

Update

December 2018



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1918-2018: Some reflections

Northern Friends Peace Board's trustees gathered in worship at the beginning of November 2018 and were led to share some reflections on the centenary of the armistice.

The peace testimony, today, is seen in what we do, severally and together, with our lives. We pray for the involvement of the Spirit with us, that we may work for a more just world.
London Yearly Meeting, 1993

The shadows of two world wars are long and have informed and shaped the lives of millions. The legacies and the causes of violent conflict are intertwined. Justice, equality, respect for human rights and care for the planet are all affected by war whilst the absence of each is sowing seeds of current and future conflicts. To build peace means addressing these issues, as well as developing and nurturing the skills of dealing with conflict nonviolently.

Out of the shock and agony of war can come a more positive vision, with people committing themselves to new ways of living together on this fragile planet, driven by such sentiments as those expressed in 1918 – 'Never Again!'. We are now in a time when visions and hopes of post-world war and post-cold war are being cast aside and trampled on. These visions were never perfect or fully realised, but they recognised our inter-dependence and our common humanity.

In these turbulent times, we take courage from the compassion and creativity that there is amongst many people in the world for tackling the roots and the results of violent conflict. We remain committed to a vision of humanity united in common concern for our planet and the health and welfare of all its inhabitants; committed to act to this end in the spirit of peace, respect and openness.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Northern Friends Peace Board was preparing to face the challenges that lay ahead whilst still expecting a short, if bloody, period of conflict. Amidst the confusion and distress of today, we also look ahead with both profound concern and active hope, drawing inspiration from our faith community,

from those who have gone before us and from those who will come after us.

Together, let us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope. From a statement of Quakers, Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1987

Workshops

In early 2017, we launched an offer of four different workshops for Quaker Meetings and other groups. Since then we have facilitated a variety of workshops broadly on the themes of *Building Peace Together, Engaging with the media, Rethinking Security* and *Productive Conversations on difficult issues*.

A sub-group of NFPB has now begun to review of these and to plan for how we can develop them in the future. We are keen to hear from Friends who would like to invite us to run a workshop on one of these themes – or to develop a workshop specific to your local concerns and interests. We are also looking at how we can involve more Friends in developing and facilitating these and other workshops. A leaflet giving some more details can be downloaded from: <http://nfpb.org.uk/node/202> and is available on request from our office.



A number of NFPB members are linking up with Friends across the country in response to an invitation from "Roots of Resistance". This is a grassroots network of Quakers across the UK who are building a creative, vibrant and radical Quaker response to the **DSEI** (Defence and Security Equipment International) arms fair, which takes place in London in September 2019. For more information - <https://rootsofresistance.org.uk>.

NFPB meetings in Lincoln and Sheffield

NFPB members met in September and in December, in Lincoln and in Sheffield respectively. Each meeting was attended by Friends from across the Board's area and enriched by contributions and participation from local Friends and Attenders.

Thinking ahead and reflecting on **Remembrance** was a theme threaded through our agendas. As well as sharing information about particular acts of witness and remembrance marking the centenary of the end of the First World War, we heard about the recently opened International Bomber Command Centre near Lincoln. Friends also shared news of witness at Armed Forces Day events earlier in the year, and of distributing white poppies during the period leading up to 11th November.

Our meeting in Sheffield at the beginning of December included two facilitated discussions, on themes of **Religion and Violence**, and **Rethinking Security**. The former was an opportunity to contribute, from a peace action and witness perspective, to a consideration being undertaken the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relationships. The second workshop reflects our growing involvement with the Rethinking Security Project. In each discussion, we were encouraged to identify key questions and principles, as well as outcomes and consequences of this thinking. See also: <http://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk>

Thank you to all those Friends who have supported and contributed to our meetings during 2018. **Our meetings in 2019 will take place in Liverpool, Edinburgh, Carlisle and Leeds.** Circumstances have not always made it easy for NFPB members to attend meetings this year, with the severe cold snap at the start of the year and weekend industrial action on train services. But when we have been able to meet, Friends have attended in good numbers and have brought great energy and commitment.

Fuller reports of our meetings can be found via <http://nfpb.org.uk/latest-news>

Edinburgh Opposing War Memorial

NFPB agreed to make a donation in December to support the creation of a memorial in Edinburgh to remember the contribution of those who have opposed and conscientiously objected to war. This will be placed in Princess Street Gardens and will seek to inform and to be a focus for reflection. Quakers in Scotland have also given significant support to this project, both through their time and financially.

For more information, go to

<http://peaceandjustice.org.uk/projects/co-memorial/>

Networking for a change

This autumn has been a typically busy time for networking. NFPB was the host organisation for the October meeting of the **Network of Christian Peace Organisations**, with Manchester Meeting House providing the venue for a lively and productive cross-denominational meeting. In November a number of NFPB members played an active part in the QPSW **Activists' Gathering**, taking place this year in Lancaster. Exploring both the challenges and building hope, the gathering was a chance to reflect and plan for action arising from our testimonies to peace, equality, sustainability and truth.

Later in November, NFPB was represented at the Annual **Peace and Service Consultation of FWCC EMES***. Meeting at Bad Pyrmont in Germany, this year's gathering provided space for joint thinking on specific issues such as arms trade campaigning and trauma, as well as for stepping back and considering how we plan and develop our work both responsively and strategically. It was good to have an opportunity to meet with European Friends at this challenging time.

* Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle-East Section

Constructive approaches to disarmament

We have set up a sub-group to do some focused work to promote the implementation of the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**, as a step towards nuclear disarmament. A number of our members took part in the international rally at Faslane in September and we are looking for further opportunities to work with Quakers and in taking this forward. In the meantime, we have also been part of a small group of organisations promoting the concept and a commitment to **defence diversification**, drawing on peace movement and trade-union perspectives in trying to influence the Labour Party in particular to this end.

Finance

Thank you for all your support during the past year, continuing the support that Northern Friends have given since 1913. For the past three years we have given a guideline figure of £8.50 per member for Area Meeting contributions. For 2019 we are suggesting £9 per member, to help us respond to cost increases in different areas. We are also grateful for the support from individuals who have made gifts and left us legacies, and for support from a number of grant-giving trusts. Contact us for more information about ways of supporting us and for copies of our accounts.