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Epistles & testimonies

compiled for Yearly Meeting Gathering to be held
25 July–1 August 2009 at the University of York

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

www.quaker.org.uk/ym

Epistles & testimonies

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

Epistles & testimonies is the second section of *The Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2009 (Proceedings)* published by Britain Yearly Meeting after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting.

Proceedings comprises the following documents:

1. *Documents in advance*
(including agenda and introductory material for Yearly Meeting in session with information about how Yearly Meeting Gathering will work)
2. *Epistles & testimonies*
3. *Trustees' report & accounts*
4. other reports & *Tabular statement*
5. the minutes of the Yearly Meeting

Documents in advance, *Epistles & testimonies* and *Trustees' report & accounts* will be sent to each household booked to attend Yearly Meeting Gathering. *Documents in advance* and *Trustees' report & accounts* will also be sent to each local and area meeting.

All of the publications will be available online at www.quaker.org.uk/ym along with an abridged audio version of *Documents in advance*. All the text publications will be available in printed form at Yearly Meeting Gathering.

The minutes of Yearly Meeting will be sent to all local and area meetings at the conclusion of Yearly Meeting.

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Epistles

Introduction from Quaker World Relations Committee

Quaker World Relations Committee is the body Friends in Britain entrust with building and maintaining our relations with other Yearly Meetings around the world. We are challenged by how best to uphold Friends through such devastating experiences as the extreme violence in Congo, Georgia and Kenya or the hurricanes in Cuba. We are also sometimes challenged by the diversity of our religious theology and need to remember that we are different branches from the same root. Throughout our history Friends in different parts of the world have kept in touch, in part, through Yearly Meetings sending each other epistles. These open letters addressed to Friends Everywhere are a way to send each other greetings, to tell how the spirit is faring, and to describe the tests and celebrations in the life of the Yearly Meeting. The following introduction attempts to explain the place Britain Yearly Meeting has in the world family of Friends and to set into context the epistles which we have received.

Quakerism has its origins in mid-17th century England. From the earliest days, convinced Friends travelled widely taking their message to distant parts of the world and “speaking truth to power” where they saw a chance to build the Kingdom of God on earth. In the last 350 years, Quakerism has spread around the world and in the process has evolved and changed. Early Friends in Britain proclaimed a faith which they knew experimentally, a faith that brought them direct, personal communion with the Divine and the Spirit that gave rise to the Scriptures. They were Christians who knew the Bible very well and who wanted their lives to mirror all the best characteristics of an early Christian community. In the 21st century, not all Quakers in Britain would call themselves Christian and our approach to the Bible and to theology can be described as liberal. Our worship is based on silence and whilst our lives are influenced and guided by our beliefs and testimonies, we are also fully involved in the wider society in which we find ourselves.

Unprogrammed worship, such as is familiar to us, can also be found elsewhere, for example across Europe, in Asia, southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand and parts of the USA. This tradition represents 11% of the total world membership. It is not however necessarily correct to associate unprogrammed worship with liberal theology, and Christocentric theology with programmed worship (see below): many combinations are possible.

There are Quakers who describe themselves as conservative, whose theology, worship and way of life remain much closer to that of early Friends in 17th century England. These Friends (mostly in the USA) represent 0.03 % of the membership, but they might well feel that they are true to the original guiding principles that George Fox proclaimed, and that many of us in Britain have lost our connection to the roots of Quakerism.

Quakerism has also evolved in the direction of programmed worship, which British Friends usually reserve for specific occasions. As we once appointed Recorded Ministers, and still appoint Friends to serve the Meeting in various ways, so Friends in programmed Meetings appoint pastors, Friends who are trained and released for service, to minister to the community. The programmed worship may include hymns (songs), a sermon, Bible readings and prayers, and there is also a time of free worship, when other Friends can minister, as in unprogrammed worship. Programmed Meetings represent 49% of the total world membership.

Other Friends have moved further along the theological spectrum to become evangelical

Quakers. These represent 40% of the world Quaker membership, but that is an underestimate, as many evangelical Quaker Churches do not affiliate to the Friends World Committee for Consultation. This is a body, formed in 1937, which provides opportunities for Friends to meet, to talk and come to a better understanding of each other, thereby deepening our spiritual life and strengthening our outreach in the world. It includes in its membership Yearly Meetings from all the traditions described here as well as small groups and individuals.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) has four regional groupings. These are Africa Section (with 43% of world membership), Section of the Americas (47%), Asia West Pacific Section (4%) and Europe and Middle East Section (6%). Britain Yearly Meeting belongs to FWCC and to its Europe and Middle East Section, in which it is by far the biggest Yearly Meeting. In the USA, many Yearly Meetings of the unprogrammed tradition belong not only to FWCC but also to Friends General Conference (FGC), whilst programmed Yearly Meetings may belong to Friends United Meeting (FUM) and evangelical Yearly Meetings to Evangelical Friends International (EFI).

Friends from these diverse traditions can find common ground in the belief in “that of God in everyone”, in the Testimonies and in our Quaker business method. On the other hand, there are differences in the way Friends work in the world: Friends of a more liberal persuasion would see it as important to try to make the world a better place, while Friends of the evangelical persuasion will be more concerned with saving souls and bringing them into membership. Understanding one another is not always an easy process – Friends come from very different cultural backgrounds and traditions, which influence the expression of their faith and practice in ways we may find unfamiliar or uncomfortable. We may need to remind ourselves that we have not necessarily found all the answers – “Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?” (Advice 7)

From Europe and the Middle East

Europe & Middle East Friends Gathering 2008

TO FRIENDS EVERYWHERE: From Thursday the 20th to Monday the 24th of March 2008, 127 participants from twenty-five countries gathered in Vienna. Our gathering was the first ever fully-integrated joint Meeting of the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation and the Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF), and coincided with the transition from one EMES Executive Secretary to the next. This gathering was truly historic. It occurred on the 70th anniversary of both the founding of EMES and the annexation of Austria, when Friends from England, Germany and Austria were involved in the Kindertransport, rescuing 10,000 children and offering them a safe home.

We were welcomed warmly by our hosts, the Viennese Friends, but more coolly by the Austrian Spring weather (cold winds and driving sleet included!). We were touched by heartfelt messages from Friends who were prevented from attending, including some Middle Eastern Friends. Departing Executive Secretary Bronwyn Harwood spoke most movingly of how the differences between us are so much less important than what unites us.

Our eyes were opened to the great variety of Quaker contexts within EMES – the passion and dynamism of emerging groups spreading Quakerism into new areas as well as the uncertainty of shrinking of some Meetings. We felt ourselves especially privileged to hear from members of Georgia Worship Group, the newest official Meeting in the Section.

When the focus was on peace-building, the speakers helped us to understand the personal realities of working for peace, be it the great disappointment experienced when the chance for real change did not fulfill its promise at the time of the ‘rise’ of the Iron Curtain; a Friend’s personal journey from despairing peace activist to committed peace facilitator; or the complexity of peace building in conflict areas, where there can be no justice for one community without justice for all. A session on the peace activities of the Quaker Council of European Affairs (QCEA) further developed this theme.

On Saturday afternoon, we rejoiced in the timely change in the weather that accompanied two activities – an exploration of Vienna’s beautiful architecture and history, and a walk in the Vienna woods.

Small group sessions and daily workshops added to the richness of the gathering. Several themes stood out, including the challenges faced by small worship groups, the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine, the ever-present intermingling of sorrow and joy, and – particularly for the Young Friends – the importance of faith in action within the Quaker experience. The joint gathering gave us the opportunity to explore the position of Young Friends in our Meetings and Worship Groups. Inspirational themes were matched by a series of practical workshops on dealing with small Meetings, outreach, and Quaker business methods, with the help of Woodbrooke-on-the-Road.

Best of all was the spiritual energy generated amongst us, lifting us up, signified by each day’s epilogue, in which words and music infused us with positive feelings and reflected a growing sense of unity. Friends experienced the special thrill of worship in the company

of Quakers from so many different parts of Europe and the Middle East, and we were also blessed by the presence of a number of delightful small children.

The gathering very much looks forward to the future of EMES with Marisa Johnson as the new Executive Secretary, hoping further to increase its geographical diversity and spiritual unity.

On behalf of EMES Annual Meeting and EMEYF Spring Gathering

Marit Kromberg
Clerk FWCC-EMES

Ali M Ghanem
Clerk EMEYF

Denmark Yearly Meeting

”Storedam” College, Denmark, March 30, 2008

To Friends Everywhere,

Following another provocation against Muslims through the repeated publication of offensive cartoons in the Danish press, the flag of our country has again been burnt in some places abroad.

Our keynote speaker, Per Ingvar Haukeland of Norway YM, engaged us by sharing his testimony of love for our Earth. The choice between fear and love provoked by the climate crisis and the threat of immense suffering for human beings and all living creatures on this planet, must inspire us to make a constructive effort.

Our deliberations on the visions and possible action for our YM made it clear to us that we must continue to focus our energy on constructive dialogue in the hope of reconciliation with the Muslim community in Denmark. This is our immediate response to the untenable situation left by the recent cartoon provocations. We realized that the international attention that Denmark is receiving opens up opportunities and urges us as Friends to make our efforts visible and known to a wider public.

Through dialogue and reconciliation we may show the world that there is a different way of relating to the so-called terrorist threat. In this manner we perhaps become able to direct our attention towards the real threat: the underlying governing attitudes. We realized that these same attitudes are decisive for the unfolding of the climate crisis.

While our primary concern now must be dialogue with Muslims, this should not keep us from deepening our love for the earth and let it lead us on to future action.

We were delighted to have the company and contributions of a number of visitors and representatives from other Yearly Meetings. In the latter group were Friends from Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Germany and the United Kingdom.

We experienced the sessions of this yearly meeting as yet another step towards healing internally and externally.

In loving Friendship

Mogens Clausen
Clerk of Denmark Yearly Meeting

Finland Yearly Meeting Epistle 2008

Dear Friends

Finland Yearly Meeting was held in a beautiful natural setting at Frantsila Hyvän Olon Keskus in the town of Hämeenkyrö. The summer weather has been favourable, and the rough-hewn walls of our meeting room have held our gathering in a safe embrace. We are in the light and we are together.

Like Quakers, this garden and the buildings that surround it have a long history, which has been built by many people through many generations. Here we have felt renewed and found a safe harbour for our meeting, which can no longer be held at our previous location – a place where we had gathered for many years and which has been well-loved by many.

We're very grateful to John and Diana Lampen, who have joined us at our meeting and helped us to deepen our community through spiritual exercises. During the weekend we found common ground, where new and old Friends could meet. This is important, because both old Friends and new will now journey together to a common future. Along the way we ask for guidance, that we may grow together in a Quaker spirit.

France Yearly Meeting

28 August 2008.

To Friends around the world:

Some 50 friends met at Relais Le Bocage, Pontmain in Normandy for the 84th Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends of France. Participants included others from Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Canada, the United States and the Netherlands.

Frères humains qui après nous vivez
N'ayez les coeurs contre nous endurcis
Car, se pitié de nous pauvres avez,
Dieu en aura plus tôt de vous merci – l'Épître de François Villon

(freely translated: Brothers those who live after us/ do not harden your hearts/ For if you have pity on us poor souls/ the sooner God will have pity on you)

We are in a village famous for visions and pilgrimage, and thus inspired we set to work.

Several visitors evoked the possibilities of Quaker witness. The delegate from German Yearly Meeting proposed that we contribute to a 350th anniversary celebration of the 1660 peace testimony and its revisioning for the 21st century. North American delegates from Quaker Earthcare Witness proposed exchanges all of such materials as environmental guides, queries, and a wiki "Building a Culture of Peace" as well as several international internet forums for use by Young Friends, to further action on the 2007 Friends World Committee for Consultation Triennial minute on the environment.

We return home, strengthened by solidarity between Yearly Meetings across frontiers, to begin a new stage of work together for preservation of the planet and the continuation of the 1660 Peace Testimony.

As usual, we began with Meeting for Business on the first evening. The next day we plunged headfirst into our YM theme, "Living Witness – Towards a Deep Ecology and a

Sustainable Way of Life”. Alan Allport convinced us of the twin environmental crises, and what we need to do about them. Fear, he said, “spurs us to fight or flight; but only love can motivate us to construct a future world, of which we will be the ancestors.” Intense silence followed his presentation – we were both shaken and united. To summarize, he showed us, evoking species extinction and global warming, how far we are still from sustainability, and how stuck in our consumerist habits. Our average production per head of CO₂ in Europe is eight times higher than what Earth can sustain. Conclusion: we must find our way to radical simplifying of our lives, conscious and fair practice towards all living things. We must hold ourselves responsible. Our duty is not only putting into words, but to putting into practice that responsibility – indeed, to be living witnesses.

Our next activity was in deep ecology, a surprising experiential workshop – moving not only our bodies, but our spirits. We experienced past, present, and future as a sacred continuum sustained by love. Our discovery of each other as precious lighted the way to Love of the Earth, bringing us from petty individualism into sympathetic fellowship with each other.

Members of the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation (EMES)-Woodbrooke, European Online Project shared their Quaker education work with us, inspiring us with their enthusiasm. Runneth over our cup from the holy well, in action and sharing.

We heard news from other Yearly Meetings, particularly that of EMES recalling peace actions during the year, notably at the Eurosatory arms exhibition.

The report from Congénie Center included home-made jam, two retreats there, and news of weekly worship by a growing number of Friends.

At an evening party we celebrated our joyous reunion, and shared hope in the possibilities of courage and love.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

To Friends everywhere,

We send our greetings from the Annual Meeting gathered at the Woodbrookershuis, Barchem, the Netherlands, May 9–12 2008. The theme for this year was suggested by our children: sustainability – where is your limit? We discovered it is rather a matter of moving a boundary from within. We feel in line with Samuel who set up the stone he called Ebenezer, saying: “Hitherto the Lord has helped us.” (1 Samuel 7.12).

We supported each other while raising new markers for sustainable behaviour. We played a newly designed “footprint game”. It made it clear to us how much of the earth’s space we take up for all our activities and how we could save. The children were leading our groups for this occasion. In a similar fashion we calculated how much carbon dioxide we produce. This made us aware where we can reduce our output to make room for a righteous development for others. If we concentrate on our spiritual rather than material growth, we need not decrease our happiness. Possibly even the opposite.

We learn time and again our actions should be guided by love and not by fear. Fear of disaster is not far removed from fear for material loss. And that while the problems of the world can only be solved by sharing at a global level: sharing everything freely, including

our insights and solutions. Sharing in an inclusive way of loving creation. We experienced we can feel more closely connected to the natural resources. This connection starts with admiring the maybugs or cockchafers (*Melolontha melolontha*) that have become quite rare. In Barchem these beetles still survive and we had to remove them from our bedrooms regularly.

Shortage of energy, food and water can lead to conflict. We heard various examples how to create better mutual understanding in such situations. We practised how we can communicate in a more sustainable and connecting way. This requires from us to be more open about our feelings and our needs, to be vulnerable. By expressing our intentions: “You are worthy, I want to be open in my communication with you”, we show our involvement. We may at the same time respect ourselves and our present limitations.

The children made a considerable contribution to the programme during this gathering. The sunny weather also helped to make them feel happy. They very fittingly constructed ventilators that worked on solar power. At the final presentation they held up mirrors to everybody, which were decorated with texts concerning sustainability that were both stimulating and confrontational.

We want to set up our own stone together, so we call on each other to donate over and above our present contributions 1% of our annual incomes to the Dutch Quaker Service Fund to support sustainable development.

Over the years we have taken part in peace organisations.

We want to broaden the scope of our witness and support organisations for sustainability as well.

As a first step Netherlands Yearly Meeting shall sign the appeal from two Dutch initiatives: Klimaatwet-nu (for governments to enforce reduction of CO₂-emission by law) and Countdown 2010 (to check the loss of biodiversity).

Also we intend to continuously encourage each other to seek a more sustainable lifestyle.

Still the question:

Shall I ever get there?

There where life resounds,

A clear pure note

In the silence.

(Dag Hammarskjöld, Vågmårken, secretary-general UN 1953–1961)

Kees Nieuwerth

Clerk, Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Norway Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends Everywhere

We have been gathered for our annual session at Moi in the 190th year of our Society. The theme for our gathering was A Quaker Perspective on Environmental Concerns.

Inspired by the term Heavenly Earth from the song Angel Ground by the Swedish poet Evert Taube, Per Ingvar Haukeland led us into a mental universe in which we seek to meet That of God in all life forms. The disquiet we feel when we consider the lack of

sustainability in our management of the Earth, our home, has the capacity to make us afraid and lose courage, but it may also serve to awaken our concern. It may lead us towards openings in which possibilities of profound changes for good may reveal themselves to us. As Quakers we may work for deeper awareness about the intimate connection between us humans and our natural environment. Through this kind of deep or profound ecological approach we may build on and bear witness to our own experience and show it in the way we live and act. The future of our Earth cannot be secured only through technical solutions and innovations.

We were reminded of the text of Call to Action developed by Britain YM in 2001. The text is rich in inspiring words and is a very suitable basis for a profound ecological Quaker commitment. A conscious link to the philosophy of profound ecology may enable us to take part in work which spans much wider than the Quaker world. But we still feel that Quakers have a distinct message based in a unique tradition arising out of our religious conviction. The go-ahead spirit of early Quakers in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, may provide inspiration and hope as we face the ecological crisis of our own historical period. We are challenged to proceed from the joy which fills us as we mobilise to protect the natural environment which we love, and to approach the work with high spirits and creative initiative. Whatever we undertake must be filled with so much enthusiasm that there will be no room for narrow self-interest.

After Per Ingvar's introduction we gathered in groups to share our thoughts. We were encouraged to describe the challenges we expect, to share our visions about a sustainable society in future, and to reflect on how we both as individuals and as a Quaker society may contribute.

For many years we have had as an aspiration to establish a Quaker Centre through which we may pass on Quaker thinking about faith and perspectives on peace, human rights, ecology, etc. and be a meeting point for seekers and a rallying point where people with different points of view may enter into dialogue. We now have premises which are suitable for such a purpose. The Meeting was enthusiastic about putting the proposal into action. A working group took on the task of embarking on the practical planning and had its first session during the weekend.

Per Ingvar took a group of about 20 persons of all ages on a hike into the surrounding landscape. Everybody took part in an exploration by using all their senses. They looked for traces left by other creatures, listened for sounds, smelled the air, tasted and touched plants and trees. The children particularly enjoyed nature under the blue sky and the sun.

The 12 children have in their own way contributed towards shedding light on our common theme. On our last evening together they shared some of the ideas they had been working on. They had made a large collage demonstrating our universe and the solar system, and they had made models of lavishly decorated butterflies. They had studied insects and painted T-shirts with motifs from nature and about peace. They also shared some of their quotes about the importance of taking care of our Earth. It was apparent that they had had a great time together with lots of playing and singing, too.

Liz Scurfield from Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) in Brussels told us about the project to develop a Quaker View on Energy Security and Conflict. The project aims to look at the demand side of the energy equation in the global North and at the conflicts that arise, particularly in the global South, as the North tries to match its demand by securing resources.

At the close of every day we have had the privilege of gathering in epilogue invited by our Young Friends. Through music, poetry, and sharing the experiences of each day we have had a strong feeling of being gathered in a warm and open fellowship. It is uplifting to experience that we are not alone in our disquiet, but that it is shared not only by Norway Yearly Meeting, and not even by the world wide family of Friends, but even with a large proportion of humankind. This gives encouragement and inspiration.

We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.

(Britain YM, *Advices & queries* no. 42)

On behalf of the Religious Society of Friends, Norway YM

in Moi on the 29th Day, 6th Month, 2008

Gyda Heie Hansen
YM Clerk

Sweden Yearly Meeting

To Friends everywhere

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Sweden gathered for its 74th Yearly Meeting at Svartbäcken from 1–4 May 2008, with the theme Tradition and Change. The speaker, Julia Ryberg, talked about the critical balance between these two. She used the image of a pine tree that survives the storms because its roots are deeply anchored and it can bend and sway in the wind. We can also think about how the tree carries change within itself as dormant buds. It's about being the person I already am.

But we should be wary of change as some kind of compromise, said Julia. If we removed the word Quaker from our name, started to sing hymns in Meeting for Worship or voted on our decisions, we would lose something fundamental. But it has also been said that the Religious Society of Friends has to be capable of shifting boundaries, mentally as well as physically.

Even though we are rooted we also need to continually move forward. One of our European guests reminded us that becoming a member of the Society is not an end, but a beginning. Important change occurs at different levels, and has to grow from within. Someone quoted George Fox's well-known words to William Penn, "Wear thy sword as long as thou canst." In the light of today's environmental debate this could perhaps be updated to "Drive your car as long as you can!" We were told to be careful with water. Jokingly, someone suggested that one way of saving water was to shower with a friend! In true Quaker fashion this was developed into "If you want to save water shower with a friend, but if you want to save the world shower with an enemy!"

A difficult subject stirred up deep feelings, and a decision became impossible in the allotted time. But something happened after the lunch break. In the silence we felt such a presence and spirit of love that a decision could easily be made.

Some of us reflected on Karin Boye's poem Yes, of course it hurts when buds are breaking. The same poem also refers to that trust that creates the world. In order for the buds to

break out in our Society we need to trust each other, and also our “employer”, as someone expressed it. We quoted Emilia Fogelklou, who challenged us “not to get stuck in the past but in every new situation wait on life’s flow from he who said ‘Behold, I make all things new’”.

Trust was demonstrated during the Yearly Meeting in many ways. A narrative of deep personal meditation led to our drawing closer. Like so many times before we experienced deep and close encounters with new and old friends. As one participant expressed it, “we have come closer in a four day immersion in love”.

Svartbäcken, 4th May 2008

Wilhelm Dahllöf Margareta McKenna
Co-clerk Co-clerk

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

To Friends everywhere!

Our theme was the integration of all generations to promote the future of our Quaker Society. Two international speakers shared their experience with us on how to create a vibrant Quaker community. A group of young friends had prepared a creative project in a worship setting so that we were able to put multigenerational work into action. The amazing result reflected the Inner Light and filled us with joy.

In our Meeting for Business we decided to forward to Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) a Statement on the Responsibility to Protect (see below), which advises that international interventions must be carried out in the Quaker spirit. We are very grateful to belong to the worldwide Quaker family.

The Responsibility to Protect

The statement below is the response of Switzerland Yearly Meeting to an invitation of QCEA to consider a report of the “International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty”. Our position is intended to help QCEA to reflect the Quaker opinion on this important matter at the level of the European Union.

Statement by Switzerland Yearly Meeting on the Responsibility to Protect

Humanitarian crises fit into a long process of which three stages are identified by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty: the events leading up to and preparing the crisis, the crisis itself and the social reconstruction which follows. For us as Quakers, the heart of the matter throughout the whole process lies in the spirit in which action is undertaken. It is essential at all stages to eschew any bullying spirit. Our starting point is “the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars” (George Fox, 1651).

The responsibility to react during the crisis

We agree that where internal conflict is causing serious suffering to the population and the State in question is unable to halt it, then intervention by outside bodies, as a last resort after preventive actions, overrides the principle of national sovereignty.

We are opposed to any military intervention, which can only undermine non-military, non-violent approaches and which runs the risk of provoking further violence rather than

preventing it. We are concerned about the “military drift” creeping into thinking on this subject.

We believe that the types of non-military action outlined below bring less harmful and more long-lasting results. Whatever type of non-military action is used, it should only be to protect the population and not with the intention of changing the regime or bringing in a new order.

1. International police intervention

We favour police intervention which is limited to protection of the civilian population from harm. It requires professional police forces specially trained in the techniques of conflict resolution, mediation, dialogue, conciliation. We are not all opposed to the police using arms, if necessary to protect life, depending on the immediate situation.

2. International law and order provision

Containing a conflict situation and preventing escalation of violence requires a system of law and order where those suspected of contributing to the violence are brought to justice. In this, the role of the police force mentioned above is fundamental, as is also the presence of prosecutors, lawyers, law courts, judges, prisons and laws in conformity with international norms. Intervention of this sort needs to be rapidly provided internationally where the local system is inadequate to see that justice is done.

3. Non-violent techniques

We urge that the way of non-violence – neither passivity nor violence – be recognised as a legitimate approach in extreme situations. The examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, of resistance movements in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Philippines and elsewhere, of Latvia’s official non-violent defence against Russian tanks, as well as of individual mediation efforts such as Will Warren’s in Northern Ireland – all these and many others demonstrate the value of non-violent action. This method can fail as can military intervention, but it has the merit of not provoking further conflict. Support for non-violent intervention by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as by official bodies, should form part of the panoply of action which the international community stands ready to provide or support.

The responsibility to prevent

We strongly agree with the International Commission’s Priority 4A: “Prevention is the single most important dimension of the responsibility to protect”.

The first responsibility is to consider our co-responsibility for human suffering in unstable countries. We need to recognise that we in the developed world are part of the problem. Much should be done in our own countries to modify lifestyles and to influence those policies of our governments which directly or indirectly contribute to conflicts elsewhere.

It is our firm conviction that neither standing armies nor ready-made solutions imposed from outside can prevent internal conflicts. We believe that the many bodies practising and teaching the use of dialogue and mediation in decision-making hold out the best hope of preventing conflicts flaring into violence.

We urge that such conflict-solving actions be undertaken, whether by governments or NGOs, much earlier in situations of potential conflict in a country – the dramatic situations of suffering we see in many countries have been openly simmering for years, with

little or no official international intervention. NGOs can move faster, but lack of financial means limits their action.

We plead therefore for increased support from governments and international organisations to these bodies.

The responsibility to reconstruct

Crises should be handled by all concerned in the perspective of rebuilding a society which can live in peace, bearing in mind that as Gandhi said “there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree”.

Statement adopted by Switzerland Yearly Meeting at its yearly meeting May 10, 2008

From Africa

Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting held in Grahamstown, South Africa, 2008.

The Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting gathered at the Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown from the 3rd to 9th January 2008 under the theme Building Quaker Community in Africa. The Meeting was held against a background of deteriorating relationships and violent events in Kenya, escalating tension in Zimbabwe and confusion within the ruling party of South Africa.

One of our members in Zimbabwe was arrested shortly before he was due to attend Yearly Meeting. We hold him and his family in the light.

One hundred and ten Friends from Meetings in Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, visiting Friends from USA, England and New Zealand, the Regional Representative of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and two workers of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) participated in the Yearly Meeting. We were richly blessed with 14 Young Friends and 16 children between ages of 1 and 14. The children's activities included worship sharing, swimming, innovative games, visits to museums and the beach whilst the adult outings included visits to local museums, an alternative history tour of Grahamstown, and a hike along the beach.

Our time together was enhanced by candlelit Taizé worship and singing from the Quaker song book as well as daily Meetings for Worship and enriching worship sharing groups. These varied forms of worship deepened our spiritual nourishment.

We are grateful to those members who designed the Programme and undertook much administrative and liaison work which ensured that our business meetings were fruitful and efficient. As less time was spent in business, there was more time to respond to the challenges currently facing Yearly Meeting, envisioning the future of Quakers in Central and Southern Africa, including developing a Quaker Faith and Practice for our region. The Yearly Meeting was blessed with a spirit of togetherness and acceptance of our diversity.

We celebrated our being in the Eastern Cape with an evening of poetry, music and art on the special relationship of animals and humans movingly presented by Chris and Julia Mann.

Our Eastern Cape focus was strengthened by a visit to Salem, home of Richard Gush where we heard of his life in a fascinating talk by Colin Steyn, admitted him to posthumous membership in the presence of several of his descendants and listened to the Richard Gush Memorial Lecture. Richard Gush was one of the 1820 British settlers who in 1834 courageously mediated a peaceful resolution between the Amakhosa and the settlers.

Richard Gush Memorial Lecture, was given in the old church at Salem near Grahamstown, which Richard Gush had built and where he worshipped and near where he was buried. Vernon Gibberd's lecture was entitled "On Turning the World the Right Way Up."

With frequent examples from his 45 years of "spreading a little happiness" in the drier, poorer parts of Africa, he reminded us of the importance of being present to people whether we were employers, teachers or just fellow-pilgrims following the teachings of

Jesus, and reflecting the richness of the testimonies evidenced in the lives of early Friends – of whom Richard Gush was one.

In so doing, he said, we might better discern the Truth and avoid the pressures of fashion, ideologies and need to conform. “Even at the age of six”, Vernon said, “my love of gardening, passed onto me by my Mum, made me forsake the school sports field for the school vegetable garden.” He concluded by saying how that culminated in his work on homestead gardening, and a way forward for South Africa – and Africa – to give everyone a chance to grow wholesome food for their own families and reverse the degradation of our natural resource base.

We enjoyed some excellent summer school sessions, ten minute talks and special interest groups, all of which covered diverse topics such as Quaker Quest, Towards a Quaker Testimony on Democracy, Experiment with Light, Why Good People do Bad Things, Suitcase Memories and Improving the Prayer Life of Meetings.

Yearly Meeting 2008 was challenging, stimulating and enriching. We feel a breeze blowing through the Yearly Meeting taking us in new exciting directions.

From the Americas

Church of Quaker Friends in Cuba

(affiliated to Friends United Meeting)

TO FRIENDS IN ALL THE WORLD

March 2, 2008

To all Friends who are united by the ties of one common spirit, the spirit of love, grace and peace, we send greetings from the largest of the Antilles, bathed by the rushing waters of the Caribbean.

Based on our experience of faith in the Lord of life, we believe that, for brothers and sisters and friends of all times and of all nations, the message of the Good News of Salvation, and the spiritual and ethical requirements that follow from it, is so radical that it changes the old values and challenges believers to take up and live the values of the Kingdom, which are a scandal to the eyes of society, but are the power of God for those who trust in Him and obey Him.

Cuban Quakers, gathered in our eighty-first session of the Yearly Meeting, have come to understand the implications of radical obedience by studying the words of the Lord in Matthew 10:38: "... he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." We have opened ourselves to being challenged by the Master, and like those first disciples, we have given our answer. And so we have been able to face up to this commitment in the way we have expressed it through the theme of this session: Let us leave all for Christ.

Renunciation-fruits, sacrifice-hope have been recurrent words in our thinking at this time, in a context of crisis, of intergenerational dialogues, and of openings to new realities. And so, the recognition of five young pastors became a transcendental moment in this meeting, a joy both shared and celebrated, since although the scarcity of workers continues to be a fact, God sustains the Work and provides when there are men and women willing to give their all for the good of their neighbours. At the right time, we continue forward with our construction projects in spite of difficulties with financial resources, with the help of other Yearly Meetings and of Friends United Meeting. As an example of this, only a few days ago we began building what we call "the Quaker Ruins," which we will continue by faith, trusting in divine providence and with the help of our Friends.

We ask for your constant help in prayer and good will, and at the same time we thank you for we have felt the blessing of your prayers to the Lord of the Vineyard, who commands us to go to gather in the harvest, while he continues opening hearts and enabling us for this mission which has been entrusted to us.

With joy and certainty that distance is no barrier to fellowship and love, we send from our land a warm greeting to our brothers and sisters.

The brothers and sisters gathered
for the purpose of the 81st sessions of the Yearly Meeting
of the Church of Quaker Friends in Cuba

[Translation by Susan Furry, edited by S E Benigno]

Illinois Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference)

All this is from the divine Reality that reconciled us to itself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Corinthians 5:18

To Friends Everywhere,

We send our greetings of joy and love from the 134th annual session of Illinois Yearly Meeting near McNabb, Illinois. The theme, Our Ministry of Reconciliation, led us to reflect on the need and the means for reconciliation in our own communities and around the world.

In Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, the youth were called to participate even more and the Adult Young Friends were given a more prominent voice. The Adult Young Friends have blended into the batter of Illinois Yearly Meeting as we create a comfortable working and worshiping community. Friends, young and old, in the Children's Program, High School Program, worship sharing and workshops, experienced the practice of reconciliation through working through conflict and reached a place of understanding about their feelings, and their power to make choices.

Friends learned from speaker Brian Young that reconciliation can mean reconciling finances as well as relationships between people and between God and us. Friends dealt with all these meanings in Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business as we learned about designs for new buildings and sought to reconcile the needs of Illinois Yearly Meeting, Clear Creek Meeting, and the wider world. Friends found unity and moved forward, also seeking to reconcile with the earth and to live lightly through sustainable buildings which strive to reflect the Quaker testimonies, especially environmental stewardship.

Speaker Florence Ntakarutimana gave us hope through her message about the Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi finding reconciliation through the Friends' African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) called Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC). Through three-day workshops in rural communities, she and others teach victims and perpetrators to name and understand the effects of trauma they are suffering as a result of the killings in their country. They then learn the skills of compassionate listening to those who have anger and pain. Finally, Hutus and Tutsis participate in trust-building exercises with each other. Many people have been transformed and have found peace through this ministry of reconciliation.

Our message to you is that speaking truth in love is something we must do over and over in different words and through different deeds of reconciliation, again and again, renewed and refreshed by the Spirit and each other in the ministry of reconciliation. This work of reconciliation is difficult because we have to go through anger and feelings of hurt and fear. But through truth, compassionate listening, forgiveness, and the inner work of the Spirit, people, families, and communities can find reconciliation and peace. In this world torn by war, our ministry of reconciliation is needed more than ever. We commend you all to the healing work of Love.

Yours in the Light,

Illinois Yearly Meeting

Intermountain Yearly Meeting

2008

To Friends Everywhere:

Three-hundred and thirty-eight Friends of Intermountain Yearly Meeting heard a “Call to Compassion” June 11–15, 2008, but it seemed to be equally a call to action.

In the keynote address by Leah Green, founder of the Compassionate Listening Project, and in interest groups running the gamut from peacemaking to the environment to human rights, racism and immigration, Friends were given proven, practical tools to change the world.

Spiritual nurturance was also in abundance, from the small worship sharing groups that many felt were the highlight of the annual meeting, to corporate worship and of course private contemplation inspired by the beauty of God’s creation here at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico. After a successful pilot program, the Spiritual Formation Committee will continue finding ways to deepen spiritual grounding among the member meetings.

The unusually strong wind sweeping across the colored rock spires seemed to breathe new energy into our yearly meeting, compounded by the youthful enthusiasm of the largest number of teen-age and young adult attenders we’ve had in quite a while.

We were blessed by live music, poetry, dancing and lots of laughter.

Last year’s decision to begin the affiliation process with Friends General Conference (FGC) was taken to the next level, with three Friends from that organization present to answer questions and concerns. The meeting approved the appointment of two representatives to attend FGC’s Central Committee meeting in October.

After 19 years, one of our most well loved forms of faith in action, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) - Intermountain Yearly Meeting (IMYM) Joint Service Project, is in for some reevaluation and changes. AFSC has announced it may withdraw funding after September 2009. Strong support for some form of intergenerational Quaker work camp was evident in both the plenary session and subsequent interest group, with several mentioning they got their start as Friends by attending a work camp. A subcommittee is being formed to examine the issues and make a proposal based on monthly meetings’ answers to a series of queries.

The Eyes Wide Open exhibit of army boots and civilian shoes representing Iraq war casualties moved us to a higher level of compassion for this loss to the world. A number of Friends were moved to gather and discuss possible responses to the U.S. presence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We call on Friends everywhere to discern what more we can do to end the war and occupation.

Friends Committee for National Legislation representatives were on hand to facilitate writing letters to members of Congress urging diplomacy in all dealings with Iran.

A Quaker activist from Burundi, Florence Ntakutimana, bore witness to the results of Quaker intervention in that troubled country.

We were pleased to meet the new editor of *Western Friend*, formerly *Friends Bulletin*, Kathy Hyzy. The magazine now has a website, www.westernfriend.org, complete with live blogging. Friends bid a fond farewell to longtime editor Anthony Manousos.

We seek to understand what action we might take to help solve pressing immigration and border problems.

Climate change continues as a significant concern among IMYM members.

As a Friend reminded us, “We are living in a time that all of us are being called to much more risky witness,” and to that end, we have reactivated our Committee on Sufferings, which was laid down in 1998.

We leave our Yearly Meeting with a sense of hope and a newfound level of compassion, ready to bring our new skills to bear on the world’s many problems.

In Leah Green’s words, “If we would just as a global community realize that these skills are not a luxury any more ... I believe we would see a dramatic change in our planet in one generation.”

Yours in the Light,

Penny Thron-Weber Annette Kowal
Clerk Assistant Clerk

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

8/2/2008

To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative), meeting on the campus of Scattergood Friends School in our 131st annual session (2008). In our daily meetings for worship followed by attention to business we listened reverently and patiently as reports were read aloud of: people who are attempting to follow the leadings of the Spirit; the responses to our advices and queries; the state of the meeting reports of monthly meetings; the annual reports from Scattergood Friends School and the Scattergood Farm; and the reports from our broader work such as American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, and the Friends World Committee for Consultation. As we heard these reports, we discerned the many ways in which people are called to live out the theme of this year’s session, “Follow the Light.”

Scattergood School is a sanctuary of peace and tranquility, but it sits between the Iowa and Cedar Rivers. We were especially mindful this year of our proximity to the human suffering caused by the flooding of those rivers and the trauma of those who have lost homes and businesses, and suffer from the destruction of public and philanthropic institutions, especially in Cedar Rapids. We were also mindful of the needless suffering inflicted on the immigrant community in nearby Postville by the federal police forces who have incarcerated hundreds of wage-earners and left hundreds more of their dependents in desperate poverty.

At our 2007 yearly meeting session, we had leadings to examine our lives, following the example of John Woolman, to see if our personal practices and patterns of consumption contribute to the exploitation of labor and the disproportionate use of the earth’s limited

resources. We struggled again this year to discern the leadings of the Spirit in the face of natural and human catastrophes, remembering the words of Jesus, “In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matthew 25:40). How do we address suffering on our doorstep, as well as suffering in communities far away? We heard a powerful presentation from Theoneste Bizimana from Rwanda Yearly Meeting, the coordinator of HROC (Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities). In the midst of our own crises, we have much to learn about the healing and rebuilding of communities, whether they are in Postville, Cedar Rapids, or our home communities and meetings.

In the Light of God’s Love and on behalf of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative),

Deborah Fisch
Clerk

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference)

Sixth Month 15, 2008

To Friends Everywhere,

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting gathered at Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, for its 45th session, Sixth Month 12 through 15, 2008. Friends weathered storms of climate, including torrents of rain that miraculously parted whenever the children’s program had outside activities. Friends were not challenged during our meetings, however, by storms of the spirit or heart, and showed great love to each other during business sessions, in worship sharing, at meals, during fun, and during our spiritual practice periods.

The Lake Erie Association of Friends was founded in 1939, becoming a Yearly Meeting in 1963. At 45 years old, Lake Erie YM has shifted from the developmental task of solidifying its identity to becoming a nurturing resource for its Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups. Signs of this new stage include a survey of households regarding their attitudes toward the Yearly Meeting, a consultation for clerks of Ministry and Nurture committees of the monthly meetings, the planned development of a set of Queries for use by the monthly meetings, opportunities with a traveling minister from Friends General Conference, a vibrant and ongoing spiritual formation program, and a planned consultation for monthly meeting clerks. We are excited and energized by this shift in our consciousness about who we are as Friends and what we can accomplish together.

Another sign of our growth is the interest and energy that young adult Friends are bringing to the Yearly Meeting. These young Friends grew up in our Yearly Meeting, coming to us as nursing babies and roaming toddlers. Now the wheel has turned, and they are taking on advancement and outreach among their peers. They have also enriched our gathering the last two years with special activities following the plenary sessions that spoke meaningfully to the themes. We look forward to the fruits of their fresh outlook and energy.

This year’s theme was Peacemaking from the Inside Out. Helen Horn, a cherished member of our Yearly Meeting and our plenary speaker, asked us if we were “Centered Enough for Peacemaking”. Helen encouraged us to act out of faith, despite our fear, to follow the nudges of Spirit to act on behalf of peace and justice. She also encouraged us to take time for reflection and refreshment, for “feeling the Presence of something yearning, through the mystery of suffering, for us to help channel healing into the world”.

Friends were presented with an opportunity to discern how Spirit may be nudging us. Friends School in Detroit, under the care of Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting of Lake Erie YM, suffers the impact of Michigan's economic downturn. Ten percent of the student body had to withdraw mid-year due to an inability to pay school fees, resulting in layoffs of essential and talented teachers. Given the extremely high academic achievements and community contributions of the students and graduates of this school, we are saddened by this news, and encourage Friends everywhere to examine their hearts regarding support for Friends schools, and especially Friends School in Detroit.

During our time together we have been blessed by the power, peace and love of the Spirit of God and by each others' presence. We thank God for the strength of our loving connection.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,

Shirley Bechill

Clerk

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

(affiliated to Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting)

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you...
Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you.
(Isaiah 43:1b, 2, 4a, NRSV)

“War: God Help Us!” called Friends to the 348th New England Yearly Meeting Sessions, August 2nd through 7th, 2008. We convened on the campus of Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, at a bountiful table, aware of those suffering from violence, war, and poverty, both near and far.

We called on God and heard the Creator challenge us to love each other and to work for justice and peace in our world, our meetings, and our souls. Throughout the week, we heard calls for reconciliation — for love, patience and forgiveness.

On Sunday morning, our children led us in singing songs of love, ending with “I will never forget you, I will never forsake you, I will always love you”.

We heard from a Friend who had spent many hours in a hospital, hugging babies dying of AIDS, holding them as they died, so that they would know the warmth of loving arms and the beat of a human heart; she knew that God was holding them both. In the valley of the shadow of death, even when we may not be able to know it, the Healer's arms are holding us and will never abandon us.

We prayed fervently for two leaders of New England Yearly Meeting who had medical emergencies during our sessions. Within a few days, Friends folded over 2,000 paper cranes for healing.

We implore holy wisdom to guide us to effective witness against U.S. policies of killing, terrorism, and torture. We long to align our hearts and actions with the spirit of peace.

In recent years we have frequently labored over the personnel policy of Friends United Meeting (FUM). Friends recognize prejudice and discrimination within FUM policies against gay and lesbian Friends. Some among us feel strongly that by continuing to support FUM, we are complicit in that discrimination.

Yet, we value and respect FUM in its many streams. Those among us who work on FUM projects testified to the love in which the work is carried out. We honor Kenyan Friends who have lived the peace testimony in the face of danger and hatred far beyond the safe experience of most of us. Some of us feel we are called to continue to support FUM and to continue to witness there that the Holy One loves all people equally, regardless of sexual orientation. We heard powerful testimony from gay and lesbian Friends urging us to stay engaged with FUM. We cannot make peace in the world, unless we stretch our hearts to be in peace with our fellow Friends.

We approved a budget that includes the contribution to FUM we feel we can afford. We recognized that some Friends are in pain at this decision. Our Finance Committee is seeking a way that Friends who feel they cannot conscientiously support FUM to contribute to our yearly meeting without their funds going to FUM.

In considering where we are led, we realize that we must be able to articulate our own belief about what constitutes appropriate sexual relationships. Over several years, our young people have challenged us to be clear about our sexual ethics.

Last year, we approved a Minute of Commitment (NEYM 2007–67) to talk with each other about sexual ethics and the deepest meanings of family, marriage, and committed relationships.

We also asked our monthly and quarterly meetings to seek Divine guidance on same-sex marriage, where we are not yet united. We were deeply touched when all eight quarterly meetings reported on what their monthly meetings have done on these subjects. We strongly feel that the Spirit is calling us to continue this work, recognizing that in the face of much hesitancy in speaking openly about these matters, the work must be done with great tact and love. Friends from meetings that have engaged in the discussion spoke of finding it a blessing.

Over and over again, we were reminded of our need for reconciliation and wholeness, forgiveness and patience. Beneath our joy and love, we are conscious of our brokenness. We fear the God of the burning bush may call us to risks and sacrifices. We are resentful over differences within our yearly meeting which may bring schism and loss. We know that our Inward Teacher challenges us to deeper love and commitment, but we sense the power of the separating spirit.

We need to let ourselves feel the pain of knowing that we and the world should be better, and then transform that pain into something else.

Jesus told us to love one another. To do it, not just to talk about it. We pray that we are so filled that we are overflowed with love, with thy love so strong that as we go out from this place we are changed. Fill us so that we can truly be Friends to all people.

The call to love each other weighs heavy on us. There is no minute that is going to resolve our problems; we need to learn to love one another again and again. We need to learn to forgive each other.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

(1 Corinthians 13:4–5, 7–8a NRSV)

Dear Friends, pray for us. Dear God, draw us near to your Center. Bring us home.

New York Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting)

Seventh month, 20th–26th, 2008

Silver Bay, New York

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

A soft nourishing rain welcomed us to our 313th Session of New York Yearly Meeting on Lake George, inviting 473 adults and 184 Junior Yearly Meeting participants to sink deeply down into our “Spiritual Community Across the Spectrum of Age”. During the course of the week the rains continued to pour down as did the power of God working in our midst.

We opened our week together with an older Friend telling a story to our small ones. The stolen rainbow in the poignant story tells of the discovery that hope lives within us all, across the spectrum of our experiences and ages.

Our General Secretary, Christopher Sammond, noted that we were in a place of pausing, asking us to use our spiritual energy in seeking guidance to discern our direction and readiness to address the impending global crises. He asked us to deeply consider: What do we want to create?

Christine DeRoller and Michael Clark, Powell House Youth Directors at New York Yearly Meeting’s Retreat Center, were our plenary speakers on “Breaking Down the Boxes: A Practicum in Listening”. In an experiential program, they raised us from our seats and joyfully jumbled us up in games and activities where we met and made new friends of all ages. Our intergenerational community was deeply affirmed.

Our Bible Study, led by Eden Grace of New England Yearly Meeting, opened the vision of the Kingdom of God among us as we examined the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. Richly interwoven into her commentary were related Biblical passages and Eden’s personal experiences of witnessing the political and spiritual struggles of the Kenyans with whom she works.

Our second Meeting for Discernment was held for a full day at our Summer Sessions. Six hours of worship over three sessions opened us to hearing how the Spirit is at work in us as a body. Many felt nurtured by the time together, and over half were compelled to remain in Worship longer. We saw some themes emerging and felt the value and the burden of our seeking together for its own sake. As spiritual seekers we deepened our understanding of ourselves, each other and our communities.

Some issues that had been labored and seasoned in committees included youth programs, racism, care of our earth, work in prisons, conscientious objection, and Alternatives to Violence Programs, both abroad and in the U.S., Aging Resources, Consultation and Help (ARCH), a program connecting seniors, Meetings and families to resources, has begun its pilot program, and the Young Friends In Residence, a program of middle school youth

conferences run by young adult Friends, has taken another step toward realization.

Presentations by Friends working with Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) in Columbia, Ache, and Bolivia, the work of FUM in Kenya, and the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) workshops in Burundi and Rwanda humbled us with their powerful witness.

Many of us are challenged and pained by Friends United Meeting personnel policy, homophobic remarks made at an FUM board meeting in Kakamega, Kenya, and the affirmation of the Richmond Declaration as the faith basis of FUM. We are seeking clarity about how to be in association with the rest of FUM. We are clear that, for now, we are called to rest in that lack of clarity, though it pains us deeply to do so. We are reminded that what we seek to be about is love, peace, integrity, and seeing the Divine in others.

A New York YM Minute on Torture was put forth and approved. The Minute articulated our witness to Friends everywhere and to the wider world, calling on all to be guided by the Spirit into respect for all humanity.

Throughout the week, the Healing Center provided a place of worship supporting the physical and spiritual needs of many Friends.

We delighted in hearing our Junior Yearly Meeting epistles during their Business Meeting. This year, our 11th and 12th graders joined adults in morning Worship Groups as part of their Program. Junior YM groups attended Business Meeting at the end of each morning session for Community Worship.

Together we worked, we played, we spent time in worship and discernment. Throughout the week the nearly continual rains kept us largely indoors; in community, in relationship, and in ourselves; renewing our inner resources for our work this coming year.

Sing and rejoice, ye children of the day and of the light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. And truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow amongst the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play.

George Fox, 9th month, 1663, Epistle 227

On Behalf of the New York Yearly Meeting,

Ernestine Buscemi
Clerk

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

Epistle to all Friends everywhere

Seventh Month 9–13, 2008

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from the 311th annual gathering of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative). We met this year in Greensboro, North Carolina, on the campus of Guilford College, a space that provided us with room for quiet reflection and sharing amidst the occasional sounds of the orchestral musicians also present for an intensive music camp. This campus felt like home for many of us, and it also meant that we all passed beneath and appreciated the large and plentiful trees here. This led many to truly feel like they were “Coming Home to Creation,” the theme of our gathering this year.

In our Bible study each morning Jennie Ratcliffe of Durham Meeting led us in exploring how we understand our relationship with the wider natural world when we read the Bible. On Sixth Day evening we heard from Carl Magruder of Grass Valley (California) Monthly Meeting who encouraged us to listen carefully to the Spirit and live out of that Spirit when considering the current ecological crisis we face. On Seventh Day evening Vivette Jeffries, Fire Carrier of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, welcomed us to the land and she and her father Elder John Blackfeather Jeffries shared the oral history of their people and individuals shared their own oral history. This brought forth stories of great pain and separation due to oppression, racism and abuse, creating a space for healing. Vivette stated that as we heal, so does Creation, because we are all part of Creation.

The Friends United Meeting Triennial was held near Greensboro at the same time as our gathering, and some of us took the opportunity on Fifth Day evening to go hear Landrum Bolling speak to them. Landrum Bolling spoke of peace as a part of a life of devotion and included concern about believing that there are motions towards war with Iran. Resonating with this concern, and believing that Friends must live in the life and power that takes away occasion for all war, the Yearly Meeting was led to approve a minute in opposition of provocative actions by the United States towards Iran and encouraging dialogue and negotiations. Friends within the Yearly Meeting and beyond are encouraged to build on this minute with additional outreach to elected representatives and others seeking peaceful resolutions to disagreements with Iran. The minute can be found on the Yearly Meeting website (www.ncymc.org).

Our attendance has grown again this year, with 125 people present at various points during our sessions. We were blessed with many visitors, including Friends from California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and other meetings within North Carolina. Of those in attendance, 15 were young people of ages ranging from ten months to seventeen years. These young Friends once again benefited from thoughtful planning and had activities that included rollerskating (quickly becoming a tradition), visiting a waterpark and a bog garden. They spent time at the environmental studies branch of the Greensboro Library, created walking sticks, and did other art and craft projects. They also joined the adults in hearing about the underground railroad for escaped slaves, Nan Bowles' talk on her visit with the Cherokee, and the storytelling with the Jeffries.

As is our practice, we were brought closer together as a body through the practice of sharing local Meeting responses to our queries in our business sessions, through sharing full and powerful ministry in response to that practice, through hearing reports of the state of two Friends schools with historic ties to our Yearly Meeting, and through hearing letters and reports of the lived faith of our young adult Friends and our representatives to various gatherings.

We will gather again at the University of North Carolina – Wilmington in seventh month, 2009, if it is in keeping with Divine Will. We send you our prayers that all creation may be made whole with that life and light from Christ.

On behalf of the yearly meeting,

Sidney Lee Kitchens
Clerk

North Pacific Yearly Meeting

7/20/2008

To Friends Everywhere

Friends from Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana gathered in loving worship July 17th – 20th 2008 on the campus of Oregon State University in Corvallis, OR. The 281 gathered Friends, including 31 children, 26 Junior Friends, and visitors from Friends' organizations and other Yearly Meetings, were welcomed by our Presiding Clerk Helen Dart. She told us "I look forward to the adventurous journey we will be taking together with the Divine over the next few days."

Our Friend in Residence Ruth Flower addressed us on our theme "Answering to that of God in Everyone." She creatively engaged our imaginations to include all people with no exceptions. In sharing with us her career as an activist and a lobbyist, she spoke of her journey from righteous anger to love. We were reminded that we are not called to see that of God in everyone but to answer to what our faith tells us is there. She gave examples of true sharing on a human level that come from expectant listening in our everyday interactions, parallel to our practice in worship.

In the ongoing effort to bring alive our Mission Statement to support and encourage Friends to deepen their spiritual centers and move into Spirit-led action, we continued with our re-structuring. A goal is for North Pacific YM to be an effective resource for all our Meetings and worshiping groups. During this session we increased our substantive discernment with a concern for business. We approved a three-year experiment of adding one day to our Annual Sessions. It was noted that our young people, and those who work with them, expressed the most joy at the idea of a longer Annual Session.

We welcomed Kathy Hyzy as the new Western Friend editor and minuted our gratitude to Anthony Manousos for his twelve years of faithful service in bringing us Friends Bulletin (the old name for Western Friend).

We approved two seasoned minutes: Minute on The War on Drugs, and Minute On Global Climate Change. The Minute on the War on Drugs calls for a change of national policy away from criminalization of drug use to a public health model. The Minute on Global Climate Change calls upon Friends to make a standing priority and corporate witness in the coming year to take all possible measures to reduce the devastation of global climate change and move us toward more sustainable lifestyles.

Our young people seemed open and connected among themselves and with the adults. Through their games and worship they developed a strong community in a short time. One group mentioned with satisfaction how a game of capture the flag turned into a dispute and the dispute turned into an exercise in conflict resolution and reconciliation.

As we go out from this gathering, we carry with us gratitude for the vitality of the people, the renewal of our connections, the strengthening of our commitments and the openness to explore new possibilities for expression of our faith. We send our love to Friends everywhere, and invite you join us in speaking truth and love to ourselves and to each other.

Helen Dart
Presiding Clerk

Northwest Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Evangelical Friends International)

19–24 July 2008

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, along the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles –
the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.

the prophet Isaiah as quoted in Matthew 4:15–16

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings from the campus of George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon, USA.

In case you are not familiar with Northwest Yearly Meeting (NWYM), let us introduce ourselves by giving you two “word pictures” from the events of this week that may capture something of the elusive answer to the question, “Who are we?”

Imagine Bauman Auditorium filled almost to capacity, 1200 people on its ground floor and balcony. We met here together each evening to sing, pray, and listen to a speaker. It is Tuesday evening. Imagine a dynamic speaker, able to fill the space with his words and the power of his message (Dr. Tony Campolo; enough said. Or if that is not enough, check out the NWYM website for the videos.). Imagine a 12-piece band with brass and stringed instruments on the stage bringing those 1200 people to their feet to sing one of the great hymns of our faith.

Crown Him with many crowns,
The lamb upon His throne!
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own!

If there were rafters, they would have shaken. This is who we are: a community of Friends that sings with one voice the triumphant story of our faith.

Now imagine, an hour later, outdoors, in the dark, on a small, unlit stage, one man with one guitar, singing the blues to an audience of maybe 15 listeners.

Lord have mercy on me today...
I woke up in this body
and I don't know how you take it,
and I walked around in your streets today,
and I saw the way they treat you
and the way they treat each other
and I know I'm bound to stay
know I'm bound to stay...
I remember wings of gold in flight,
I remember singing with all of my might
I remember staring straight into that light
that blew away my darkness and rolled back my night

and I remember wings
I remember wings
I remember wings

(c) Derek Lamson 2008

This, also, is who we are: a community of Friends with their own voices, some broken with pain but still singing the story of their faith.

If you truly want to know who we are, you will have to come join us sometime. This year we had what must be a record number of visitors from other yearly meetings and Quaker organizations. We welcomed

Phil Baisley, Earlham School of Religion
Micah Bales, Great Plains YM
Sabino Chipana, Bolivia YM and bringing greetings from Peruvian Friends
Martha Davis, Iowa YM (Conservative)
Virginia Dawson, Canadian YM
Margaret Fraser, Philadelphia YM
Tyler Hampton, Lake Erie YM
Beatrice Kinganiri, Kenya
Susannah Kromberg, North Pacific YM
Rae Lawrence, North Pacific YM
Nancy McLauchlan, FWCC
Gayle Mateson, North Pacific YM
Florence Ntakarutimana, Burundi YM
Thomas Simiyu, Kenya
Ann Stever, North Pacific YM
Ray Treadway, North Carolina YM (Conservative)

Our theme, “Bring Forth the Kingdom” was explored during lectures, daily worship, rallies, banquets and workshops. The evening sessions were simultaneously interpreted for our Latino members and visitors, and we are very grateful to our experienced and competent interpreters: Jonathan Hibbs, Portia Jones, and Ron Stansell. One of our workshops this year, on immigration issues, was bilingual, reflecting our growing numbers of Latino meetings.

Our Sunday evening keynote address was given by our beloved superintendent, Colin Saxton, who reminded us of the words from the Gospel of Matthew quoted above, and challenged us to encounter Jesus, to turn toward God’s reign which is here and now. There is no detailed contract, just a call to love, pray, be a light, to do good even to an enemy. Monday through Wednesday we were blessed to have Dr. Tony Campolo, renowned author and speaker, who, with humor and drama that must be seen and heard to be fully appreciated, emphasized that the Kingdom of God consists of transformed people who transform the world. Do not use power, political or otherwise, as a short cut to enforce the Kingdom; rather, speak with the authority that is earned only with loving sacrifice.

In previous epistles, we told of our work to change our Yearly Meeting structure. It was HARD for us to make these deep structural changes; there was a very real fear that we would lose our sense of direction and traditions. During the past two years we have formed new boards with fresh mission statements: ministry plans were presented, and approved, during the morning business sessions. We saw some of the fruit of this restructuring:

Friends discerning new and different calls to ministry, concerns for issues of immigration and torture, workshops confronting the horrors of sex trafficking and unjust trade practices, lively discussions about our Faith and Practice and commitment to its (and our) integrity in the use of language. We are united in wanting to bring forth the Kingdom, not only with the proclamation of Jesus' words, but with a living gospel that embodies and integrates our Quaker testimonies of peace, justice, integrity, simplicity.

Other business of the week: We approved a budget for 2009. We approved the call and recording of two ministers, Betty Jo Steele (Silverton Friends) and Angel Diaz (Iglesia Evangelica Los Amigos).

(N.B., "record" doesn't translate well into Spanish, where it means "remember"; it's not that we'd ever forgotten these Friends...) We considered two proposed minutes, one on torture and one on the treatment of families of detained/deported undocumented workers. The minute on torture was approved and is appended to this epistle. The other minute was not approved as written; our clerks concluded that, while there was substantial unity about the need to respond compassionately to the plight of those whose families are being disrupted, the meeting could not practically unite around a minute in the time we had available.

A major item of business involved changes to our NWYM Faith and Practice to reflect the approved changes to our YM structure. The proposed amendments from the Faith and Practice Revision Committee (all 50+ pages) were reviewed during the previous year at local and area levels. We can attest to God's work among us, allowing us to come together on the first reading of our Faith and Practice revisions, a result of excellent committee work and diligent attention by representatives.

We have a vibrant group of young people, high school and junior high, who meet for their own annual sessions and join us midweek to lead the worship program in the evening and present a summary of their work during a business session. Please take the time to read their epistles, which are enclosed.

Thursday evening during our closing Celebration Banquet, we reviewed the week with a slideshow, greeted warmly our newly recorded Quaker ministers, and began the sad but necessary process of packing up and returning home.

Thank you, Gentle Readers, for hearing our epistle, sent to you with love and the blessings of Northwest Yearly Meeting,

Lon Fendall
Presiding Clerk

Northern Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference)

Here I Am: Understanding and Shining My Inner Light

"And the trees of the field, they clap their hands, as we go forth with joy."

Greetings from the 2008 Northern Yearly Meeting annual sessions at the Lions Camp in Rosholt, Wisconsin, where apple trees are blossoming late, pine forests greet the rising sun with gentle, vibrant energy, and the spring weather is as perfect as sub-luminary bliss can make it.

Youth, youth, youth! We are a young yearly meeting, scarce thirty. Yet, until this century began to seem familiar, greying heads overwhelmingly predominated. Recently, this

domination has morphed to the spiky dos of our young people. While older Friends form the strong warp of our gathering, children and youth, about 106 out of the 310 total number, bind its colorful, multi-textured weft. Exuberance is the watchword.

As younger Friends play frisbee on the lawn, older Friends tending to Quaker business look out on the pink crabapple petals that fall in the wind. Letting go,... letting go,... Such beauty is an aid to ground us in Spirit and bring our labors to unity in covered worship.

Our business process skills mature and the grasp of Divine will for us becomes more ready. Some aspects of our process are hidden treasures – like those in the story our visiting Friends from El Salvador Yearly Meeting, told during the worship they led Saturday.

Spiritual gifts and the joy and responsibilities they bring as we respond to Divine leadings and nudges play recurring motifs. We gratefully support and hold in our prayers Northern Friends traveling in ministry as far afield as El Salvador and Rwanda. Committees and individuals reporting on concerns are also growing in good Quaker process: thorough preparation and spiritual readiness make business run more smoothly. We consider many of the same subjects each year and have more Faith and Practice chapters to labor with, but seasoned minds and hearts are turned by new revelation, and the fresh perspective added to our work allows us to garner a deeper meaning within it. We flow within a convergence of diverse perspectives and find that, in this rich space, we are of one spirit. We seem bathed in a new light, with new shadows, angles, and beams. What truth do we reflect off each other? In our plenary, three Friends shared journeys of being led and finding a path to faithfulness: one, to work on race and class justice and the second, to build a house that was “just enough” – in deep communion with his partner. The third, a younger Friend, related her experience as a white person, working in “the most segregated city in America” (Milwaukee) and shared her Slam poetry with us. Then, in small groups, we told each other our stories and discovered that the diversity of our leadings is immense. Further, Divine imperatives come with various intensities and characters, and have different speeds and trajectories of approaching maximum clarity. How do we discern when we are being given a direct order from God? What are the signs of way opening? When are apparent barriers signposts to right action? When do our emotions distract us and when are they friendly aides to clarity as we step into the unknown? Some concerns may be passive and in sync with one’s life, allowing us to maintain familiar ties and community connections. In other cases: “I don’t know what this light’s for, or what it means to me or anyone else, I don’t know what gifts I’ve been given, or how to make myself clear now, or make myself known. But today I wrote a poem.”

As Quakers, we help guide each other by speaking of our individual and corporate experience of the Divine. Initially abstract queries about Inner Light and Leadings become incarnate in the stories – of disagreeing with the farmer across the road or being the only white person attending the gathering of African-American women. We remember the stories and live in the light of them. Some of the uproar of applause during our Sunday talent show in The Hollow was the sound of mosquito swatting. But we basked in the grace, good humor, and comradeship of song, dance, and spoken word. The MCs and most of the performers were younger Friends, sharing their gifts while bathed in the pale, green light of new leaves. Who knew that a Dr. Seuss story would make a perfect rap song? Or that there is a tale of George Fox on the Yellow Brick Road? Mother and daughter sing in harmony; Earthquakers quake; and the heels of Ireland grace our ears.

Our last evening brings thunder, lightening, heavy gales, and rain. A tent blows across the lake; two-score teens engage in an intense and emotional business meeting. In a cabin,

there is chocolate graduation cake for all to share amid drumming, guitar sounds, card games, and conversation. As the humidity increases during the storm, Friends of all ages mingle in the dining room, El Salvadorans conversing with Northern Friends – a solar engineer and a therapist – over a puzzle, fitness buffs examining leg tendons, and recreation seekers learning dominoes. The T-shirts worn encompass the planet.

We live a testimony of love and compassion as our Memorial Meeting for Worship lifts up names and memories of those we have lost from this life. We also rejoice in births and important life milestones. Some of us, once in the middle, are now elders, and we feel the weight of the torch of Fire we steward for a short space, making it ready to hand on to our youth. Spirit gathers among elders and the young who are the future and present of our faith. And “There are angels hovering round.”

Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends

(affiliated to Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting)

8/16/08

“Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

(John 15:14)

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.”

(John 15:12)

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings in the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ! We have gathered together at our Stillwater Meetinghouse near Barnesville, Ohio for our 196th annual session, and have been richly blessed, not only with the presence of Almighty God, but also with unseasonably mild and pleasant weather.

Though the world around us grows more troubled with each passing day, we have found ourselves blessed with peace. Our mornings began with a time of reading whatever passages of Scripture our Lord chose to give us, followed by times of gathered prayer or sharing on the theme of charity.

Each of our business sessions began with a lengthy time of waiting worship, often graced with vocal ministry, which was followed by consideration of our various matters of business.

While two of our evenings together consisted of meetings for worship, other evenings included presentations by various members and visitors. On one occasion, the sharing by three friends of some of their “Encounters with the Lord” led to spontaneous additional sharing by perhaps a dozen others. The sharing might easily have continued into the night had time permitted. Jackie Speicher of Right Sharing of World Resources gave a talk on “The Transforming Power of Simplicity”, and Thomas Swain another on “My Call to Labor for Peace”. Our last evening together included presentations by Junior Yearly Meeting and Young Friends, who have never failed to warm our hearts.

As the troubled world around us increasingly turns to teachers of various kinds, we continue to gather in the presence of our One Teacher, and to hear Him. Jesus Christ,

the Word of God, continues to speak in and to our hearts, and we, as Friends, seek to do whatsoever He commands us.

We hope and pray that all Friends everywhere will be hearing and obeying Him – and loving one another as He has loved us – and that we increasingly will be living and serving in His Kingdom.

In the love of Christ,

Seth B. Hinshaw
Clerk

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting)

Greeting to all Friends everywhere,

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting met for its 188th annual session on the campus of Earlham College, July 30–August 3, 2008 using the theme “Delve deeply, walk lightly, dwell in harmony” to shape our time together. Early in our sessions we saw how the strains of our theme were echoed in epistles from Friends around the world as they expressed common concerns for deepening the spiritual experience, caring for the earth, and fostering understanding among us. A sense of connectedness and an appreciation for the richness of the fabric of the Society of Friends provided the backdrop for our sessions.

The different strains of our theme were pulled together by Jens Braun of New York Yearly Meeting as he drew from his experiences working in Costa Rica and the Gaza Strip and from his later leading to participate in an intentional community in New York. While working to walk lightly on the earth, he realized that sustainability is not enough. We want much more than the stasis implied by that word, as we delve more deeply into the values that sustain us and allow those values to guide us in our efforts to dwell in harmony. He challenged us to break away from the societal architecture that shapes our situations and step into a world where wealth consists of wellbeing and wholeness rather than tradeable goods.

Doug Gwynn of Indiana Yearly Meeting took us from the divergent beliefs of present-day Quakers back to the set of tenets that defined the early Seekers in 17th century England. Doug led us in an examination of the historical context that shaped the Society of Friends in the 1640s, and helped us to understand the societal influences that fed the fervor of early Friends. We were left to ponder how we might recreate that sense of urgency and longing for a reawakening to Christ’s message.

A set of queries helped us delve deeply into our understanding of God and to share our experiences of the Spirit in worship sharing sessions. Considering questions such as how we have experienced the leading of the Spirit, how we share our faith with others, and what convictions sustain our commitment to service or witness, we challenged ourselves to find the spiritual center we all share. Workshops, too, helped us explore how we can find commonalities and dwell in harmony as we considered topics ranging from discovering Convergent Friends to finding paths to peace between Israel and Palestine.

Business sessions continued our discussions of the revision of our book of discipline and of the equitable division of responsibility for our financial needs among the monthly

meetings. We struggled to find common ground on definitions of membership in the Society of Friends and what it means to be a member. We searched for ways to be sensitive to the burden of our financial expectations on struggling meetings. While the process can at times be uncomfortable, we also see the Spirit moving among us as we work to resolve these issues.

We rejoiced in the participation of a vibrant community of teens and young people, and welcomed a growing group of young adult Friends. They challenged us with queries, contributed to workshops, and joined with us in plenary sessions while conducting their own business sessions, working on service projects, and enjoying their leisure time together. In their hands, we're confident of a bright future for the Society of Friends.

Our time together in these sessions has been rich and full. We have challenged ourselves to delve deeply. We have explored our commitment to walk lightly. We have searched for ways to dwell in harmony. We take away from this place the sense of renewal necessary to continue the process, and we share with all Friends everywhere the desire for God's loving presence in our lives.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference)

August 3, 2008

Greetings in the Light to Friends around the world,

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting met for the summer portion of our 328th annual sessions held July 30th through August 3rd, 2008, at DeSales University, Center Valley, Pennsylvania. The theme of our gathering was "Sharing Our Journeys — In Light, Love, and Peace."

We began with a message from Fred Kauffman, a Mennonite minister and a member of the steering committee for the ecumenical peace gathering to be held at Arch Street Meeting House in January 2009. Fred set the stage for our sessions with his meditations on our need to become followers of the Spirit of Christ, not simply seekers of worldly satisfaction. He also shared the message that Jesus did not come so much to be a living sacrifice for all of us, but to teach us that God does not want blood sacrifice. He came to teach that the true way to Peace is through compassionate love and understanding for everyone, even those we dislike, fear, or do not understand.

We can begin this by just talking to one another. We learned about the power of simple conversation to change the world through our "One Book – One Yearly Meeting" selection: *Turning To One Another; Simple Conversations To Restore Hope To The Future* by Margaret J. Wheatley. It is always an inspiration to simply sit and talk with old friends and new. How wonderful to rediscover that these conversations can be the beginnings of a better world.

In our plenary sessions our individual stories came together in a one-ness even in the midst of previous divisions. We listened to the Spirit and experienced healing through our laughter and our tears of deep emotion and sometimes grieving. After our Friday evening session there was joyful contra dancing. We are a people born for love and joy. We felt the Spirit of Love and Truth flowing throughout the Meeting, in small groups of people discussing God's vision of a world free of poverty, in toddlers chasing a butterfly on the lawn, the spontaneous music played in our library, even in the business sessions themselves!

The performance art duo Quiet Riot (Bill and Dave Mettler) told us stories of community based around the themes of: Belonging, Choice, Fun, and Respect. Using mime and sound effects, they demonstrated how we are valued and valuable in community.

Our children's program provided a variety of experiences for every age group. Many imaginations were fired by one role-playing game in which they became 17th century Quakers on an adventurous journey to the Americas encountering pirates, storms, and bears. Our children helped us begin each day in worship. Their exuberant attitudes and ministries of mischief and innocence are greatly treasured.

Friends in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting recognize that we have been in a period of transition for some time. This began in part with our work to modernize our organizational structure, which was done in the 1990s. Our aspiration has always been to seek a balance between the many facets of what it means to be a "Yearly Meeting". This includes continuing efforts to understand the organic nature and changing roles of our member bodies, Monthly and Quarterly meetings, our committees and working groups, and our employees.

Now in these business sessions with Divine Grace, we have tasted the fruits of those labors. In the holy community we created at this gathering, we had opportunities not merely to make choices but to welcome the Spirit-led work done by all these groups and individuals. All of the business brought before us was approved or accepted. We experienced a joyful confidence in the workings of the Spirit through each other. We are so grateful for the tremendous blessings and tireless work done by all those who made these sessions possible. Together we were all part of a great collaboration. Each of us was vital to the Spirit-led accomplishment of the work before us.

Now we have committed to an intentional process of self-discovery and discernment. This can only be described as a renewed commitment to hearing and answering God's call to us to be a people gathered. This not only includes exploring a new process to discern our Yearly Meeting priorities, but we are on a path to further revise and strengthen the relationship between our annual sessions and continuing business sessions throughout the year. We also approved a new committee to oversee the stewardship of our beloved Arch Street Meeting House. We are committed to accountability and a well-ordered division of our labors. In the coming year we will also develop those priorities which will help us nurture a loving faith community of communities.

Like people all over the world, concerns for peace, justice, and an earth restored are much on our minds. We have a group engaged in re-envisioning the Quaker peace testimony. They have encouraged us as Meetings and individuals to take this up ourselves as well, that we might live that testimony authentically in our daily lives. We know that as we develop better ways of discerning our priorities and conducting ourselves we will also be developing the tools to help us become better agents of healing in our world.

Colin Saxton, Superintendent of Northwest Yearly Meeting, was our Saturday evening presenter. He affirmed our work on the peace testimony. He invited us to see how far we can go to live in that power, life, and Spirit which takes away those barriers which separate us. He asked, "Are we at peace with each other?" Further, he reminded us that we can be transformed by "that Light which helps us see that we are written on one another's hearts". The world needs people who have been transformed. Colin asked us to evangelize by sharing our stories of transformation and witness. Our lives are the poems, love letters, and songs of God. They are being sung in a way that humanity can best understand now.

Indeed, we feel we are transforming as a Yearly Meeting. We are emerging from a period of serious distraction and dissonance. We were like a great jazz band with no set list of music. Now we are finding those songs we can play together. We are discovering how to harmonize with each other. We now have the confidence to improvise and compose new music as the Spirit so conducts us. The music is sweet and simple yet it soars. When we ask, “Where is God in this?” the answer is “All over.”

We send you our prayers and good wishes and look forward to hearing how the Truth prospers with you.

Thomas Swain
Clerk, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting)

23rd day, 3rd month, 2008

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” – Matthew 11:28

To Friends everywhere,

Loving greetings from Southeastern Yearly Meeting, as we gather at the United Methodist Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, Florida, for our 46th annual sessions. For the past five days, we have worshipped, rested, and played together in God’s own living cathedral of vibrant green live-oaks, blessed by both warm sunlight and much-needed rain. We enjoyed many opportunities for worship: early morning worship on the shore of Lake Griffin, daily worship sharing in small groups, and meeting for worship with attention for business, where our visions, leadings, and love come to fruition.

We try to meet each other where we are. Friends feel cared for and accepted here, whether new to our community or already well-known among us. The greatest gift of our time together is the gift of unconditional love.

A variety of workshops, interest groups, and retreat sessions created space to explore our connections to the wider Quaker world, seek deeper engagement with social concerns and Quaker witness, and make ourselves available in a variety of ways to the Spirit among us. We found ourselves often in deep, generous dialogue about our individual experiences of faith, discovering a rich variety of personal belief, language, and experience among us. Yet we find that in faithfulness and love, we have a connection much deeper than our differences.

Stephen W. Angell presented the Walton Lecture, “The Foundations of Liberal Quakerism.” Our experience was that deepened understanding of our historical foundations both gave us a sense of rootedness, and provided a context for understanding the challenges facing our yearly meeting today.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting is still challenged by the question of our affiliation with Friends United Meeting.

However, as we take a sabbatical rest from considering it in our official business, we are able to see some of the gifts that our process of discernment has given us. Painful struggle has cracked us open, pushed us into deepened dialogue about our beliefs, and reminded us of

the need to rest in God's loving arms.

So we have rested together in this time. In resting, we find renewed energy for other important concerns.

We established new committees for earthcare and racial justice. During one of our evening sessions, we marked the passing of the fifth anniversary of our country's war on Iraq with a powerful theatrical presentation, "What I Heard About Iraq."

In fall 2007, a committee was established to hold our relationship with Friends United Meeting in prayer and discernment. Southeastern Yearly Meeting seeks ways to move forward in faithfulness with God's unmediated guidance. In order to do this, we must release judgment, forgiving ourselves and others. From this place of love, we find renewed energy for witnessing Truth in the world.

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." – Isaiah 40:29

May Peace be with you and everyone.

In God's Loving kindness, the Epistle Committee and Susan Taylor, Clerk

Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association

(affiliated to Friends General Conference)

Epistle of the thirty-eighth session of the Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association of the Religious Society of Friends: Meeting at Warren Wilson College, Swannanoa, North Carolina, June 12–15, 2008.

Greetings to all Friends, Yearly Meetings and Friends Organizations! We assemble in the beauty of the southern mountains at a season of warmth, with the hum of cicadas, rejoicing in the gathering of Friends and the fellowship of the Spirit.

Friends were encouraged at the opening of business to live "our lives in the power of love and not worrying too much about the results. In doing this the means becomes part of the end... we must literally not take too much thought for the morrow but throw ourselves wholeheartedly into the present. That is the beauty of the way of love, it cannot be planned and its end cannot be foretold." (Wolf Mendl in *Faith and practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends*, 1985, p. 188)

Following the theme of Yearly Meeting, "Out of the Harbor: Our Voyages of Faith", eight Friends launched us on our voyages of faith by sharing their awe-inspiring journeys during the open plenary session. We were humbled, delighted, inspired by Nicholas Wells' account of growing up Quaker; Bonnie Hardie's and Conrad Honicker's brush with death and lessons in accepting the unexpected; Dick Houghton's experiments using mechanical engineering as a creative path and kinesiology as a spiritual one; Woods Nash's photo's in a Haitian orphanage gently holding a starving child on his lap, of work in an African AIDS hospital, and in a Cambodian factory producing clay water-filter pots; Pam Beziat's photos of her nursing work in Central American and her organic garden in Nashville; and Hannah McDermott's heart-warming account of growing up in Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA).

Hearing these histories gave us an acute awareness and deep appreciation of the treasure we have in individual SAYMA friends.

In the second plenary, Friends heard stories from Armenia, Greece and the Bedouin lands from our own Kathleen Mavournin, receiving grounds for reflection on the growth of wisdom, kindness and discernment.

We honor the contributions of our visitors and representatives of wider Quaker organizations. We heard of the work of the Friends Committee on Outworld Relations, the Friends World Committee for Consultation, American Friends Service Committee and its Southeast Regional Office, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Quaker Earthcare Witness and Quaker House.

The Faith and Practice Revision Committee presented a well-written section on the care of children in our meetings [which was approved]. We also approved revisions to our section on Equality. Friends were not in unity at this time on a section on government. Of greatest concern was language regarding making decisions on reproduction and family planning by individuals unhampered by legal restrictions.

In the light of our equality testimony, we conducted a threshing session on the role of meetings in performing legal marriages while only heterosexual marriages are recognized by our current laws. Careful and thoughtful planning had established guidelines for the threshing that resulted in a productive, open and useful session.

Two Meetings brought concerns regarding Friends Meetings authorizing legal marriage certificates for some couples when they are not legally allowed to do so for others.

Meetings are struggling to find ways to honor all marriages equally. We wish to avoid the inequality required by laws giving privileges to heterosexual but not same sex couples. Friends are seeing ways to witness for marriage equality to the larger society.

Gay and Lesbian individuals expressed the alienation they feel because of the wider society's rejection of their marriages. Friends unite to focus concern on strengthening and supporting couples.

At the close of business the Yearly Meeting considered and approved a minute to stand and act against the practice of torture based on the Golden Rule.

15 June 2008

Western Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends United Meeting)

August 14, 2008

To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 1:6, (NIV), we read, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." This was the overlying theme of the 151st annual sessions of Western Yearly Meeting of Friends, held from the 31st day of Seventh Month to the 3rd day of Eighth Month, 2008 in Plainfield, Indiana.

Max Carter, Director of Friends Center, Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina, who grew up in Western Yearly Meeting, led us in Bible Study. He referenced his discussion to 1 Peter 2:9, 1 Cor. 9:22 and Ecclesiastes 7:18, to show how a peculiar people, chosen out from the world, have demonstrated a changing testimony to the world, as we celebrated our sesquicentennial anniversary, 1858 to 2008. Max related happenings from the ministry

of Allen Jay to challenge Friends to continue the good work which Christ began in earlier Christians exemplified in the life and service of Quaker Allen Jay during times of change in practices among Friends.

Tom Hamm, professor of history and curator of the Friends Collection at Earlham College presented the Quaker Lecture, "Luminous Friends". He summarized changes in the Society of Friends brought about by the committed, wise, and eloquent lives of Priscilla Hunt Cadwalder, Eliza Clark Armstrong Cox, Barnabas Hobbs, Samuel Edgar Nichol森, and Elbert Russell, all of whom had connections with Western Yearly Meeting during the 150 years of our existence.

Ministries and responsibilities of Western Yearly Meeting include Friends United Meeting, Earlham College and School of Religion, Quaker Haven Camp. Simon Bulimo, Friends Theological College and Friends Church Peace Teams, Kenya shared some of his experiences. The educational work of Earlham College and School of Religion were described. Quaker Haven Camp programs were supported.

A multi-generational service offered opportunities for young Friends to give testimonies to the presence of Christ in their lives focusing upon Christ's unconditional love. Those who had been in Western Yearly Meeting Cabinets over the years had a reunion.

Historical presentations included a visit from Eliza Armstrong Cox; a play, "Who is Addison Coffin?" and reminiscing by former clerks of Western Yearly Meeting during the service of former superintendent, Robert Garris. A panel told their hopes and visions for Western Yearly Meeting in "A Peek into the Future". Displays from monthly meetings telling about their histories were of interest. A commemorative book had been published and was available.

A missions service featured Judy Davis, Iowa Yearly Meeting nurse who volunteered in Kenya during troubled times. She stressed the need for ongoing support of Kenyan Friends.

John Punshon, British Friend, who taught at Earlham School of Religion, spoke in both Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. He talked about "Gratitude and Reflection" in the story of the Good Samaritan. We should meet future new challenges with obedience and faithfulness. John explored ideas of celebration of achievement with gratitude and appreciation for the people who lived and served in the Midwest of America. Western Yearly Meeting is recognized as an example by other yearly meetings which should inspire us to continue "the good work" with generosity and discernment for what God wants Western Yearly Meeting to do as we go forward.

The 2008 Western Yearly Meeting sesquicentennial sessions took a look backward but also presented challenges for witness and service to further God's Kingdom in the future.

Jim Crew
Presiding Clerk

Wilmington Yearly Meeting

(affiliated to Friends United Meeting)

John 5: 2–9: “Do you want to be made well?”

This was the topic addressed by Wilmington Yearly Meeting as it assembled in its 117th annual session July 24 to 27, 2008. Visiting Friends from six different yearly meetings and six Friends organizations joined us at various venues in and around Wilmington Ohio. We recognized and celebrated ways in which we are in good health. Approval of new members of the Board of Trustees of Wilmington College, the recording of the gifts of ministry of four persons, the large number of participants in the Young Friends program, and holding sessions in two delightful new meeting houses are all signs of our wellness. We also faced ways in which we as a yearly meeting are unwell and envisioned possible paths to wellness. We seek ways forward through concerns about dwindling membership and differences of opinion regarding theology and individual behavior. We pray for wellness for all Friends who read this epistle knowing that all are in some way in need and that God is the Great Healer. We, Wilmington Yearly Meeting, are trying to take up our mat and walk. We invite Friends everywhere to walk with us.

2008 Epistle Committee:

Robert Beck
Canby Jones
Debbie Knight
Robert McNemar
Andrea Scott
Douglas Woodmansee

From Asia and the West Pacific

Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting

Tena koutou katoa and loving greetings to Friends everywhere,

In July 2008, Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand gathered at Tibb's House, Auckland, for Yearly Meeting. Nestled beneath Maungawhau, an extinct volcano near the city centre, the spacious houses and giant pohutukawa trees of a boy's boarding school provided the venue. The weather sent us rain, mist, fog and welcome sunshine. The buildings provided hot meals and, almost always, electricity.

Some Friends arrived two days early to attend a seminar on "Nurturing our Meetings". This helped them to prepare for Yearly Meeting by holding it in the light and allowing Friends to move into deeper spiritual awareness. Other Friends arrived on the Friday for formal proceedings, beginning with meeting and greeting of Friends from every Monthly Meeting in the country, including Young Friends and others from Australia and Britain. We worshipped together, received messages from those unable to attend and heard the names of Friends who have died in the past year. These gentle beginnings prepared the ground for the hard work to follow.

In two and a half days of business considerations we heard updates from the work of Quaker committees; Treaty Relations, Quaker Peace and Service, The Right Use of Money, Futures, Alternatives to Violence, Handbook Revision and Centenary Celebrations.

We were challenged and enlightened by Friends working on issues of Climate Change and Penal Reform; how can we move forward as a community on these matters and what is our role to play within our nation and the wider world?

The meeting laboured over two major concerns about caring for money in right ordering. It took a long time! One proposal for a committee to advise on ethical investments yielded a struggle. Another to set up a committee to disperse funds on testimony-inspired projects was easily agreed upon.

We celebrated with Young Friends, through their lively presentation the completion of their first year as a constituent meeting of our Yearly Meeting.

For all the long considerations and determined, sometimes painful, inquiry of our policies, the spirit of laughter and joy were never far from proceedings. Listening, acceptance and forgiveness were part of our process.

In a sun-dappled and full-to-the-walls Meeting House for Sunday Worship we were reminded that Meeting for Worship is a party where we are all guests and hosts; the Divine Spirit our eternal guest and host.

The energy of Young Friends, the animated oratory of older Friends, the smile, song and story of an Alternatives to Violence Project Aotearoa volunteer, Mareti Kume, and a surprise brief visit from ex-asylum seeker Ahmed Zaoui, all lifted our hearts and breathed life to refresh us anew to persevere with the work at hand.

We were also blessed with the launch of a book of poetry written by our late Friend, Judith Child. Her words capture our experience:

“In the deep water of silence, tangled and withered leaves and branches are disentangled, and, revived and refreshed, can move about freely, while the root is still firmly attached to bedrock”.

Arohanui, and loving greetings to all.

Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa/New Zealand, 2008.

W.V. (Bill) Robinson
Clerk

Australia Yearly Meeting

To Friends everywhere,

Three hundred and fifty Friends met for Australia Yearly Meeting in Melbourne in January 2008. Simmering at times in the extreme summer heat we recalled the words of George Fox: “Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit”.

In welcoming Friends to country, Winifred Narandjeri Bridges, an elder of the Wurundjeri people, reminded us of the cruel deprivation inflicted on the Aboriginal peoples in the Melbourne area in recent history. These wounds are unhealed.

With moving accounts from their spiritual lives, Friends called us to consider the Summer School theme “Quaker Testimonies: with Spirit into Action”. We seek not only to live the testimonies, but to strengthen and deepen our connection with the Spirit from which they arise. For instance, we are developing an Earthcare Statement, addressing the issues of global warming, the threat of poverty and the spread of war. The Statement reminds us that we are called to consider the world as an inspired whole. We feel a greater imperative to simplicity in our personal lives.

We have an abiding consciousness of the many international concerns within the global Quaker community, both by the presence of Friends from around the world and the work of Australian Friends in the world. Awareness of community was apparent at every level in the gathering, a sense of caring one for another. Sachiko Yamamoto, former Clerk of Japan Yearly Meeting, movingly spoke of her personal spiritual path and the experiences of Friends in her country. We have felt the continuing healing power of the Holy Spirit arising from our honest sharing of the hurts of war. Another visitor, George Ellis from South Africa, delivered the annual Backhouse lecture which spoke of both the contribution of modern science to our understanding of the universe and its relationship to religion, positing within modern cosmology a continuing place for God at the heart of human experience and values.

Responding to so many conflicts around the world makes the peace testimony a constant challenge. We are holding our Kenyan Friends in the light during the current violence in their country. The Presiding Clerk spoke movingly of a deeper understanding of the Middle East conflict gained through his visit to Palestine and Israel. But peace is always a struggle, not only between nations but between religious groups and within them, including our own. Finding peace within ourselves is the first and most important step in any action we take.

The State of the Society report entitled “How the Spirit is moving among us” records a strong desire for spiritual renewal all around Australia. The ‘bubbling up of the Spirit’

inspires many of us to re-examine and renew our testimonies and the disciplines of Friends. Two Friends travelling around Australia under concern for “Quaker Voices in the 21st Century” have invited us to consider anew John Wilhelm Rowntree’s question from the 1895 Manchester Conference, “What can Quakers give to the World?” We have seen a flowering of creative responses.

Elaine Emily from Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting of Pacific Yearly Meeting, supported by Cathy Walling of Chena Ridge Friends’ Meeting of the Alaska Friends’ Conference, shared her exploration of the Spirit and functions of eldering. We note with gratitude the nurturing focus they have conveyed. We also heard of the challenges facing Friends in other parts of the world where speaking truth to power can lead to humiliation and even death. The testimony of integrity is put to the severest possible test in these circumstances. We heard moving accounts testifying to the grace of God in the lives of Burundian Quakers from those who have taken refuge here.

Equality continues to be a challenge for Australian Friends. Our witness to the spirit of God in all people has been strengthened by deep consideration of how we celebrate, support and record all committed and loving relationships. The testimony to equality also calls us to be open to new light and a diversity of experiences of the Spirit.

The practice of communal mysticism, unique to Friends and much respected by other churches and groups, may give us a special role in holding our suffering globe and its peoples in the light. Even in times of drought the wellspring of the spirit knows no restrictions. In the words of Isaiah: “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

Testimonies

Introduction

The possibility of writing a testimony concerning the life and service of a deceased Friend has been a valued part of our tradition. A testimony should not be a formal obituary or eulogy, but should record in thankfulness the power of divine grace in human life.

Quaker faith & practice 4.24

Not all Area Meetings write testimonies now. There are many questions raised: why should we write a testimony, why for this Friend and not that Friend, what is meant by the grace of God? Meeting For Sufferings commended the following guidance to Friends in 2006.

Testimonies to the Grace of God in Lives – An Enduring Presence

The advice in the current *Quaker faith & practice* at paragraph 4.24 that “a testimony should not be a formal obituary or eulogy, but should record in thankfulness the power of divine grace in human life” is not always easy to carry through.

The following paragraph, 4.25, a Minute from the then Hertford Monthly Meeting of 1780 records “purpose of a testimony concerning our deceased worthy Friends (is) intended as a memorial, that they have walked as children of the Light, and of the Day, and to excite those who remain to take diligent heed, and to yield to the teachings of the still small voice, that they may follow them as they followed Christ, the great captain of their salvation.” Much of this expresses Friends’ interest in the writing of testimonies today, but how is it carried out?

Historically in Britain the issue of records concerning deceased Friends in the Ministry began in the 17th century. An early record maintained by London YM is now lost but a series of volumes begun in 1740 were maintained until 1872 with retrospective entries copied up from 1719. These volumes are known as Testimonies concerning Ministers deceased. From the 19th century (they) contain minutes from Quarterly Meetings recording the lives of Friends rather than Ministers. From 1861 Quarterly Meetings were at liberty to prepare a testimony concerning any Friend ‘whose life was marked by conspicuous service to God and the church’, (text typed up in Friends’ House library subject files c.1970)

An early American testimony written around 1690 advises “it is a justice due to the righteous, and a duty upon us, to contribute something to perpetuate the names of such who have left a fragrancy behind them, and through faith have obtained a good report” (Samuel Jennings’s testimony concerning John Eckley of Philadelphia.)

Coming forward to the 20th century London Yearly Meeting Church Government of 1931, in use for more than three decades, stated “A Monthly Meeting may issue a testimony concerning the life and service of a deceased member whose life has been marked by devotion to the cause of his Lord and to the service of the Church. The object of such a Testimony is not eulogy, but to preserve a record of Divine Grace in the lives of (wo) men”. This last sentence bears a close similarity to para 4.24 in the current *Quaker faith &*

practice. The text goes on to refer to progression of a testimony to YM “only if it is likely to be of service to the Society”. This is in line with our current practice.

In today’s fast moving world Friends face a double challenge, to concentrate on the Divine, and to write a short but rounded record. The first is not easy as it necessarily relates to our temporal experience; the second is increasingly important if posterity is to hold learning from an inspiring text in an age of complexities, speed and an increasing multiplicity of knowledge and communication. Friends can be long-winded. This puts some off from joining in our Business Meetings for Worship.

A testimony should radiate the Grace of God as shown in the life of the Friend who has passed from this world. It differs from an obituary account of achievements, yet a few milestones in the life of the deceased will serve to illuminate the spiritual gifts bestowed.

Date of birth, date(s) of marriage(s), and date of death describe the setting of time. This is a necessary aid to living Friends. It is also recognition of the times in which the life is set for posterity, where future Friends can relate the spiritual gifts received to the cultural context of the era. Reference to immediate antecedents can anchor the recall of a name for more distant Friends. Reference to children can demonstrate the enrichment of life.

Recognition of a spiritually lived life and its application characterises the preparation of a Testimony. Worship through quiet waiting upon God prayerfully alone or where two or three are gathered together in Meeting is the hallmark of a Quaker. This does not deny the devotional or biblical emphases in other traditions. As seekers after Truth, Friends should be open to new learning as God’s revelation continues in the world.

It is against this background that the application of talents whether within the life of the Society or in witness in the wider world are described. There is a temptation to link these to a career pattern or an extended voluntary body commitment, and hence border on an obituary. Rather, it is the spiritually inspired application of the talent for good that matters.

Examples of the flowering of each talent in the life pattern of the departed Friend can then be quoted. If carefully knit together these convey an image of the whole.

Writing a testimony to the life of a departed Friend may not be easy. How far do we understand the familial and cultural background, the stresses and successes in that life? Did the light shine forth in life? Where we see glimpses of the inner spiritual life, how do these reflect in outward activity?

Were outward concerns truly a reflection of inward Grace? How does economic comfort sit easily with God’s Will? Then we come back to what to include, what to leave out and how to outwardly reflect a spiritually inspired life to future generations.

Not far distant may be the expectations of relatives of the deceased. When a close relative died I had anticipated a prepared obituary in *The Friend* but instead I read a note from one who had only known her in her last years. I know a Friend now who feels hurt that no testimony was written around her partner who died some years ago. On another occasion a Friend who was to die shortly afterwards made plain that he did not want a testimony written to his life. It is difficult to know the aspirations of family members, and particularly so when anxiety and grief intrude. With a little passage of time, such aspirations if known should not cloud the consideration within Monthly Meeting of how appropriately to remember a Friend. Such an interlude of perhaps a few months may help the Meeting also in its discernment as to whether to prepare a Testimony to the Grace of God in a life. It is the Light shining in Life that matters.

That Meetings might hold a short record of the lives of members is commendable. That these should be developed into Testimonies is not necessarily the right use of time for the living. It is difficult to distinguish between the Martha and the Mary, and neither should we judge. Meetings need prayerful thought before committing the strengths of a life to a Quaker Testimony.

Endorsed by General Meeting for Scotland by its minute 15 of 11 September 2004 and approved by Meeting for Sufferings by minute 6 of 2 December 2006.

John Frederick Adamson

29 viii 1920 – 6 xii 2007

John was born in York where his father worked in Banks music shop and publishers; at his first school (Church of England) he was presented with a bible 'for good work and bright spirit'. He then moved to a Methodist school and in 1931 won a York City Scholarship to Bootham School. He felt that this changed his life.

John had to face conscription at the end of 1940. For more than three years he had been attending York Meeting, and he was the clerk of the Young Friends Group. Making a difficult decision, he registered as a conscientious objector and joined the Friends Ambulance Unit on 1st January 1941. After training he was sent to join a relief section in London's East End which was suffering heavy bombing; for a while he worked in air raid shelters and rest centres; in 1942 he became quartermaster in Birmingham responsible for buying and distributing stores, and in 1943 was transferred to the Finance Department of Friends Ambulance Unit Headquarters in London.

John had met Helen Pontefract at a gathering in York in 1939 for former students of Quaker schools. They kept in touch when John left York to join the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU), and married in June 1944 in York. Part of their honeymoon was spent in London in the week that flying bombs began to fall. Helen soon found a job in London and joined John there.

After some months they began to think of overseas service in the FAU for which their French and German would be useful. In July 1945 they joined a small group who were given two weeks to explore the conditions of British subjects in France. After this they joined an FAU unit in Berlin which had just arrived to do relief work in a city of ruins and refugees.

Helen and John worked in Berlin from August 1945 to June 1946, and the work was to be a memorable part of their lives. At first the work was with people from other countries who had been forced to work in Germany and who now wished to return home; then the group were faced with the huge problem of the thousands of German refugees turned out of their homes in East Germany. As it was felt that only action at a high level could help, FAU members made a survey of the situation, visiting railway stations at night which were packed inside and crowded outside. John was asked to collect the facts and write a report which was sent to relevant government departments and was later quoted in the House of Commons and in newspapers. Their survey of conditions left a deep impression on the population, partly because of their language abilities but also because they disobeyed the non-fraternisation orders of the military. At the 1996 *Stille Helfer* Exhibition the

press besieged the Adamsons for interviews – they were so well remembered for their humanitarian work.

John and Helen made good use of their German in Search Bureau work which involved trying to find missing persons on behalf of their relatives in Britain and elsewhere. This was difficult and distressing work, but very rewarding when missing people were traced. Through these activities members of the FAU got to know a number of German people, including the German Quakers in Berlin. John was asked to give several talks in Berlin, including one in a German school. This was one of the influences which led him to decide to become a teacher. He began his studies in October 1946 in Cambridge. The four years at Cambridge were a busy time, as Yvonne was born in 1947 and Richard in 1949.

John taught in Wolverhampton and in Leeds, before moving to a school near Oxford, co-educational, tolerant and forward looking that suited him so well that he remained for 23 years until 1980. During this time family life suffered a serious loss when Richard died in an accident just before his seventeenth birthday.

While a member of Oxford Meeting, John served as Clerk of the Meeting, and also served on Meeting for Sufferings. He and Helen were described as ‘an integral team in the life of Oxford Meeting’. He was clerk to the Education Committee of Sibford School in the 1970s, and the then chairman appreciated his quiet effective support – ‘after every meeting he would summarise and make one feel supported when sometimes difficult decisions had to be made’.

Family holidays were usually taken abroad getting to know people and different ways of life. In his school, John started and supported exchanges with schools in France and Germany, and he and Helen led a number of school visits abroad. Groups of young students often met at their home for discussion groups, and on Sunday evenings they held open house for students.

Soon after John retired in 1980 Helen and John paid a visit to the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen. They decided to move to North Wales, and became interpreters at the Eisteddfod. Languages were always very important to John, as well as speaking French and German fluently, he also learned Welsh and Russian. They moved to Ruthin, which had the advantage of being near to Chester, where Yvonne was settled with her family. Helen and John were active members of Ruthin Meeting, took up golf and joined a choir which they enjoyed for many years. In 2002 they moved to Llandudno, and joined Colwyn Bay Meeting, where John’s spoken ministry and quiet presence were valued.

John showed charm and courtesy. If somewhat traditional in his attitudes and opinions, these were honestly and sincerely held, founded on a solid upbringing which included several strands of Christian fellowship. John was secure in his faith, and was able to draw on his wide experience and his learning, for the benefit of those around him.

A strong feeling of quiet dedication and determination comes from the memories of those who remember John. He gave much support and encouragement, although was occasionally frustrated when those around him didn’t reach the high standards he hoped for. John has been described as ‘a very good listener, completely unflappable, patient, observant and with a quiet warm way and smile. He was always very modest about his and their joint achievements, never boastful’.

Signed in and on behalf of North Wales Area Meeting
held in Bangor on 13th September 2008

Julia Aspden, Clerk

Esmé Blamires

16 ii 1929 –16 xi 2007

Esmé Blamires, wife of John, was born Esmé Styles in Heckmondwike on the 16th February, 1929. Her mother came from Cambois, a mining village on the Northumberland coast. Her father, who worked as a hairdresser in Heckmondwike, died when Esmé was only ten.

From 1940 to 1947 she attended Heckmondwike Grammar School, where she gained a Higher School Certificate in Chemistry and Physics. At the Grammar School she first met the Quaker teachers, Olive and Kenneth Ford, who were to become an important influence in her life.

After leaving school, Esmé studied Advanced Physical Education at Southlands College, Wimbledon (a Methodist college for women), and later became a PE teacher at Princess Royal School, Batley. It was at this time that she began, to worship at Bradford Meeting, together with the Fords and Leonce Richards. On occasion she cycled to Scholes Meeting, where she met John.

1952 brought a move to Lincolnshire, where Esmé was in charge of Physical Education (PE) at Kitwood Girls' School, Boston. At this time she was attending Spalding Meeting, and at a Midlands Young Friends' weekend in Northampton in 1954, Esmé again met John, who was now working in Leicester.

They were married at Scholes Meeting House on the 31st March 1956.

Esmé continued to be in charge of PE, this time at Abington School, Wigston, Leics, until the birth of their firstborn, Simon, in 1959. Rachel followed in 1961 and Katherine two years later.

Esmé took a keen interest in social activities. She had been involved, even taking leading roles, in Burton Overy Village Hall Drama Group. She continued this involvement as a member of the County Drama Society in Leicestershire.

In 1956 Esmé and John became members of Leicester Meeting, until in 1965 they returned to Yorkshire to care for ailing parents. They then became members of Bradford Meeting as Scholes had no children's meeting.

Esmé continued teaching and from 1968 she taught part time in Junior Schools in Rastrick and Morley and full time at St Andrew's, Brighouse.

Esmé had a wonderful way with children. She often took Bradford children's meeting, where her warm, caring personality made her much loved. Esmé's service to Bradford Preparative Meeting and to the Monthly Meeting was multiple. At various times, she served as Convenor of Overseers, Assistant Clerk, Convenor of Monthly Meeting Nominations Committee, and, from 1996 to 1999, was Monthly Meeting representative at Meeting for Sufferings. Esmé will be long remembered as convenor of the Catering Committee, not only for her organisation, cheese pies and scones, but also for her Beetle Drives at Bradford's yearly parties. Here, she could coax the most unwilling participants into enjoying themselves.

Their home was a place of fun and laughter and warm hospitality. To be invited there was the happiest experience. Esmé was a lively hostess, entertaining guests with her stories. Any

stranger to the Meeting would soon be invited back for lunch. One young man, Tai from Vietnam, became almost part of the family and stayed for two years. They took no credit for this, claiming that his politeness and innate good manners made him an ideal role model for their teenage children.

From 1970 to 1975 she and John, were on the staff of General Meeting Holiday Schools at Bentham, Ampleforth and Ackworth.

They enjoyed holidays at Glenthorne from its beginnings.

Esmé was a member of the Executive Committee of Waring Green Community Centre, which she served on for thirty years. In 1985 she took early retirement and added new activities to her service in the community. For more than ten years she worked at an Oxfam shop and for five years was a voluntary Case Worker at Brighouse Citizens' Advice Bureau. Always energetic, Esmé played badminton until her late fifties. She played bridge with the Brighouse Third Age Group, and helped for several years with the Brighouse Forget-Me-Not Club.

In retirement, when their children had become independent, Esmé and John took time off to travel. They visited most European countries and lived adventurously, going as far afield as Russia, China, India, Thailand and Canada.

Esmé loved English Folk Dancing and danced, among other places, at Wrenthorpe, Cober Hill and Elizabeth Wilson's home in Huddersfield. In her later days in the Nursing Home she had a good relationship with the dance therapist at the Day Centre.

Bradford Meeting will be the poorer place without her. She had been gradually withdrawing from us in the last few years because of the onset of Alzheimer's disease. But even just before last Christmas, she showed us something of her former self in the reading of a poem for children about a dachshund. All her old skills of storytelling were apparent.

Esmé never let her long struggle with psoriasis dampen her spirit or take away her zest for life. She did not complain, in spite of frequent hospital visits and unpleasant treatments.

We rejoice that she and John came to worship with us and share the life of our Meeting.

Signed in and on behalf of Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting
held at Bradford on 12th January 2008

Brian Bone, Clerk

Victor John Burch

28 viii 1919 – 4 iv 2005

Victor was a Quaker by conviction. He came to The Society of Friends after his personal witness as an Absolute Conscientious Objector during the Second World War. Gaoled in HMP Wormwood Scrubs for this moral stand, Victor met like-minded people who included many Friends. He was born on 28th August 1919. His mother was Roman Catholic and his father a Congregationalist, and Victor was brought up as a Congregationalist. At the age of eighteen Victor became responsible for his family's welfare after his father's death. This meant that he was unable to go on to higher education, but his love of learning remained and he continued to educate himself. He gained City and Guilds certificates in bookkeeping and other subjects through studying at night school.

Before the Second World War started Victor was working as a telephone engineer and had met three colleagues who were pacifists. In his own words – ‘I came to see that a true Christian life, following the teachings and example of Jesus, was of necessity pacifist.’ He registered under the Military Service Act as a Conscientious Objector and was called to a tribunal to be assessed. Victor was a non-church-going Christian and had no previous history of anti-war action. His reticence and shyness added to his difficulty in making a case for his stance against war service and so he was struck off the Conscientious Objector register. Attending a medical examination at a military barracks meant an acceptance of conscription into the forces. For this reason Victor refused to attend and a summons to a magistrates’ court followed. He was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment and taken to Wormwood Scrubs.

For the first few months there was little opportunity for association between inmates as they were locked up in their cells for the greater part of the 24 hours. However, the prison was regularly visited by a Quaker Chaplain and there was a weekly Friends Meeting. Victor was not a member of the Society at the time, but he did attend these meetings, feeling that Friends’ ways came nearest to his own ideas. It was at this time that he formed a lifelong friendship with Peter Grenger, a birthright Friend. Victor was impressed by a reading from *Advices and Queries* and borrowed the *Book of Discipline*. He later said, ‘My commitment to Friends dates from reading that book in prison.’

After a while there was some relaxation of routine allowing association between prisoners at meal times, and an extra period of exercise in the evenings. During association periods one of the pastimes was chess. One of the other prisoners managed to devise a chess board and set of men from odd materials, and it became noticeable quite soon that Victor was hard to beat. (It was not until Peter Grenger visited his home later that he became aware of a row of match-winner’s cups on the mantelpiece.) By mid-1942 there were about 100 conscientious objectors of many different persuasions in Wormwood Scrubs – Methodists, Baptists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Quakers and Humanists. As a result there was lively discussion at times of association, in which Victor was active.

After eight months Victor was released from prison for good conduct. He was called for an interview at the local employment exchange, but he could not accept direction of employment as a condition of exemption from the armed forces, as that again meant he accepted the principle of conscription for military service. Again he was summoned to court and served a sentence of one month with hard labour. When he was released from prison he found employment as a hospital porter/orderly at Charing Cross Hospital and worked there until the end of the war. This was in spite of the National Service Officer sending for him again and telling him he would be directed to a hospital away from home. Victor refused this direction and the officer said he would have to consider the position. Eight months later Victor had a letter to say the Direction of Labour Order had been withdrawn. During this period Victor attended Friends’ Meetings whenever possible and finally became a member in June 1945.

When the war ended Victor and his mother moved to Cornwall so that he could go into partnership with his brother-in-law on a small-holding at Trehill near Liskeard. In 1953 he first met Margaret who had come down for a holiday to stay with a cousin in Pensilva. This meeting led to others, and a regular correspondence after Margaret returned to her teaching post in Staffordshire. In July 1954 Victor and Margaret were married at Uttoxeter Meeting House which was under the care of Staffordshire Monthly Meeting.

The market garden was unable to support both families, so not long after their marriage Victor went to work for a firm of agricultural merchants. Because of this they moved to Liskeard where the firm was based. It was here that David and Elisabeth were born. Margaret and Victor became active in the social and religious life of the local Friends' Meeting, and Victor served as Clerk to Liskeard Meeting and Treasurer of Cornwall Monthly Meeting. Victor played chess for Liskeard and sometimes for Cornwall. He and Margaret had many other interests including membership of the local Arts Society and as a result often had young artists staying in their home, including Janet Baker and Geoffrey Parsons. These visits gave Victor particular pleasure as they fed his enduring passion for music.

Subsequently Victor changed firms to work with Cheadle Textiles necessitating a move for the family to Cheadle. The family moved to Dilhorne where they lived until his retirement. Their membership was transferred to Stoke-on-Trent Meeting where they played as ever an active role in the Meeting's life. Here Victor served as an elder, as Clerk to Monthly Meeting and as Quaker Prison Minister to HMP Stafford. As an elder he had responsibility towards Leek Recognised Meeting which he and Margaret attended once a month. Victor was active in politics while living in Dilhorne, being at various times local treasurer, chairman and candidate for the Liberal Party and a Parish Councillor. On Victor's retirement in 1985, he and Margaret moved to Banbury where they had some idea of reducing their commitments. Fortunately for Banbury Meeting and for various other local organisations that thought didn't last.

Soon after their arrival in Banbury they became fully involved in the life of Banbury Preparative Meeting where Victor was prepared to tackle the toughest of tasks. One was to cut down an overgrown yew tree using only a handsaw and considerable skill. From this toughest of woods he selected pieces of timber to be worked on his lathe later. On another occasion he battled to tame a particularly thorny berberis hedge. He was able to develop his love of gardening by growing vegetables to his high standards, while Margaret concentrated on the flower beds.

Victor took on the role of Banbury Monthly Meeting Clerk in spite of a having had a major heart operation. At his first meeting, his wry opening remarks to Friends were to ask for their 'best behaviour because I cannot do with any argument in my delicate condition.' He conducted business meetings with quiet authority and efficiency, allowing time for discernment; especially when there were organisational difficulties after the new Banbury and Evesham Monthly Meeting came together. His many services to the Meeting included elder and Registering Officer. As a Trustee he travelled to Friends House and to the Charity Commission to finalise protracted negotiations for a new Charity Scheme. He was closely involved in the painful decision to sell Armscote Meeting House. He did much to support the work of the Bray D'Oyly Housing Association especially as one time Chairman of the Management Committee of the East House sheltered housing scheme.

A long time Examiner of General, Monthly and Preparative Meeting accounts, Victor had the highest standards, but was always gentle in suggesting that with a bit more care errors could be avoided. His kind and helpful comments did much to raise standards. Victor has been described as a decent man, caring, thoughtful and kind – a father figure, strong in his beliefs, with an impish sense of humour. He was a mainstay of both his family and his Meetings. Ecclesiastes* tells us, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," and Victor did. He was a family man who lived a full life of work, including public and

Quaker service. He befriended individuals who needed support, pursued his hobbies and intellectual interests and was absolutely committed to witnessing for peace. His was an example of a life well lived which enriched the lives of those who knew him. He witnessed to the love of God for all people throughout his life, and for this we give thanks.

* Ecclesiastes: Chapter 9, Verse 10

Signed in and on behalf of Banbury and Evesham AM
held at Banbury on July 9th 2008

Jeffy Gibbins, Clerk

Tessa Cullen

20 xi 1947 – 6 v 2005

Tessa Cullen lived a full and adventurous life that embodied the Quaker values of commitment, integrity, and devotion to her beliefs. She believed passionately in the good in everyone and worked selflessly to help resolve conflict and build inner peace in others. She had a great sense of joy and fun which she shared with all those who knew her.

Born Margaret Tessa Wall on the 20th November 1947, she was brought up with her brother Tom in Bishops Stortford where her father worked as a teacher at Bishops Stortford College. Tessa showed an enquiring mind for spiritual involvement from an early age. She first became aware of the Society of Friends through a Religious Education teacher at school and a close family friend who had worked in the Friends Ambulance Service during the war. Although she did not attend meetings until much later in her life, she felt an identity with Quaker spiritual values.

After leaving school Tessa spent a year as an au pair in Norway. This was her first experience of caring for children, which would become a defining feature of her life both personally and professionally. Tessa returned to England to spend three years studying English at Durham University, followed by a year's teacher's training at Oxford. On completing her Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) certificate in 1971 she took up the post of teacher and housemistress at Sibford School where she remained for two years. It was during this time that she met Roger who later became her husband. Tessa particularly enjoyed the opportunity to support students in her role as housemistress, discovering her natural ability to contact and nurture the emotional and spiritual lives of young people. Recognising that her strength and vocation lay in working with children from disadvantaged and disturbed backgrounds, she decided to train as a Social Worker in Brighton, where she qualified with a Masters Degree in 1975.

Roger also moved to live and work in Brighton. They were married on 31st August 1974. In 1975 Roger and Tessa moved back to Oxford, eventually settling at Halfpenny Cottage in Stonesfield where they created a stable and loving home for their four children – David, Helena, Clare and Sophie.

Being a mother was one of the defining characteristics of Tessa's life. As her eldest son David expressed so eloquently in his funeral tribute, she was able to show each of her children how they were unique and wonderful and deserving of love. He described her as hugely gentle, magnificently calm, relentlessly understanding and encouraging, patiently and selflessly caring for her family's emotional and physical needs. 'This was more than

merely a matter of temperament; it was a huge act of will, of belief lived out, a true labour of love.'

Tessa continued to work part-time while her children were growing up, sharing the role of carer with Roger. For several years she worked as a hospital social worker, specialising in Paediatrics and later in Maternity. In 1984 she became the social worker responsible for the Special Care Baby Unit at the John Radcliffe Hospital where she remained for six years. With characteristic energy and commitment, Tessa continued to pursue interests and further training that reflected the needs of her growing family and her eagerness to support her work in every way. She undertook training as a Cruse Counsellor and a Yoga Teacher, and gained an advanced certificate as an Ante-Natal teacher for the National Childbirth Trust. Countless couples remember the dedicated and endlessly loving support that she gave them through these classes. She also became involved with the Woodcraft Folk and was a leader of Girl Guides. She was a member of the Board of Governors for both the Primary and Secondary schools attended by her children, and an active member of the local Labour Party.

It was through her involvement with the local Peace Group, which she chaired for some time, together with her search for a spiritual home, that she joined the Friends Meeting in Charlbury soon after it became re-established. Tessa and Roger became active members, taking part enthusiastically in both the spiritual and business aspects of Friends. They also became active participants in Jordans Meeting Summer Camp, where the extended family atmosphere of communal living, being outside and having fun confirmed their sense that the Society of Friends was a natural spiritual home for them. Camp became a regular and important part of their family summer holidays and a source of deep and lasting friendships.

As her own children were growing up, Tessa moved the focus of her professional life to working with school-age children. In 1990 she took up the post of School Counsellor at Bicester Community College where she was to remain for 10 years. With characteristic dedication and commitment, Tessa immersed herself in every aspect of her work. Making an immeasurable contribution to the lives of all the young people with whom she had contact, Tessa is also remembered as a great mediator, peacemaker and confidant to staff, parents and colleagues. Her work was underpinned by her Quaker beliefs – love, forgiveness, belief in the integral good in others, and a strong sense of justice. She was continually enhancing and deepening her expertise by taking further training in relevant specialities such as child protection, domestic violence, drug intervention strategies, self harm and behaviour and stress management. She undertook a three year part-time counselling training to support her work, which eventually led to further counselling responsibilities outside the school. She became a freelance counsellor at The Flat in Witney, the Marlborough School and Henry Box School in Witney.

In 2001 Tessa was invited to join Banbury School as a counsellor and was soon promoted to Deputy Head of Student Services and Head of Counselling Services; she later became Head of Student Services. These roles were a huge responsibility, and she became involved not only in counselling and social work, but also supervising staff and colleagues. She was appointed the designated teacher for children in the Care System and convened and chaired a multi-agency group working in Banbury. She continued to be a well respected and valued counsellor outside the school, teaching for several years on the counselling course with

which she had trained, supervising other counsellors, and continuing to be a mentor and support to teachers.

The importance of maintaining friendships was a feature that shone through Tessa's life. She maintained a regular correspondence with many friends and colleagues, conscientiously remembering birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions. Her loyalty, compassion and empathy will be remembered by everyone with whom she came into contact.

Her other enduring passion was a deep love of nature. She felt great happiness being among mountains, especially the Lake District. One of her many favourite activities was being part of a group of Probation Officers called 'NAPSAC' who made annual walking trips to the Lake District. She was chair of NAPSAC for many years and NAPSAC meetings were important events for the Cullen family, inspiring deep and enduring friendships.

Tessa integrated her love of the outdoors with her work, having the inspirational idea of taking groups of disaffected youngsters on challenging expeditions used as a medium for building self esteem and for effecting personal change and growth. Characteristically she qualified as a Basic Expedition Leader and in Mountain Leadership. Peter Norman, a colleague with whom she worked at Bicester, described the invaluable contribution that these trips made to the lives of so many disaffected and abandoned young people. Her painstaking care, patience and absolute commitment to the welfare of each child allowed 'the frozen hearts of damaged lives to warm and respond to her loving care'.

Tragically, Tessa's life was cut short by her illness and untimely death from oesophageal cancer at the age of 57. She bravely bore treatment with chemotherapy and radiotherapy and when faced with the prospect of death did everything that she could to help her family come to terms with the loss.

She will be remembered for her total commitment to life, her warmth and enthusiasm, and her infectious laughter. Her particular strength was to be able to knit together all aspects of her life into a complete whole. As described in her local village newsletter 'She was a lovable private person rather than a public character, who was always there when you needed her, laughed raucously and with gusto at a good joke, enjoyed food and company and was the best of friends.' To which we can add that she was also among the best of Friends.

Signed in and on behalf of Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting
held at Charlbury on 12 January 2008

Robert Card, Clerk

Josie Dunn

27 vii 1924 – 06 x 2007

Josie spent her childhood in Germany during the years of the rise of National Socialism. Her mother's side of the family was Jewish. Their experience in those times developed in Josie the deeply-held and lifelong conviction that things such as war and dividing people by race or religion are simply wrong, and are to be resisted, but resisted without hatred or bitterness.

In 1938, aged 13, Josie was sent on her own to England for safety. After a number of short-term placements she went to live with a Quaker family. They became her adopted family

in this country, and she remained in contact with them for the rest of her life. Her own mother and only sibling, her brother Kurt, were killed by British bombs in Berlin in 1943.

Her contact with Quakerism, together with her early learning, gave her a ready acceptance of our testimonies. Volunteering her energies to things she believed in or wished to support was a way of life for Josie. As a young woman she worked with Friends Relief Service on a reconstruction project in Germany and later with native Americans in Arizona, for American Friends Service Committee. More latterly she was a regular volunteer with Cancer Care and at the Grand Theatre. Her professional life was always people-centred: teaching, probation work, and social administration.

In 1956 she married Harry Dunn. They lived in London, Vancouver and Montreal before coming to Lancaster, where, as time went on, Josie became ever more involved in the life of the community, always interested, full of energy, eagerly embracing new ideas and projects. And always there were her boys, of whom she was intensely proud. From early in her life she had had a deep love of music, a gift from her mother. Among things she had been able to bring to England in 1938 was her violin, and she tirelessly fostered the musical talents of her three sons. Her great physical energy and vitality, expressed in her passion for travel, walking, skiing, swimming, family and friendship, spoke of someone who felt blessed by life.

Josie had an ambivalent relationship to Quakers and whilst living Quaker values was for most of her life not actively involved in a Quaker meeting. It was not until Harry's death in 1984 that she felt drawn to come more regularly to Meeting for Worship here in Lancaster and in 2002 she applied for and was accepted into membership. Her membership was much welcomed by those who knew and valued Josie and had been saddened by her ambivalence. Coming late in her long life, Josie saw membership as a further step on her personal and spiritual journey, a way of taking care of herself, something she had not always had time for in her busy, engaged life.

Josie had trouble accepting the loss of vitality that was inevitable in her last illness and yet until her last days experienced those graced moments when the beauty of nature mirrors the inner light. Josie knew her own failings and did not want us to eulogise her. It is for us to see that the grace of God can be seen as clearly in her 'foibles' as in her giftedness, that is in and through the whole of her life.

Signed in and on behalf of Lancashire Central and North Area Meeting
held at Blackpool on 13th September 2008,

Roy Stephenson, Clerk

Roy Charles Farrant

27 v 1925 – 9 vii 2008

Roy was born in Wellington where he attended Wellington Boys' School and became a Boy Scout.

From 1945 to 1948 he was a conscript coal miner at Eastwood Colliery in Nottinghamshire. A strong circle of friendships was forged and he found himself spiritually challenged by the diverse range of their religious views. After demob he contracted

tuberculosis and was ill for the three years being treated by a physiotherapist called Dorothy. They married in 1952.

Dorothy was not comfortable worshipping within the Anglican framework that Roy had been used to, so they set out to find a place that was mutually suitable. From 1952 they attended Godalming, Guildford and then Woking Meetings, each move prompted by Roy's new career as a Youth Employment Officer. They settled at Godalming putting down deep roots and raising their four children. Roy became District Careers Officer, working in this capacity for the next twenty-six years. He had a natural empathy with young people, seeing a need to nurture their potential, and at a time of rising unemployment he pioneered groundbreaking job creation and youth training schemes,

Roy's spiritual journey was always rooted in Christianity and for most of his life was grounded in Friends, but over the years he explored many fields – religious, philosophical and scientific – keeping an open mind and an open heart. His faith, not confined to one discrete area, rippled out to influence every aspect of his life.

At Godalming Meeting he participated in the children's meeting. His gift for connecting with the young was never more obvious than at Monthly Meeting family camp where he would be found singing round the campfire and organising games. He was an overseer for many years, served as Monthly Meeting Clerk and was a regular representative to Monthly Meetings and General Meetings. At Preparative Meeting level he served on countless committees and woe betide anyone who received a call from him with his Nominations Committee hat on. One invariably ended up agreeing to do all sorts!

Roy's ecumenical leanings found expression in the Godalming & District Council of Churches. He helped start 'The People Next Door Campaign' which encouraged members of different local churches to meet together in house-groups, fostering friendships. In 1969 he became the first Chairman of Link, a local ecumenical church magazine, a position he held for over seven years.

One evening Roy experienced a spiritual event that he described as a direct challenge to his will – to accept or reject his faith in God. This experience is recorded in *Quaker faith & practice* 26:13. He accepted. Gradually a plan took shape for Dorothy and Roy to become foster parents, offering a stable home to teenagers, most of whom had been 'in care'. Between 1977 and 1985 they fostered, (six at a time!) over forty-two young people. They, with a group of local Christians, established a half-way house to independence, providing support for a further forty youngsters over a period of eight years.

After retirement he and Dorothy spent a year at Woodbrooke. They heard about the Cape Town Quaker Peace Centre and developed a project to inform British and Irish Friends about the plight of those suffering under apartheid, and to raise funds for peacemaking and rebuilding initiatives. Their method of team-working became known as 'Farranting' at the Peace Centre and their tireless efforts contributed 10% of the Centre budget over fifteen years. In recognition of this and in memory of Roy, the Peace Centre have instituted an annual 'Farranting Day' for intensive fund raising!

Latterly Roy delighted in the unfolding relationships with his six grandchildren.

In 2008 he was selected to receive Maundy Money from the Queen, although he felt the honour was equally Dorothy's to share.

To the end Roy was a pillar of the Meeting. His ministry – often spoken with any children present in mind – was pithy and to the point, sometimes bringing unexpected laughter to

the Meeting. He was a man of integrity whose astute eye recognised weakness in himself and others, but accepted it, offering it up to Love. His manner was life affirming, open-hearted and full of warmth. Roy lived adventurously, a self-confessed seeker up to his death, which came quite suddenly after a fall on 9th July 2006.

Signed in and on behalf of Guildford & Godalming Area Meeting
held at Woking 14 July 2007

Tony Haynes, Clerk

Carol Elizabeth Gardiner

21 xii 1951 – 22 vi 2007

Carol Gardiner was the only child of Muriel and Ron Gardiner (a manufacturing confectioner), born on 21 December 1951. She was brought up an Anglican but rebelled against her local church which she found was too evangelical, forever raising money to convert Roman Catholics in Latin America. She was educated at Sutton High School in south London and at Nottingham University where she read English.

Carol had a wide range of interests: jewellery-making; glass collecting; swimming; T'ai chi – and of course, music – a passion so poignantly expressed in the singing and the excerpt from Mahler at her funeral. She was an accomplished musician, as a violinist playing first violin in the Whitehall Orchestra. She was also an enthusiastic fiddler in folk music (particularly Irish) from the age of about 14. She was a silversmith, and also made bead sculptures and was an accomplished calligrapher.

On graduation from Nottingham she got her first (and only) job in 1971 at Routledge and Kegan Paul. Carol was taken on in 1971 as a copy editor. She became managing editor.

In 1973, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Living in Peckham, she knew no-one in the district but attended Forest Hill Meeting. For Carol this Meeting meant a new life and she soon applied for membership. She participated fully in the work of the Meeting, in the Building Committee and the Children's Committee, and was appointed an elder.

Routledge and Kegan Paul was taken over twice and Norman Franklin, its chairman, was forcibly retired at 60 in January 1988. The next day Carol left, also redundant, to freelance and to edit Quaker Monthly.

Two months later Norman Franklin's wife died suddenly on March 23 1988. Carol, along with many of her former colleagues, attended the funeral. She put in her diary, "Glad I went. Must keep an eye on Norman in months to come, out of friendship".

Norman and Carol were married at Forest Hill Meeting House on 2 September 1989. Norman being Jewish, almost-agnostic, she a convinced Quaker, and concerned that he might not be able to make the marriage promise but they were both of the same radical tradition, with intellectual and mystic leanings and shared many ideas in common. She enjoyed arguing (particularly as her parents never argued) and felt this was a real freedom.

Carol moved to Hampstead and joined Hampstead Meeting. She would walk the mile and a quarter up the hill to Meeting each week, and report to Norman what had happened. Her special concerns were the right holding of Quaker business, and rites of passage (funerals, weddings, and welcoming babies into the meeting). After three months she was appointed as an elder. She was reluctant to accept as she was so new to the meeting, but Hampstead

Friends said that they felt they knew her well. She was very grounded in Quakerism and faithful in both her meetings, taking very seriously any Quaker jobs that she undertook, whether at local level or elsewhere. She was very strong in her peace testimony, supporting a number of peace movements. Her spiritual life was enriched by reading, particularly around the topics of death and dying, and women's thought and feminine powers.

Her career in editing also led her to be a Trustee of *The Friend*, as well as to be on the "dots and commas" committee, to examine the minutes at Yearly Meeting.

She was a faithful attender at Yearly Meeting, found in an accessible spot in the West block – which became increasingly important as her mobility deteriorated. She also went regularly to Quaker Life Representative Council, first as editor of *Quaker Monthly*, and then as a representative of Hampstead Monthly Meeting.

Carol made a major contribution to the editing of the first edition of *Quaker faith & practice*, which includes the following passage from her on disability:

"Our Religious Society includes a considerable number of people who to some degree live with disabilities, and we generally present quite a good record of considering their needs and attempting to cater for them – a consideration born of our conviction that there is "that of God" in every person. But we should ask ourselves continually if this consideration is being maintained and whether it goes far enough. If we really mean that there is that of God in everyone, then it behoves us to look with creative loving imagination at the condition of every human being. This includes listening for what they do not or cannot say. It does not mean listening to what someone else says supposedly on their behalf."

Rehearsals for *The Gates of Greenham* began friendships which developed over the years. Carol was always hospitable, opening her home to discussion groups and Yearly Meeting visitors – at first in her tiny house in Peckham and then at the house in Hampstead right through to 2005 – and taking an enthusiastic interest in other people's lives.

She was godmother to the two daughters of her university tutor at their childhood baptism. She took her godmotherly duties very seriously and stayed in close touch with the two women, who became Quakers, up to her death.

Although her relationship with Norman's children was difficult, she went to family religious dinners and became enamoured of the Hebrew blessing over new fruits. "Blessed art Thou O Lord God, King of the universe, who gives us life, and sustains us and enables us to enjoy this season."

She had great sensitivity – but this became acute distress, triggered by her illness. The MS got worse, and she had to drive to meeting, and then, later, be driven, as she could not park her car close enough to walk. The fatigue which attends MS made her give up eldership and other Quaker work, and for her last two years she could not often get to meeting. However, what pleased her enormously was a Wednesday meeting for worship which was held in a nearby private house for an elderly Friend who could not get to meeting (small numbers and intense silence). A meeting was later held at her home.

During 2004 the MS rapidly deteriorated. Carol became housebound and depressed. Further deterioration occurred which led eventually to a diagnosis of cancer. She took the news well, and was happy to die, at peace with the world, out of pain, on 22 June 2008 at Eden Hall Hospice.

Carol chided Friends for saying how brave she was, because, she said, bravery wasn't an appropriate word. Perhaps she meant that the word implies that there is a choice, whereas she just got on with life. She lived with such resilience. Her integrity, forthrightness, and her tough intelligence were challenging and rewarding in equal measure.

Her spiritual life was inextricably entwined with her whole life – family and friends; how she spent her money; her job; her artistic interests, particularly her music; her books; her plants and garden.

Hampstead Friends remember her for this, for her humour, and a kind of fierce joy lit with a wonderful smile, despite everything – even in hospital shortly before she died.

Signed in and on behalf of North West London Area Meeting
held at Edgware on 14 May 2008

Rod Harper, Clerk

Anthony Capper (Tony) Gilpin

2 i 1913 – 15 ix 2006

Some years before his death, Tony Gilpin wrote a memoir entitled “In pursuit of peace” and there can be no better epitaph to describe his extraordinarily full and adventurous life.

Tony Gilpin was born in Golders Green, London, both parents being Quakers. His mother took children's classes at Golders Green Meeting. His father left school at 15 and was determined that both Tony and his brother should have a full and proper education. Tony was sent to Bootham (“rather than the Quaker Eton, Leighton Park”, as he records) and from there went to Cambridge.

At Bootham, indicating something of the initiative he was to show in later life, Tony made frequent visits to the out-of-bounds local cinemas, pretending he was taking photographs of steam trains in York Station.

Whilst at Bootham he also organised a Quaker sweepstake. The “horses” were regular speakers at meeting and the “course” was the length of time that the Friends spoke. Money would be gathered before Meeting and dispersed to the most accurate forecaster.

He attended many meetings for worship but remembers very little of what was said. One exception was from a disturbed Friend from The Retreat, the mental hospital in York, who opened her ministry with “oh for a bubbling up, oh for a bubbling up, oh for a bubbling up (pause) of raspberry jam, jam, jam, jam, jam”.

His father was keen for him to join a firm where he was a director, Baker Perkins, and perhaps because of this Tony studied economics. He was taught by John Maynard Keynes and learnt an important lesson – that all established wisdom is open to question; he observed eminent, scholarly and well-informed professors in profound disagreement. Attending Quaker meetings whilst at Cambridge confronted him with the need to think deeply about the peace testimony. Thereafter, his commitment to non-violence did not waver, although often challenged, in his later work in Africa with the military.

After a year in Germany to increase his knowledge of the language and culture, he joined his father's firm as assistant secretary, but never really took to the work. As the war approached it became increasingly obvious that the firm would be involved in some way with the production of armaments.

He became active in the Peace Pledge Union and helping Jewish and political refugees from Germany and Czechoslovakia. His commitment to this work led him to leave Baker Perkins (and a job where he would have been exempt from military service) and work in Paris with Spanish refugees who had gone there during the civil war in Spain. After the Germans seized Paris in 1940 he drove a bus of about 30 Basque children from Paris to Bordeaux as part of the flood of refugees. This was the second time these children's lives had been disrupted, yet despite occasional crying and wailing he felt their acceptance of their fate was truly remarkable and was something he never forgot. It was a factor which impelled him later towards a career with the United Nations, where he felt lay the best chance of avoiding some of the terrible things he had witnessed in Paris.

He managed to escape from France and continued working with refugees in London. It was at this time that he met Eirene Douglas who came from an Irish Quaker family, and worked with him at the International Commission for War Refugees. They married in the Small Meeting House at Friends House on 19th April 1941.

Two nights before, the building had been damaged by a bomb and he and Eirene learnt that they had been sitting directly under windows that were hanging precariously "by a few threads". He said later in a typically laconic way, "Fortunately the quiet of a Quaker Meeting did not set up physical vibrations sufficient to dislodge them".

Meanwhile he had to appear before a tribunal: obtaining unconditional exemption from military service enabled him to work where he wished. He felt led to learn more about post-war reconstruction and joined a research organisation "Political and Economic Planning". This was a gruelling time; academic papers on Britain's post-war trade had to be produced for discussion with senior civil servants, and at the same time his pacifist and humanitarian beliefs led him to be active in the Famine Relief Committee which was attempting to persuade the British Government to lift the blockade on food in German-occupied territories. He also was addressing meetings all over the country, attempting to gain support for this cause.

When the United Nations (UN) was formed in 1946 he joined it, feeling that his concern for peace would best be forwarded in this way. His experience as a member of the Society's Peace Committee helped to cement his resolve to pursue his concern for peace. Both Eirene and he knew that working for the United Nations would involve considerable sacrifices on both their parts, with periods of separation from each other and their children and frequent moves to different parts of the world. One of the children later said of Eirene, "You enabled him to fulfil his destiny". The memoir referred to at the beginning of the testimony makes many references to Eirene and his four children and his family life – vitally important in sustaining his witness in the world. He relates both amusing and serious incidents: just one is included here. It is a conversation overheard by Eirene and himself between their children.

Sylvia: All people are sheep, and the only shepherds are God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost.

Jean: Yes, all peoples is sheep – even Americans.

Felicity: And are all animals sheeps?

Jean: Yes, mouses is sheep and cats and dogs and everything is sheeps.

Felicity (closing the subject): And sheeps are sheep.

Tony Gilpin spent the rest of his working life in the service of the UN, always retaining Quaker links and attending Quaker meetings in many different parts of the world. He

initially was involved in early international trade agreements, firstly in New York, later in Havana, China, Asia and the Far East. When in New York he had contact with Sidney and Brenda Bailey when they were wardens of Quaker House New York. Sometimes critical of the UN, describing their efforts as heavy-handed, he became increasingly respected for his sensitive but firm approach. His main contribution was in Africa, particularly in the Congo where the UN sent a peace-keeping force after the withdrawal of the Belgians, where he undertook three spells of duty in the early 60s, and later for 10 years he was the UN representative for their development programme in Southern Africa, and in the 80s he was also chairperson of the Quaker South Africa Committee and member of Quaker Peace and Service (QP&S) Central Committee.

During the course of his service Tony met many interesting people, from prime ministers and presidents to ordinary working people of all kinds. He came across huge variations of views and disparate interests, often finding it extraordinarily complex to achieve any effective agreements. He occasionally would find himself in situations of personal danger with the possibility of being kidnapped or injured. He lived in situations sometimes of extreme hardship, sometimes of untold luxury.

At various times in his career, his task was to edit the reports of specialist agencies, another task that required much diplomacy and it was not uncommon for him to have to explain tactfully to the author that what he had written was “totally meaningless”.

Sometimes this diplomacy was needed when undertaking ecumenical activities, e.g. when at a Baptist service there was a hearty rendering of the hymn “When the Son of God goes forth to war”.

In the treatment of his colleagues he was not always so tactful. He was made angry by administrative muddle and inequity. One letter was returned to him by a Friend who said, “I do not wish to have such unQuakerly language in my files”.

At times he felt defeated, reflecting that the vastness of the problems sometimes made them feel unreal. Nevertheless his faith in humanity and belief in the inner light never prevented him from sensing an overflowing store of idealism and goodwill in those striving for a better world.

Tony left the employ of the United Nations in 1977. He undertook various assignments for the UN and QP&S including a Peace Mission to Zimbabwe in 1980 with Adam Curle and Walter Martin, as well as being active in the local meeting in Hampstead.

His life became constrained after a major stroke and the death of his beloved Eirene in 1985. Nevertheless his benign and loving presence continued to be felt in Hampstead Meeting.

Tony Gilpin will be remembered for his imposing presence (he was over 6’4”), his intellectual rigour and his faithful adherence to his Quaker beliefs. A person who could find social conversation difficult, particularly with reserved people, Tony Gilpin exemplified the Society’s commitment to that which takes away the occasion for war.

Signed in and on behalf of North West London Area Meeting
held at Edgware 14 May 2008

Rod Harper, Clerk

Joan Hayter

7 iv 1932 – 19 viii 2006

Joan was born in 1932 and spent her childhood in High Wycombe. After leaving school she studied Physics at Royal Holloway College and went on to work for the Admiralty in Portsmouth – she was one of the first women to go to sea with the navy – testing equipment she had helped to design.

It was during her time in Portsmouth that Joan married Ken, and her son Mark was born. While Mark was still very small the family moved to Byfleet in Surrey. Mark started school there and Joan returned to Royal Holloway to study for a PhD in plasma physics. It was around this time that Joan's problem with alcohol became acute. Like other things in her life, Joan faced the situation head on, tackled it courageously, and eventually overcame it with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous. She continued her active support of this organisation for the rest of her life, acting as treasurer of local branches and helping to start up new local groups.

When Mark reached secondary school age the family moved to Malvern to enable him to attend the College there. At this time Joan started to train as a teacher, but decided it was not for her.

It was in Malvern that Joan's marriage to Ken ended. It was also during this time that she started to attend the Quaker meeting in Malvern and eventually became a member of the Religious Society of Friends there.

In 1989 Joan moved to Poole to be near her mother in Broadstone and joined us in Poole Meeting. She was a valued, forthright, loving and committed part of our community for the rest of her life.

For a long time she was treasurer of Poole Preparative Meeting, Poole Christian Aid and Casillo (an ecumenical group) – her work was always meticulous and she knew when it was time to hand over. She was also supportive of other treasurers in the Monthly Meeting.

Joan liked music, in particular English classics, and read widely, particularly about religion. She took part in the Christian Meditation Group held at St Nicholas Church in Corfe Mullen – a fellow member describes her as 'a wise and gentle guide'. She was ecumenically minded and was involved in faith healing and prayer groups and was active in the Anglican churches around Canford Heath until she moved to Wimborne, where she became a part of the Minster community. She was for a long time a lay chaplain at Poole Hospital.

Joan was a devoted carer to her invalid mother until her death just a few years ago. She was proud of Mark and pleased that he had found a faith.

Joan had the gift of creating and maintaining friendship. Her friendship with Mark's father continued until her death, even though their marriage had ended.

Joan had been through the 'dark night of the soul' but had come to a time of acceptance.

She had found peace in the period we knew her. She had learnt to hold fast to abiding values, especially to love, in the context of the 'last things'. Her spoken ministry at meeting and in ordinary conversation was simple, personal and prayerful. She had a deep faith in God – 'My Lord' – who in her last years, helped her to walk in the paths of love and peace.

Earlier periods of her life had been stormy at times, but ultimately she succeeded in finding peace with those whom she loved.

Signed in and on behalf of Bournemouth Coastal Area Meeting
held at Bournemouth on 19th January 2008

Penny Estall and Patricia Needham, Co-clerks

Robert Hockley

26 xi 1914 – 31 vii 2006

Robert (Bob) Hockley was born on November 26th 1914, the second son of Florence and Henry Hockley. The rebel in Bob manifested itself on his first day at school. He had been instructed to wait for his elder brother to accompany him home. He was sure he could find his own way, so gave his brother the slip. By the time he left school at the age of fourteen, he had come to realise that his education had barely begun. There was so much he wanted to know about so many things. This thirst for knowledge stayed with him all his life. On leaving school he took a job as laboratory assistant at Southampton Grammar School. Realising this was a dead-end job he obtained an apprenticeship with a large building firm in Southampton to become a qualified carpenter/joiner. During the depression in the 1930s he worked as a tram conductor with Southampton Transport. In 1946, with a view to improving his work experience, he enrolled in a building course with the City and Guilds. During his career, he made an oak memorial table for Lockerley church and restored the organ in Shirley Baptist Chapel. A number of Southampton Friends benefited from his carpentry skills.

Throughout most of his life Bob was a keen cyclist. As a young man he joined the Cyclists Touring Club and found cycling long distances in congenial company afforded ample opportunities to discuss all manner of topics, including religion, politics and philosophy. One of his cycling companions, a close friend for 50 years, was a veteran of the First World War. Some of the stories he told convinced Bob that war was not for him. Bob joined the Peace Pledge Union, and never wavered in his stand on pacifism. This drew him naturally to Quakerism and he was accepted into membership of the Society in 1941. His dogged determination to follow through what he believed was notable. Four times he was summoned to appear for a medical examination for the armed forces. Four times he refused. The consequence was a spell in prison, an experience he often used later when he was involved in discussions on attitudes to prisons, prisoners, prison reform and justice.

Although he joined the Society as a result of his peace witness, his Quakerism was based on a broad and deep acceptance of Quaker principles. He gave to his Quakerism the same energetic application he gave to everything he undertook. He served the Society on many committees, national, regional and local. In particular, he served two terms on Meeting for Sufferings, and he was the first elder appointed from the Mainland with special responsibility for the Channel Islands during a difficult period in Jersey meeting. In Southampton Preparative Meeting he also served as Clerk for a term, and as an elder, and on the Premises Committee. He was unrepentant on wanting to do things properly, and spoke plainly and uncompromisingly to that end, which did not always increase his popularity. He was someone who could be painfully critical when others did not meet his standards but all of us could respect his single-minded search after what is good and right.

Bob was a very intense and highly principled man but he also had a ready wit which was a saving grace and alleviated his intensity. And he cared about people. He joined the Labour Party, no doubt influenced by his working class background, and remained a loyal and active member until 2003. He resigned his membership when the British Labour Prime Minister backed the United States in going to war in Iraq.

Bob ministered in Meeting for Worship often, and his ministry came from real commitment, and was spoken equally plainly. Those who heard it would not forget that clear powerful voice or the message it conveyed. His knowledge of and love of the Bible was prodigious and his ministry was often woven around biblical themes. The very last time he ministered was during the third of three Meetings for Worship held in his home at a time when his mind was clouding over. With complete clarity, he said simply, "Follow Jesus".

Bob's family was very important to him. He met May Harrod at a Young Friends' gathering and they were married at Godalming Meeting House in 1945. They had two daughters and a son, and were a close-knit family throughout his life. There was almost nothing Bob would not attempt if it meant improving the family home or saving money for what he considered important things. The children were taken regularly to meeting in Southampton and participated in the Aldermaston peace marches. After moving to Alton, Bob and May attended the monthly Meetings for Worship at Greenham Common women's camp.

In 1991 May became ill and went into a nursing home, and it is a measure of his love, persistence, and determination, that, although his sight was failing, he would make the seven mile journey, by bus, to the home several times a week, with only his white stick to help him cross the busy roads. Bob lived life adventurously in spite of his physical handicaps. He travelled to India with his son in 2000, crossing into Nepal to visit the foothills of Everest. He was planning a visit to Egypt with one of his granddaughters when frailty finally overtook him. In some ways, a more serious affliction was depression which recurred on several occasions throughout his life. In his autobiography, he surmised that depression had come to him so that he could sympathise with and help others.

Bob had a prodigious and well-stocked memory, containing all his learning and experiences. In the last period of his life at Brendon Care nursing home he was still exploring that memory, and in his inimitable way giving information and ministry to those around him. He died on July 31st 2006. He ended his life as he began it, seeking new horizons. He avidly took from life and left much of himself for which to give thanks.

Signed in and on behalf of Hampshire and Islands Area Meeting
held at Basingstoke on 9 February 2008

Ann Thomas, Clerk

Peter Holman

23 vii 1923 – 4 vi 2008

Peter Holman was born in Hurstpierpoint in Sussex in 1923 but spent most of his childhood in his beloved Yorkshire dales. He attended art school in Yorkshire, firstly in Harrogate, and after serving in the navy during the war, he qualified as an art teacher from Leeds Art School. He moved to Kent where he met Bidy and they were married in 1954. There they became acquainted with Friends and they came into membership in 1959. With

three growing sons Peter took a series of teaching posts in Kent and in 1971 was appointed to the Friends School at Great Ayton in Yorkshire as head of the Art Department.

Peter enjoyed his retirement from teaching and developed his passion for drawing maps which brought together his drawing skills and love of the countryside. He enjoyed sharing with great enthusiasm his deep knowledge of and concern for the natural world. He and Biddy became wardens at Goat Lane, Norwich, where he energetically supervised alterations to the Meeting House which we still enjoy today. They bought a home in Aylsham to which they moved full time in the mid 1980s.

Peter was a founder member of Aylsham Meeting and was closely involved in the purchase and care of the Meeting House in Peggs Yard. His other great interests in Aylsham were the History Society and the Aylsham Association. In all that he undertook he was consistent, conscientious and gave himself wholeheartedly.

Peter had a dry and mischievous sense of humour. His ministry was interesting, simple and human. He was particularly good in producing suitable ministry when children were about.

An example of Peter's contribution to Area Meeting was his delightful and helpful booklet of directions to all of our meeting houses. We suggest that consideration be given to publishing an updated version in his memory.

Signed in and on behalf of Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting
held at Aylsham on 20 September 2008

Caroline Norton, Co-Clerk

William (Bill) Kneller

8 vii 1919 – 19 x 2007

Bill Kneller was born and brought up in London. At the beginning of the war he volunteered to join the Army, although he was in a reserved occupation and at the time would have been protected. This was typical of Bill – a man of strong passions and deeply held convictions. His war experiences affected him deeply, particularly when he went through the searing experience of the evacuation of Dunkirk. Because of all these experiences, he became convinced that war was wrong and this, no doubt, influenced his future commitment to peace. It was natural that Bill should find his home with Quakers whose peace testimony he so wholeheartedly supported.

For many years Bill was a member of the Northern Friends Peace Board and also of the local Amnesty International Group of which he was one of the founder members.

Bill eventually settled in Blackburn, the home-town of his wife Muriel, and here he made a strong contribution to the local community. He was an active member of what he would describe as the 'Real' Labour party and served as a Trade Union Official in his place of work. There is no doubt that many an employee would thank him for fighting their corner – for Bill, a peace-loving Quaker, was a real fighter when he believed an injustice had been done, and at times was prepared to take on his employers – even sometimes to the detriment of his own career.

Bill was his own man, without any affectations, always and openly himself. He was a man of principle and integrity with the courage of his convictions and would never compromise

his principles. Although at times his forthright views could prove challenging to meeting, his integrity and adherence to what he believed was right commanded respect. The many cards and messages Muriel received following his death mention these qualities time and time again. They were certainly recognised by the community, and in 1968 he was made a magistrate and served on the bench until 1989. He was a very active and well respected magistrate and it was during this time that he became interested in prison reform and began to question the effectiveness of a prison sentence under the prevailing conditions.

Bill found a great deal of happiness in his marriage to Muriel – who has been a most devoted and loyal wife and to whose wise counsel he would listen.

Above all, Bill was a spiritual man and a great seeker after spiritual truth. He had a questioning mind and valued the Quakers for the space they provided in his spiritual explorations. Bill never had any doubt that life had a spiritual dimension and he fought his last illness with great courage. He firmly believed that death was not the end. The world needs people like Bill who have the courage of their convictions and who are prepared to stand up and fight for what they believe is right.

Signed in and on behalf of Pendle Hill Area Meeting
held at Bolton on 12 July 2008

Norma Lee, Clerk

Endorsed by Lancashire and Cheshire General Meeting
held at Manchester on 18 October 2008

Peter J Speirs, Clerk

Gwendoline Loney

26 iv 1920 – 17 xii 2007

Gwen Loney's daily life was rooted and grounded in a deep Christian faith, a warm, loving personality, plain speaking and concern for all with whom she came into contact, whether in her family, her work, the Quaker meetings where she lived or in the wider world. She had no limits to her prayerful concern for other people, her sharing of others' joys and sympathy for their distresses. Her friendship and hospitality and her readiness to listen to people seemed to have no bounds.

Gwen was born and brought up in a large Quaker family in Richhill, Co. Armagh, in the north of Ireland. She was the only girl and the second eldest among Joseph and Violet Loney's nine children. Her elder brother died in infancy, which meant that Gwen was soon the eldest. She always spoke with deep thankfulness for the love and care of her parents and for her family life on the farm in which she grew up with its fields, orchards and garden, its cows, horses and poultry. During her early years Gwen worked on the farm, but on the outbreak of the Second World War she became the office manager of the local jam-making factory known as Fruitfield Preserves Ltd. This factory had been built and owned by the Quaker family of Lamb Bros, before the First World War, but it had been closed for a number of years.

Gwen started a Sunday school in Friends Hall in Richhill that influenced the lives of many people in the village and surrounding areas. She was also involved in the Christian Endeavour, which was well attended each week. This was the time that Gwen was looking

after her mother, who was ill and died in 1960. (Her father had died in 1939.) Gwen continued to stay in the home place for about a year, living with her youngest brother William and his wife June who were newly wed.

In 1961 she began a new life in Manchester, going to a position as Deputy Matron at Meadowside Nursing Home, where she was for two or three years before moving to Brookfield View Home in Gorton as Matron. It must have been a huge change for her, leaving her strong family ties and rural life in Northern Ireland for a deprived area in a big industrial English city. Not only this, she also moved from the closely knit evangelical Quaker meeting in Richhill to the theologically more liberal meeting in Manchester. For both Gwen and many Manchester Friends this was quite a challenge. Gwen's professional duties meant that she was not able to attend Sunday morning meeting on a regular basis, but when she was present she often testified to her faith in strong, traditional Biblical terms that made some English Friends uncomfortable. But through this period of mutual adjustment what was never in doubt was Gwen's large-hearted, outgoing friendliness, her caring nature and her total commitment to Christian Quaker testimonies and values.

When Gwen retired many Manchester Friends imagined that she would probably return to Northern Ireland, but she continued to live in her small terraced house in Gorton, throwing herself ever more devotedly into the life of the local meeting, Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting and Lancashire & Cheshire General Meeting. She also attended Britain Yearly Meeting, using the opportunity to stay with her brother Noel and his wife Susan, who lived in Hertfordshire.

It is not easy to do justice to the extent of Gwen's contribution to the life of Manchester meeting. Gwen liked to keep busy, whether it was in practical matters such as baking scones to sell for refreshments at Sunday morning meeting, in the work of oversight or in prayer and vocal ministry. Without fuss she demonstrated what one person with God's support can do to further the kingdom of heaven. Through making jam and marmalade and baking cakes and scones she almost certainly raised more money than any other individual to help repair the roof of Mount Street meeting house. She was no doubt the moving force behind Richhill meeting's generous financial contribution to this work too.

Time and again in recalling what Gwen meant to them Friends have referred to her sense of humour and ability to laugh at herself. Her niece Susanna Bastable commented that she was great fun and continued to be energetic company even in her eighties. 'She had a habit of drawing children towards her with outstretched arms, looking into their eyes and warmly connecting with them. She never overlooked children. Her catering was extravagant and generous. I remember in particular the wholesome seeded rolls, packed to bursting with home roasted ham and salad, that she would make for our picnics. The pale, sugar dusted shortbread wrapped in greaseproof was a hallmark of Gwen's hospitality. I could never understand how Auntie Gwen's "thrown together" recipes would yield such perfect results.' Susanna ended her comments by saying: 'I often wondered where Gwen got her vitality for life. Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." I guess that was it. Christ was the source and supply of all her energy.'

Gwen also had a tough, no-nonsense side to her personality that not everybody appreciated, but she expected other people to be honest and straight with her too. She could be bossy, especially when directing Friends who offered to help with catering. But her toughness helped with some of the youngsters in the rather rough area of Manchester in which she lived. She made it clear where she stood and did not talk down to them.

Gwen was active not only in Sunday morning meeting for worship, but also the smaller meetings on Sunday evening and Wednesday lunchtime. She joined in study groups and the late autumn study and fellowship weekends at Lattendales, the Friends Fellowship of Healing guest-house at Greystoke, near Penrith. Her deep knowledge of the Bible and early Quaker writings fed naturally and powerfully into her vocal ministry, and she adapted her style to take account of feminist criticisms and the need for inclusive language without diluting her essential message. All of this was important, but many people have given and will continue to give thanks for Gwen's care for them as individuals. She served for many years as an overseer, but she did this kind of work all the time, keeping in touch with people, listening to their troubles, telephoning them to see how they were if she had not seen them for some time. She supported hosts of individuals in difficult times. This included family members as well as the two meetings to which she belonged, and it was reciprocal. She and her niece Violet were particularly close and supported each other. Gwen also even travelled to Pakistan to be with a couple of friends she was concerned about.

As she became less mobile, Gwen decided to return to Northern Ireland to be nearer her family and friends there. She went in March 2000, just short of her eightieth birthday. In 2003 she suffered a stroke which affected her speech and made it impossible for her to speak in meeting as well as curtailing her other activities. Before she died her sight problems with macular degeneration caused her considerable difficulty. She was cared for principally by her niece Violet.

In May 2007 she was admitted to Craigavon Hospital and in July moved to Hockley Mews Nursing Home. Every Sunday she was taken by special taxi to Friends meeting at Richhill. She died on 17 December 2007, having attended meeting for worship the day before.

Four Friends from Manchester meeting were able to attend the funeral two days later and were warmly welcomed at Richhill meeting house, which was full of extended family and F/friends. The meeting itself was rooted and grounded in prayer and Biblical quotation, just in the manner of Gwen's own ministry. What was spoken reflected Gwen's life and character with tales and memories from her youth, her work, her time in Manchester and her return to Richhill. In ministry, her courage was stressed, not so much in relation to her physical difficulties (they were barely touched upon) but in regard to her ability to adapt and change throughout her life. She was referred to as the matriarch of her family. Yet paradoxically she lived for others. Both her ability to bring people to Quakerism 'through prayer and education' and her gift for perceiving people's needs and meeting them were emphasized. In her nurturing and nourishing she had a generous spirit and was free with her friendship, time, effort and whatever resources she had. In her, faith and action were one.

Carol Batton, a long-time attender of Manchester meeting, wrote two 'Poems for Gwen' with which we end.

Elder Flower

'You shall know them by their fruits'
She did her 'share' (made sure we did ours),
Little we knew how hard her 'share'... (one cannot hear arthritic bones).

Grade II Listing?

She repaired the roof With Jam and Chutney and it's still not leaning?
Does anyone know if she asked for Jars?
No — I know she is dead — but I'm not sure that will stop her making jam!

Signed in and on behalf of Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting
held at Manchester, 11 May 2008

Margaret Gregory, Clerk

Ann Mason

6 x 1953 – 14 vi 2007

Our Friend Ann Mason, who died 14th June 2007 at the age of 53, was a colourful, energetic and committed member of the Religious Society of Friends. Born 6th October 1953, Ann was the only child of Bob, an English Quaker, and Sheila, an Irish Catholic. Ann came from a very musical family – Sheila was an acclaimed fiddler, and Ann grew up with a love of traditional folk music, and twitchy feet whenever she heard a good jig or reel. Ann became a gifted and graceful folk dancer, and was for many years a member of Morris and Rapper Sword teams, serving as squire and bagwoman. She took part in British and international festivals as a member of London Folk, the English Folk Dance and Song Society's display team, and was active in the Morris Archive Group and the Morris Federation. She was also a talented needlewoman with a love of colour and textiles, making many of her own clothes.

Ann trained as a librarian, specialising in medical librarianship, though her mother wrote her application for her first post because of Ann's dyslexia. Ann's gift for organisation, and her lively – sometimes outspoken – determination to get things done, enabled her to make a considerable contribution in this field, notably with the College of Occupational Therapists and – combining two passions – the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, where she served on the Library's distinguished Advisory Committee.

Ann's Quaker father died when she was 12, and Ann was brought up as a Catholic. She became more involved with Quaker meetings in the 1990s, initially at Wanstead and later at Ratcliff Meeting. She gave freely of her time and talents, prepared to turn her hand to anything and often to be found getting on with tea-making and washing up. Amongst other roles, Ann was clerk of Wanstead Meeting for three years, was involved in Quaker Quest and Quaker Outreach London, and served as a member of Meeting for Sufferings. Here she showed great strength. She applied herself to the business of the Society, bravely being prepared to speak even when the meeting seemed to be moving in another direction, always seeming a little surprised at the support she received from others who obviously appreciated her clear thinking and succinct ministry. She would try to temper some of the abrasive contributions of others and would always wait till a session ended before releasing the frustrations she felt, particularly when she had been misunderstood!

Ann was a complex and paradoxical person: generous, irritating, direct to the point of forceful, with a sense of humour often turned against herself, and a boisterous laugh that could be heard ringing through the Meeting House. She had a real gift for friendship, but tended to be surprised that so many loved her so dearly. Instinctively a rebel and often her worst enemy, she held strong opinions but was open to challenge and to change. She was also deeply reflective, with an inner quietness and strength.

In planning for her future, Ann decided to divide her time between London and her flat in Cromer, on the Norfolk coast that she loved, with the intention of eventually retiring there. It was at Sheringham Meeting in Norfolk, in 2006, that she met Alan Kirkham, who was

to become her husband in March 2007: a transforming time in Ann's life and a marriage that gave her tremendous joy in the months remaining to her.

Ann learnt in November 2006 that she had a diagnosis of terminal cancer. She planned her life from then on with a practical and courageous focus on living in the present, joyfully celebrating her wedding at Wanstead followed by a farewell Ceilidh at Cecil Sharp House: a dance that Ann herself saw as a true memorial, noting wryly that she was determined to dance at her own wake.

Ann's vibrant, loving nature and passion for life is beautifully expressed in the phrase that she used to sign off her emails: "While there is music in your mind there is dancing in your heart".

Signed in and on behalf of North East Thames Area Quaker Meeting
held at Romford on Saturday 19th July 2008

Melvyn Freake, Clerk

Jean Medley

2 v 1931 – 3 vi 2008

Jean was born in York in 1931 and moved to Leicester at the beginning of the war. On leaving school she worked in a shop. She later joined the army as a PE instructor and was for a time stationed in Nigeria. She spent some years there and eventually returned to Leicester. She moved to Exton in Rutland in March 1976 with her five children and became actively involved in village life.

At some stage she had been on a CND march to Greenham Common and probably met some Quakers there. In Oakham she walked past the Meeting House, came in, and was absorbed into the life of the Meeting. She applied for membership in the mid eighties.

Jean was in many ways an unusual Friend! Having struggled with her education in earlier years, she did not presume to consider that she might become clerk or take on other roles that involved the writing of minutes and reports. Instead she gave her full support to those who were doing jobs, helping with the practicalities and making sure that decisions were carried out – even if that meant that she was the one to do it. At garden or other working parties, coffee mornings and other events Jean would be there livening up the place with her sense of fun and pleasure at being among Friends. Jean was always ready to lend an ear, and loved to welcome everybody to her charming cottage in Blacksmiths Lane.

Jean's strengths were that she loved and understood people and could get alongside everyone. People instinctively knew that she was interested in them and that they could talk to her. For example, during Christian Aid week when volunteers from the Meeting were doing house to house collection, Jean would frequently be missing, only to be found chatting to a newly-made friend on the doorstep, listening to their troubles and admiring their garden – perhaps coming away with a cutting! Jean was indeed a true friend to many people. She could pour oil on troubled waters and bring together the most unlikely people. Skills she used in meeting and everywhere else.

She was among the first volunteers at Ashwell prison, recruited to befriend isolated prisoner's families. Her experience as a single mother gave her plenty of insight into the struggles of the young women, often with small children, visiting the men inside. A senior

probation officer has written to say that she was an exceptional colleague. All appreciated her down to earth, common sense approach. A meeting for worship was held in Ashwell prison for a time, which Jean attended regularly – she felt it was important. She got on well with other volunteers. Her faith as a Quaker was important to her and often came out naturally in conversation. Jean worked at Ashwell for over twenty five years, right up to the time she finally went into hospital.

Jean's health began to cause problems some ten years before her death when she was suddenly rushed into hospital. On enquiring what she needed there, *Quaker faith & practice* came out on top of the list. Thereafter she had to have six monthly check-ups and later several operations. Throughout this time of loss of weight and increasing frailty, Jean's zest for life and interest in others did not fade. Even at the very end visitors would be greeted with warmth and enthusiasm. She was a much loved and loving Friend.

Signed in and on behalf of Leicester Area Meeting
held at Leicester, 7 September 2008

Peter Yeo, Clerk

Robert John Neidhardt (Bob Neidhardt)

20 ix 1942 – 10 vi 2007

'Truth' is a complex concept; sometimes the word is used for God . . . sometimes for the way of life,' (*Quaker faith & practice* Chapter 19 – Truth)

Most of our lives are lived on one plane. Hopefully they grow as our discoveries and meetings influence us but they remain more or less predictable. Nobody could have foreseen the forces that changed the life of Robert Neidhardt or 'Bob' as he came to be known. He was born in Illinois, the second son of a strict Roman Catholic family. His full life of 84 years covered many areas, both geographical and emotional. He was a man of peace, a wise listener, a lover of all things beautiful and a compulsive searcher for truth.

Bob was educated in Catholic schools and at Kings College, Wilkes-Barre, where he studied sociology. In later years he spoke candidly about the impact on his personal development of the Catholic belief in original sin and the need to constantly atone for it. After graduating he worked with young offenders in Pittsburgh before entering the seminary in the late '60s.

He left the USA in 1971 being out of sympathy with the Vietnam War, racism and the USA economic system but continued his training as a priest in Santiago, Chile, with the Order of the Holy Cross, studying theology and philosophy and teaching woodwork, beekeeping and all manner of practical skills at a local school. This was the time of Allende's socialist government which was very attractive to Bob. When the brutal military coup brought General Pinochet to power in 1973 he stayed in that country for more than two years, helping others to escape and supporting the resistance. Close friends and colleagues were imprisoned and tortured. A number of them urged him to be ordained to provide spiritual support. Bob was faced with his own mortality. He had extraordinary courage but was expelled from the country and made his way to Peru where he was ordained in 1975.

In Peru he worked for the Diocesan Social Justice Commission (Roman Catholic) in the impoverished coastal town of Chimbote working with the poor and coordinating a local health programme, but he was having doubts about the priesthood and celibacy and by 1980 he had asked for permission to leave his Order. Later that year he met a young doctor, Jenny Amery, who was working for a Non Governmental Organisation-run health programme for children in the shanty towns. They were married in 1981 in Jenny's home town in England, but returned to spend four more years in Chimbote where their first two sons were born. In 1985 Bob took his family back to Chile to work for an American Friends Service Committee project in Santiago. This must have taken great courage. It was a stressful situation with violent house-to-house searches, secret police and disappearances. Bob was involved in the production of audio-visual aids for education and Jenny in self-help health care. A third son was born.

There was no Friends Meeting in Santiago but it was there that they met several Quakers including Dorothy Birtles, who was visiting political prisoners. Her quiet persistence impressed them both and on their return to England they answered the advert put out by Quaker Home Service and received back George Gorman's "Introducing Quakers".

They started attending Welwyn Garden City Meeting in 1987 and two years later were accepted and welcomed into membership.

Bob's life was a sort of quest, always in support of the oppressed. He contacted the CIIR (Catholic Institute for International Relations) in London and worked for them from 1989–92 on the Nicaragua programme which meant more journeys to South America.

All those who worked with him will remember his dedication, calmness, good humour and above all his optimism. He was always hopeful as he envisaged a peaceful resolution of violent conflict leading to a new, fairer society.

When this project ended he moved from CIIR to join the mediation programme at Friends House, London, as co-director with Quaker Peace and Service, where he linked his past experiences with new challenges in conflict resolution. He took a group of ex-combatants from both sides of the war in Northern Ireland to spend time with ex-combatants from the Sandinistas and Contra forces in Nicaragua who were learning to live together. He made many visits to Sri Lanka working to bring the Tamil Tigers and Sri Lankan government to an "unofficial table" to talk. The quiet working of Friends at William Penn House delighted him as it was always personal contact that mattered to him – that and listening.

It was a time of change at Friends House; conciliation was being explored in different directions and it left no room for Bob. So, in 2000, he left QPS to become Director of CODA International, a development agency working on community projects in Latin America and South Africa. But this was a painful time and his quest for truth was leading him in a different direction. After years of mediating between people, he had to reconcile different parts of himself including his own sexuality. All life was sacred and God was truth. He openly acknowledged his new-found identity: that he was gay. Bob was a man stern with himself, shy in some respects but fine-edged, like "the shine on the polished grain" in the wood he liked to carve and fashion. He knew he would cause pain to those he loved but the ties to his family were never broken.

He worked for a time with a young people's project in Milton Keynes. He applied himself to the struggle for gay rights. He was active in a gay spiritual warriors group.

Bob was not only a man full of ideas, he was an immensely practical person. He had farmed in the U.S.A. He worked at an allotment and at one time dreamed of living on a smallholding. His discovery of the beauty of orchids led to a fantastic collection which he nurtured as a parent. He was a talented wood-turner and loved canoeing. He gave and shared practical life skills to his sons. His sense of humour spread a warmth around him and he was a most creative and accomplished cook!

The 17 years he was in Quaker membership helped him to realise the absolute belief of the divinity in everyone. Latterly he lived as part of a small, mainly Quaker community and was a popular source of strength and help to his fellow members. For the Meeting, he served as an elder and chaired some evening meetings.

In the last few years he worked at Luton with EasyJet using his Spanish language abilities to ease and correct problems. He supported his colleagues, standing for fair treatment and justice. Justice is based on our equality and the ultimate divinity of each human being. So Bob lived out our Testimonies; the principles of equality, compassion, integrity, simplicity and concern for the earth and for all things living,

Bob's colleagues at EasyJet were steadfast in their support in the last months of his terminal cancer. They presented him with a special adjustable chair and collected a large sum of money for a cancer research programme. His courage – and even humour – in the face of his cancer was remarkable. He was given time with his sons' help to put his affairs in order and make arrangements for his beloved orchids. Up to his death he was “a Messenger who announced the voice of life”.

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”. John 8 v32.

Signed in and on behalf of Hertford & Hitchin Area Meeting
held at Guilden Morden on 13 October 2007

Barry Wilsher, Clerk

Evelyn Nicholson

1907 – 1993

Evelyn Nicholson became a member of the Society of Friends after attending Ayton School as a pupil from 1922–25. She remembered as a girl dancing along the lane from the station to the School, happy that she was to join her brother there. She previously attended a local school in Newcastle but her father's ill health following war wounds led to her being sent as a boarder to Ayton, which thus became the centre of her life's work and service. Following University she joined the school staff as an English teacher and was appointed Headmistress in 1938, after a brief spell at Hemsworth Grammar School.

She was a firm disciplinarian but learnt the importance of listening and is remembered for going out of her way to understand and help individuals. As was said in ministry at her memorial meeting, if you went to Evelyn with a problem she would put down her own life and pick up yours. She was also a pioneer in encouraging girls to become qualified for positions of responsibility. Among the many developments that she fostered was the growth of the Sixth Form, which placed Ayton on a par with other Friends schools. By the time she left, girls and boys had entered universities and colleges all over the British Isles.

She was also involved in planning and raising money for building developments and the School environment; her administrative and financial ability was crucial in this area. Many parts of the school, laboratories, arts & crafts rooms, teaching rooms and sports facilities remain as evidence of this. But first and foremost she was a teacher, and many old scholars speak especially of her excellence in teaching English.

In the wider Quaker field she was a representative for the Heads' Conference on the Commission on the future of Friends' schools from 1949–51, and served for nine years on the Friends Education Council Executive.

As well as support for Shelter and the local day centre for the handicapped (Yatton House) she was outstanding in her care, both within the meeting and outside it, of elderly people, particularly in times of illness. This service extended over many years and she was a source of comfort and help to many in their later years.

Somehow she found time to give much service to Guisborough Monthly Meeting. She was clerk to elders for sixteen years, served on Finance & Premises Committee for many years and acted as correspondent for the Retreat. The existing Meeting House is a memorial to her in this respect, for she was a major influence in the conversion of what was a nineteenth century building into a modern gathering place of School and Meeting. Her work for the Monthly Meeting Education Committee in raising money and giving advice to parents wishing to send children to Friends Schools was significant, as was her organisation of the Meeting Sale through the Tuesday Meeting. Considerable sums of money for many good causes have been raised by this means.

Above all, she was a committed Friend. Her contributions to meeting for worship, to the School Meetings and to many other gatherings have influenced many lives. Her ministry was grounded in firm conviction suggested by the wealth of her knowledge of literature and her wide experience of people and their development. One member of the meeting has observed that her ministry, while obviously deeply Christian, was of a liberal kind, open to the seeking and lack of dogma that is a feature of Quakerism and that finally persuaded him to apply for membership.

Those who knew her well enjoyed her love of life and a real sense of humour. The courage and dignity with which she faced her protracted terminal illness was an inspiration to us all.

Signed in and on behalf of Guisborough Monthly Meeting
held on 9 May 1993

Donald Gill, Clerk

Endorsed by Durham General Meeting
held at Great Ayton on 27 November 1993

Tony Marsh, Clerk

Mary Edna Probert (Nee Fairbanks)

27 vi 1923 – 20 i 2008

Mary was born into the Quaker home of William & Edith Fairbanks at Parkstone, 64 Hainault Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, and was thus, according to the custom of that time, registered as a birthright Friend. Her first attendance at Meeting would have been in

a room hired for that purpose in Purcell House, 17 London Road, Southend-on-Sea. [It was not until 1936 that Friends bought their premises in Dundonald Drive, Leigh].

Mary's education started in the Kendrick Preparatory School, 154 West Road, Westcliff. At 13 she moved for a year to Westcliff High School for Girls before going on, in 1937, to spend four years at the Friends School, Saffron Walden, Essex. There she was joined by her brother, John; her younger brother, David arrived later. Her cousin, Derek Gaffee, remembers well the years before she went to Walden: Mary joined the Juanita School of Dancing, organised by Kathleen Grist. There she learned the arts of tap-dancing and ballet. The most important event of the year was to perform on stage at a matinee concert in the Palace Theatre, Westcliff. This annual event used to attract a full house, with the proceeds going towards the building fund for Southend General Hospital.

Friends' School Saffron Walden and Quakerism were inseparable for her – she was on the School Committee (just as her father had been before the war) and eventually became Deputy Chairman. Mary & Eric never missed an Old Scholar's reunion and, in 1970, in recognition of her tireless work for the Old Scholars Association, she was made its President.

(Paddy Welton has long and fond memories of her time with Mary, starting at Walden. Their respective fathers shared collecting & returning the two girls on their "days off" – with Mary being, temporarily, rather homesick on going back. They both enjoyed roller skating, taking advantage of the wartime winter emptiness of Southend's promenade for the purpose. Paddy was three months younger than Mary, and their weddings and first babies were also three months apart. She recalls cycling from her then home in Rayleigh, with baby on a seat behind, to enjoy a day with Eric and Mary, and later sharing the Old Scholar's Reunions with them. "Naturally, I am sad this long friendship has ended, but so grateful for all it has meant.")

On leaving school, Mary worked at the Strand Branch of Coutts Bank until the end of the war, when she married Eric Probert, a Leigh Friend, in Leigh Meeting House. They had three children: Janet, Stephen and Tony. They extended their family informally by paying for the education of Francis Aselma – a Kenyan Friend introduced to them through Leigh Meeting. Francis always referred to Mary & Eric as his 'mother and father in England', and maintains contact with the Meeting. Janet and Brian have since visited Francis and his wife, Mary. Francis is now a leading light in the Kenyan YMCA.

In 1941 Mary, who had a great affinity with children and young people, started the children's class at Leigh Meeting and was convenor of its Children's Committee until 1968. (It was not solely children of Leigh Meeting who benefited from her care and enthusiasm, at Whitsun in 1976 she organised a "Junior Olympics" for children coming with their parents to the Saffron Walden Old Scholar's weekend; the event was a great success, and was continued for many years). Mary Wauer (Wanstead Meeting) recalls that Mary's "sense of fun and humour enabled those of us younger to take seriously George Fox's words to be patterns, be examples...then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone. This enabled us to bond with the Society."

Just before she retired, Maurice Fox, on behalf of the Meeting, wrote to many of the former pupils, asking for a record of their experiences, with photographs, if possible. The replies – too voluminous to be easily summarised – filled an album, which was presented to Mary and is now safely stored in the Meeting's archives. On hearing of Mary's death,

Harry Hemingway wrote: “Mary was eager to leave the calm of meeting for worship for the Kinder-chaos of the children’s room. No chore, this; in the 45 minutes of Sunday School, a special kind of pastoral care, education even, took place.”

Mary became an overseer of Ratcliff & Barking Monthly Meeting and, in 1966, clerk to overseers. Many of the overseers of that time have mentioned that Mary was a very caring person. Jessie Hobson recalls: “Her close and loving relationship with her husband, Eric, enabled them both to offer their services on many Quaker committees — Mary especially as a dedicated overseer. She was a first rate organiser, and a regular attender at the High Leigh Family Conferences. She made newcomers welcome at Meeting, and kept contact with people worldwide: only her decline in health halting what would have been a life-time of service to others.”

This service led to helping in a wide variety of local organisations: granddaughter Marianne Lawrence recalls, for example, Mary’s deep involvement in fund-raising for the (then) Marriage Guidance Council, and going (as a small child) with her to prepare lunch for Abbeyfield residents, with whom she was very popular. Janet Abbott remembers also how active Mary was with Young Wives, joining the Earls Hall Young Wives group and becoming President of the Southend Young Wives’ Federation in 1968. Janet was pregnant at the time, and Mary was very conscious of the awkwardness of having a grandmother as president of Young Wives! Shortly after, the problem was solved by changing the name of the organisation to Federation of Wives’ Clubs.

Finally Ann Hemingway “...remembers Mary when she was a magistrate, (a position from which she retired at 59) and was encouraged by her to become a prison visitor. She recalls with pleasure Mary’s warmth and cheerfulness and, with admiration, her ability to organise so many Friendly activities (that ever-full diary!). Our children, among others, enjoyed the picnics on the beach, dressing up in early Quaker ‘fashions’, and the Christmas parties.”

During her last ten years, Mary suffered from an acute form of dementia, initially losing her memory and then, towards the end, her power of speech. For practical reasons, family support during this trying period could not be evenly shared, and much of the burden fell on Tony. He cared for her in an exemplary manner throughout.

Signed in and on behalf of North East Thames Area Meeting
held at Leigh on Saturday 13th December 2008

Melvyn Freake, Clerk

John Ransome

13 iii 1933 – 19 v 2008

John died peacefully on May 19th. He had farmed in Lincolnshire until retirement in 1994 when he moved to Empingham, transferring membership of Brant Broughton meeting to Oakham.

He attended Sidcot and Bootham schools.

He and his forbears had been Friends for many generations and, with his father Felix, called themselves members of the ‘awkward squad’ meaning they valued their independence and upheld Quaker ideas.

John was very much his own man and he enjoyed the challenges of his land and took

every opportunity to enhance his environment by planting many trees, making ponds and encouraging wildlife as well as taking an active part in village life.

He valued his friends, surroundings, fishing, enjoyed painting, woodworking and made jewellery in silver.

A much loved and missed husband, father and grandfather.

Oakham meeting much appreciates the hard work and care shown by John in premises committee over many years.

Signed in and on behalf of Leicester Area Meeting
held at Oakham, 6 July 2008

Peter Yeo, Clerk

Patricia Roberts

27 v 1943 – 21 v 2007

Patricia Roberts was a pillar of Croydon Meeting for over 30 years. She had a strong personality and served her local meeting, her Monthly Meeting and her local community with great enthusiasm and diligence. She was a deeply committed Quaker.

Patricia was brought up in the Church of England. During the 1960s she was a student at Cambridge University and was influenced by the ecumenical attitudes that were then encouraged by the vicar, Hugh Montefiore. This was the time of the “Honest to God” debate. Pat met John Drewery and they subsequently married. Pat took a Geography degree at New Hall and an education qualification at Hughes Hall and she later went on to teach at the Friends’ School Saffron Walden.

Pat and John came to live in Croydon, began attending Meeting and they came into membership in 1970.

During her time in Croydon meeting Pat gave devoted service, as clerk, as an elder and an overseer and on the Children’s and Premises Committees. She was clerk of Purley & Sutton Monthly Meeting from 1992 to 1994. In all these offices her clear-headed wisdom proved a great asset and she was always full of energy. She was very well versed in *Quaker faith & practice* and was a stickler for things being done in right ordering. Her facilitation of a Hearts & Minds Prepared group in 2004/5 is well remembered as having a strong beneficial effect on the life of Croydon meeting, leading to a continuing study group.

In 1994 Pat was among a group of three Mothers for Peace who took part in a notable visit to Uzbekistan. They met with local women and visited schools, hospitals and factories.

In 1999 Pat was appointed to the central committee of Quaker Social Responsibility and Education and she continued when this became Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), approaching its work with commitment and enthusiasm: for her, it was an honour to serve the Society in this way. During 2006–7 the process of appointing the first group of trustees of Britain Yearly Meeting took place. Patricia Roberts was a clear candidate for this important role and she was thrilled to be appointed. It was a great sadness to her that her final illness prevented her from attending any of the initial meetings of this committee.

Pat was deeply committed to the wider Christian church in the Croydon area and she relished the role of representing Friends in ecumenical structures. She took an active part

in Churches Together in Croydon, became Borough Dean for 8 years from 1995, chairing the Housing Task Group and organizing three important forums on homelessness. She was president of Croydon Free Church Council from 1997–1999.

Around 2003, Pat developed an interest in Ignatian spirituality and she took a 2 year course at the London Centre for Spirituality. For her, this led to a significant deepening of her spiritual life. She wrote: “I’ve found out that for me [Ignatian spirituality] has come to be crucial in my personal spiritual development. It has helped me centre down below my surface desires, my ‘ought tos’, my obsessions and my anxieties to become more aware of that part of me that can, at its best, relate to the light within.”

Pat had a very positive attitude to life and a deep religious faith. It was only when she was convinced that a certain course of action was God’s will for her that she would undertake any major decisions in her life. On a number of occasions she asked for a meeting for clearness to give her support in her decision-making. This desire for a spiritual leading helped her in the difficult and sometimes unpopular stands she was called upon to make in her various offices, and during the break-up of her marriage to John and subsequent remarriage in 1982 to Brynmor Roberts.

Pat became aware during 2006 that she was suffering from mesothelioma, a form of cancer of the chest. When it became clear that this illness was incurable, she met the challenge with tremendous courage and composure and she started to plan for the inevitable end without delay. She regarded this period as the culmination of her journey through life, and seemed to gain strength from the spiritual studies that she had undertaken. The birth of a granddaughter a few months before was a great joy to her.

Patricia Roberts died peacefully on 21st May 2007. She expressed the wish for a woodland burial and this took place at the area set aside in Dorking Cemetery on 7th June. Seventy Friends, relatives, and members of other churches gathered in the sunshine to witness the committal. The subsequent memorial meeting held at Croydon Meeting House coincided with the final celebration of the 50th anniversary of that Meeting House. Pat had been clerk of Croydon Preparative Meeting during the initial planning of the celebrations and her drive and energy had provided the necessary impetus for this to be a success.

Patricia Roberts will remain in our memories as a devoted Quaker, blessed with drive, ability and enthusiasm. We are sad that her life was cut short at a time when even greater areas of service were opening up for her but we thank God for all that she accomplished and for the experience of having her among us.

Signed in and on behalf of Purley & Sutton Area Meeting
held at Streatham FMH on 17 May 2008

Ethel Livermore, Clerk

Michael Rowntree

16 ii 1919 – 23 ix 2007

Service and leadership were combined in an uniquely harmonious way in the life of Michael Hotham Rowntree, who died on September 23rd 2007. In all the different phases through which his life passed there was revealed a natural gentle authority combined with unselfconsciousness and real humility.

Brought up in a Quaker household in York, being the great nephew of Joseph Rowntree the philanthropist, he absorbed Quaker principles and the tradition of service to others from his parents Arnold S. and Mary K. Rowntree. This would have been reinforced through his schooldays at Earnseat School, Arnside, and at Bootham School. During these years Michael's love of the natural world, particularly his passion for ornithology, was encouraged, an interest that remained with him throughout his life.

At Bootham School this interest progressed to a more scientific approach when he learned how to ring birds, a technique which has proved invaluable to the understanding of bird migration and behaviour patterns, and one which he later taught to other ornithologists. His knowledge was far reaching. For eighty years he kept monthly lists of all his sightings, wherever he was in the world. Michael led bird watching trips to the Middle East while a member of the Oxford Ornithological Society.

At Bootham his natural leadership was recognised when he became head boy. He gained a scholarship to Queens College Oxford and was much involved with the Oxford Ornithological Society. However, his studies were cut short by the imminence of war when he registered as a conscientious objector (CO). Michael was a member of the first Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) training camp in 1939.

Michael's adventurous service with the FAU in nine different countries was initially in Finland in its short war against Russia. From 1940–45 he was with the unit attached to the Hadfield-Spears mobile hospital, part of the Free French forces, serving in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, across North Africa and through Italy and France. His friends in that unit have written of his influence upon his colleagues in holding fast to Quaker and pacifist principles in many tricky situations which developed with both the military and the unit. Meeting for worship was held regularly, sometimes "in unusual places such as the backs of trucks". Mike's qualities of quiet leadership were recognised when he became leader of the unit after his predecessor was killed in the desert. Indeed, it was his love of birds that was to save his life. Driving to Bir Hakeim, Libya, he stopped to watch two desert wheatears when two bombers flew over; during those vital few minutes, the slit trench where he was due to meet a colleague was obliterated.

His support to individuals and his good management were much valued. Friendships with colleagues both French and English continued, sometimes for sixty years, nourished by the reunions which he helped to organise every few years until very recently. He had the gift of good administration without being authoritarian, and he brought out the best in others. After the end of the war in 1945 he continued to lead the FAU team serving in Germany, working with displaced persons and the civilian population at that time of great suffering, work which was handed on to Friends Relief Service.

On returning to civilian life he chose to make his career in newspaper management, firstly in Darlington and then in Oxford as Assistant and then as Manager of the Oxford Mail and Times. With his wife Anna he took a full part in local life, bringing up their three children within the family of Oxford Meeting. The hospitality of their home was extended, to many friends young and old. He served his Meeting – as later in Kirkbymoorside – in many ways.

To list the other areas of his service reveals the wide scope of his concerns, governed by the recognition of the needs of the world, its peoples and all its creatures, and the determination to make conditions better for all of them. In due course he retired early

from his job to free his time and energy for these interests, which included Oxfam, the Friends Provident, The Friend, Quaker Peace and Service (QPS), the Area Health Authority running the Oxford hospitals (as later in Scarborough), local Ornithological and Natural History societies in the Oxford area and then in northeast Yorkshire, and two of the Rowntree Trusts.

He served on QPS Central Committee from 1979–85, partly as assistant clerk, being particularly involved in the work in Africa, India and the Far East, personally visiting many of the projects. He worked for thirty years, at all levels, for Oxfam, a small Quaker inspired relief committee which has grown into a giant, becoming Chair of the Executive and then for six years Chair of the full Council. After removing from Oxford to a much, loved area of North Yorkshire he kept in very close touch with Oxfam and was given the rare honour of being a Chairman Emeritus for the rest of his life. Those who knew him in those years have spoken of his special qualities of maintaining a broad challenging vision while supporting and encouraging individuals.

These qualities were shown also in his work for the Rowntree Trusts. He served on the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Reform Trust for over forty years, finally as Chair of the latter. Colleagues have written of his firm sense of what was right, his kindness and courtesy, his ability to provide a quiet lead towards unity in difficult decisions. He effectively reinforced the ethos of the Trusts in strengthening the hands of those actively working for justice and peace.

Even in old age, suffering from increasing physical restrictions, these qualities shone out: his joy in sharing with others his immense knowledge of birds, his commitment to wild life conservation, his patience, gentleness and humility, always seeing the best in others, always spiced with a generous measure of humour and of fun. “A beacon and a witness” were words used at his funeral to sum up his life. Something of the grace of God shone through Michael’s life.

Signed in and on behalf of Pickering and Hull Area Meeting
held at Hull on 12 April 2008

Susan Dickinson, Clerk

Margaret Helen Simpson

11 vii 1921 – 11 ii 2007

Margaret Simpson was born in Bristol on 11th July 1921 but was educated at Harrow Girls County School in Middlesex when her family moved to London. They later moved back to the home of her grandparents in south Bristol and during the Second World War Margaret worked as a clerk and shorthand typist. In 1941 she joined the British Overseas Airways Corporation and then worked in the Personnel Office of the Royal Air Force (RAF). This must have been a difficult time for anyone living in Bristol, which was heavily bombed, and of course for anyone involved in issues within the armed services. As far as we know she never spoke of that time. In 1946 Margaret moved back to the London area and worked as a school secretary at Haberdashers Aske’s School where she stayed for five years. It was during this time that she began attending Harrow Meeting. In 1948 she helped at a Young Friends Conference at Wigton Friends School in Cumbria and in Young Friends Margaret found a way of being that held her for the rest of her life. It was around this time that Margaret was accepted into membership of the Society of Friends.

In her personal life Margaret had not found happiness. This was a difficult time for her and in 1951 she chose to return to Bristol to be with her family and to seek work in the area. She began a course at Woodbrooke but was then offered a post at Long Ashton Research Station, which was part of the University of Bristol. She remained in Bristol for the rest of her working life, serving with immense dedication as Secretary and Personal Assistant to the Director. She was apparently a formidable figure there, in defence of the Director and of her own standing as his Secretary! She later received an MBE for services to the University and accepted the award, as she said, “for secretaries everywhere”.

Margaret had, in 1951, transferred her membership to Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting, attached to Friars Meeting. Her deep interest in Quaker history was already apparent. She was appointed clerk to Monthly Meeting Library and Lecture Committee and served in this post for 46 years. In 1952 she arranged a large exhibition in Bristol to mark 300 years of Quakerism. She was also appointed as clerk to Monthly Meeting in 1954 and held this post through the difficult and painful years when the decision was taken to sell the historic Quakers Friars Meeting House in central Bristol. The issue was bitterly divisive and it was Margaret’s commitment to the Quaker business method that enabled her to hold the Monthly Meeting together. Her service was not confined to the local area and from 1961 to 1967 she took part in the Yearly Meeting Book of Discipline Revision Committee. Margaret continued to use her intellect and her enquiring nature to seek out and check historical details from many sources. A visiting Friend noticed that her copy of *Quaker faith & practice* was carefully and profusely annotated and when, after her death, another Friend bought one of her books from her estate that too was full of her own notes and observations.

From 1967 she attended Redland Meeting serving as an elder and for five years as clerk to elders. She took her responsibilities very seriously. Though, steeped as she was in Quaker history, she rarely seemed to appreciate that the past was never static, and as a result she was often resistant to change. At times she could be distractingly ineffective, but just at the moment when it seemed to be becoming unbearable, she would surface and ask an important or searching question. She could at times be infuriatingly obstructive, yet in tense and apparently intractable situations she could suddenly offer a few words which enabled a meeting to transcend its differences and move towards a healing resolution.

In 1975 when there was great concern that Bedminster Meeting was reduced to a very few Members she took the difficult decision to transfer her attendance from a busy and active meeting to help in keeping Bedminster alive. This she did and attended faithfully as the meeting very slowly attracted new members and attenders and survived. For almost the whole of her life Margaret remained a devoted participant of Monthly Meeting. She retained many warm friendships within the wider Society and a Friend remembers that on his parent’s 50th wedding anniversary Margaret arrived with a bouquet of fifty wildflowers to mark the occasion.

By 1980 Margaret had reached retirement but then in 1982 she attended Yearly Meeting at Warwick and there met Anne Wynn-Wilson who had begun the Quaker Tapestry Project. All of Margaret’s energy and passion found a home as the first and long-term secretary and newsletter editor of the project. This brought together her great loves, art and colour and perhaps most of all the history of the Society of Friends. This was her bedrock and the source of her strength. Margaret assisted in putting on many displays of the Tapestry as it developed, especially in the Royal Festival Hall in April/May 1990 and in August 1990

in Bayeux, in a hall directly below the Bayeux Tapestry. Another major exhibition was in Central Meeting House in Bristol, in October 1991, to mark “Quakers in Bristol since 1654”.

Margaret’s work with the Tapestry was a very real service within the Society of Friends. She was appreciative of the work done by others for peace, social justice and other concerns and added her own voice through her correspondence. She had never married and continued to live in the house where her parents and grandparents had lived before her. Her home could seem like a family museum with all of its myriad contents unchanged but she always made friends welcome and in her personal friendships she could, and did, offer support and affection in sometimes difficult situations. Her interests had also spread to include a passion for watching tennis on television and an equal passion for watching snooker! We recall her in her middle years with her tall commanding figure; we remember her too in later years, her frame bowed but her determination in no way diminished, as she made her laborious way to meeting for worship or committees, leaning on her wheeled support frame. She continued, as she had always done, to invite newcomers to her home to impart something of our history and to show an interest in their lives.

In meeting, as she grew older, her loss of hearing caused her great distress and her anger at this was not always well directed or controlled, yet at times she showed great kindness to individual Friends. Whenever she took offence at some unintended slight she moved quickly to restore good relations. Margaret continued to hold fast to the roots and heart of Quakerism. She was like a deep-rooted shrub in a garden with new tenants; people who liked the house but sometimes wanted to re-design the garden. Margaret was the awkward shrub that was too deeply rooted, and sometimes too thorny, to remove. As the newcomers planted around it the shrub could be seen as the focus and strength of the design and as the seasons, the colours and forms changed, the shrub remained, holding the soil, and perhaps the soul, and enriching the earth around it.

The Tapestry she and others have left us is indeed appropriate. When she died, the Tapestry Committee sent these words in memory of her. “The friendship, expertise and love she shared with us over the years will be greatly missed. Margaret was part of the Tapestry Committee (and family) from the beginning, in the early 1980s and we will treasure the huge contribution she made towards this work. During the last twenty-five years the Quaker Tapestry became a way of life for Margaret – it was her legacy for the future. It is because of these people, like Margaret, with dedication and vision that the Tapestry continues to thrive today.”

Signed in and on behalf of Bristol Area Meeting
held at Horfield on 22 October 2008

Christine Willmore, Clerk

David Brian Roy Swinstead

8 xi 1917 – 15 vi 2008

Anyone looking back through the records of Hampstead Monthly Meeting would be impressed, perhaps even humbled by discovering the contribution to the Society of Friends over 80 years by David Swinstead – Area Meeting clerk, Local Meeting clerk, Area and Local Meeting treasurer, representative and treasurer of Six Weeks Meeting. Apart from

these major undertakings, David was an elder and clerk of elders of Hampstead Local Meeting on and off for a period of over 60 years and similarly a member of Hampstead's premises committee. To all these positions he brought a quiet efficiency: Friends knowing that work would be undertaken in right ordering and that due process would be followed, in premises committees and at Six Weeks Meeting he would not hesitate to speak plainly, especially if he felt the Society's resources were not being properly applied. He was known at Six Weeks Meeting for scrutinising minutes and ensuring that decisions were properly carried through.

David was born into an artistic and musical London family and was rather proud that his father's compositions still brought in (albeit small) sums from the Performing Rights Society.

He was a quiet thoughtful child – one of his favourite occupations was to look at bus timetables and work out the most convenient way to get from A to B. An early reflection of an unusual combination of altruism and meticulous attention to detail, which was to be a feature of much of his work for the Society and in his life in general.

It was during his latter years at school that he became a pacifist and conscientious objector and a chance meeting led an acquaintance to suggest that he might get support for his position from the Society of Friends at any tribunal he may have to face. The support he received led him to join the Friends Ambulance Unit in which he served during the Second World War.

After the war he qualified as an accountant and much of his working life was given in service in this capacity to charities, notably the St. Johns Ambulance Association. On retiring at 60 he took the highly imaginative step of buying a health food company, "Marigold Foods", a one-woman band operating out of a lock-up on the Edgware Road, and later out of the garage of his house in Hampstead. David and his partner built the business from a loss-making concern into a highly successful distribution company of organic foods which now employs over 60 people. They have run the company with a policy of social responsibility, and in accordance with Quaker principles of straightforwardness and integrity, consciously acknowledging the personal needs of each member of staff.

David's courteous and slightly old-fashioned manner towards others was appreciated. In his later years he sometimes appeared less outgoing than formerly, however, once addressed, his face would light up and his eyes would twinkle. This was much in evidence when his local meeting celebrated his 90th birthday with him and particularly so when mention was made of his sporting prowess at cricket.

Central to David's life was meeting for worship which he, with occasional pauses, attended regularly ever since that first contact with Friends in the early 1940s. He ministered only occasionally, usually in the form of a prayer which would resonate deeply with the tenor of the meeting. He drew much strength from the deep silence of a meeting for worship, "a living silence" as he often described it: his sense of the divine had an unflinching hold upon him.

After his separation from his second wife, David moved more and more towards the simple life. Despite the increasing success of Marigold Foods, he persisted in living in his office in their business centre/warehouse. His desk, an easy chair and a bed were the only furnishings. As the company prospered and he became richer, he gave more and more of

his earnings away, acknowledging that he found it difficult to spend anything on himself. It was Quaker simplicity taken to ultimate limits.

David Swinstead was a complex, sometimes determined person, some said too much so. An early characteristic identified by his sister when he was a child was of being able to find a way, often by an unexpected route. This gift stayed with him throughout his life.

A contributor, philanthropist, devoted to family and to his surprise a highly successful entrepreneur, David was always ready to give credit to others – his business partner and others at work, and anyone else who occurred to him. This Friend has left our Religious Society and society in general the richer for his care and for his service.

Signed in and on behalf of North West London Area Meeting
held at Friends House, London, 13th November 2008

Rod Harper, Clerk

Mary Willes

19 v 1927 – 15 ii 2003

Mary was a member of Winchester Meeting for ten years and became one of its most influential members. She was greatly loved by many of the Meeting and this testimony is a collaborative description by several of us.

Her spiritual journey began in the Congregational Church and as a questioning child she decided that the adults there did not believe what they taught the children. As a young woman she attended her first Quaker meeting in Oxford and although subsequently conforming to the Anglican Church at Downe House during the ten years she taught there, she joined Friends in 1967, having started to attend in 1963. The book that influenced her most was George Gorman's "The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship".

Her academic career started in 1945 with her entrance to Somerville College Oxford, to read English, having gained a State scholarship. She felt quite ill-prepared and overwhelmed by the rich cultural life of Oxford. After graduating she took a teaching diploma and her testimonial was as follows:

"Miss Willes is a student of outstanding ability. She has an original mind which is at ease with analytical thought and in artistic creation. Her knowledge of literature is wide and sensitive, her standard of scholarship high and her English style is deft and lucid. Miss Willes has a generous conception of her work as an educator and will give herself to it unsparingly. She is methodical and reliable. She is patient and friendly in her dealings with pupils and is an unselfish and courteous colleague. "

These qualities were recognisable throughout Mary's life.

Sadly she then turned down a teaching post at Unity High School in Khartoum to please her parents, who felt she should stay in England to care for them. She took a post at Ashford School, followed by one at Downe House for ten years until 1963. She then applied and was appointed Lecturer, soon to be followed by promotion to Principal Lecturer, at West Midlands College of Education, Walsall.

During the late sixties there were increasing numbers of children from ethnic minorities in the local schools who could speak little English. This brought a new opportunity for Mary to specialize in linguistics. In 1968, using her analytical ability, she gained an

M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Essex. This radically changed Mary's professional life. She then founded a new Department of English Language at the College. She became more involved in Applied Linguistics, making written and verbal contributions in this field. In 1960 she completed her Ph.D. from Birmingham University (which became the book "Children into Pupils") and this coincided with the failure of Mary's parents' health and she was free to start a new life.

She took up a post as Associate Professor of English at the University of Macao. Her own words best expressed the transformation of her life after this move: "It was as though everything that happened before had happened to someone else." There she made lasting friendships with her colleagues and pupils. After six years she changed to supervising graduate studies and writing material for distance learning.

Returning turning to England in 1992, Mary held various consultancy posts in England and China and published several books on linguistics. In 1993 she bought a house in Winchester and became a member of Southampton and Portsmouth Monthly Meeting, providing much support as a conscientious and hardworking editor of the meeting newsletter and as clerk. Mary also threw herself into the activities of our Meeting, supporting the asylum seekers who were imprisoned in Winchester. A group of friends was formed to visit them and she kept an accurate log of all the detainees, which included their visitors and visits. One of them was Chinese and she was able to visit him and help with his deportation. She also deputised for our Warden when she was away. One Friend remembers Mary at a Monthly Meeting distributing cups of tea wearing an apron and declaring, "I'm a Nippy."

Mary continued to write and in 1997 accepted an appointment as Honorary Professor of the University of Beijing, where she lived for four or five months at a time, very modestly, ignoring the cockroaches, writing text books and teaching English. A few months before her death she arranged for a group of her students to come to Warwick University for further studies.

This is a broad outline of Mary's life but although it does show what a warm, loving and unique woman she was, it does not mention her talent as an artist. Shortly before she died she went on a course to learn how to paint icons – not easy. Before this she had done delicate and detailed paintings of flowers and drawings of Chinese landscapes, which she sold in aid of Sightsavers. She also wrote delightful and witty poetry.

Another aspect of Mary was her ability to adapt herself to acquaintances and friends. She shared their interests and enthusiasms with encouragement and humour, so that funeral tributes poured in from all over the world, including one signed by a number of her Chinese colleagues: "When we first met Mary as a colleague in Beijing we loved her for her learning and for her mind, the clarity of her thought, the grace of her writing and the wonderful riches of her conversation – and then she stayed longer with us and we loved her simply for herself."

Mary's own modesty, tempered with humour, allowed her to share her love of art, history, poetry, her appreciation of technology and use of the computer, as well as the natural world. We miss her deeply and will, I am sure, continue to do so and we know ourselves to be exceptionally blest for having been among her many friends.

Signed in and on behalf of Southampton and Portsmouth Meeting
held at Basingstoke on 11 February 2006

Frank Boulton, Clerk

£6 where sold