

Update - May 2020



Northern Friends Peace Board

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NPPB staffing and office arrangements during the pandemic

Philip Austin, Coordinator, has been working from home since the middle of March and Steven Waling, our part-time Administrative Assistant, has been furloughed until the end of June, with trustees making use of the government's job retention scheme.

We do not have routine access to all the resources and materials that we would normally, but have most things in place to keep connected and communicating.

We bring our members together through a new email network and routinely use video-conferencing opportunities for discussion and information-sharing and for sub committees and working groups to continue to meet.

We are clear that we can and must continue to play a role in facilitating, conversations, sharing knowledge and experience, speaking out, creative thinking and networking amongst Quakers and others concerned about peace.

Please do get in touch with us with questions, ideas, concerns and news. What is your peace witness in the midst of a crisis of this sort? What can we learn, what can we give? We must find new ways to support one another in such extraordinary circumstances, physically distanced but, socially and spiritually, very much one community.

New website features

We are maintaining our **calendar** of events, with these mostly being online. [Please let us know of anything we could usefully add.](#)

We now have **online donations** facility on the website – please use this or contact us for bank details to set up a bank transfer so that we don't have to pay as many visits to the bank. <https://nfpb.org.uk/donate/>

We also have a new blog section, **NFPB Voices**, which launched with a number of personal accounts and reflections on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe. <https://nfpb.org.uk/voices/>

Rethinking Security

Northern Friends Peace Board has now formerly affiliated with *Rethinking Security* and is active in the outreach work of this network. 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 now a range of comment and discussion pieces on their **blog** at:

<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/blog/>

Christian peace groups statement

There was to have been a conference in late April on the theme of *Prophets and Reconcilers*, organised by the the Network of Christian Peace Organisations (NCPO). It is hoped that this may take place at another time.

Members of NCPO have been keeping in touch for mutual support and information-sharing and also agreed and published a statement in late March which read, in part:

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, called for a global ceasefire in light of the coronavirus... The Network of Christian Peace Organisations urges our government to robustly support this call by discontinuing the sale of arms during this crisis and calling on all involved in current conflicts around the world to lay down their arms.

... This crisis is teaching the world much about the values of compassion and fairness, and the ability of societies to care for the most vulnerable as the basis of security. All our efforts now are rightly focused on preserving life and we have been heartened by the huge efforts made to this end, and by the strengthening of community bonds across the nation. The coming weeks will be painful for society. We will need time to grieve and to reflect. We hope that the bonds of common humanity, coupled with the compassion and imagination being deployed today can create a lasting legacy for future generations.

The full statement is at:

<https://nfpb.org.uk/2020/03/30/statement-regarding-coronavirus-30th-march-2020/>

Report from our February members' meeting

Friends from Notts and Derby Area Meeting provided hospitality for our first NFPB meeting of 2020. NFPB members were joined at Derby Meeting House by a good number of Friends from the Area Meeting and further afield for the day and we were pleased to welcome new members of the Board.

The first of a number of 75th anniversaries have already happened this year. As we met, we anticipated the forthcoming public holiday marking 'VE Day'. Friends were invited to reflect on how the war between 1939 and 1945 had influenced their understanding and commitment to issues of war and peace. Responses ranged from a recognition that in the midst of the horrors of war, simple kindness – for example, that shown to evacuee children – was also present. We heard concerns that it can be too easy to oversimplify the message that 'victors' of the war were entirely on the side of good.

Michael Mears, from Wandsworth Meeting, was welcomed to our meeting. As a professional actor Michael, with You-Ri Yamanaka was hoping to be performing *The Mistake* from this summer. It addresses the build-up and consequences of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, using this 75th anniversary year as an opening to raise these issues. See: <https://michaelmears.org/the-mistake-a-new-play-about-the-day-the-world-changed-forever/>

Trustees' report and review process

Part of the afternoon session of the meeting was focussed on addressing concerns brought to members by NFPB's trustees. As with other parts of Quaker work, there are both challenges and opportunities ahead, from financial pressures to changes in the wider political and global context. The Board heard that trustees will be seeking additional sources of funding, so that we do not only have to draw on reserves to address operating shortfalls.

Working in small groups, Friends identified a number of areas that either need further consideration or might be leadings to ways forward. The value of working together as Friends, with times for mutual support and discernment, was affirmed. The climate crisis, economic inequalities and political tendencies that promote militarism all have an effect on peace concerns; how can NFPB, within the wider Quaker structures and the peace movement, best use its resources in the future? We were also challenged to be more inclusive.

The consideration will continue and will be the focus of an additional meeting (now planned to take place as a web-conference) of Trustees and other Friends in May.

Military Spending and Arms Conversion

In April, we signed an open letter on military spending and the Covid-19 pandemic (see <https://www.ppu.org.uk/openletter>) as part of partnership with other groups promoting the Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) from mid-April to mid-May.

The open-letter reads, in part:

Money diverted from military budgets could contribute towards NHS and social care costs, initiatives to assist those losing their jobs and support for people whose mental health is affected by isolation. Longer term, we need to re-orient the economy towards socially useful production and shift "defence" resources away from militaristic approaches and towards tackling serious threats to human security, including pandemics, poverty and climate change.

There is a website with resources related to the issues of military spending at <https://demilitarize.org.uk>.

We are also part of a group of organisations developing ways of promoting arms conversion. One of the other organisations in that group, Medact, ran a webinar on this in late April and their Peace & Security Campaigner Reem Abu-Hayyeh has written a useful piece available at : <https://www.medact.org/2020/blogs/arms-conflict-coronavirus/>

A blog piece on this issue from NFPB Coordinator Philip Austin is available at:

<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2020/05/06/covid-and-arms-conversion/>

Peace Round-up

We continue to produce a summary of links to peace-related news and comments every 4-6 weeks. The latest issue, which has many items arising from the pandemic in relation to peace and justice concerns, **can be found at:** <https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/publicity-information-outreach/#peace-round-up>

Thank you

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

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.