

Update – April 2021



Northern Friends Peace Board

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Charity SC 024632

War in Ukraine

In the period leading up to the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian military, we began collating resources on the NFPB website. Our aim is one of promoting wider understanding of the context, and raising awareness of some of the possible routes to peace. We have continued to do this throughout the period since 24 February, with the page (https://nfpb.org.uk/ukraine_2022/) being regularly updated. We hope this has been and will continue to be a useful resource for Friends and more widely.

Friends have been active in a number of ways, in support of refugees, in witnessing for peace and speaking out against continued and increasing militarism. Quakers in Huddersfield, for instance, are holding their peace vigils on a weekly basis. As well as calling for peace in Ukraine, these vigils are reminding people of the UK's role in supplying arms to Saudi Arabia that are used in the ongoing war in Yemen.

NFPB has been part of discussions with Quaker and non-Quaker partners about responses to the war and convened its own meeting for NFPB members to consider the issues and implications of the war for peace work in the future, following up the meeting of Board members on 5th March: see overleaf for a report of that meeting.

Online worship to uphold the situation in Ukraine

Weekly meetings for worship, arranged by FWCC Europe and Middle East Section, take place every Tuesday at 13:30 UK time. Further details about these and other opportunities for online worship and links with Quakers in Kyiv, visit <https://fwccemes.org/news/quaker-attention-on-peace-and-ukraine>

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, with other Christian peace partners, is holding weekly times for prayer online on Fridays, at 19:30. They have also produced some simple posters for printing off and resources for ecumenical worship. These are available via:

<https://for.org.uk/ukraine/>

Banners, posters and more

NFPB one-person rainbow peace banner kits are again available via our website, along with posters, tea-towels and postcards – see: <https://nfpb.org.uk/shop>.

Also available to download are a range of leaflets, which we are in the process of reviewing and updating. See: <https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/publicity-information-outreach/>

QUAKER VIGIL FOR PEACE

We stand here out of deep concern at the continuing war in Ukraine.

War is a reflection of a failure in resolving differences and injustices through peaceful means. Care and compassion for all victims of war is an inspiring response to a terrible situation.

We hold in our hearts everyone facing fear, loss and uncertainty, and express our profound hope that ways out of this war can be found.

We urge all those who have influence to use this to work for an end to the current suffering and to shape a better future for the generations that come after us.



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Love. Pray. Make Peace. Report of NFPB members' meeting

The war in Ukraine was the thread that ran throughout the first full meeting of NFPB in 2022, on 5 March. Thirty Friends gathered online, with new members joining us and most Area Meetings being represented. Some Friends were unable to stay for the whole meeting as they were supporting peace witness in different parts of the country.

In considering Northern Friends Peace Board's continuing work, we were only too aware of the likely effects on this of the war. From work on nuclear weapons abolition, to challenging military spending to promoting rethinking security, the work goes on but will need to adapt and change. We heard a number of suggestions for what else might be required of us in the coming period and NFPB members will continue to meet to reflect and to develop ideas for action. Trustees reported on a small increase in financial contributions from Friends in 2021, and also presented a revised governing document – which was accepted by members.

In small groups and in the whole meeting, Friends had time for listening to feelings and responses to the international crisis that had developed over the previous ten days, reflecting on the implications for the world and for our work in the world. Friends acknowledged fears, distress and a sense of feeling powerless. We were reminded of the importance and value of finding practical ways of taking action, from supporting young people, to collecting and sorting out materials for refugees, to continuing the work of building peace where we are.

In some ways, what we are led to do is simple: Love. Pray. Make Peace. We heard that these words had been put on display at a Leeds Meeting House. But we also know and were reminded that neither our peace testimony nor pacifism have ever been simple; and they are not now.

There was a concern that the intense media coverage of the war can be emotionally difficult to deal with; we need to look after ourselves and one another. We need to be ready to listen, creating spaces for hearing others, acknowledging the fears and uncertainties. Building empathy and recognising our common humanity, how might we be led to take action to reach across barriers?

We were reminded that this is not the only war nor the only crisis facing the world. Militarism and war are linked to other crises, from climate change to racism, from political corruption to inequality. This gives an added imperative to continue to promote and build change towards a radically different type of security. Sharing our vision and hope can encourage others who are seeking and trying to walk a different path.

The meeting closed in a period of stillness.



Image of signboard at Central Leeds Meeting House (photo – Robert Keeble)

NFPB members will next meet on Saturday 18 June, at Central Leeds (Carlton Hill) Meeting House. We are planning for this to be a blended meeting. Later in the year, meetings are scheduled to take place on 24 September and 26 November – arrangements to be confirmed nearer the time.

Climate and militarism – webinar

We were pleased to collaborate with the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and Quakers in Britain in hosting a webinar in January on the theme of “Is COP26 enough? Peace, militarism, and the climate crisis: a missing piece”.

This attracted more than 80 participants, from Europe and beyond, with speakers Sheila Babauta, an indigenous elected representative from the Northern

Mariana Islands, and Stuart Parkinson, from Scientists for Global Responsibility.

The speakers gave analysis and insight into the effects of militarism on climate and the challenges of holding governments to account for this impact.

- A **video** of the webinar is available at https://youtu.be/gX5_2vOLLFc
- and a **report** is in the latest issue of QCEA’s Around Europe at https://www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Around-Europe-390_DIGITAL-single-pages_compressed.pdf



Rethinking Security

NFPB is an active member of this network, being particularly involved with its outreach activities. Rethinking Security is a network of UK-based organisations, academics and activists, working for a just and peaceful world, based on approaches that address the underlying causes of conflict and insecurity. (<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/>).

From late February to the end of March we supported Rethinking Security in running a 5-week Woodbrooke course, which attracted participants from the UK and beyond.

The course explored different aspects of human security and included analysis of the UK government’s current approaches to security and how this might be developed with different priorities. It finished with a session introducing possible ways of getting involved in research as part of the Alternative Security Review.



A video of the launch of the Alternative Security Review is available at <https://youtu.be/TzaGJklbEhw> and further information is at <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/find-out-more/alternative-security-review/>

To keep in touch and get involved:

- A regularly-updated part of the Rethinking Security website is the blog, which has had a number of useful pieces recently on alternative responses to the war in Ukraine.
- To join the Rethinking Security supporters’ network: <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/supporters-network/>
- Please get in touch with us (via nfpb@gn.apc.org) if your Quaker group would like a workshop or other opportunity to explore these opportunities further.

Nuclear weapons prohibition treaty

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to disrupt events. The first meeting of the states who have ratified the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons <https://nfpb.org.uk/tpnw-info/> was to have taken place in March, but this is now going to be from 21-23 June, in Vienna. It was decided to postpone as holding it as an in-person event would enable a range of civil society groups to also be involved with activities around the conference.

In the meantime, an important report has been published. Written by Rebecca Johnson, *Nuclear Weapons Are Banned! What Does This Mean For Britain?* analyses the treaty and makes clear recommendations about how the UK could /should respond to this UN agreement. It's a substantial piece of work and an invaluable resource for those who want to learn more about the treaty and its implications in working towards disarmament. As the report says, and as we have been reminded by the war in Ukraine:

"Nuclear weapons continue to threaten the world with war and terror. ... Recent events provide a stark reminder of what can go wrong when possessing and relying on nuclear weapons for deterrence: dangerous leaders, miscalculations, escalation, 'use them or lose them' pre-emptive strikes... it only takes a hundred Hiroshima-sized bombs to cause nuclear winter and global starvation."

The report and a summary of its key points can both be downloaded from <https://cnduk.org/resources/nuclear-weapons-are-banned-what-does-this-mean-for-britain/>



Meetings for Worship at Faslane

Friends in West Scotland are again holding Meetings for Worship outside the Trident nuclear submarine base at Faslane. These are on the following dates, at 11am: - 24 April, 22 May and 26 June. For further information contact Mary Alice Mansell mamansell54@gmail.com , or Daphne Wassermann daphne@aquarius1000.plus.com

Global Days of Action on Military Spending – 13 April – 12 May

The Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) has been taking place across the world since 2011, to coincide with the release of the SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) figures on world wide military spending. The new figures are an opportunity to together with groups across the world in amplifying this vital issue in the public consciousness. Since 2017 the event has been expanded to Days of Action to cover a number of other important dates for the campaign messaging such as Tax Day in the US.

As the latest campaign mailing says: *The focus for 2022 will be a call for peace in Ukraine and an end to the spiralling arms race. In the last weeks we've seen billions in new funding allocated to weaponry, ostensibly in order to deter Putin. The problem is NATO already outspends Russia 18:1, overspending as a strategy to contain Putin has failed. We need a new strategy based on developing common security.*

See: <https://demilitarize.org.uk/global-days-of-action/>

Coming up

This is a small selection from items listed on our regularly-update website calendar/ events listing. To see more, go to: <https://nfpb.org.uk/calendar>

Living Truth – a Rallying Call for Quakers

A staggered (ie. over three days) online conference is being arranged to take place, **25-27 April**, by the new Quaker Truth and Integrity Group. They ask:

“Can we – with others – call to account institutions and individuals responsible for practices that fall short of the standards and norms which inspire our concerns and our nation’s traditions? How best can we support greater responsiveness to truth in the public discourse and acknowledge those whose actions exemplify integrity? What practical measures might be taken to pursue this aim?”

Further details via: <https://quakertruth.org/calendar/>

Peace at the Heart

There is to be a the launch of the report, *Peace at the heart: A relational approach to education in British schools* taking place on **11 May, from 16:00**, online.

“In this online event, join the Peace Education team from Quakers in Britain to unpack the case for a relational approach at every level. We'll hear from educators leading this work in British schools, and see examples of peace education in action.”

Further details: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/events/peace-at-the-heart-launch>

Hexham Debates - 15th Series

Recordings of the first 5 of this current series, in which Friends are involved, are available to view via <https://hexhamdebates.wordpress.com>. Themes include Global Britain after the Afghanistan Debacle, authoritarianism, energy security, health care changes, and transformation in the midst of multiple crises.

Coming up:

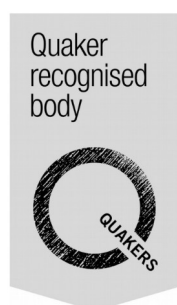
Saturday **30 April 2022: Hyper-consumption: Corporate Marketing versus the Planet**, Gerard Hastings, Emeritus Professor, University of Stirling

Saturday **11 June 2022: Why do we need to rethink security?** Paul Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University

Thank you!

Thank you Friends for your continuing financial support during this challenging period.

For different ways to contribute go to: <https://nfpb.org.uk/donate/>



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