Northern Friends Peace Board
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Bulletin

July / August 2026

News, events, and more on current peace activities and concerns

Living our Peace Testimony gathering



Around 70 Friends gathered at Friargate Meeting House in York on 13th June to explore the theme of *Living our Peace Testimony*. Organised by Northern Friends Peace Board, participants came from across the North, including parts of Northern England, Scotland, and North Wales.

In the morning, after a period of worship, there were opening contributions looking at the theme from personal, global and community perspectives, with Bernie Jordan, Margaret Calvert, Alistair Heslop and Till Geiger speaking. They, and the gathering as whole, considered the question of where hope lies in these challenging and unsettling times, and heard responses to the question 'what, then, shall we do?' In the session, we heard spoken contributions on the importance of hope being expressed through action, of the crucial role of listening to understand, facing up to tensions in ourselves and in how we engage but also affirming the preciousness of life, and our oneness with others. One of our speakers referred to words of activist Clover Hogan, encouraging people to find what is in our hearts and abilities in order to respond to challenges facing us. We were also reminded of the importance of seeking to understand the background and context of areas of conflict and crisis and the needs of those involved.

Themes arising during the morning were followed up in workshops and discussions, focussing on: *speaking our truth, dilemmas and tensions, peace and young people, global international conflict, Palestine and Israel,* and *planet care.* Friends also learned how to make origami paper cranes, which will be used during the Quaker Silent Walking Peace Vigil in September, and participated in a visioning exercise. The day was also enriched by live music, stalls and time for eating and talking together over lunch.

A closing minute for the gathering concluded: *"As we close our meeting we hold in the light Friends and others across the world who are striving for peace in all aspects of life. We take courage and hope from being part of this web of connections and of positive and committed action."*

New NFPB Coordinator to take up post in the autumn

Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) trustees are pleased to announce the appointment of Irenée Rajaona-Horne as their new Coordinator. With the current Coordinator, Philip Austin, due to retire at the end of 2026, Irenée will be starting in October, working initially with Philip for a three-month long handover period.



Irenée Rajaona-Horne (left) handing over to her successor as Chief Executive Officer of Money for Madagascar, Lova Rasoalinoro, in April 2026

Irenée has most recently worked as the Chief Executive Officer for Money for Madagascar. Irenée is a Member of Lancaster Quaker Meeting, and says, in anticipation of starting her new role:
"I have long admired the work of NFPB. As a Young Quaker in the 1990s, NFPB was a source of hope and inspiration to me, as I was seeking my path into peace and international development work. A few decades on, it is an honour to take on the coordination of this highly respected peace-building organisation. I am aware that I have big shoes to fill with the retirement of Philip. But I am also very excited to bring my own deep experience of growing charities and catalysing community change, which I hope will help Northern Friends to flourish in their pursuits of Peace. I love to work through synergies, collaborations and partnerships. What is more, I cannot do this alone! So I urge any fFriends who have a calling for Peace to get in touch and get involved… we need all of you! Together we can make a difference!"

NFPB trustees were impressed by the range and quality of applications they received for this post. Jayne Meadows, Clerk to Trustees said *"Replacing our valued Coordinator of 35 years was a major challenge. We are grateful for the support and direction from NFPB members during the process. We attracted a strong field of applicants and thank the candidates we interviewed for taking the time to meet us. We believe that we have found in Irenée the right person to support Friends in the North of Britain in their peace witness."*

Philip Austin has been the Coordinator since 1991, initially job-sharing with Jenny Austin and working on his own in the role since 1996. NFPB trustees hope to present Philip Austin with a book of memories, appreciations, poems, art and photos relating to his time working for NFPB at our Board Meeting to be held at Central Manchester Meeting House on 28 November 2026. We would welcome contributions from Friends by 15 September 2026. All contributions should be sent to Jennie White: whitejennie161@gmail.com.

World Quaker Day – peace focus

World Quaker Day is on **4 October 2026**, and this year's theme is *Let Peace Be Among Us* with the supporting Bible passage, Hebrews 12:14, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy."

FWCC is planning **Global Online Worship** on the day, bringing together Friends across borders, languages and Quaker traditions with a shared focus on peace.
https://fwcc.world/event/worldquakerday2026/

Just Peace Coalition – *Time to Act*

"Across Palestine and Israel, communities are living through devastating violence, loss and injustice. Palestinian Christians have called on the global Church to respond not with silence or despair, but with courage, compassion, and action. The Just Peace Coalition brings together churches and Christian organisations across the UK to respond to that call. Together, we are inviting individuals, churches, and communities to commit to working and praying for a just peace for all who call the Holy Land home."

As well as inviting people to add their names to the 'Time to Act' appeal /commitment below, the coalition makes available a range of resources to support and enable that action. Read more at https://justpeacecoalition.com/

Time to Act : *Together with others, I hear the call of Palestinian Christians and stand alongside all those living and working for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. I will listen, learn, live, and act in ways that support justice, human dignity, and freedom for all who call the Holy Land home.*

UK Security, NATO – what next and what are some of the alternatives?

At a well-attended online **Rethinking Security**-organised discussion forum following the NATO summit in Ankara, Ian Davis from the charity 'NATO Watch' gave an informed summary and analysis of the state of the organisation, its members and the wider context. The war in Ukraine, changing relationship with the United States, pressures to increase military spending and more were explored and participants were invited to share ideas and information about opportunities for promoting an agenda with human and planetary security at its heart, rather than military-oriented security. The online event was also an opportunity to announce a new resource from Rethinking Security's outreach group (in which NFPB is involved) - **Talking Points on Security Claims and Responses;** the booklet takes the claims of the National Security Strategy and some broader claims about so-called national security and offers people- and planet-centred responses and alternatives. You can use it to prepare for discussions with decision-makers, public talks and events, or just to help in conversations about so-called national security and military spending.

https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/supporters/talking-points-on-security-claims-and-responses/

Choosing a different path, following conscience

In May, **Voices of Peace: Stories of Conscientious Objectors from Europe and Beyond** was published by the Quaker Council for European Affairs, in partnership with three other international peace organisations. A launch at Quaker House in Brussels was followed in June by an online event, in which participants heard powerful testimony from conscientious objectors from Israel and Türkiye, who had both contributed to the publication. Other writers include those from Spain, Finland, Eritrea and Russia. In the introduction, the editorial group writes:

"People who refuse military service are often seen as traitors, weak, or unpatriotic. This stigma can impact them, their families, and their communities. In many countries, refusing military service can lead to serious and lasting consequences, and some of them are forced to leave the country. Often, their stories are overlooked or even silenced. This publication aims to change that by sharing the voices of conscientious objectors and focusing on the human side of the issue… It also celebrates their resistance and their free will."

https://www.qcea.org/voices-of-peace-stories-of-conscientious-objectors-from-europe-and-beyond/

Global Week of Action for Peace and Climate Justice

21-27 September 2026 : Divest from War – Invest in The Just Transition!

The third annual Week of Action for Peace & Climate Justice **will address the links between war, militarism/militarisation and social, economic and climate injustice. It will promote grassroots action and policymaking to confront both genocide and ecocide – for peace and a just systemic transition.** The week is promoted and coordinated by an international working group. They aim, through this week of action, to raise public awareness of the links, build connections between movements and build momentum for collective action. The website has a lot of useful resources to help learn about and plan your own actions. https://climatemilitarism.org/weekofaction/

Silent Walking Vigil for Peace 19 September – how can you get involved

Taking place in London on 19th September, the aims of this initiative are to be '**a positive, public witness for peace by Quakers, with an invitation to all who are supportive to join us. We want to show our solidarity and care for those impacted by violence, conflict and war.'** And alongside this, the organising group are 'encouraging Quaker communities UK-wide to arrange local peace activities around the same date so those unable to be present in London can feel involved.'

Read more about how to get involved and to support this inspiring project: https://quakervigilforpeace.org



Petition against military conscription

The coalition of peace organisations which organised the International Conscientious Objectors Day ceremony in London in May have also launched a petition. This reads:

We call on the UK government:

- To **rule out any future introduction of conscription** - mandatory national service or registration - in the UK.
- To **assert and uphold the rights of conscientious objectors**, ensuring protection for those who refuse to participate in the armed forces.

A background note on the sign-up page (https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-to-military-conscription-1) says:

For the first time in generations, the threat of conscription seems very real. We must act now to oppose it. With heightened debate around insecurity, we are hearing growing calls for the re-introduction of some form of compulsory national service. … We reject conscription as a moral affront and an attack on human rights. It deprives young people of choices and opportunity at a vital time in their lives.

To force military service on the population would involve a colossal waste of funds. During a cost of living crisis these resources are desperately needed elsewhere. With war escalating around the world and record number of civilian casualties, now is the time to stand up for peaceful and cooperative approaches to conflict resolution.

Peace Round-up - a small selection of links to a range of news, comment and more, relating to current concerns - *inclusion here does not imply endorsement*

- **Can Peace Studies thrive in the era of strong man leaders?**
  https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/can-peace-studies-thrive-era-strongmen-leaders
- **No Peace Without Education: No Education Without Peace**
  https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/blogs/2026/no-education-without-peace
- **The World's First Non-violent Municipality**
  https://wagingnonviolence.org/cnv/2026/04/caicedo-colombia-worlds-first-nonviolent-municipality
- **Resistance is only half the equation**
  https://wagingnonviolence.org/2026/06/resistance-is-only-half-the-equation
- **Environmental Action for peace & security**
  https://www.undp.org/stories/environmental-action-climate-peace-and-security
- **Nonviolent solutions are everywhere**
  https://wagingnonviolence.org/cnv/2026/06/nonviolent-solutions-are-everywhere/
- **New Resource: Talking Points on Security Claims and Responses**
  https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/supporters/talking-points-on-security-claims-and-responses/
- **Quaker statement on antisemitism and Islamophobia** https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quaker-statement-on-antisemitism-and-islamophobia
- **Court of Appeal Backs Ban on Palestine Action**
  https://www.quaker.org.uk/Fnews-and-events/news/court-of-appeal-backs-ban-on-palestine-action
- **Global Military Spending Hits Record High: How Countries Rank**
  https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-04-28/global-military-spending-hits-record-high-how-countries-rank
- **Military experts or arms industry insiders?**
  https://aoav.org.uk/2026/military-experts-or-arms-industry-insiders-uk-media-fails-to-disclose-defence-sector-links-in-nearly-60-of-cases
- **Quakers Oppose Defence Universities Alliance**
  https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-oppose-defence-universities-alliance
- **The world has evaded nuclear war through luck, faith leaders warn**
  https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/the-world-has-avoided-nuclear-war-through-luck-faith-leaders-warn
- **The Price of War: The Iran Conflict Reveals the True Cost of Militarism**
  https://www.fcnl.org/updates/026-06/price-war-iran-conflict-reveals-true-cost-militarism
- **"Security for Whom?"** https://www.tni.org/en/open-letter/security-for-whom
- **Military climate strategies: are they just greenwash?**
  https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/military-climate-strategies-are-they-just-greenwash
- **A Declaration of Resistance**
  https://afsc.org/news/declaration-resistance

A tale of two letters and two PMs

At the start of July, a letter was sent to the outgoing UK Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, with a focus on military spending, as he prepared for attendance at the NATO summit. Coordinated by Quakers in Britain and Rethinking Security, the letter was signed by 50 organisations, including Northern Friends Peace Board. The letter read, in part:

"At this time, we wish to outline our grave concerns about the increasing focus of resources on the military over other forms of international engagement. Development, diplomacy, peacebuilding, conflict and atrocity prevention are all essential and underfunded tools in building a safer world. We also know that tensions are lowered when racial, gender and climate justice are prioritised.
Since last year's Strategic Defence Review and National Security Strategy, your government has repeatedly heralded a national conversation on security. This has yet to materialise.
There is a clear public appetite for broader discussion on how to build a more secure, resilient and peaceful world, with many unconvinced by the prevalent 'war-footing' narrative and focus on rearmament."

The letter can be read in full via this page (https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/open-letter-to-pm-on-military-spending/) and was forwarded to the then likely (and now actual) successor as PM, Andy Burnham.

Andy Burnham was in-post before the end of the month, and we joined with other members of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations in writing to him as organisations that ***"share a vision of a better world – one built on peace and justice for all. We will continue to play our part in building it, in our communities and beyond, and we invite you to do the same in the office you now hold."***

This letter focused on the importance of peace and diplomacy, the need for a change in economic direction, and a change in the government's approach to migrants and refugees. The full letter can be read here: https://ncpo.org.uk/letter-to-new-pm-july26

Some events

This is just a small selection from our website calendar.
To see a fuller events listing, see https://nfpb.org.uk/calendar - and please get in touch if you have an event that we can add to our calendar and future *Bulletin.*

- 1 August – **Christian Peace Witness Vigil – No to Nuclear Weapons, Faslane,** 11-12:30 to join the bus from either Glasgow or Edinburgh: office@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk
- 6 and 9 August – **Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day –** commemorating 1st use of nuclear weapons – go to our website for links to events https://nfpb.org.uk/calendar
- 1-22 September – **Hope as a Practice** – Woodbrooke course online - https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/hope-as-a-practice/
- 19 September - **Silent Walking Vigil for Peace** – London https://quakervigilforpeace.org/

Northern Friends Peace Board Charity SC0 24632
Quaker Meeting House, 50 Silverwell Street, Bolton BL1 1PP
Tel: 07730 070167 **Email**: nfpb@gn.apc.org **Web**: http://nfpb.org.uk