people who attended this event explored the theme 'Understanding inequality: What can WE do?' A young Friend, Jessica Beck, joined them to explore inequality in more depth. She listened to what they thought an equal society would look like and how their visions differed from society today. She then fed these reflections back to Yearly Meeting.

"I felt the young people were really insightful, with many of them taking their thoughts and feelings onto a practical level in their lives."

Adult volunteer

Helping Friends to access central support

At November's conference for area meeting clerks, we introduced the *Directory of services*. It shows Friends and meetings how to access the full range of resources and support we offer.

A copy will be sent to every local and area meeting clerk in early 2016. Besides being a printed resource for meetings to refer to, the directory will be available on the new Quakers in Britain website (see page 8).

The primary role of Friends House staff is to support Quakers and meetings in their worshipping communities. We hope this resource will also help those new to Quakers to better understand the national organisation.

We will gather feedback on the directory in 2016 and there will be an online survey for Friends to complete. This evaluation will tell us whether the directory has helped Friends to access central support and how we might improve it for the future.

Pilot programme to help meetings thrive

The Vibrancy in Meetings Pilot Programme is an exciting new joint venture between Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. It aims to help meetings thrive as communities with a vital Quaker ministry.

In 2015 we completed our research into how the programme could be delivered. Based on these findings, we have decided to trial a local worker scheme in three or four parts of the country. This will be funded for three and a half years from legacies. We are now working to set up the programme and have appointed a part-time staff member and steering group to coordinate and guide it.

In 2016 the programme will recruit local workers to be placed in or near Quaker meetings in several parts of Britain. They will spend time with meetings, offering ideas, sharing good practice and putting meetings in touch with others who can help. They will offer spiritual, practical and/or pastoral support, depending on the needs of each meeting.

Staff will evaluate and share what they learn so that we can build an understanding of whether this is an appropriate way to support meetings.

Supporting stewardship of Quaker property

Quaker Stewardship Committee supports Quaker meetings in their stewardship of finance and property and helps to ensure they meet their legal requirements. To ensure treasurers have the most up-to-date information, we published a set of property advice sheets, which are available online from the Quakers in Britain website. Since guidance relating to property and its maintenance can change frequently, our new advice sheets give links to websites that detail the latest guidelines, ensuring that our advice to meetings remains relevant.



Henley on Thames Meeting House. Photo: John Hall

Promoting Quakerism

We strengthen our presence in the world by promoting our Quaker faith and values. In 2015 we engaged with MPs and candidates during the general election, developed our advocacy in Scotland and launched a new website for Quakers in Britain. We explored a number of different ways to reach new audiences. In 2015 we spent £1.9m supporting this work.

General election 2015

“Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs.”

Advices & queries 34



We are compelled by our faith to speak out in the world. We engage in political processes and make use of print and online media to communicate our messages.

The general election was a valuable opportunity for us to

explain our values, raise our concerns with prospective MPs and help to shape the national debate.

To help Quakers to engage with the election, we produced an election guide covering over 20 issues. It included a brief overview of some of our key concerns, suggested questions for

parliamentary candidates and provided links to further information.

Ashford Local Meeting hosted a meeting for learning, at which they discussed topics from the election guide. Chichester Local Meeting made an ‘election washing line’ by writing their hopes and concerns for the election on t-shirt-shaped pieces of paper and then pegging these to lines strung across their meeting room.

We also set up the QuakerVote website to facilitate letter-writing, discussion and debate. A blog responded to the latest election news and we enjoyed a lively presence on social media. We held two hustings debates at Friends House, London: in March a panel of politicians from the five main parties responded to questions around international affairs, while the theme for April’s event was ‘Paying for society’.

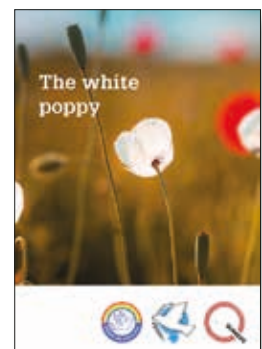
Many meetings hosted hustings or sent representatives to hustings. Reading Local Meeting organised a ‘not a hustings’, where all the candidates were invited to participate in a creative listening exercise similar to worship-sharing. Manchester and Gloucester Friends put questions to their local candidates and shared the responses online.

Developing our advocacy work

Until 2015 our national advocacy work focused on the Westminster Parliament, but significant matters are increasingly devolved. So in January we appointed a Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer. The part-time post, a three-year pilot, is jointly funded by Britain Yearly Meeting and General Meeting for Scotland.

The post has helped us to take forward some key Quaker concerns, which include a concern adopted by General Meeting for Scotland about militarisation in society. We have developed partnerships with ForcesWatch and the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, and new relationships with Scottish MPs have led to a range of political actions.

To prompt conversations about the increasing militarisation of Remembrance Day, we sent white poppies



We hosted two hustings events at Friends House, London. Photo: Michael Preston for BYM

and an accompanying leaflet to all MSPs and Scottish MPs in Westminster. We met with Scottish National Party MPs to brief them on fracking issues, and the Scottish Parliament put down a motion welcoming Quaker Week.

We also attended the Scottish National Party conference for the first time in 2015 and submitted a petition to Holyrood on visits to schools by armed forces personnel. We have engaged with wider Scottish society by giving talks in schools and at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Library collections reach new audiences

The Library at Friends House is one of the largest collections in the world relating to Quakers and their work. It is an inspiring resource covering Quaker history, faith, thought and practice.

In 2015 we loaned several items from our collections to major exhibitions in world-renowned institutions. Each of these items helped to promote key aspects of Quaker faith and action.

We loaned four photographs to the Victoria & Albert Museum of Childhood for an exhibition about the forced emigration of children to British dominions between 1869 and 1970. The photographs, taken in Spitalfields in the early 1900s, were originally used to raise awareness and money for destitute families in London's East End.

We contributed to the British Library's Magna Carta exhibition by loaning a tract featuring a reproduction of the Magna Carta produced by William Penn in

1687 for an American audience. Over 125,000 people from around the world visited the exhibition and learned about the democratic ideals early Friends exported to America.

We supported Friends by providing material for local Quaker projects and exhibitions. Central England Quakers assembled an impressive World War I exhibition in the community gallery of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. We helped to create stunning visual panels featuring images from our collections. We also contributed museum objects to help tell the story of conscientious objection and Quaker support for German internees during the war.

By sharing our rich heritage with new audiences, we help Quakers to speak out in the world and tell stories of our faith-based action.

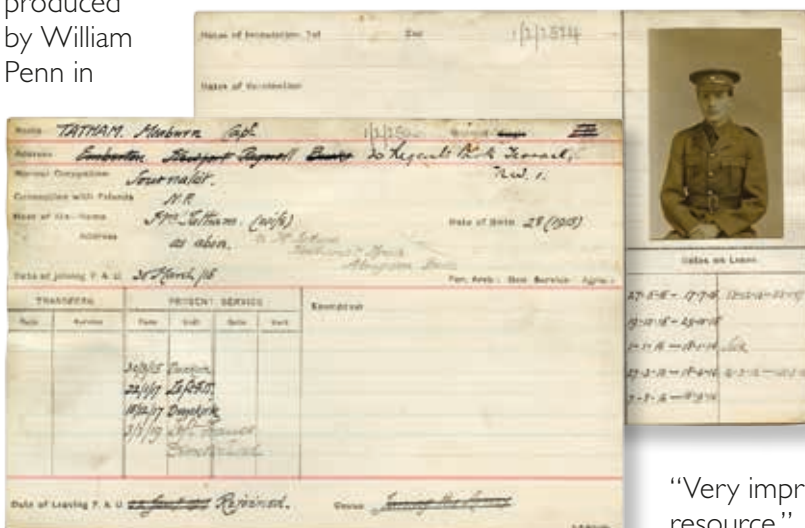
Friends Ambulance Unit personnel records now online

In 2015 the Library at Friends House launched a new website that gives access to the personnel records of Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) members during World War I.

The FAU was a volunteer ambulance service formed by a group of Quakers in August 1914. During the war it transported 277,000 sick and wounded people, set up and ran hospitals, and, from 1916, offered alternative service to conscientious objectors.

The FAU personnel cards are accessed by family historians whose relatives served in the unit and by researchers interested in relief work and conscientious objection.

Our new website allows users to search over 2,500 digitised personnel cards. They include photographs, details of members' backgrounds and military service tribunals, and summaries of members' service in the unit. The site has opened the collection to a much wider audience, and it attracted around 4,500 visitors in 2015.



FAU personnel card of Meaburn Tatham.
Image: Britain Yearly Meeting

"Very impressed by the FAU WWI resource."

"What a fantastic resource!"



We are looking at ways to make more of our collections available online. Projects like this are a fantastic way of promoting Quakerism. They bring Quaker heritage to a wider audience, attract new researchers, and inform and inspire about our testimony and witness.

Quaker presence at Greenbelt

Over the August bank holiday, Quakers took part in Greenbelt Festival near Kettering. Greenbelt is an annual festival of faith, justice and the arts, attended by 8,000 people.

We had our own dome and a stand in the festival's exhibition area. A team of volunteers coordinated a series of meetings for worship and talks on peace, conflict and community, and 17 Friends from Northamptonshire Area Meeting looked after our stand.

Our participation in Greenbelt is part of an exploration into using festivals and outdoor events for outreach. It was a great opportunity to connect with other organisations that share our values and to work with Quakers from across Britain. It helped us to forge new relationships with those of different faiths and none, and it supported Quaker meetings by encouraging newcomers to attend.

Large Meeting House wins architectural recognition

In May the Royal Institute of British Architects awarded the refurbished Large Meeting House at Friends House its prestigious London Award. The award recognised the sensitive and innovative design, which retained key heritage features while improving accessibility and adding a stunning skylight in a vaulted roof.



The launch of the *Climb up to the moor* exhibition in the Large Meeting House was well attended.
Photo: Fiona Meadley

In 2015 the refurbished Large Meeting House hosted Yearly Meeting for the first time (see page 10) and our second Quaker Activist Gathering (see page 20). It also hosted *Climb up to the moor*, a Quaker Arts Network exhibition that highlighted the importance and fragility of moorland and our relationship with nature.

Under the name 'The Light', the Large Meeting House also serves as a major London conference venue, generating vital funds for Quaker work. During September's two-day Permaculture Association Conference, we catered for 650 delegates and generated £72,000. We were also proud to sponsor Medact's annual 'Health through Peace' conference.

"Thank you for the amazing support... We really couldn't have pulled off the event without you. The space is completely incredible and was perfect for our conference."

Medact participant

The refurbished hall presents many opportunities for outreach. It is a space that can be used to speak to the world about our values. Simply by using renewable energy and offering our delegates locally sourced, seasonal menus, Friends House reflects Quaker values of simplicity, transparency and sustainability.

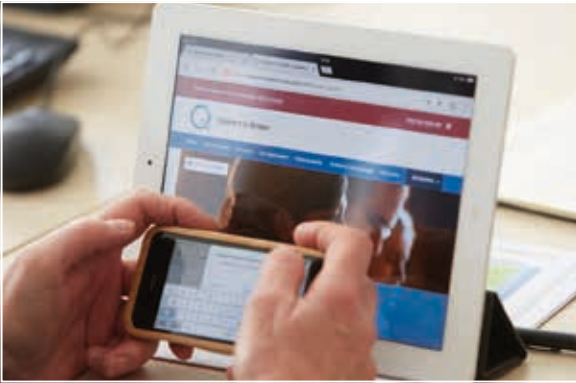
A new website for Quakers in Britain

In September we launched a new website for Quakers in Britain at www.quaker.org.uk.

As the means by which so many encounter our faith and work, the Quakers in Britain website is vitally important. It helps us to speak out in the world and is the first port of call for journalists, enquirers, politicians and Quakers of all ages. It provides information relevant to all these groups and highlights the connection between our worship and witness.

The new website is organised according to how users search for information rather than by committee or department function, making it easier to navigate and moving users towards further engagement with Quakers and Quaker work. It is also compatible with all mobile devices and web browsers.

The new website makes it easier for meetings to find the support they need. A resources section brings together all the free resources



Our new website is mobile responsive and will make it easier for people to find the information they need.
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2015

available for meetings to download, be it Quaker Week posters, advocacy briefings, children and young people's work, or guidance for treasurers. We are committed to maintaining the usefulness of the site, and user testing will remain an essential part of further development.

Swarthmoor Hall

In the 17th century, Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria was the heart of the burgeoning Quaker movement. A Grade II historic house, it was acquired by Britain Yearly Meeting in 1951 and today runs a diverse programme of courses, retreats and outreach events.

In 2015 Swarthmoor Hall hosted Quaker meetings and groups for pilgrimages, business meetings and worship. Our regular spiritual activities give Friends, meetings and seekers an opportunity to come together for worship.

2015 was a year of growth and change. We began refurbishing our accommodation and in July launched the Barn Café. Accommodation sales grew by 55% while sales in the new café exceeded budget by 75%.

The refurbishment reflects Quaker simplicity and sustainability. We installed more efficient heating and reused the old benches from the Large Meeting House at Friends House.

Friends House Hospitality now manages the hall, which aims to break even in its commercial activities and reduce the subsidy it receives from Britain Yearly Meeting.

We began to promote midweek bed-and-breakfast accommodation to holidaymakers and people travelling on business, to increase occupancy during the week.

Greenbelt Festival

I was one of the volunteers assisting with the Quaker presence at Greenbelt in 2015. I helped with the 'Fly Kites Not Drones' workshops, the daily meeting for worship, an evening discussion slot on community and all the other bits and pieces you find yourself doing: carrying things from one venue to another, helping organise the stall and talking to passers-by about Quakerism.

There was a team of volunteers led by staff from Friends House: people who were interested and able to deliver different parts of our offering. There were some Friends more experienced with outreach, local Friends, Friends able to deliver specific workshops around areas of our work and a number of Friends willing to muck in.

My experience at the time was generally positive and quite wet – a lot of rain fell. I believe our presence was really appreciated: there was a lot of interest in Quakers, and the people we spoke to at the festival were glad of an opportunity to find out more about Quakerism.

I think my resounding memory of the festival in terms of what we offered was how important a quiet space can be among the business of a festival site: our quiet space in the evening was used and was simply a place people could be.

Maud Grainger (Central England Area Meeting)



Children holding their kites carrying messages of peace after a workshop at Greenbelt Festival. Photo: Britain Yearly Meeting

These midweek bookings will help to fund our weekend courses and retreats and cover the building's running costs. This will put Swarthmoor Hall on a more sustainable footing for the future, and will also raise awareness of Quakerism among new users.

Sustaining our church and faith

We work to ensure that our church governance is responsive to the Holy Spirit and informed by Quaker testimony. In 2015, Yearly Meeting considered how best to challenge injustice, Friends explored ways of building peace through interfaith dialogue, and we helped Friends to prepare for a possible revision of our book of discipline. In 2015 we spent £0.6m on this work.

Yearly Meeting focuses on social justice

“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.”

Yearly Meeting 2015, Minute 36

Attending Yearly Meeting for the first time

When I was going to Britain Yearly Meeting on the train, I was really nervous because I'd never been before. I thought it might be just sitting in the meeting house the whole time. But it was very different from what I thought.

We had lots of fun playing parachute games (yippee!), baking bread then sharing it with the Fox Cubs (Quaker children aged 3–5) – yum!

I also really enjoyed going to the British Museum with banners and holding a meeting for worship outside the entrance. All the people coming out stared at us, but I didn't mind because they were looking at the big BP banner with oil dripping from it. It made me feel as though I was actually making a difference.

I also liked going to the all-age worship session. I'd never sat in meeting for worship for half an hour before, but everyone kept getting up to speak and I could see lots of people I knew in the Large Meeting House, so the time passed really quickly.

I was chosen to read out my group's minute in the last session, in front of hundreds of Quakers filling up the Large Meeting House. I was really scared beforehand, but when I actually read it I wasn't at all scared because there wasn't time to be nervous.

I had a really great time at Yearly Meeting. I hope I come next year.

Kate Penny (aged 9)

In May more than a thousand Quakers from across Britain gathered at Friends House, London, for Yearly Meeting. It marked the first of a three-year consideration of the theme 'Living out our faith in the world'. Friends were asked how they might meet today's challenges spiritually. We made more space for the "still, small voice" in silence and ministry to allow the theme to be considered throughout Yearly Meeting.

Yearly Meeting explored pressing issues of inequality in our society, with a focus on housing. This has led us to engage with parliament on the Housing Bill, and Friends have joined in action on inequality, such as the Living Wage campaign. Attendance was high, with 825 people present at Saturday's sessions. Over 130 young Quakers also explored issues around justice and equality at Junior Yearly Meeting (see page 4).

This was the first Yearly Meeting to be held in the newly refurbished Large Meeting House, and we streamed some of the sessions to a neighbouring room. We also posted video recordings of some of the speakers on the Quakers in Britain website for the first time. We will develop this use of technology for future Yearly Meetings.

On the Sunday we held a food fair in the courtyard of Friends House, with meals inspired by the regions of the world where we are engaged in peace work. Our restaurant and café sustained Friends throughout, serving 760 hot meals and 720 sandwiches respectively.



Yearly Meeting: Friends in the Large Meeting House for Yearly Meeting in session.
Photo: © Mike Pinches 2015

A Spirit-led church

“Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?”

Advices & queries 7

The Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) helps Quakers to engage in interfaith dialogue locally and nationally.

Every 30 years or so, the World Council of Churches (WCC), which brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships to seek Christian unity and a common witness, works towards a convergence document. The document asks all churches to articulate their faith and explain how they are cultivating their Christian understanding.

Quakers' last response, published as *To Lima with love* in the 1980s, offered our interpretation of Christianity and is a seminal text for Quakers worldwide. Since 2013, QCCIR has been consulting with Quakers in Britain to respond to the WCC's current convergence document, *The church: Towards a common vision*.

QCCIR shared the first draft of its response with Meeting for Sufferings – our national representative body – in March 2015. The final document, *A Spirit-led church*, was accepted by Meeting for Sufferings in September 2015 and is now a corporate document. Many Friends were involved in commenting on the text throughout the year and it has been a major undertaking by QCCIR.

A Spirit-led church seeks to explain why Quakers do what we do and defines our vision for a religious society, and we encourage Friends to use it as a study text in their local meetings.

Conference explores interfaith peacebuilding

In recent years British Quakers have expressed concern at growing Islamophobia and have begun to ask for practical ways to deal with tensions in their communities.

In September we responded by holding a conference at Friends House, London, on the subject of interfaith peacebuilding. The keynote speakers were Jane Clements, Director of the Council of Christians and Jews, and Mashuda Shaikh, Community Heritage Officer at Kirklees

Engaging with Yearly Meeting in a new way

Following the example of Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting's subsidy for Friends attending Yearly Meeting Gathering, Sawley elders and overseers decided to underwrite a day trip to Yearly Meeting for as many as wanted to go, and organised the tickets and so on. It proved very popular. There were eight of us that Saturday morning at Preston train station (and one collected en route), excitedly chattering about this the first visit for most of us to Yearly Meeting.

The plan was to attend the afternoon plenary session on housing, but we were early enough to attend a presentation or workshop of our choice before the main event. It was a fascinating afternoon seeing Quaker discernment in action – there were many speakers and they were listened to intently by all present. The first break gave some of us the opportunity to visit the Quaker Centre Bookshop and explore Friends House. Before long it was time to meet up for our journey home.

Back on the train we shared our thoughts and impressions as we journeyed home. Although it had been a long and busy day, our enthusiasm for Yearly Meeting was undimmed and I'm sure we will be there again in 2016. The day after our trip was local meeting for worship for business, and it was our sense that our business method was more disciplined and centred following the experience of a Yearly Meeting session.

Many of us are looking forward to Yearly Meeting 2016 and hoping to make the trip again.

Christine Marshall (Sawley Quaker Meeting)



Friends from Sawley Quaker Meeting.
Photo: Sawley Quaker Meeting

Council in West Yorkshire. Jane drew on her experience to talk about the importance of mutual understanding while Mashuda spoke about her work on a range of local community initiatives.

Workshops looked at ways of building relations with Muslim and Jewish communities. The Kingston Friends Jewish Relations Group and St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace led workshops based on their extensive experience of interfaith work. Participants were given an insight into how the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (see page 19) engages with interfaith peacebuilding. Quakers from across Britain attended and were given ideas and methods to take back and use in their communities.

Attending the QCCIR Interfaith Peacebuilding Day Conference

At Quaker Conference for Christian and Interfaith Relations conference at Friends House there were two speakers, then workshops followed by a summary and a short meeting for worship.

As I consider myself a Jewish Quaker, I was interested in the first speaker, Dr Jane Clements, Director of the Council of Christians and Jews. In her talk 'Working with the Jewish community', she gave us an overview of how the relationship between Christians and Jews has changed over the years. This year is only the 50th anniversary of the Vatican's *Nostra aetate*, which absolves Jews of the death of Jesus and acknowledges that Jesus was Jewish.

Many Israelis and Palestinians are trapped in their own narratives, each believing that accepting the other's narratives discredits their own. I have now experienced the pain of that dichotomy myself since learning about the other narratives through Quakers.

The second speaker was Mashuda Shaikh, a Muslim woman who works with young people to share different cultural experiences and to build good relations.

Marigold Bentley, secretary to QCCIR, summed up. She pointed out that many Friends felt forced into positions with which they weren't comfortable, but trust had to be built and we can all have roles in interfaith peacebuilding.

Joan Darbyshire (Swansea Quaker Meeting)

Our activism stems from our worship, and it leads us to explore difficult subjects such as these. Interfaith peacebuilding is a challenging area of work but one that holds many opportunities for positive engagement and tangible progress. Local interfaith initiatives are a great place to start.

Reflecting on our book of discipline

Quaker faith & practice, our book of discipline, describes British Quaker experience and provides inspiration and guidance in the living of our faith. It also illustrates the interconnectedness of our worship and witness. Since 2014, Quakers in Britain has been considering whether to begin a full revision of *Quaker faith & practice*. We are helping Friends to prepare for the possibility and to undertake some groundwork ahead of a corporate decision being taken.

In October we launched the 'Reading *Quaker faith & practice*' project. We are suggesting ways for Friends and meetings to read and reflect on one or two chapters each month, be it together or individually. We hope this will deepen Friends' spiritual experience and increase their knowledge and understanding of the book. Instead of requesting formal feedback, we are offering Friends opportunities to share their insights in small groups or on social media.



Young Friends reading and studying sections from *Quaker faith & practice*. Photo: Jane Hobson

We have invited a number of Quaker theologians to participate in a 'theology think tank' to explore the variety of belief in our church. We have also consulted with Friends on the church government sections of the book and have begun to gather online materials to support the revision process. The project, which runs until April 2017, is stimulating spoken ministry in worship and is helping Friends to engage with this significant decision.

"I've only ever dipped into the book, so it's really good to be encouraged to read it systematically."

Project participant

Helping Quakers to take part in our governance

In 2015 we developed our use of online tools to make information more accessible and meetings more flexible, enabling more Quakers to play a role in our governance. This allows us to draw on the experience and expertise of Quakers of all ages and regions, not just those who can attend meetings in person.

Quakers can now view committee papers online through QGroups, our online facility for committee members. QGroups also helps Quakers to work collaboratively by exchanging information on a forum. Important decisions can then be made in a timelier manner.

Our use of video and telephone conferencing has enabled Friends to take part in meetings they wouldn't have been able to attend in person. Online media cannot replicate the richness of meeting in person, but it is a valuable tool when the only alternative is not to attend. By meeting remotely, we cut the cost of travel and accommodation, save time and reduce our environmental impact.

We have also developed QList, which helps meetings to manage their membership records. This also helps us to collect up-to-date information for our annual *Book of Meetings*. We are now working to develop QList to gather information for the tabular statement, which details the status and membership of our constituent meetings.

Every Quaker in Britain should be able to take part in the governance of our Society. To this end we are embracing new ways of working that will help more of us to participate.

Representing Britain Yearly Meeting at Netherlands Yearly Meeting

In May I attended Netherlands Yearly Meeting (NYM) for the first time as one of two representatives from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). It was a life-enriching experience. About a hundred Friends had gathered in a peaceful and beautiful woodland setting to consider in depth the theme 'Working for peace: Our peace testimony in the 21st century'. This was explored in the large group, in small interest groups and in our base groups. Many of the contributions were challenging and uplifting, and there was time to hear, listen and think.



Considerable thought had been put into making visiting Friends from other yearly meetings feel welcome. All the papers and the programme had been translated into English, a discreet method of simultaneous translation was provided and as a visitor it was easy to be quickly absorbed in the activities.

There was a lovely ceremony for those who had applied for membership. Each person was introduced by a member of the yearly meeting and some details of the person's life, work and spiritual path were given. Each was welcomed formally into membership by the clerk. It made the process feel like adoption into the family of Quakers in the Netherlands.

It was a very positive experience to attend NYM on behalf of BYM. It has reinforced my feeling that BYM is a large and often quite impersonal gathering, especially for visitors. It is really important to recognise visitors' needs and to provide them with information and the hand of friendship – whether this is additional information or help with language/translation. The Overseas Visitors' Tea is one way of addressing this, as a first step towards making them feel as welcome as I was made to feel at NYM.

Anne Bennett (Quaker World Relations Committee)



Witness through action

As Quakers we are all activists and we are all worshippers. By putting our testimonies into action, we live out our faith in the world – in Britain and overseas. We spent £2.4m on this work in 2015.

Economic justice

Quakers respond to corporate call for equality

“Our action begins in worship, in seeking and reflecting before we act... As a yearly meeting we are restless to take corporate action to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live.”

From Yearly Meeting 2015, minute 36

We are led by our testimony to equality to challenge the current economic system, which causes huge inequalities, and to seek alternative models for a fairer society.

At Yearly Meeting 2015, Quakers in Britain made a ‘call for equality’, which asks us to challenge government policy that increases inequality. The government’s Welfare Reform and Work Bill will reduce the level of support given to some of the poorest people in our communities and make it harder to access that support. Children, large families and people unable to work because of illness or disability will be particularly affected.

We helped Friends to raise concerns and engage with MPs on the bill by producing briefings, which we also sent to MPs directly. We developed action alerts at key opportunities, which Quakers used in their own advocacy work. We submitted evidence to the Bill Committee highlighting our concerns in greater detail.

In September we coordinated a joint letter signed by faith leaders, which was placed in the *Telegraph*. We brought together Christian and Jewish groups on the proposal within the Welfare Reform and Work Bill to restrict eligibility for Child Tax Credits to the first two children in a household. This resulted in a joint briefing document to members of the House of Lords and media coverage in the *Telegraph* and *The Guardian*.

Quaker Equality Week

In recent years the desire to take action on economic inequality has been a recurring theme for Quakers in Britain. The idea for a Quaker Equality Week grew out of a special interest meeting at Yearly Meeting 2014.

In March more than 80 Quaker meetings took part in Quaker Equality Week. An initiative of Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting, it was a week of action to raise Quaker concerns about economic inequality with local politicians, prospective MPs and the public.



Devon Friends during Quaker Equality Week.
Photo: Nicholas Cox

Up and down the country, Quakers held vigils, organised public events, and took part in radio interviews. BBC Radio Scotland’s *Good Morning Scotland* programme devoted an edition of its ‘Thought for the day’ slot to Quaker Equality Week and its aims.

Friends’ vigils and other activities were well received and many valued the opportunity for coordinated witness. The week brought Friends together around the issue of inequality and contributed to Yearly Meeting’s minute on inequality. It also helped to inspire several meetings to develop their own equality initiatives, including Lancaster Quakers’ Living Wage Campaign.

Social justice

Taking forward our concern on housing

“We are called to resist and challenge policies that contribute to inequality and exclusion from access to housing, whether social housing or the private sector.”

From Yearly Meeting 2015, minute 25

Quakers work to promote inclusive values that enable all people to fulfil their potential. We are committed to social justice, the reduction of prejudice and the equal treatment of all.

At Yearly Meeting 2015, Quakers in Britain took part in a session on housing. We followed this up with a weekend event at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in September to explore how best to take forward our concern for housing provision in Britain.

The meeting identified alternative models and various strands of work that Quakers could explore. These were seen not as isolated issues but as interconnected and with many existing and potential links to our current work. The meeting examined government initiatives and cuts and outlined more principled, ethical approaches to housing and homelessness.

The weekend's concluding minute captures two key areas in which Quakers could make a real difference. Investment in sustainable housing could involve funding local housing projects or choosing investment options linked to sustainable housing. And, in response to the growing dependency on private landlords, two Friends are developing the idea of forming an ethical landlords' association to promote good practice and model good regulation. Since Yearly Meeting we have been engaging with politicians around the Housing and Planning Bill, especially on the key issue of right to buy.

Sustainability

Quakers lobby new MPs on climate justice

We help Quakers and others to live more sustainable lives and to explore the connections between sustainability, economics and peace.

In June almost a hundred Quakers from across Britain joined thousands of others to take part in a climate lobby at Westminster. We spoke to newly elected MPs, reminding them that climate change is a concern for a

diversity of constituents. It was also important to make our voices heard ahead of the international climate negotiations in Paris.

The lobby was organised by the Climate Coalition, of which we are a member. We made an important contribution to the debate by highlighting climate justice as well as climate change. Quakers and others use the word 'justice' to draw attention to the injustice and inequality that perpetuate and are perpetuated by climate change.

Quaker Equality Week

Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting has a small but active Social Justice Group. The group had been holding equality vigils for some time and hoped that someday equality would become a national concern. When the idea of a Quaker Equality Week was suggested and someone was needed to organise it, we were more than happy to volunteer.

It was a bigger project than we've taken on in the past, but it was very much a joint project with Friends House – neither party could have pulled it off without the other. And it was great. Posters were displayed, vigils held, leaflets handed out, letters written all over the country. Some meetings that had not held vigils before had their first vigil.

A pack was produced to give guidance on how to run Equality Week events. Again, this was a collaborative effort between us and Friends House. We had a weekly phone conference with a member of Friends House staff and benefited from the willing help of several Friends House departments. We offered wording for placards; Friends House staff members offered their design skills and knowledge of paper sizes and good print firms. The pack was distributed to many Quaker meetings, supplemented by a basic website we produced.

We have gained in confidence as a result of Quaker Equality Week. We have been more active in engaging with parliamentary candidates and representatives, asking questions of interest to Quakers to general election candidates and publishing the results. We have also been collecting and collating evidence for parliamentary committees, and held vigils when the Conservative Party Conference was in Manchester.

Elizabeth Coleman (Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting)



For Quakers, inequality is a spiritual concern. Our belief that there is that of God in everyone leads us to recognise the sanctity and equal worth of every person. This means we are as interested in how energy is owned, priced

and distributed as we are in the way that it is produced.

Many Quakers have continued the conversations they began with MPs that day, challenging policies that fall short of the action needed to tackle climate change.

Attending the climate change lobby



I went to lobby my MP on climate change as a lone Quaker, which is always a bit daunting – so I thought I'd better go with heart and mind prepared! I read the very helpful briefings from Britain Yearly Meeting and Friends of the Earth and attended the preparation session on the day.

I thought of two specifically Quaker things to say – that

we believe humans are stewards, here to care for the earth, and that we believe in equality, having consideration for those on earth who are poorer than ourselves, ensuring they have a voice and offering support. We are all children of God.

I chose three 'Fs' from the many interlinked issues to focus on:

- fuel poverty (people not able to afford fuel)
- fracking (say 'no' to fracking)
- fossil fuels (and the need to keep global warming below 2°C).

I discussed the issues further with the other constituents as we waited for Wes Streeting (Labour MP for Ilford North) to show up. We were disappointed. At the end of the lobby, I went to look for him and was rewarded with a long session with him over tea on the House of Commons terrace – a complete surprise.

I saw other Quakers at the interfaith service before the lobby.

Overall I found the lobby an inspiring experience, seeing so many people standing along Millbank talking with their MPs. Meeting Wes Streeting has made it easier to communicate with him since by email.

Maggie Freake (North East Thames Area Meeting)

Quakers at climate talks

For almost 70 years the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has supported multilateral efforts in peace and justice. From offices in Geneva and New York, staff engage in 'quiet diplomacy' by hosting off-the-record talks at which governments, non-governmental organisations and experts can air differences honestly and work towards agreement.

Since 2012 we have supported QUNO's work at the UN international climate change negotiations. Mistrust was blocking progress, so QUNO worked to highlight shared visions. It encouraged negotiators to describe their fears and their hopes for the future. Our funding of QUNO meant it was viewed as 'non-political' and authentic in its purpose. This helped to stimulate greater engagement:

"Thank you for getting us in the right spirit to do this work."

A COP21 delegate

The Paris Agreement was a remarkable achievement because it was seen by both developing and developed countries as balanced. The agreement is not perfect – and there is much work now to be done by all of us – but it has set a global framework for action. It is a much-needed success for multilateralism in a world of increasing bilateral trade agreements.



Nearly a hundred Quakers attended the climate lobby at Westminster in June. Photo: Britain Yearly Meeting

Peace education

Two new films address militarisation in schools

Quakers promote and develop peace education in British schools and communities.

We are deeply concerned by an increasing military presence in British schools. Since 2011 the government has expanded cadet forces into state schools, increased funding for 'military ethos' projects, and invited military units and arms manufacturers to sponsor university technical colleges.

We produced two short films in 2015 to expose this strategy and stimulate a public debate. *The unseen march*, released in the run-up to Armed Forces Day in June, brings together voices from education, the armed forces and public life to examine and question the growing role of the military in schools.

The film received over 10,000 views in the first month, and in its first week reached 150,000 Twitter accounts and 84,000 Facebook users. It generated a great deal of radio coverage including a BBC Radio 4 interview with our Recording Clerk and a series of BBC local radio interviews.

The 'British Armed Forces Learning Resource', produced by the Ministry of Defence and promoted to schools by the Department for Education in September 2014, prompted our second film. Supposedly to "educate children about the work of the UK armed forces", the document is a politically driven attempt to promote 'military values' and recruitment.

Our graphic animation *The British armed forces: Propaganda in the classroom?* unpicks the document to reveal its bias. We



Children at Argyle school in London taking part in our Fly Kites Not Drones project. Photo: BYM

collaborated with ForcesWatch on the film and it was narrated by Quaker broadcaster Geoffrey Durham. It was promoted widely on social media and received coverage in *The Independent*, *Schools Week*, *TES*, and on *Forces TV*.

"Culturally, [the British Armed Forces Learning Resource] is the kind of resource one gets in countries with less-than-democratic structures where civic education is used by governments to manipulate citizens into an uncritical attitude towards the state."

Don Rowe, former Director of Curriculum Resources at the Citizenship Foundation

Friends have been using the films to spark local discussions and to take action. Many have screened the films written to their local MPs, schools and press and promoted peace education. Godalming Quaker Meeting formed a group to address the militarisation of education, Banbury & Evesham Area Meeting held a learning session on the theme, and Quakers in Liverpool and Warwick held public meetings on the issue during Quaker Week.

Disarmament

Week of action disrupts arms fair

"The only true safety is the safety of all, and unless your weapon of defence achieves this work, or works towards this, it is a source of antagonism and therefore of increased peril."

All Friends Conference, 1920. Quaker faith & practice 24.40

We initiate and support action for peace and are committed to nonviolent social change. We equip Quakers and others with the tools they need to promote peace in Britain and abroad.

In September, Quakers joined people of all faiths and none in a week of action against the Defence & Security Equipment International (DSEi) arms fair. It is held in London's Docklands every two years and is the largest of its kind.

The week of action included a meeting for worship in the middle of the road leading to the fair. We witnessed the horrors brought about by the arms trade and helped to block lorries carrying military hardware into the venue.



Quakers and others held a meeting for worship at the DSEi arms fair.

Photo: © 2015 Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

In 2010 we brought together groups interested in opposing the arms fair, which resulted in the formation of the Stop the Arms Fair coalition. As the coalition has grown, so has its effectiveness. Its actions against the 2015 arms fair were more effective than ever, with a whole week of protest disrupting deliveries.

In the run-up to the arms fair, we publicised the actions widely and helped Quakers from around the country to come together to witness effectively. We stayed in touch with Friends before and throughout the event, ensuring effective coordination of actions, and set aside a space for young Friends to witness.

“Our country cannot promote peace and democracy, London cannot be a city of peace, if it is where repression begins, where torture begins, if it is where the seeds of war are sown.”

*Sam Walton, Peace & Disarmament Programme
Manager for Quakers in Britain*

Faiths unite on nuclear disarmament

Working with and on behalf of Quaker meetings and activists, our peace testimony leads us to campaign against the renewal of Trident, Britain's nuclear deterrent, and for a peacebuilding approach to security.

In February we held an interfaith conference on nuclear disarmament at Friends House, London, at which many of Britain's faith communities were represented. We explored

the issues from a faith perspective and discussed how faith communities can be more involved in the movement for nuclear disarmament. The conference led to a UK multifaith statement on nuclear weapons, which was released in March and signed by 26 prominent faith leaders.

On 6 August, the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, Friends House hosted an interfaith service of commemoration and commitment to a nuclear-free world. Attended by around 250 people from a number of faiths, it brought a common faith perspective to the nuclear debate in Britain. The service included silent worship, readings from the different faith representatives, the lighting of a candle, music, poetry and a video message from a Hiroshima victim. Many people signed the multifaith statement on nuclear weapons.

Our work on nuclear disarmament stems from our peace testimony and is central to our faith in that of God in every person, friend or foe. Our openness to light from any source allows us to work ecumenically and with other faiths. This puts us in a unique position to promote and support the many different ways in which people can help to build a nuclear-free world.

In 2016 Parliament will vote on whether to renew Trident until the 2060s at an astronomical cost to British taxpayers. We have made Trident a priority for our work in 2016 and will be supporting Friends as they engage with their MPs and the general public on the issue.



Our interfaith service in August commemorated the 70th anniversary of Hiroshima.

Photo: Michael Preston for Britain Yearly Meeting

Peacebuilding overseas Speaking out on Israel and Palestine

We seek an end to the occupation of Palestine. Since 2002 the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), which we run on behalf of ecumenical partners, has trained volunteers to provide a protective presence, support peace activists on both sides and monitor human rights abuses in the region. EAPPI is an initiative of the World Council of Churches.

We are now speaking out more effectively on the situation in Israel and Palestine thanks to a new approach to advocacy and increased staff support.

Two new developments are helping EAPPI's human stories reach new and wider audiences. We have created an eyewitness blog, which gathers all ecumenical accompaniers' (EAs) stories in one place, and many Quakers and others have signed up for monthly updates. EAs now have access to the EA Hub, an online forum that connects them and helps them to renew their strength in hard times, inspire one another and record their activities.

We have been heartened to hear from the public and decision-makers in the UK and Ireland that they welcome the stories our EAs bring back from the field, which illustrate the human impact of the occupation. Other agencies working in the region have stressed the value they place on our work:

"With the continuing impunity for the perpetrators of violence against children and attacks on schools, EAPPI is considered one of the cornerstone responses in supporting highly vulnerable communities."

From a March 2015 letter by Mera Thompson of the UNICEF Education Cluster and Li Fung of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



Activists from across Kenya gathered to celebrate five years of nonviolent campaigning success.

Photo: Laura Shiplier Chico for Britain Yearly Meeting

Expanding our peacebuilding work in East Africa

Since 2010 our East Africa peacebuilding programme has focused on Kenya, where we work with local organisations and communities to foster the use of nonviolent strategies to challenge social injustice.

Over the past couple of years, word of the programme's work in Kenya has spread to other parts of the Great Lakes region. Inspired by stories of community groups successfully challenging social injustices without resorting to violence, peacebuilders in Burundi and Rwanda have been asking us to visit and share with them these techniques.

Both countries are in need of an approach that will address the root causes of structural violence and empower people to speak out. So in 2015 we began setting up active nonviolence pilot projects in Burundi and Rwanda.

We are working closely with Rwanda Yearly Meeting and a Quaker peace organisation in Burundi to fund teams of Kenyan trainers to work with community change agents in these countries. They are providing intensive residential training and will accompany the community change agents for several months as they practise their new approach.

The newly trained community change agents have already identified potential campaigns. These include protecting the rights of orphans being exploited by their foster carers and working with market women who are being harassed by police.



Turning the Tide – Kenya



Ezra Kigundu is a trainer for Turning the Tide – Kenya, an active nonviolence programme that helps people to challenge injustice. Here Ezra reflects on a campaign to challenge police collusion in crime.

We had incidents in our area where a group of young men would come into a community, terrorise the whole

community, mugging everybody. This happened repeatedly for two months. So we thought, no, this is too much for us. So we called a meeting together with the people whom we had trained in my local area. We tried to analyse – why this insecurity?

We realised that one of the main reasons was a poor relationship between the police and the citizenry. There had been a tendency of the police to harass the civilians, so the civilians developed a fear of the police. We realised that the policemen were colluding with the perpetrators because at one point we found the perpetrators had been wearing police uniforms.

So we held a community dialogue. We called the civilians and we invited policemen and the leadership. We were so happy because that day the policemen came in good numbers; the public came in good numbers, in fact the top leadership of the police was also in attendance. Civilians could ask questions; police could ask questions. And from that meeting, a resolution was passed and a few people were chosen to help the police in patrolling the area. Since then we've never had incidents of insecurity. The community is very friendly with the police; they can share any information, any threat, anything that is threatening them.

I learned a lot. But the greatest thing I understood is that the community has the solution to its own problems, and its members have power within them. This programme is in my heart now, it's in my heart. I own it. I feel it.

Ezra Kigundu (Trainer, Turning the Tide – Kenya)

Quaker activists connect

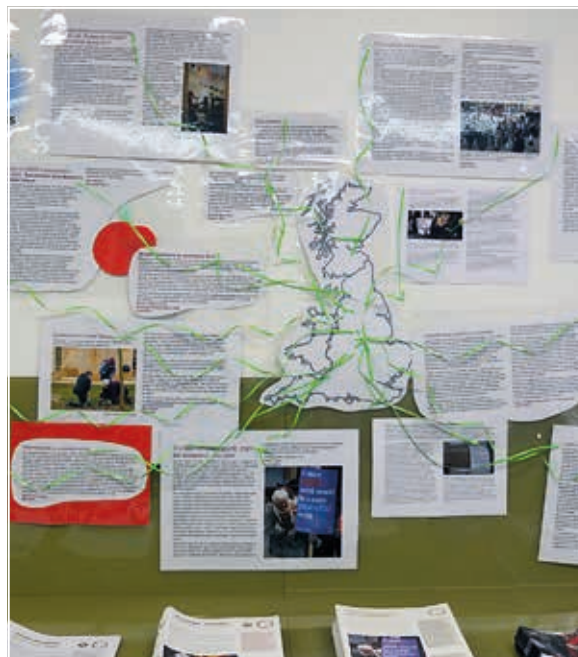
In November around 75 Quakers gathered at Friends House for our second Quaker Activist Gathering. Building on the success of the 2014 event, it gave Quaker activists the chance to meet and connect with one another; explore the links between our faith and our activism, share knowledge and skills, and strengthen the Quaker activist community.

Workshops covered Trident, Palestine and Israel, climate justice, and asylum and refugees, and participants looked at various approaches to campaigning on these issues.

The day sparked a great deal of enthusiasm for sharing concerns, ideas and experience. Participants fed back that they felt stimulated and encouraged. Some said they would take issues back to their local meeting for further exploration, while others said they felt energised and less isolated by connecting over shared concerns:

“I no longer feel I'm fighting injustice in isolation – I feel a sense of solidarity with the group.”

The gathering gave Quaker activists the chance to reflect on the close connection between their worship and action.



A map showed many of the areas where Quakers are involved in activism. Photo: Britain Yearly Meeting

Hospitality Company helps to develop careers

In 2015, Friends House Hospitality Company launched a training academy to offer staff the chance to gain qualifications and develop professionally. So far, 12 staff have completed an NVQ or apprenticeship, with 10 more on their way. We ensure they are given time in work to complete their coursework so it doesn't affect their work-life balance. Some graduates have moved on to positions of greater responsibility, at Friends House or elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Camden Council has launched a new apprenticeship scheme to help single parents from the borough return to work and gain an NVQ. We are proud to participate in the scheme by employing apprentices for 16 hours a week, which reduces the effect on their benefits.

The apprenticeship scheme has already made a positive impact on participants' lives, and they value the support of their employer. One commented, "I feel like I have gained a family."

Friends House supports enriching enterprise

In September, the Friends House Hospitality Company began working with Douglas House Project to help it to set up a social enterprise making tray bakes. It equips ex-offenders with skills that can help them to find long-term employment and reintegrate into the community. Our participation in this project stems from our commitment to help those less privileged and to include them in society. The project is ongoing but has already helped many ex-offenders:

"They now have a qualification in food hygiene, and are designing recipes, making and delivering baked goods to sell. We have watched them grow in confidence and self-belief because they are treated as worthwhile. We are very grateful to the Quakers for offering them this opportunity as it has enriched their lives..."

Amy Wollny, Turning Point

Friends House champions sustainability

Since 1926 Friends House has been a place of worship and the central offices for Quakers in Britain. It has long reflected Quaker values of simplicity and sustainability, and in 2015 we won two awards for our environmental values.

Our efforts to reduce the building's carbon footprint were rewarded in March by Camden Climate Change Alliance, which recognised Friends House as a Carbon Champion. The award is also given for influencing the local and wider community to live a more sustainable life.

"We are delighted to receive this award and feel it is a testament to our Quaker concern for the earth and the well-being of all who dwell in it. This concern leads to our commitment to working sustainably and to our role encouraging others in the wider community."

Paul Grey, Head of Facilities at Friends House

In June, at the Camden Business Awards, Friends House was 'highly commended' for its outstanding contribution to environmental sustainability. Despite the restrictions of being in a Grade II listed building, we reduced carbon emissions by 10% in 2014, with an overall reduction of 21% since 2009. We have committed to a zero-waste-to-landfill policy. Through the Food Save scheme, food waste is monitored and reduced, and local produce is sourced to minimise energy consumed in the production, transport and storage of food.

Bees play a vital role in the natural world, but numbers are in decline due to pesticide use. To help reverse this trend, a company called Capital Bee installed 80,000 bees in two hives on the roof of Friends House and is helping us to look after them. Staff have enthusiastically donned suits to learn more about the bees' habits and society, and we are building a small team of Friends House beekeepers. Despite variable weather conditions, the bees have prospered. They even made enough honey for Friends House staff to be treated to a small jar each!

How our work is governed

“I remember an outburst in Meeting for Sufferings, when Friends felt that Britain Yearly Meeting was becoming ‘just a well-run charity’. ‘I don’t want to be part of a well-run charity, I want to be part of a religious group, a church,’ said a weighty Friend. The point is that we need to be an ordinary well-run organisation, with good structures and sensible practices, which we then make extraordinary by transcending, not discarding them.”

Beth Allen, 2007 (Quaker faith & practice 8.24)

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) trustees are responsible for ensuring that the governance of the Society is carried out with integrity, and for ensuring there are resources for the priorities set out by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. Trustees are accountable to Yearly Meeting for the centrally managed work and for ensuring that BYM complies with the law. The Recording Clerk and Management Meeting are accountable to trustees for the work undertaken. They prepare an annual operational plan and budget for trustees.

The governance of BYM relies upon wide participation of members, and we depend on Friends to discover and exercise their gifts in service to God and our community. Trustees have three subcommittees: Audit Committee, Employment Committee and Finance & Property Committee. The work is further supported by standing committees (Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations; Quaker Life Central Committee; Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee; Quaker World Relations Committee), whose work is included in this report. Together, these bodies define policies and decide the work to be done. All meetings of trustees and committees are held as Quaker meetings for worship for business, with appropriate eldership.

Trustees have a strong working relationship with Meeting for Sufferings, the standing representative council of BYM, of which they are all members. Trust is central to all our relationships, and we hope to preserve this trust with vigilance and sensitivity.

Developments in governance

In reflecting on the Trustees’ work in 2015, several areas of governance merit particular attention:

- Trustees supported Meeting for Sufferings in the development of *Our faith in the future*, a document outlining BYM’s vision for the future. They and the standing committees are now working to align plans for Quaker work with this vision.
- Trustees reconstituted their Finance & Property Committee and its subcommittees to reduce duplication and over-governance. The work is now carried out by a single Finance & Property Committee with new terms of reference.
- BYM registered as a non-party campaigner under the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014. Our planned advocacy work was not affected by this legislation, although considerable additional administration was required.
- Trustees are reviewing their Audit Committee.
- Trustees have been working with Management Meeting to develop a more strategic and resilient management structure that can be more responsive to the current needs of the organisation.
- Trustees have given further attention to risk management; there is more information about this in the *Financial statements* (published separately).

Trustees serving during 2015

Jennifer Barraclough (Clerk, Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting)

Sarah Donaldson (Manchester & Warrington)

James Eddington (Lancashire Central & North)

Nick Francis (West Wiltshire & East Somerset)

Sheila Gatiss (Cambridgeshire)

Ingrid Greenhow (Assistant Clerk, Chilterns)

Alison Ironside (Central England)

Roy Love (Sheffield & Balby)

Lynn Moseley (South Wales)

David Olver (Craven & Keighley)

Virginia Pawlyn (Banbury & Evesham)

Michael Phipps (Chilterns)

Alastair Reid (West Scotland)

Tim Southall (Bristol)

Graham Taylor (Northumbria)

Peter Ullathorne (Treasurer, Central England)

Average giving by member, by area meeting

£150+	Bournemouth Coastal Area Meeting (AM)	Manchester & Warrington AM
	Cambridgeshire AM	Mid-Thames AM
	Chilterns AM	Norfolk & Waveney AM
	Craven & Keighley AM	North Somerset AM
	Devon AM	North West London AM
	East Cheshire AM	Northamptonshire AM
	East Kent AM	South East London AM
	East Scotland AM	Surrey & Hampshire Border AM
	Hampshire & Islands AM	Teesdale & Cleveland AM
	Hertford & Hitchin AM	Thaxted AM
	Ipswich & Diss AM	Wensleydale & Swaledale AM
	Leeds AM	West Wiltshire and East Somerset AM
	London West AM	Wirral & Chester AM
	Luton & Leighton AM	
£100–150	Brighouse West Yorkshire AM	North Wales AM / CCR Gogledd Cymru
	Central England AM	Northumbria AM
	Cumberland AM	Oxford & Swindon AM
	Dorset & South Wiltshire AM	Pendle Hill AM
	Gloucestershire AM	South London AM
	Kendal & Sedbergh AM	South Wales AM / CCR De Cymru
	Kingston & Wandsworth AM	Southern East Anglia AM
	Lancashire Central & North AM	Southern Marches AM / CCR y Gororau Deheuol
	Leicester AM	Staffordshire AM
	Lincolnshire AM	West Scotland AM
	North London AM	West Somerset AM
	North Scotland AM	York AM
£50–100	Banbury & Evesham AM	North East Thames AM
	Bristol AM	Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM
	Central Yorkshire AM	Pickering & Hull AM
	Cornwall AM	Sheffield & Balby AM
	Hardshaw & Mann AM	Sussex East AM
	Mid-Essex AM	Sussex West AM
	Mid-Somerset AM	West Kent AM
	Mid-Wales AM / CCR Canolbarth Cymru	Worcestershire & Shropshire AM
£0–50	South East Scotland AM	West Weald AM
	Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria) AM	

These figures are calculated using membership information from the 2014 tabular statement and all contributions to Britain Yearly Meeting funds received during the 2015 calendar year. Some contributions given via meetings in 2015 but received by us in 2016 are therefore not included in the figures above.



Thank you

We warmly thank the following trust and agency donors for their support in 2015:

C B & H H Taylor 1984 Trust	Sir James Reckitt Charity
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development	Stephen R and Philippa H Southall Charitable Trust
Christian Aid	The 1970 Trust
Dundee Friends Property Trust	The Church of Scotland
E Robson Charitable Trust	The Dennis Family Trust
Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust	The Evan Cornish Foundation
George & Mary Crosfield Charitable Trust	The JA Trust
Hermon Trust	The John Ashlin Cutforth Charitable Trust
Hilda & Alice Clark Charitable Settlement	The Larren Art Trust
Hillcote Trust	Trocaire
Historic England	United Reformed Church
HT & LB Cadbury Trust	W F Southall Trust
Jenepher Gillett Trust	William A Cadbury Charitable Trust
Methodist Church	William P Bancroft Charitable Trust
Oakdale Trust	World Council of Churches
SC and ME Morland's Charitable Trust	
Scottish Episcopal Church	

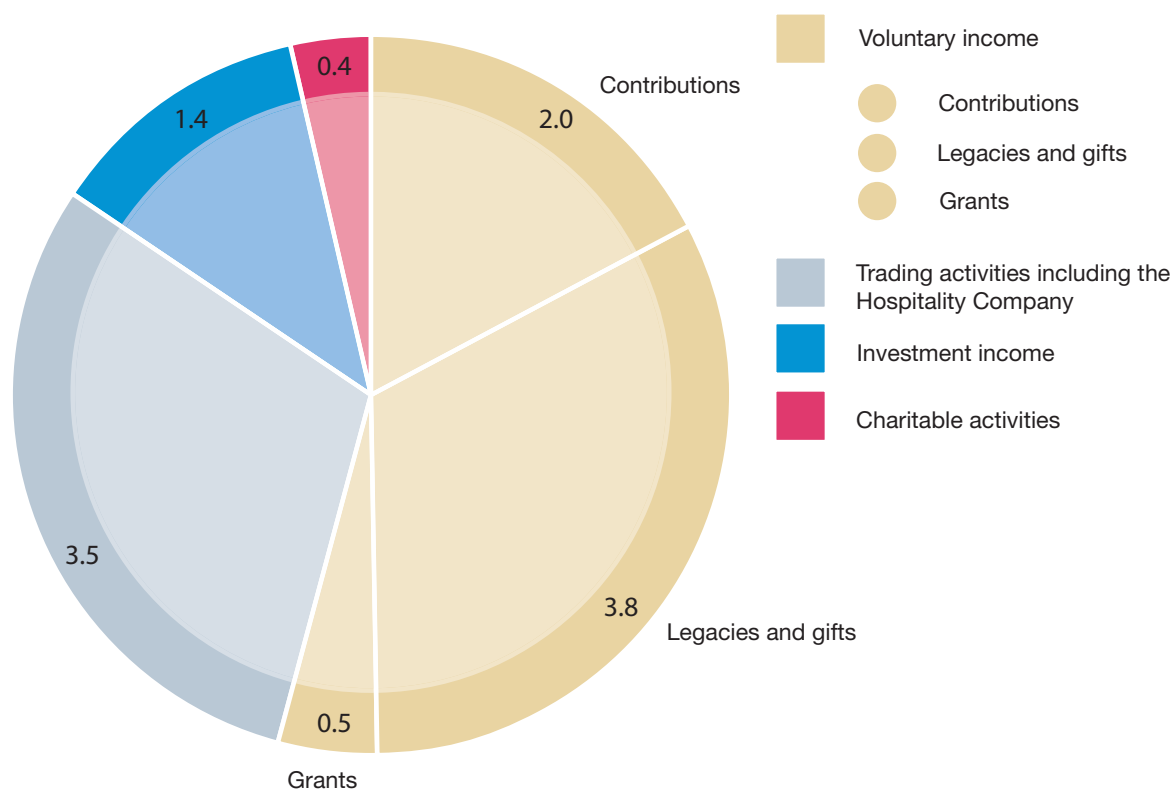
We thank Alfred and Isabel Bader for their continuing generous support.

We are thankful to those who left legacies for Quaker work in their wills:

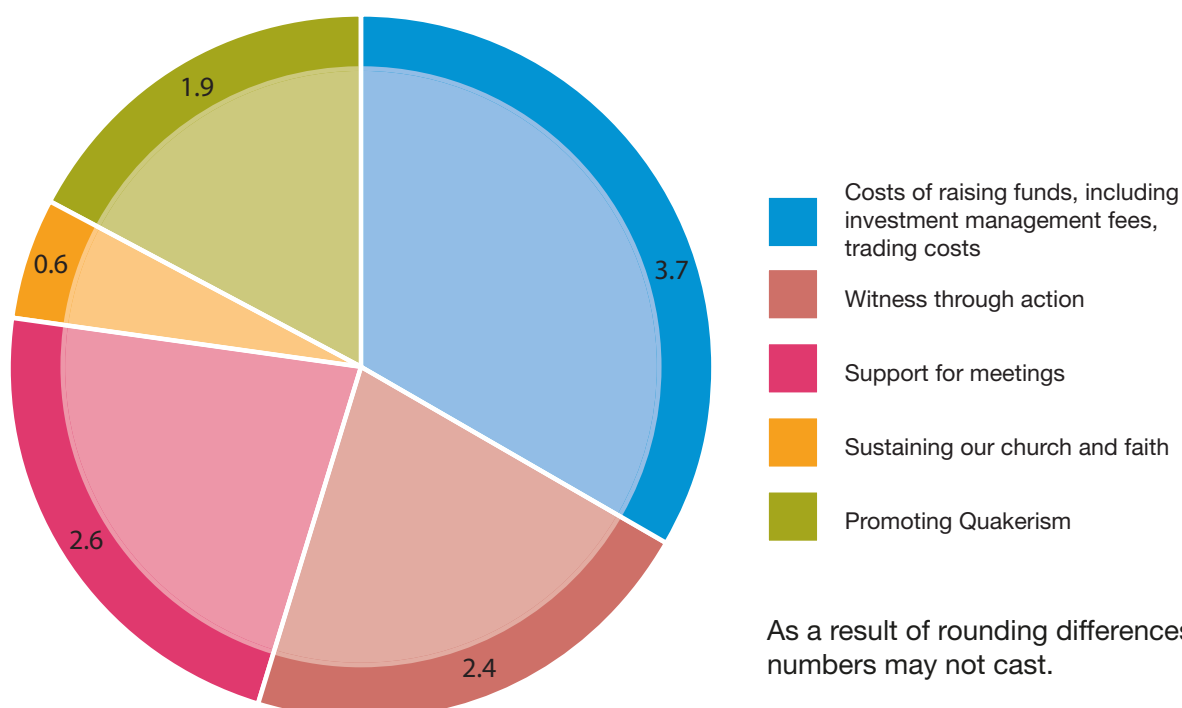
Alan George Ivamy	Geoffrey Percival Cundall	Nancy Doreen Lloyd
Alan Taylor	Gladys Clench	Natalie Hope Lerner
Ann Cripps	Humphrey Terry	Norman Hughes
Arthur Wellwood Ferguson	Irene Newhouse	Patricia Jones
Barbara Doris Glassey	Ivy B Broadhurst	Peta June Sandars
Partridge	James Edward Knight	Phillip Mitchell
Brian Sanders	Janet Pascoe	Raymond Arthur Nunn
Christine Brown	John Stevens	Roger Wright
Christopher Lunnon	Joy Simpson	Ruth Isobel Shone
Clarice Howorth	Karl Frensdorf	Sally Sainsbury
Desmond Smith	Kathleen Lyon	Sonya Allinson
Doreen Winifred Awmack	Lenore Davies	Stephanie Evelyn Thomson
Dorothy Kathleen Havergal	Lesley Milne	Sylvia McMaster
Shaw	Lucy Aynsley	Thomas Earnshaw
Dorothy Powell	Margaret Eiddwen Jones	Thomas Marsh
Elizabeth Ann Raymond	Marian Milnes Campin	Vera Bates
Frances Joyce Woodward	Marie Roberts	Vera Coster
Frederick Arthur Jenkin	Marjorie Clipstone	Virginia Donovan

2015 at a glance

Income (£m)
Total = 11.6



Expenditure (£m)
Total = 11.1



As a result of rounding differences, numbers may not cast.

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.



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