

Update

February/March 2020

Northern Friends Peace Board

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Charity SC 024632

Friendship and Encouragement

NFPB members held their final meeting of 2019 in the midst of the election period and just two days after the London Bridge attack. During the meeting in Leeds, we heard expressions of appreciation the support that we can and do give one another, within and beyond our community as Quakers in Britain. We were warmly welcomed: with a message of greeting on the outside of the Meeting House, warm drinks and soup, and Friendship and encouragement from local Friends – nourishment for body and soul.

Lisa Cumming, Programme Manager for QPSW's **Turning the Tide** programme (<https://turningtide.org.uk>), introduced some of the key ideas and future plans of the programme. The minute of this session read, in part: *"In the current social and political context of crisis, division, and structural violence, when do we want to hold out a hand saying 'enough', and the other outstretched in love – and how do we find the balance? How do we look after each other in turbulent times? Maybe we can look for 'the cracks', because that is where the light is."*

NFPB members Ann Bettys and Robin Bowles have been part of the core-group for **Roots of Resistance** (<https://rootsofresistance.org.uk>). They reflected on the action at the DSEI arms fair and on the process of preparation and follow-up facilitated by that core group. They led us in discussion and sharing ideas on how this witness about the weapons trade and can be sustained and developed.

Leeds Friend Martin Schweiger gave an informative introduction to the US government's activities at the 'RAF' base operating at Menwith Hill near Harrogate. Martin supports the weekly vigil and other activities of the **Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign** (<https://themhac.uk>) and encouraged Friends to get involved and to find out more.

NFPB's Trustees and nominations committee each reported to the Board. Support from Area and Local Meetings for the work of the Board is broadly in line with the budget, for which Trustees expressed their appreciation. **The guideline figure for contributions in 2020 is £9 per member for a further year.**



Members' news

A regular feature of our meetings is the sharing of ideas, news and information from across the NFPB area. The following is just a selection from our meeting in November:

- Donald Saunders, from North Wales, recently recorded an interview giving an account of his experiences and motivation as a **conscientious objector in the second world war**. Footage from this will in due course appear on the BBC website and we shall publicise this when available.
- Ursula Sharma, from Manchester and Warrington AM, had attended parts of the performance in Manchester, of **24 Hours of Peace**, (<https://24hoursofpeace.co.uk>). She commented on the great sense of solidarity and connectedness.
- Michael Elstub talked about his recent efforts for **Veterans for Peace**. Friends were pleased to hear that he had been awarded a prize for his particular contribution to VfP's activities.
- **Huddersfield Friends**, Ann Bettys told us, continue to hold monthly peace vigils, sanctuary suppers and climate vigils.
- The film **War School** had been shown to Friends in Pickering and Hull AM as they began to think about a possible response to the national Armed Forces Day events to take place in Scarborough in June.
- Till Geiger gave an update on East Cheshire AM's peace education project **Peace Pathways**.
- Janet Fenton told us that the Scottish Parliament was to host screening of the film **The War Game**.
- We heard that Friends in different parts of the North were beginning to think about possible action in relation to **COP26**, the UN climate conference taking place in Glasgow in November.

Iran – NFPB statement

Time to step back and take constructive action

On 9th January Northern Friends Peace Board trustees issued the following public statement

We join with others in urging our government to play a constructive and active role in seeking routes to de-escalate tensions following the assassination of General Quaseem Solameini. As a community committed to peace, we oppose violent action and reaction by parties in a conflict. We are distressed at the opportunities lost already to build a more constructive set of relationships with Iran through the United States' undermining of the JCPOA nuclear deal. There is a dangerous spiral that has already developed from this, and there is a danger that the UK will be drawn further into this due to its relationship with the United States. This must not be inevitable and there could be devastating consequences for the wider Gulf region and indeed the world. We live together on this planet and should seek to deal with differences positively and to build the conditions in which dialogue, understanding and cooperation can be developed. The space for such dialogue is reduced in the heat of violent conflict. Now is the time to consider the wider consequences, and for restraint and stepping back rather than being drawn into reactive and provocative action.

Prophets and reconcilers

NFPB is part of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations, which is organising a **conference to take place in central London on 25 April**. They ask "Who are we called to be to transform the world?" ... *In the face of structural and cultural violence, militarism, division, and the climate emergency, how can we become the prophets and reconcilers the world needs to inspire radical transformation in our communities, in our world, and in ourselves?* With speakers from a broad range of backgrounds and faith traditions, the conference will explore nonviolence, bridge-building, grassroots activism, and ways we are called to be spiritual peacemakers - a force for change in the world today.

Bookings and further information via

<https://prophetsandreconcilers.eventbrite.co.uk>

Website update / social media

We have had the same website since 2013, but it was becoming increasingly unreliable and was not easily read on mobile devices. In the New Year we were pleased to launch the new version: familiar but improved, we feel. We hope you find what you need to on it and don't forget to check our social media accounts.

<http://nfpb.org.uk> Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all via accounts called 'nfpb1'

Mailing list

If you are not already on our mailing list to receive these updates directly, please contact nfpb@gn.apc.org to be added to our mailing list.

Rethinking Security

With the new government planning a review of security and related issues, now is a good time to get involved with promoting and discussing non-military approaches to security. NFPB is involved with the Rethinking Security network, which has a mailing list for people who would like to be individual supporters. Emails will contain links to useful sources of information and pointers to action. You can sign up to the **supporters network** via <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/supporters-network/> There is a growing range of other resources on the same website – and watch out for a new blog, that should be appearing soon.

Workshops

NFPB workshops have taken place in different parts of the country and we would like to be putting on more of them. As well as the package of four workshops that we offer, we are looking for opportunities to put on one-off small events on specific current peace concerns, with both input and discussion.

We are also keen to offer shorter workshops when appropriate, as we are aware that full-day workshops are not always easy to fit in with other commitments. If you would be interested in having support from NFPB in putting on or hosting a workshop, for Friends and others, please get in touch.

(<http://www.nfpb.org.uk/our-work/workshops>)

Support for events

Do you have an event (doesn't have to be a Quaker event) at which it would be good to have NFPB **leaflets** for distribution, or some of our **materials** (from postcards to tea-towels) on a sale-or-return basis? Would you like a **speaker** about NFPB? Would you like us to help **publicise** the event through our members and our website?

Please get in touch if these might be of interest, and also with requests or suggestions of resources or activities not mentioned here but that might be helpful in the future. (*see the top of this update for our contact details*)

Thank you

Thank you Friends for your continued support of our work, financially and in many other ways.