

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE) Annual Report Year ended 30 September 2020

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Year ended 30 September 2020

FSSE (Friends Southern Summer Events) is a small Quaker charity, entirely run by volunteers, whose purpose is the advancement of the Religious Society of Friends through the provision of educational events for young people.

Object and Activities

FSSE's objects are:

- (a) to promote and advance the religious education of the community and in particular of young people, including those of the Quaker tradition, and others with an interest in learning more about Quakers;

AND in furtherance thereof:

- (b) to organise and promote events for the spiritual growth and moral benefit of the community and in particular of young people with an interest in Quakers;
- (c) to disseminate by whatever means the ideals of truth, non-violence and equality within a Quaker background; and
- (d) to promote any purpose that is charitable according to the laws of England and Wales and for the benefit of the public as may from time to time be determined by the trustees.

FSSE usually runs two week-long events: Junior Gathering, for 11-14 year olds; and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds. The catchment area is southern England, though others are welcomed if there is space.

Public benefit statement

FSSE exists for the promotion and advancement of the spiritual nurture and religious education of young people including both those of the Quaker tradition, and those with an interest in learning more about Quakers and Quakerism. This benefits personally the participants who attend the events, and also benefits the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) more widely, through the spreading of Quaker ideas and ideals.

In carrying out these purposes, FSSE usually organises two annual residential Quaker events in August of each year: Junior Gathering (for young people aged 11-14) and Senior Conference (for older participants aged 15-18). These events benefit the young people who attend them enormously, by providing spiritual education through workshops which advocate the Quaker testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality and truth. The events provide spiritual nourishment from new (and old) friendships, shared worship and activities including sports, games, drama, music and other creative arts.

Based on the feedback participants provide, we know our events are significant in the lives of those who attend, helping to build confidence, knowledge and supportive friendships which in some cases last a lifetime. We see young people wanting to come back year on year, and also those who want to give back some of what they gained by helping at the events.

Funding

In normal times (the COVID-19 pandemic made 2020 an exceptional year) FSSE is funded primarily through participant fees. Fee income is supplemented by grants and gifts from charitable trusts and Quaker Meetings.

Some participant fees are funded in part or in whole by a young person's Local or Area Quaker Meeting. FSSE's aim is to ensure that no-one who wishes to come to Junior Gathering or Senior Conference is prevented from doing so for financial reasons. Grants and gifts enable us to support participation by young people who could not otherwise afford the full fees. Decisions to apply grants and gifts to support participation are taken by the bookings secretaries in consultation with the treasurer.

Achievement and Performance

The year to September 2020 saw FSSE amend its usual event structures to ensure it could meet its objectives despite the constraints of COVID-19, which would have made the events very challenging to run in the traditional way. We took the decision that Junior Gathering could not run this year, and that Senior Conference would take place as a 'virtual' event. Despite the challenges this change in approach brought, feedback from participants, parents and other stakeholders demonstrates the event was a success, and ensured we fulfilled our purpose.

Trustees' Annual Report

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone, and the last 12 months has seen FSSE make changes to the way it runs its events. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we took the collective decision that FSSE's events would not run in the same way as in previous years. Junior Gathering for 11-14 year olds did not run this year, and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds ran as a remote, technology-enabled event over the course of a shorter week than previously. Trustees believe that despite this new context, those involved in planning and running the event were able to ensure it served Quakers well, and was facilitated according to firm Quaker values. Although not an in-person event, Senior Conference remained, thanks to the work of the event coordinators, arrangements committee, team of base group facilitators and the support of the participants, a place where young people could gain spiritual input and learn more about Quaker values and testimonies.

Trustees are of the view that FSSE remains on a sure financial footing. The shift to our event programme consisting of one online event rather than the two residential events FSSE has traditionally provided saw an expected shift in our annual accounts, with income and payments greatly reduced. As reflects a longer-term, Young Quaker group wide pattern, not simply the different nature of the 2020 event, our reserves have fallen since last year. Our financial reserves would still just about enable us to meet the cost of one in-person event failing.

Regardless of what form future events take, we will continue to focus on increasing our participant numbers, as well as taking time over the next few years to scope out potential options for how we can better meet the needs of our young people through the events we run. Over time we expect that participant fees will need to rise, although we do not anticipate this happening in 2021. We know that many Area and Local Quaker Meetings

support our participants, their families, and FSSE finances through part funding of participant places, and are grateful for this.

We worked hard to make our events open to everyone, regardless of means. In previous years this has included helping participants with difficulties find bursary funding locally where possible, and where not possible, providing bursary funding from FSSE's own limited funds. For the 2020 event, the issue of access was not so much financial (we invited participants to make a donation in lieu of a normal fee) as ensuring potential participants were aware an event was still running. We have taken on board the learning from this year's successful event, and will ensure publicity campaigns happen earlier, in a highly targeted way, to ensure we reach as many potential attendees as possible.

We pay careful attention to the safety of our events, with designated trained safeguarding team members. We carefully assess possible risks so that we mitigate them, or are prepared should we have an emergency.

Comments from the adult helpers and parents, as well as participants' feedback from Senior Conference events, indicate that FSSE was very successful in meeting our objectives.

Since AGM 2019, Trustees have met five times, across the year, via video-conferencing services. Some of these meetings were also attended by event coordinators and people in other FSSE management roles, to help discern the most effective way to run our events, and their time and input is invaluable.

We would like to thank everyone who helped run and oversee our work this year, for the courage, tenacity, positivity and sense of purpose they have shown throughout a backdrop which none of us anticipated or would have chosen. We are grateful also to the Quaker meetings and other bodies whose bursaries were still able to help our finances. The sense of joy and inspiration FSSE events bring has not been diminished, and it remains a privilege to be connected to this organisation, its events and the people who contribute to them. Thank you.

James Barnard – Clerk to FSSE trustees

Senior Conference Epistle 2020

To all Friends everywhere,

From the 15th-19th August 2020, the first ever online Senior Conference was held. Twenty-seven 14 to 18 year-olds and ten adult volunteers came together from around the country (and beyond!) to enjoy five days of fun activities and exploration of our theme:

“Understanding our place as a religious society”. To address this theme, we heard from three speakers, examining both the theological diversity within Quakerism as well as the place Quakerism holds within society as a whole.

On Sunday, the first full day, we heard from Roger Warren Evans, a nontheist Friend and member of the Nontheist Friends Network. By sharing the story of his past, Roger explained his present standpoint as a nontheist Quaker, ultimately defining himself as an ‘evolutionary nontheist’. Roger shared that he grew up surrounded by vastly opposed theological views. Though attending a Quaker school, this conflict made him hesitate to take any strong standpoints towards the beginning of his life, keeping his head down religiously and generally “fudging the issue”. As a student, he was the secretary of the Cambridge Humanist Society led by E.M. Forster, whom Roger quoted as saying “tolerance is what’s left when love gets left behind”. This impacted Roger’s view that he could not simply be an atheist. Later in his life, Roger returned to Quakerism as he felt that it was a “genuinely open-minded culture”, a sentiment shared by many conferees. He concluded philosophically that he believes humans are a “malfunctioning species”, and that it is our actions which are most important. This is what can change the future.

Monday’s talk was from Mark Russ, a self-identified “Quaker-shaped Christian”. Mark asked us to consider what our understanding of religious experience is, and shared his own experiences with us. He explained how he sees religion as a set of practices, beliefs and stories, which all come together to form an individual’s experience of the world. One of the most famous Quaker quotations is from George Fox: “there is that of God in everyone” — and to some Quakers, in everything — however, many religious people experience periods of time when they are closer to God, or further away. Mark shared that through his years as a Quaker he has learned not to be hard on himself, or on God, for these periods of spiritual dryness. He also shared four turning points in his life where he felt as if he encountered God. The first, was Mark’s experience of coming out as gay age 17 and the subsequent “spiritual coming out” — a deep connection to God and the world. He also shared other experiences with us including comparing drag queens to priests for the gay community: “Drench me in that big, gay, glittery Holy Spirit”. Mark reminded us that religious experience is not always big and dramatic, but sometimes small or retrospective.

On Tuesday, for our final speaker session, Grace Da Costa talked to us about the other side of our theme — the place held by Quakerism in a sociopolitical context. As Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager for Britain Yearly Meeting, Grace talked to us about her role as a lobbyist, explaining how building strong relationships with influential individuals and groups can help bring about change in line with Quaker values. She also explained the reasons why faith groups, including Quakers, have such an important role in political environments, citing

that faith in action can often be powerful and elicit a more positive response among others than action taken in other contexts. Grace encouraged us to think critically and challenge the position of privilege that we all recognise British Quakers hold in society as a majority white, middle-class, Christocentric group. We were reminded to remain humble, listen to and learn from the opinions and voices of those marginalised in society as a whole and within the Quaker community — especially when their experiences are different from our own. We will continue to think analytically about our aims, action and audiences in every step we take towards a more equal future.

Building a strong community online over the course of five days was never going to be as simple as if the event were in person. A staple of Senior Conference is base groups — small groups facilitated by conferees — which provide a comfortable space for participants to make new friends and share experiences and worries. Despite not having the usual ‘hub’ of a base group room, ‘breakout rooms’ on Zoom provided the privacy and intimacy needed for the conferees to bond, discuss themed sessions, create comedy sketches and play a variety of online games. In addition to base groups, prologue and epilogue each day provided a sounding board of spiritual togetherness among participants and a place to get into and out of the Conference headspace. On Tuesday night, many 18-year-olds experienced their final Senior Conference epilogue, and this made for a typically atmospheric and emotional last evening in spite of the physical distance between us.

As always, the event was full of fun activities. The evening entertainment sessions allowed us to come together over Zoom even though we could not achieve the sessions’ normal physicality. Ents included a quiz (with questions well-designed to avoid any cheating!) and a ‘themed showcase’ during which each base group turned up in costume, accompanied by a pre-prepared video which was shown to the whole group. For the final night, we stuck to Conference tradition and had an online adaptation of the classic talent show. Conferees sent in a variety of videos showcasing their diverse skills. We ended the night having seen a Quaker rap, slam poetry and even some live fortune telling. Each night, one person volunteered to read a bedtime story after epilogue. These proved extremely popular and we heard tales from great children’s authors such as Beatrix Potter and Dr. Seuss. Though online, these activities helped create the wonderful sense of togetherness for which Senior Conference is so loved.

Conferees left this year’s event with a heightened understanding of the position of Quakers in both a theological and societal sense. As well as seeing first hand the diversity of beliefs within Quakerism, we learnt of the importance to recognise and understand the religious (or non-religious) standpoints of others. We know the significance of putting our faith into action and how, when combined with the willpower to change things, we can use this to make a positive difference in the world. Perhaps the most noticeable thing to be taken away from Senior Conference 2020 is the sense that, even in these difficult and divisive times, young Quakers can always come together as one.

Signed in and on behalf of Senior Conference 2020,

Jonathan H and Issy C-W, Clerks.

FSSE Annual Accounts

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Friends Southern Summer Events (charity no. 1155420)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30 September 2020.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date: 22 March 2021

Name: Keith Barnes

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body: Fellow, CIMA

Address: 2 Beeforth Close
New Earswick
York
YO32 4DF

Receipts and payments to 30 September 2020

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2020 - Consolidated

	2020	2019
Receipts		
Contributions & donations	1,494	3,889
Participant fees (for 2020, donations)	70	46,491
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	1,564	50,380
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	427
Planning expenses	981	2,225
Skills development	97	600
Total pre-event	1,078	3,252
Event		
Accommodation	0	40,991
Staff event travel & services	79	3,344
Group event travel & services	0	3,035
Speakers expenses	0	309
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	0	160
Materials & supplies	110	595
Minor equipment	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	190	48,434
General		
Management meetings	109	559
Trustee expenses	220	649
Subscriptions	120	120
Insurance	474	543
Bank charges	60	66
Total general	983	1,937
Total payments	2,251	53,623
Receipts less Payments	-686	-3,243
Balances brought forward at 1 October	22,375	25,618
Balances carried forward at 30 September	21,688	22,375
Prepayment for Sibford School	3,948	3,948
Cash at bank and in hand	17,740	18,427
Reserves	21,688	22,375

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2020 - Junior Gathering

	2020	2019
Receipts		
Contributions & donations	0	0
Participant fees	0	17,341
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	0	17,341
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	249	944
Skills development	0	577
Total pre-event	249	1,521
Event		
Accommodation	0	17,958
Staff event travel & services	79	1,386
Group event travel & services	0	1,555
Speakers expenses	0	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	0	31
Materials & supplies	0	371
Minor equipment	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	79	21,301
General		
Management meetings	0	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	0	0
Insurance	0	0
Bank charges	0	0
Total general	0	0
Total payments	329	22,822
Receipts less Payments	-329	-5,481

Notes

(1) Junior Gathering was not held in 2020. Payments in 2020 relate to pre-Covid-19 planning, plus a residual event claim from 2019.

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2020 - Senior
Conference

	2020	2019
Receipts		
Contributions & donations	0	0
Participant fees (for 2020, donations)	70	29,150
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	70	29,150
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	732	1,281
Skills development	97	23
Total pre-event	829	1,304
Event		
Accommodation	0	23,033
Staff event travel & services	0	1,958
Group event travel & services	0	1,480
Speakers expenses	0	309
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	0	129
Materials & supplies	110	224
Minor equipment	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	110	27,133
General		
Management meetings	0	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	0	0
Insurance	0	0
Bank charges	0	0
Total general	0	0
Total payments	939	28,437
Receipts less Payments	-869	713

Notes

(1) The 2020 event was held online. Fees were voluntary.

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2020 - General Income & Expenditure

	2020	2019
Receipts		
Contributions & donations (Note 1)	1,494	3,889
Participant fees	0	0
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	1,494	3,889
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	427
Planning expenses	0	0
Skills development	0	0
Total pre-event	0	427
Event		
Accommodation	0	0
Staff event travel & services	0	0
Group event travel & services	0	0
Speakers expenses	0	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	0	0
Materials & supplies	0	0
Minor equipment	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	0	0
General		
Management meetings	109	559
Trustee expenses	220	649
Subscriptions	120	120
Insurance	474	543
Bank charges	60	66
Total general	983	1,937
Total payments	983	2,364
Receipts less Payments	511	1,525

Notes

(1) In 2020, contributions and donations comprised: £1,000 from the C B and H H Taylor Trust, £127 from Cambridge Jesus Lane Quaker Meeting, and a £100 individual donation. The remainder represents cheques written out in the previous year which were never cashed, treated as donations back to FSSE.

Statement of assets and liabilities at 30 September 2020

The charity had no material assets or liabilities at the end of the period other than the net Reserves (£21,688) reported under Receipts and payments.

The Trustees declare that the charity has given no guarantee where potential liability is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

The Trustees declare that the charity has no outstanding debts which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the charity at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Appendix 1: Reference and Administrative Details

Name: Friends Southern Summer Events, known also as FSSE.

Charity registration number: 1155420

Governing Document: FSSE is governed by its constitution, a copy of which may be found on FSSE's website at <http://fsse.org.uk/files/FSSE-CIO-Constitution.pdf>

Contact address: 30 Lucombe Way, New Earswick, York, YO32 4DS

Trustees: Katherine Anne Gibbs, Margaret Louisa Rose Lee, Bryony Helen Rowntree, Tessa Rosemary Brown, David Roderick Holtam, Bernard Paul Leeser, Anna Trethewey, James Barnard, Peter Slade, Gwendolen Da Sousa Correa, Michael Wood, Candia Crossfield

Clerk to trustees: James Barnard

Clerk to management committee: Oliver Waterhouse

Treasurer: Graham Torr

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA

Appendix 2: Reserves and Investments Policy

Reserves

FSSE requires reserves for normal operational reasons, as follows:

1. cash flow during the year;
2. planned additional expenditure in a particular year;
3. expenditure higher than expected;
4. income lower than expected.

We understand that it is normal practice for a charity to hold 25%-50% of annual expenditure as an operational reserve. With experience of our cash flow requirements, we agree that we will budget to hold between 30% and 50% of the previous year's expenditure.

Investment

We will hold our reserves as liquid assets to support the operations of FSSE, in a manner in keeping with Quaker principles. If it is possible to keep some in a higher-interest bearing account without operational difficulties, the Treasurer is requested to do so.