

# Suggestions for workshops, discussions and reflections using resources in the NFPB Centenary Pack

## Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Making a group time-line	3
Poster Design	5
The Peace Testimony – 1913 and 2013	6
Hands Exercise	9
Questions for reflection relating to the play	11
Links and contacts	12

## ***Dear Friends,***

We are pleased to offer this resource pack and these suggestions for discussion and reflection. We hope Friends and Attenders will find something of interest and value. We have included a number of materials and also some simple suggestions for how these might be used to support thinking and action.

Our centenary year has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the history of Northern Friends Peace Board and of Quakers in general as they have found ways of taking action for peace over the past 100 years. We have been clear from the outset that the value of reflecting on the past is both to affirm and celebrate this heritage and to draw inspiration and ideas for our current and future concerns.

## **First World War centenary**

As we prepared to mark our own centenary, we became increasingly aware that the UK government was beginning to make plans to mark the centenary of the first world war. Peace organisations, faith groups and others have begun to prepare activities and

resources that affirm the role of those committed to peace and nonviolence in times of war, and honouring the struggle that some of our predecessors went through.

We have not specifically prepared our own materials with the first world war centenary in mind, but inevitably, with the Board's early history so clearly influenced by its experience and activities during the war, some of the materials will be of interest and use during 2014 and beyond. Perhaps they will also give you some ideas of how you can draw on the history of peace activists in war time to promote a positive, anti-militarist message today.

### **Use beyond Quaker Meetings**

Similarly, whilst we have mainly had Quaker Meetings in mind in producing this pack, you may find opportunities to use some of the materials with groups of young people and in schools, for example. We would be pleased to hear from you if you find there are openings to do this.

### **Looking forward and current concerns**

At our conference in June 2013 and at subsequent meetings of NFPB, we shall continue the process that has been a key part of our work throughout our history; that of sharing news and information about peace activities and concerns, looking for opportunities for action and witness, how we might support and develop these and considering current and future peace challenges.

**Contact details and web links relating to our own work and to other related peace concerns and activities are given at the end of this pack.**

In peace and Friendship,

NFPB Centenary working group

## **A) *Making a group time-line***

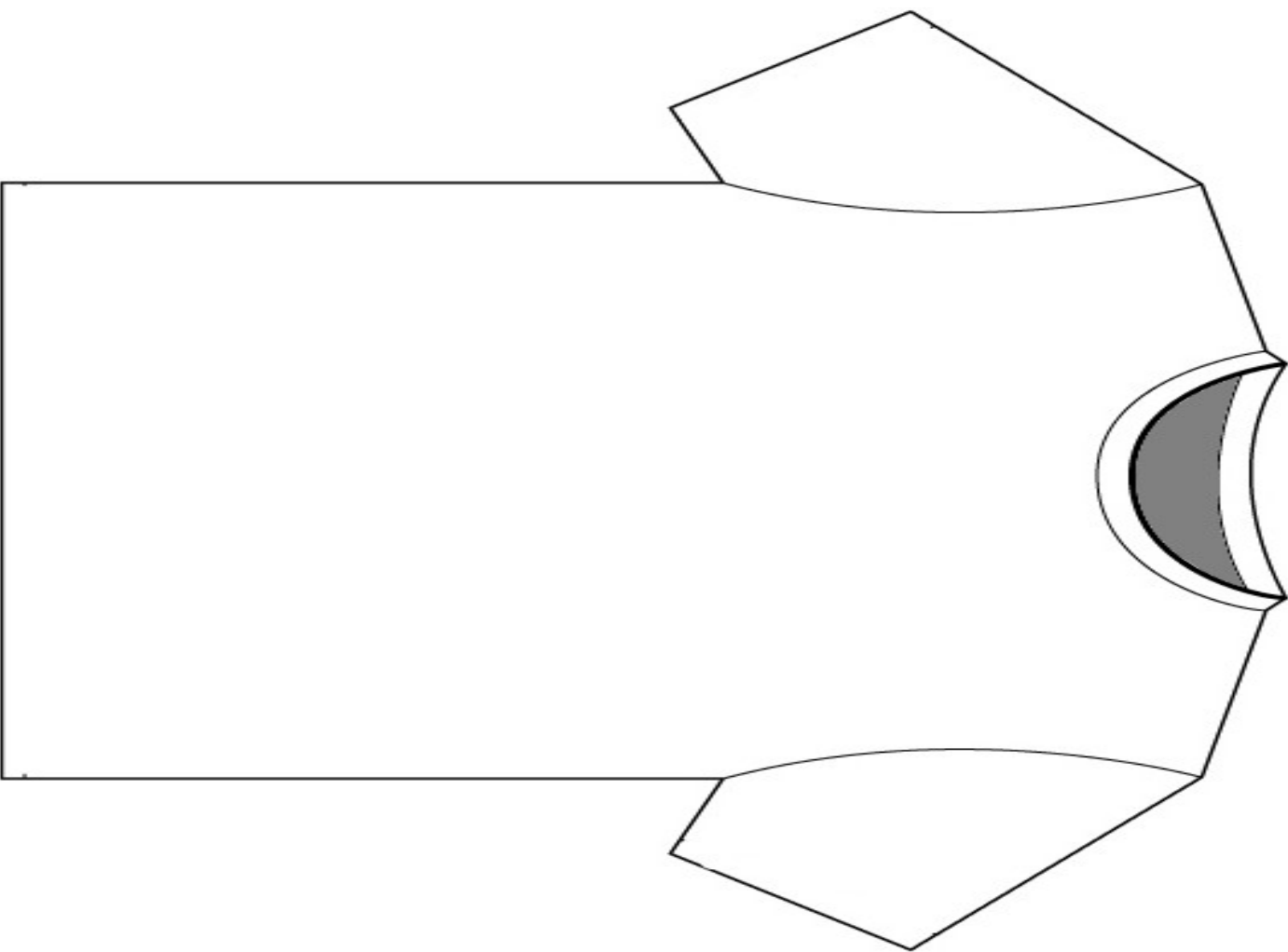
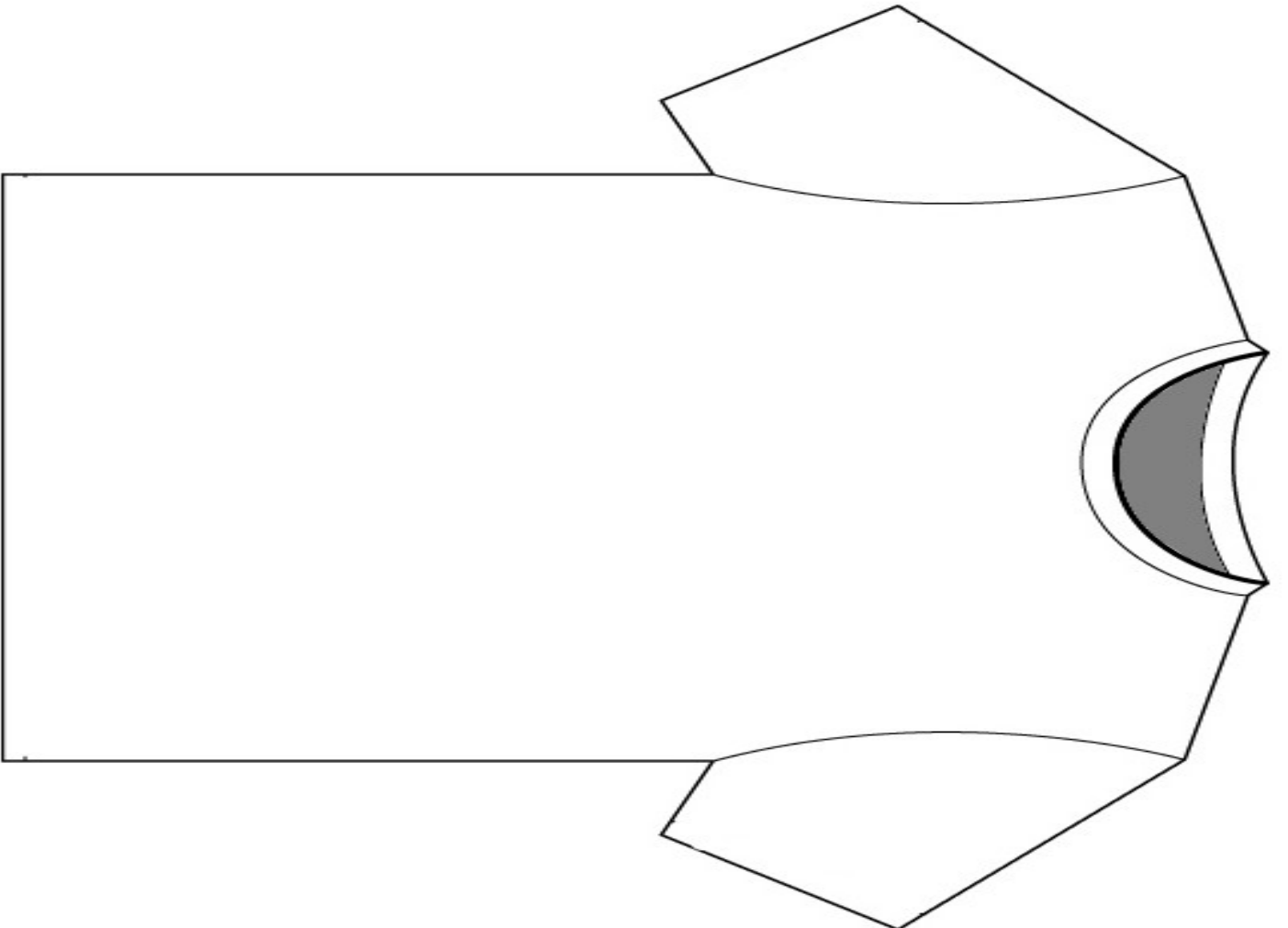
Our NFPB display and historical booklet describes peace activities that have involved many Friends over the years. Sharing stories can be a powerful way of building our understanding of how we live our testimonies in the world as well as contributing to our sense of being part of a community of Friends.

### *Activity*

By creating its own timeline as a group, this can provide openings for participants to share their experiences. One way of doing this is a 'washing line'

### *Materials:*

- ✓ String or clothes line
  - ✓ Pieces of A5 paper (either scrap or using the template on the next page to photocopy or print the T-shirt)
  - ✓ Clothes pegs
  - ✓ Pens and pencils for writing
- 
- simply hang a piece of string or washing line across a room or a wall of a room.
  - Use scrap paper, or photocopy enough for 2 or 3 per-person of the 'T-shirt' template enclosed.
  - Ask each person to reflect quietly and then write briefly about one or two significant times in their life when they have felt particularly moved to take action for peace or justice, and to put an approximate date on this.
  - Then ask all people in the group to arrange these chronologically, spending time once they have done this reading through what others have written.
  - In a group, either using worship-sharing or informal discussion, invite people to say a bit more about the experience they wrote about
    - What was the motivation for their taking action?
    - Why that action (as opposed to doing something else)
    - What did they learn from it?
    - How has it affected them since?
    - How else have they been active for peace and justice?



## B) Poster Design

NFPB has published lots of posters over the years. Some of these we have used for a calendar this year, some as postcards and a tea-towel, and others are included in this pack.

Drawing inspiration from these and from our current concerns, what simple clear peace-related message can we express together, in words and images?

This might be a good activity to do in an all-age group, using whatever drawing materials are available.

We would like to be able to publish new posters and hope that one or more designs produced by Friends during the year can be developed and used for this – see enclosed flyer.



### C) *The Peace Testimony – 1913 and 2013*

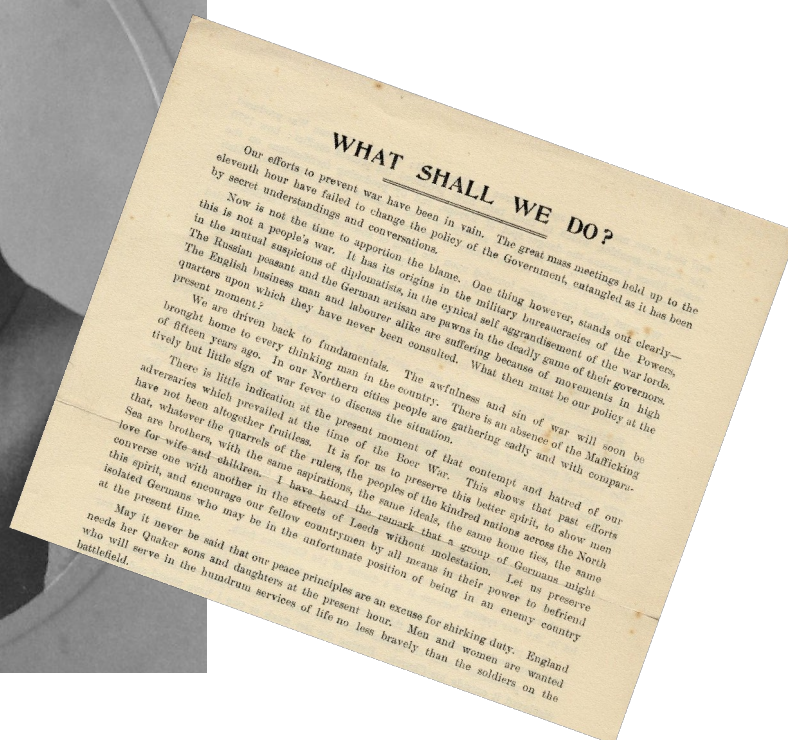
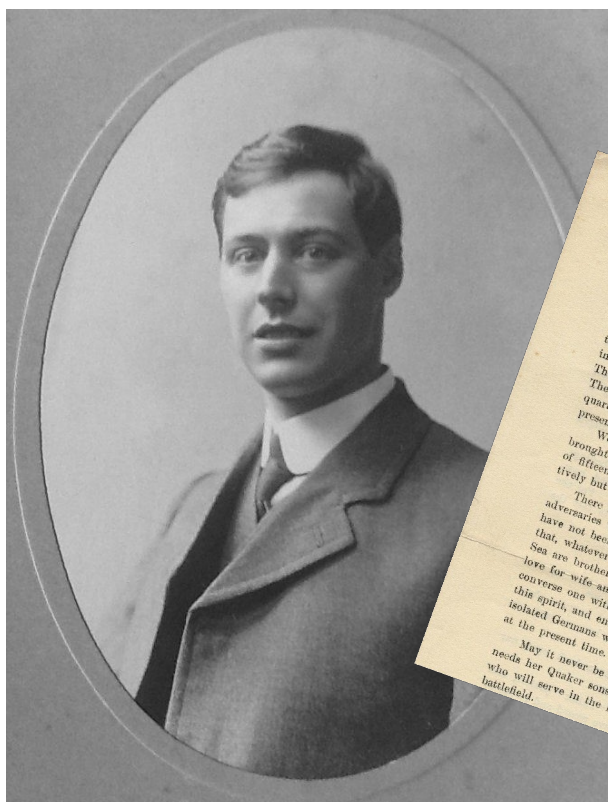
The early period of NFPB was inevitably both energetic, with founder members' enthusiasm and passion for the work being very evident, but also very challenging in the context of the first world war.

We have produced a number of leaflets, drawing on our archives and some of these are included in this pack. Other short essays of the first years of NFPB and also of the later challenges, during and after the second world war, are available to download from our website or by post from the NFPB office.

**The enclosed sheet** (following pages) contains just a small number of quotations from some of the early Friends involved in developing the work NFPB and in taking action for peace. On the reverse side are some questions that arise from our reading of some of this material – drawing inspiration from those Friends' words and witness and giving us an opportunity to reflect on the root and challenges of our peace testimony in today's world.

An additional resource in the pack is a copy of a leaflet, "What Shall We Do?", published by NFPB in 1914, being the text of a leaflet written by Robert Long, our first Secretary, on the outbreak of war in that year.

We leave it to Friends to use these as they wish. You might want to reflect on the questions and quotations using worship-sharing, or you may want to divide them up and ask pairs or small groups to consider just some of them, perhaps producing a written record of what is discussed or using responses as a tool to stimulate thinking about the current opportunities for taking action for peace.



## The Quaker peace testimony - inspiration, vision and challenge, 1913-2013

*The NFPB archives are a rich source of inspiration and information. Those involved in the Board from the outset have left a legacy of writings that challenge us still today. Below are quotations from just a few of the many documents. Overleaf are questions that we invite you to reflect on or discuss. Our situation today is in many ways very different to that of 100 years ago, but the words and spirit behind the words can be a way into reflection and action for us now.*

"We are determined ... as an integral part of our religious faith ..... not to whittle down in any way our testimony that war is a violation of the divine laws of human fellowship. But we are determined to co-operate with all who will demonstrate this great truth by an examination of the facts and laws of human relationships".  
*From the first NFPB Annual Report, published in 1914*

"Now is the time to stand to our principles. We must at the present moment show that there are men in the country with a burning, living faith who will have no part or lot in the war system because it is a denial of the Christian faith. The present is not the time to discuss technicalities. We are driven back upon our unshaken Quaker position and this is the only one in these dark hours."  
*Robert Long, first NFPB Secretary, on the outbreak of War in 1914*

"My conception of the ideal of life shown in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and my belief in the Indwelling God in every human being, make participation in warfare impossible for me. My present work is the highest service I can render to the nation – and to war stricken humanity."  
*Robert Long, at his military tribunal in 1916*

"The helpless rush of the maddened herd into the flood of armaments, which threaten to submerge civilisation makes the matter urgent – perhaps beyond the urgency of the other efforts into which the Society throws its strength".  
*John W Graham, first Chair of NFPB in 'Our Call to a New Crusade'*

*Marion Ellis at the Scalby Conference asked "had we sufficient breadth of vision to understand the other forces at work for peace? Ultimately, the Socialists and ourselves were after the same thing – they call it the co-operative Commonwealth, we call it the Kingdom of God".*

"I believe in one God and Father of the whole human race and that every man, however degraded and rebellious, is infinitely precious in his sight." "I believe we must ever place the good of all before the good of country or class"  
*Maurice Rowntree, before his military tribunal and from prison*

"While war is with us, we must get down deep to the fundamental spirit of unity which is against war..... this is the greatest opportunity we as Friends have for proclaiming those fundamental truths which are even more important than the war itself.....We.....must bathe ourselves in the Divine Light and Love".  
*Ernest Elcock*

"in wartime it is almost impossible to distinguish war work from work directed to the maintenance of the nation"....."to my mind at least the best service to our cause was to show the public we had the grit to stick to it, whatever the consequences".  
*Maurice Rowntree from prison, 16 Sep 1918*

### **Some questions for today**

What are the underlying principles and spiritual foundations of your understanding of and commitment to peace?

The Quaker peace testimony in practice has been concerned with actively opposing war as well as proposing and developing positive alternatives. What have been your experiences of these two approaches to peace action?

**How well do we take on new knowledge and adapt to new circumstances while remaining true to core beliefs and values?**

How do we avoid being too influenced by the “spirit of the age” and also avoid being out of touch and unresponsive to change?

Do we accept that all human beings without exception are precious? What are the implications of this today?

Do you agree that there can be occasions when it is right as a matter of conscience to break the law? Do you envisage any situations when you might feel called upon to do this? How can we support others facing this challenge?

How do we establish dialogue with those who disagree with us while not compromising on the integrity of our beliefs?

**How willing are you now to work in peace campaigns and with other groups whose actions are based on different beliefs and world views? What issues have you encountered and had to deal with in doing this? How do we work effectively with them without in any way compromising our own principles?**

We are unlikely to be put into the situation faced by World War I and II conscientious objectors. But we do face ethical decisions – such as about how we spend our money, support government policy through our taxes etc. How much inconvenience are you prepared to accept in following your principles in these matters?

**What gives you hope in difficult times?**



## **D) Hands exercise**

This exercise looks with the group at, what our hands can do for peace.

Read the following prayer written by Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

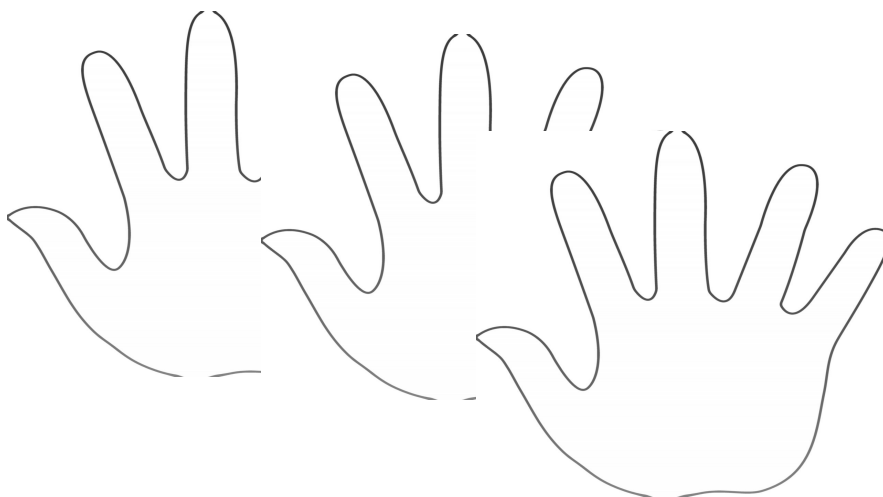
### *Christ Has No Body*

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Ask the group to divide into pairs and hand them out each a coloured paper hand – using the outlines on the next page photocopied onto coloured paper. The pairs then consider together “What their hands can do for peace in the world today” and write this on one side of their hand.

After 5-6 minutes, the pair can move onto consider “what area of peace work they would like NFPB to work on over the next 10 years”. In the following silence the hands can be hung up on large twig or put in a basket in the middle of the room by the participants, who can explain what is written on their hand or silently put their hand on the twig or into the basket.

We would like to collect these during the year to build a picture of Friends' concerns and vision for future Quaker peace work. Please send them the NFPB office (address at the end of this pack).





## **E) 'A burning, living faith'**

The play enclosed with this pack portrays fictional characters drawn from some of the real history – distant and more recent – of Northern Friends Peace Board and other Friends. We hope that it will prove a useful resource for Friends and others to promote discussion and reflection and also for telling the story of Quakers and peace over the past 100 years.

### **How you might use it**

#### **'Read-throughs' and discussion**

We expect that many groups, Quakers and others, might use the play for a read-through as a group. This will probably take slightly over one-hour. It is worth one or two people familiarising themselves with the text beforehand, so they can help suggest which parts would be suitable for people wanting to take on more or less demanding roles.

After a read-through of this sort, the group might want to discuss the issues raised by the text. Here are some suggested questions that might help open up the discussion, but you might also think of other areas to explore:

- *What immediate thoughts and responses do you have to the play?*
- *Are there characters in the play that particularly inspire you or trouble you?*
- *What historic and contemporary challenges does the play raise for you?*
- *Are there ways in which characters are shown as making their choices that help you in thinking about choices we make today in our peace witness?*
- *What connections can we make between Quaker peace witness 100 years ago and today?*
- *Peace work over the years has involved Friends in taking risks and putting themselves in uncomfortable situations. What might we each do differently in the cause of peace today?*
- *What can we do to support others led to take risks in their peace witness?*

#### **First World War focus**

A substantial part of the play relates to the experiences, and dilemmas, of Friends in the First World War. If you are organising discussion or activities specifically related to that period, you might find that the relevant sections can work on their own as a way into exploring the issues.

#### **Performance**

If you decide to do a more prepared performance of the play, perhaps with a young peoples' group or as a Meeting, we would be pleased to hear from you about this. How have you prepared and undertaken this? Who was the performance for? What responses did you get?

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The text of the play, as with our other resources in this pack, will be available online on our website. If there are useful examples of how Friends and others have used the play it would be good to know about these so that we can share this information on the website as well.

## Contacts and links

Quaker work for peace continues in a variety of forms and in many parts of the world, as does other work of committed individuals and groups from many different backgrounds. The Northern Friends Peace Board website has information about our own projects and concerns, as well as having an extensive page of links to other organisations and sources of information and a listing of events.

### Our website

Here are some of the key links to sections of our website that you might find useful:

Main page of our website		<a href="http://www.nfpb.org.uk">www.nfpb.org.uk</a>
Calendar of events	-	<a href="http://www.nfpb.org.uk/calendar">www.nfpb.org.uk/calendar</a>
Links to other Quaker groups & peace-related organisations	-	<a href="http://www.nfpb.org.uk/links">www.nfpb.org.uk/links</a>
Quakers and peace	-	<a href="http://www.nfpb.org.uk/quakers-and-peace">www.nfpb.org.uk/quakers-and-peace</a>
Current NFPB projects	-	<a href="http://www.nfpb.org.uk/projects">www.nfpb.org.uk/projects</a>
NFPB Centenary	-	<a href="http://www.nfpb.org.uk/projects/centenary">www.nfpb.org.uk/projects/centenary</a>

### Social networking

We make some use of social networking websites

Facebook	-	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/NFPB1">www.facebook.com/NFPB1</a>
Twitter	-	<a href="http://www.twitter.com/nfpb1">www.twitter.com/nfpb1</a>

### Address and contact details

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