



**living witness**  
Quakers for Sustainability

# **Annual Report and Accounts**

## **Year to 31 December 2015**

**Living Witness  
Friends Meeting House  
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Living Witness is registered in England and Wales  
as Charity No. 1119938

# Living Witness

## Quakers for Sustainability

### Annual Report 2015

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#### Introduction

Living Witness (LW) supports the development of spirit-led approaches to sustainable living among Quakers and in the wider society. Its aims are:

- 1) education on the many dimensions of the sustainability challenge,
- 2) encouraging and informing practical action for sustainability, and
- 3) deepening Quaker faith and practice as it relates to sustainable living.

In support of these aims, its main activities are:

- providing advice, analysis, study guides and resources for spiritually-grounded action, in person, in print and on the Internet
- speaking to groups and running courses and workshops

- supporting spiritual exploration and grounding, learning and action in networks of individuals and groups developing their own approaches to sustainability

Living Witness Project was started with a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (2002-2005). It was registered as a charitable trust in July 2007. In 2008 it merged with Quaker Green Action, the group of British Friends concerned with our sustainability witness since 1986. With an increasing Quaker activity on sustainability, Living Witness is just one among several sources of information and encouragement. However, we continue to function as the main grassroots network among British Friends, working closely with Britain Yearly Meeting (Quakers in Britain) and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

During 2015 Living Witness was supported by Laurie Michaelis as Co-ordinator and secretary to trustees, and Dee Sayce as Administrator and editor of our quarterly newsletter, earthQuaker. Both worked on a part-time, self-employed basis. Our work in 2015 included:

1. Servicing BYM Sustainability Group, the committee set up to provide leadership in the yearly meeting's 2011 commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community.
2. Working with Quakers internationally, in particular with the Quaker UN Office in support of progress in the UN climate negotiations.
3. Providing printed and Internet resources, including earthQuaker.
4. Leading events for local Quaker meetings and others, and running our own events on the human dimensions of climate change.

These are described in the following pages.

## **BYM Sustainability Group**

Living Witness' main area of activity in 2015 was supporting the work of BYM Sustainability Group, set up by Meeting for Sufferings to provide eldership and oversight in the yearly meeting in relation to the 2011 commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community. From January 2015 Laurie Michaelis acted as Secretary to the group. He and Rachel Berger had been members of the group and its predecessor, the Minute 36 Commitment Group.

In addition to organising four meetings of the Group during 2015, specific activities included

- Organising a special interest meeting at BYM in May 2015.
- Organising and facilitating a threshing meeting at Woodbrooke in August 2015, exploring 'what's Quaker about our sustainability commitment'.
- Work on a paper on policy and system change.
- Preparations for the March 2016 BYM Sustainability Gathering at Swanwick, Derbyshire

## **International Quaker work on peace and environment**

Rachel Berger and Laurie Michaelis attended the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Subsidiary Body meetings in Bonn in June 2015, supporting the work of the Quaker UN Office at the negotiations. Rachel followed the food and agriculture aspects of the negotiations. Laurie worked with Lindsey Cook of QUNO to organise a side event on working with conflict.

Laurie participated throughout 2015 in the international Peace and Environment network, which brings together representatives of Quaker organisations worldwide in regular Skype conversations. Along with other network participants he prepared several draft pages for the Quakers in the World website.

## **Publications**

We produced four issues of earthQuaker in 2015, including a special issue leading up to the General Election in May.

From May 2014 to May 2015, Laurie wrote a monthly column for *The Friend* entitled *Gleanings*, exploring the links between sustainability and Gospel Order. *The Friend* has plans to publish the articles as a small book.

## **Events and talks**

Our events for Quakers in 2015 included:

- A day workshop on Human Dimensions of Climate Change at Oxford Friends Meeting House in March. The event was attended by twelve Friends and led to a short report identifying a wide range of ways in which they were engaging with the issues, and mapping organisations and movements we might connect with.
- A workshop for West Somerset Area Meeting in July.
- A four-day retreat on the Human Dimensions of Climate Change at the Quaker Community, Bamford in August. Seventeen Friends participated in this event which explored some of the essential Quaker themes in responding to climate change, in particular being patterns and examples, answering that of God in the other, and finding unity.
- A talk for Bristol Area Meeting in September.

## **Other activities**

Laurie Michaelis gave a talk at the International Permaculture Conference at Friends House in London, and participated in a workshop at Ruskin Anglia University in Cambridge on psycho-social aspects of climate change.

Living Witness supports the Quaker Community, Bamford as an experiment in Quaker approaches to sustainable living. During 2015 Laurie facilitated a closed week for community members, working on conflict, relationship-building and vision in the community.

## People and governance

### Trustees

Living Witness is a charitable trust. In 2015 the trustees met twice in person and twice by teleconference, using Quaker Business Method. The trustees during 2015 were:

**Rachel Berger**, Bradford-upon-Avon (2010 - 2015). Rachel works for the appropriate technology charity, Practical Action.

**Carla Denyer**, Bristol (2013 – 2015). Carla is an engineer working on wind energy projects. During 2015 she was a Green Party councillor on Bristol City Council.

**Rachel Howell**, Aberystwyth (2014 – 2016). During 2015 Rachel was a postdoctoral research fellow in Human Dimensions of Climate Change at Aberystwyth University, and is now a lecturer in Sustainable Development at Edinburgh University.

**Sue Meredith-Velado**, Loughborough (2015 – 2017). Sue is active in local community work, including Transition Leicester and the Leicester Footpaths Project.

**Alison Seddon**, Tunbridge Wells (2015 – 2017). Alison is a trainer and facilitator working with drama and role play.

**Andrew Taylor-Browne**, Falmouth (2015 – 2017). Andrew and his wife Julie have a farm near Falmouth, where they care for a wide variety of animals, trees and other life.

### Staff

**Laurie Michaelis**. Laurie acts as secretary to the trustees. He has worked on energy, climate change and other environmental policy and education for over 25 years.

**Dee Sayce** was the Administrator during 2015. She is a former member of the Quaker Community at Bamford and works as a teacher of spinning and natural dyeing.

## Review of finances in 2015

During 2015 we saw a slight decline in financial contributions from Friends and meetings, continuing the trend of recent years. We received £6159 in payments from Britain Yearly Meeting for servicing the BYM Sustainability Group, and a bequest of £14,000 from the estate of Hilary Judith Kramer.

The major expenditure was £6,000 to Laurie Michaelis for his work as Secretary to BYM Sustainability Group. Trustees' travel expenses at £592 amounted to 7% of outgoings.

	2014	2015
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Fees for events	1,043	827
Sales of publications	20	0
Contributions from Meetings	1,750	1555
Donations from Friends	400	519
Individual membership fees	1,106	817
Consultancy		6159
Grants and Gift Aid		14000
Bank interest	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,322</b>	<b>23881</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
Fees for contract work (payments to Dee and Laurie)	6,291	6933
Telephone, IT services	79	124
Equipment (incl. literature & software)	49	119
Printing, publicity & postage	725	434
Staff travel	667	443
Staff training & conferences	-	145
Trustees expenses	464	592
Event venues, catering	375	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,650</b>	<b>8820</b>
Excess receipts over payments	-4,327	15060
Balance at start of Period	1,707	5053
Transferred from Triodos account	7,673	0
End of year balance in LWP Co-operative Bank Account	7,292	23420
Creditors at year end	-2239	-3307*
<b>Closing fund balance</b>	<b>£ 5,053</b>	<b>20113</b>

\* These consisted of £3,000 payment to Laurie Michaelis for work done during 2015, £23 outstanding Trustees' expenses and £284 in outstanding payments for printing and distributing earthQuaker in 2015. All were paid in January 2016.

## **Plans for the future**

Our main work during 2016 will be to continue supporting BYM Sustainability Group, including the BYM Sustainability Gathering in March 2016.

Meanwhile, Trustees are beginning to set out a vision for the future shape of Living Witness. It includes a reinvigorated national community, with members taking the lead in projects and networks that inspire and nourish them. There seems to be energy for:

- National gatherings, perhaps once a year
- Visits to local Quaker Meetings to support a deepening of the spiritual basis of our sustainability commitment
- Experiential retreats – exploring spiritual and practical aspects of sustainability and working on the land or with animals
- Green politics
- Joyful and spirit-led nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience
- Conflict transformation and community building
- Researching and writing about what we've learned from our Quaker journey on sustainability
- Outreach beyond Quakers, offering sustainability workshops and resources to other organisations

Living Witness members have been invited to a gathering at Bamford Quaker Community in October 2016 to explore priorities and identify individuals who are ready to take projects forward.