**Quaker Peace and Social Witness Spring Conference, 22-24 March 2019**

I attended the QPSW annual conference in March. This was a well-run event, full of interesting speakers, insightful workshops and meaningful worship. The conference opened with an introduction to the international, regional and local projects currently being pursued by QPSW staff and volunteers. We were encouraged to see the QPSW staff as resources that can support work in our local and area meetings. We were invited to consider the question:

* How can we use our Quaker compass to guide our work in our communities?

The next morning started with a great exercise to get to know people in our adjacent area meetings. We then had a keynote speech from Nim Njuguna, a former Quaker prison chaplain and a restorative justice trainer. He opened his talk by summarising the 2017 Yearly Meeting minute on diversity. Nim argued that without diversity we are incomplete, and he pointed out that "if we do what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always got." He posed some interesting questions:

* How do we use our statuses to progress social justice, underpinned by Quaker values, within our sphere of influence?
* When new people arrive, how prepared are we to accommodate them?
* Do we play safe, stay in our comfort zone, and avoid conflict?

I attended two workshops during the conference, the first on campaigning for climate justice and sustainability. Some of the most difficult obstacles are a lack of access to information, the cycle of emotional and practical issues which reinforces the status quo and the initial expense. The group agreed that moving climate issues up the political agenda by developing clear viable alternatives is essential. I found myself wondering whether there was something that our local meetings could be doing to support the brave young people who have been going on school strikes over this issue. The second workshop was on criminal justice, our broken prison system and the opportunities for transformative justice. We discussed QFP 23.47, the importance of institutions being "constantly tested against human values", and the complex realities of society as it is. It was discussed that the way to reduce pressure on the criminal justice system will be to improve social justice, equality, health, well-being and welfare.

On the Sunday morning there was a thoughtful meeting for worship, which included moving ministry on several relevant topics: shouting loudly, with compassion; the importance of being our true selves; and finding ways to facilitate genuine significant change rather than being distracted by minor inconsequential issues. The conference also included many opportunities for relaxed and structured discussion on a wide range of topics, which generated as many questions as it answered. I would definitely recommend this conference, especially as an opportunity to get to know Quakers from across the country. I am deeply grateful for AM's support in enabling me to participate in this event.