

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2015

Dear Friends,

Along with our continuing focus on nurturing our spiritual lives, April finds us also considering the stewardship of our finances, and these issues, as well as living our faith in the world, are reflected in our newsletter, with a report from Margaret Skelton, our treasurer, on our giving, and a reminder from our clerk, Rhiannon Rees, of the purpose of our meeting for worship for business on Sunday 12 April after coffee.

Gillian Turner

'An image: a waterfall. Watching the deep, dark pool at the top, the water seems motionless. But all the time it is slipping over its own edges like a silken sheet, before tumbling in a dazzle of foam and rainbows amongst rocks and tree roots. Of course the pool must be full for the waterfall to happen, but for me there is an even more important message: if the pool is full, the water must flow. If we are truly spirit-filled, action must flow. But if I act without being spirit-filled, if my actions do not come from that still centre, I am just stamping in puddles to make a brief splash.'

Jane Pearn *The Friend* 13 March 2015

News of Friends : Mavis Parker

Mavis moved to Huntingdon some years ago to be nearer to her family, and has been receiving our newsletter ever since. I asked her to let us know how she is, and here is her reply:

It gives me such pleasure to read in the newsletter of all the activities going on at such a vibrant meeting, and so good to see the old familiar names mentioned. I have such happy, positive memories of Croydon.

It is heart-warming to read of the young folk I knew from Children's Meeting. They are truly living adventurously.

Huntingdon is a comparatively small meeting, though growing, consisting of 30 members and regular attenders, with an average attendance of around 18. Our Children's meeting has gradually grown to five and meets every first Sunday. We value their presence at meeting.

Starting this month, on every fourth Sunday, we shall be holding a Meeting for Prayer for Healing. This will take place before Meeting for Worship. I am grateful that the meeting is supporting this. I sense that people generally are either fearful or suspicious of the word healing. Maybe we fear something wonderful might happen, or maybe not happen. My feelings are, to misquote Karl Marx, We have nothing to fear but our pains, be they physical, spiritual or emotional.

My good wishes to everyone,

Mavis

Kathleen Bell

Just as we were finishing the Newsletter we heard from Mary Wright that, after a period of serious illness in hospital and a spell at a nursing home in Hailsham, her mother Kathleen died at about 7:30am on Tuesday 31 March. Kathleen had been receiving the newsletter regularly since she moved to the Bernhard Barron Homes in Polesgate and always appreciated hearing our news. We send Mary our sympathy and warmest love.

Oliver Campbell-Leith

On 31 March we received this message from Jean:

"Dear Friends, This is to let you know that, after a brief decline, Oliver passed away last night at 10.10. We will miss him very much, but I'm glad to say that our dog Lizzy and I were with him, and the Home were very supportive to us both, as have been many family and f/Friends, for which we are all thankful. in Peace and f/Friendship, Jean".

We sent Jean our love and prayers, and in response Jean added "I'm happy to say that my two brothers and their families are proving helpful and supportive, with one coming over from France. Our little Quaker Meeting in Ruthin is very supportive too, and came for a mfw with Oliver to the Home just days before his passing.

Women`s World day of Prayer: Do you know what I have done to you? John 13: 1-17
West Croydon Methodist Church 6 March, 2015

We were certainly in the Bahamas. The vivid turquoise sheet with its colourful fruit and examples of Bahamian handicraft, and the shack-shack and the tambourine on each pew told us so, and by way of reinforcement, as we came together to worship we chanted, "*Aal a we is waan famaly*", in translation "We are all one family", meaning that regardless of surface differences we are all children of God, created in his image. Our convenor guided us through the programme. We gave thanks on behalf of the people of the islands of the Bahamas as we made "a joyful noise unto the Lord" singing our Hallelujah accompanied by shack-shack and tambourine, and led by our choir, we raised our voices as we sang The Doxology in canon.

The passage in John 13 1-15, was read to us. It told of the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, this being the theme of this year`s Day of Prayer "*Do you know what I have done to you?*". It is one thing to read a story for yourself, but when you hear it read to you it somehow acquires a deeper significance. Here was Jesus saying to Peter, "*If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.*"

I thought, as I had never thought before, here was Jesus here was Peter. There was no intermediary, no Pope or cardinal, no archbishop, bishop, priest, or curate, no presbyter or parson, no recording clerk, elder, or overseer, just Jesus and Peter and as he is performing the lowly service of washing his feet says words that confirm their close relationship. Powerful. And at the end he says to the rest of the disciples, he says, "*Do you know what I have done to you?*" The operative word being "to".

We sang the story to words written specially for this time of worship and we had a vivid presentation of it as one worshipper walked up the aisle carrying a basin of water and having a towel over her arm, and as she lay them down on the turquoise cloth in front of us the story was complete. As I watched her doing this simple act I remembered the story about two Quakers who were in dispute and how it was the injured one who, when all attempts at conflict resolution had been explored without success, was led by the Spirit to take a basin of water and a towel, visit his neighbour early one morning and insist on washing and drying his feet. The result was a restored relationship and as the story goes, "the friendship between the two men remained deep and vibrant for the remainder of their lives."

There was time for quiet reflection, and there was time for talking with one another about what this story meant to each of us and we shared ideas about ways in which we could follow the example of Jesus, for he had said to his disciples, "*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*"(v15). We took time to write on our footprints (a drawing of a footprint on a sheet of paper) our ways in which we could follow the example. Instead of a sermon/address/homily, whatever you may call it, from someone in the pulpit, we were sharing thoughts with one another. The footprints were later collected. Later on I found out the reason for this.

We made intercessions for all the people in the Bahamas who were following the example of Jesus in so many ways giving their time and talent and whatever resources they had to minister to the needs of the various families in the islands, and as we held them in the Light we prayed that with God`s help they be given what was necessary to carry on. The words of the hymn sung to the tune of The Londonderry Air, enjoined us to continue to follow the example, that we should do unto others as he had done to us.

Who could not feel uplifted as we sang together our international prayer that really tells us that we are all one family- The Day Thou Gavest Lord is Ended? As we left the worship area of the building for the blessing area, viz. the church hall, we each took a footprint written by one of us. I have mine as a remembrance of a really blessed time. It says, "*Be welcoming and helpful to everyone.*" There we continued talking with one another over sandwiches and cake and tea and coffee and water.

Over the weekend I wondered why this Day of Prayer seemed so special. On reflection I concluded that I had attended a programmed Quaker Meeting for Worship, a gathered meeting.

Joyce Trotman

Friends will be interested to know that Joyce`s article entitled Expediency, which appeared here in March, was also published in The Friend on March 27.

Birmingham Bull Street Meeting

Having attended Croydon Quaker meetings for some nine months or so and experiencing the great therapeutic benefit of them, it was interesting to see how other meetings are carried on in other areas. Having the intention of attending a meeting in Birmingham during a half term holiday from work, I came across the Birmingham Bull Street meeting via the Quaker website.

Bull Street I know is in the city centre and after hearing whispers of the 'clever' decision of abolishing the free parking on a Sunday in the city, (which turned out to be wrong), I was wary of parking too close in to town, so decided to park on the outskirts of the city and walk in (around half a mile).

Bull Street is on a hill and I remember walking towards the meeting, on a crisp and cold December morning.

The reception was welcoming and comfortable as with all meetings I have experienced and it was not long before the meeting for worship began.

The meeting hall itself square in shape, with a red carpet and green bench type seating, I sat down next to a gentleman and began to ground myself ready for worship. I remember a slight feeling of discomfort, partly because of my anxiety and partly because I was sharing the bench with another person and because of the slight movements experienced. I thought about changing seats but decided it would do me good to sit it out.

I also remember visualising the meeting house on top of the hill as it would have looked in times gone by, long before all the modern roads and buildings and saw myself making the pilgrimage to the venue amongst the mist in the fields.

After the meeting was over, I noticed that the attendees did not shake hands as we do at Croydon meeting, which was disappointing.

The after-meeting refreshments were pleasant and I was shown a hand-drawn Christmas card someone had made.

All in all it was another valuable experience with around fifteen people in attendance.

The Bull Street Quaker Building is quite old and very interesting and well worth a visit if you can.

Gil Greiner

Quaker Quest

Quaker Quest, a weekly meeting for inquirers about Quakerism, has been held at Friends House, Euston Road, London for many years. I went once when it was set up, noted the topics and the format of the sessions, thought, what a great idea, and that was that until I was asked to be one of the speakers in March. The topics are: Quakers and... God, Worship, Pacifism, Evil, Simplicity, Jesus, Equality, Faith, Truth and Prayer (not all at once, of course. One a week.) Joyce Trotman spoke about Evil at a session last year, and I was given Equality, which I thought was more straightforward than thinking about the nature of evil.

Before the night I was sent a leaflet about how to speak in public, the most memorable part for me was not to use Quakerspeak or acronyms, and although they didn't use the word, not to be pompous! I was also put in touch with the other speakers, and we all agreed that we had no time to meet beforehand, we were all stressed and overworked, and we were sure we would enjoy the experience when it happened.

The meeting is held in the restaurant of Friends House, and when I arrived at 6pm the first person I saw was Terry Wilkes, who is not only on the organising committee for Quaker Quest but also for Next Steps, for attenders. Leasa, the organiser that evening, welcomed me and the other two speakers, and we sat together with refreshments while we got to know one another. We were well matched, I thought. Jessi, a young woman of mixed heritage, Alex, a slightly older man from a very deprived background and with mental health problems, and me. Alex was very nervous, and I was anxious about him, but needn't have worried.

It was all very well organised. We started with an introduction. The three speakers sat behind a table with a clock, for we had 7 minutes each in each half followed by questions from the floor. Members of committee led the discussion of the topic with visitors at the interval while Friends who came to support sat together for the discussion. After the interval we each spoke again for 7 minutes followed by more questions, followed by Meeting for Worship. It finished at 9pm.

It was interesting how what the three of us said fitted together. The idea was to speak from personal experience in the first half and to bring in the Quaker element in the second. Jessi spoke

about equality from the aspect of racial prejudice and the importance to her of the testament. Alex was very honest about his childhood and health issues, and how his first-hand knowledge of living with such difficulties enabled him to work among the homeless in his neighbourhood. I found him to be a most impressive person. I spoke about the poverty in my Irish neighbourhood as a child in the first half and what Quakers here do to support all aspects of equality in the second.

While waiting for the lights to change on the Euston Road I had a short conversation with one of the people who had been present. He said he has been coming every Monday for the cycle of talks and valued the opportunity of meeting ordinary Quakers discussing important issues. He has started to attend a London meeting, and Terry said that they are now encouraging him to attend the Next Steps cycle. His comment, though, made me remember the sentence in *Advices and Queries 2*: *As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained? While respecting the experiences of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value.* I think that sums up the Quaker Quest ethos.

Gillian Turner

Financial affairs

Quaker Faith and Practice offers much advice about how we should deal with money, both individually and corporately. Chapter 14 deals with Finance: Giving for Quaker Work. Chapter 20: Living Faithfully Together, deals with Care of money held for others, (20.64 *Friends who hold money on behalf of others should have regard to the importance of the proper safeguarding and wise administration of such moneys.*) *Advices and Queries* asks: *Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations. Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility?*

At our March Local Business meeting, Margaret Skelton presented our accounts for 2014, with the following comments.

What does the General Fund for 2014 tell us?

Most people's eyes glaze over when faced with financial spreadsheets. I wanted to avoid the 'glazed effect' as much as possible when, as Treasurer of the General Fund, I presented the 2014 accounts at the March Business Meeting. Members needed to know that our total funds for this account at the end of 2014 were £4,207, but how could I best explain the information behind this amount? So I spoke to Frances Touch, the Area Meeting Treasurer, who came up with the idea of seeing what the accounts told me about us as a Meeting. On doing this, I found that three things struck me:

The first was that we value our community and understand how important being a Quaker community is to people's spiritual and emotional lives. I thought this was so because contributions and collections for our Meeting were up by over a third compared to the previous year (£3,911 this year). We had several large donations during the year and people have been generous in giving more to collections. More people had joined the group of members who give to Meeting through bank standing orders. This meant that we had been able to claim back more gift aid tax than in 2013 (£570). Our biggest expenditure (£1,113) was on grants and bursaries. A large part of this money was for conferences, courses and travel and the rest was for financial support for individuals. This suggested to me that, as a Meeting, we want, wherever possible, to inform, engage and support our members. We continued this through printed information, particularly the newsletter, which is a very important method of sharing our thoughts, actions and plans (£246). We bought and had fitted a new cooker for the kitchen (£472). This was badly needed, as the old cooker was really on its last legs, but it illustrates the fact that, for us, sharing food and drink together is an important part of being a community.

Another thing that struck me was that we were beginning to let non-Quakers know about what we do and believe. This is something that came up several times last year and which is in our minds this year. We had the small yellow 'Q' cards printed (£100), so that we could pass them on to others who show an interest in Quakers. We also bought prints of the Quaker Tapestry (£60), to let outsiders know a little more about us.

The last thing I noticed was that, although (or perhaps because) members had given generously to Local Meeting and other Quaker causes, other donations were down on 2013. We gave £1,294 to non-Quaker causes, compared with £1,617 in 2013. Donations to BYM were

£2,133 compared with £2,370 in 2013. Donations to Area Meeting were £2,121 compared with £2,489 in 2013 and we didn't make a large single donation to AM as we had the previous year. Members at the Business Meeting agreed with my recommendation to give £600 to Area Meeting to begin to address this.

So....were there fewer glazed eyes than there might have been? Who knows? But, hopefully the three trends I spotted will help us a little in shaping how we use the General Fund in 2015.

Margaret also gave us the collections and donations breakdown:

Alzheimers Society 134.00	Friends World Committee for Consultation	
Area Meeting, 2,133.75		79.00
AVP Ukraine 82.00	Nightwatch 126.90	
Britain Yearly Meeting, 2,121.75	Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs 88.00	
Brummana High School 121.00	Quaker Concern for Animals 50.50	
Campaign Against the Arms Trade 72.00	Quaker Homeless Action Table Sale 56.40	
Christian Aid Table Sale 92.15	Quaker UN Office, Geneva 105.00	
Circles South East 93.00	South East Cancer Help Centre 110.00	
Claridge House 80.00	St Christopher's Hospice 91.00	
Croydon Refugee Centre 115.00	Timanne Academy Nairobi 150.00	
Croydon Sickie Cell & Thalassaemia Gp 90.00	Villa El Salvador School, Peru 100.00	
Freedom from Torture 120.00	WAVE Trust 146.00	
Friends Family Group 296.00	Woodbrooke 142.00	
Friends of Hlekweni 137.00	Young Friends General Meeting 102.00	
<i>Collections and donations for Local meeting £3,911.06</i>		Total £7,034.45

Being Friends Together

Discussion groups on two of the four topics suggested in the Woodbrooke study guide have taken off.

Deepening the life of the Spirit together, exploring Quaker spirituality, worship, spiritual practice and prayer organised by Kay Papadopoulous. Meets every second Monday at the meeting house at 2.30pm on 13 and 27 April.

Exploring our living tradition together: the Quaker Way, rooted in Christianity and open to new light, approaches to Jesus and the bible, Quaker history and roots. Joyce Trotman

Being in the world together, our testimonies. Anthea Underwood will give details of the first meeting later this month.

If you feel that there is something you would like to study with Friends which is not covered or where you cannot make the date, please discuss with elders how you could organise it yourself.

Spiritual Preparation for Yearly Meeting

For our Fourth Sunday event, on 22 March, we provided our usual simple lunch at 12.45 and asked everyone, either during the meal or over tea afterwards, to discuss together the questions posed by Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. About 24 Friends and attenders joined in and got to grips with what some of us felt were rather woolly questions with too many abstract nouns.

- *How can we open ourselves fully to the pain of the world without despairing or turning away?*
- *How can meetings be places where individuals are both supported and challenged as they wrestle with the complex issues that face us?*
- *How are we committed to Quaker values? How can we witness for a better social order? How can the testimonies of individuals bring more peace and economic justice?*
- *What can we do to bring about justice and equality in the society in which we live?*

Although there wasn't a plenary session, there was a belief that we could do more as a meeting to provide a platform of awareness; that we should do what we can locally and within our Quaker community to support the sick and elderly and provide a safe place where people can talk in confidence about their problems.

It was also suggested that there could be regular meetings to discuss the spiritual background of topical events; that we should organise conflict resolution practices and training and to invite organisations who are part of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (eg Turning the Tide) to speak to us. Above all, that we ourselves should be an example and witness, and hope that this will inspire others.

Meeting for Sufferings 28 March at Friends House

Members of MfS represent their Area Meetings, and bring to each meeting the concerns of meetings across the country. In return we hear from Trustees and other committees at Friends House through which MfS work.

We heard a report from Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT), a paper on Islamophobia which included minutes from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations responding to minutes from Southern Marches AM and Brighouse West Yorkshire AM. A member of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network responded to minutes about the plight of Destitute Asylum Seekers, and we heard from the floor many examples of Quaker work supporting Asylum Seekers.

We had an interim report on the Local meeting responses to the Long Term Framework, and a Review of financial activities for 2014 from the BYM Treasurer. This will be formally presented to Britain Yearly Meeting, and we will all be given a copy to peruse.

You will find the minutes of the meeting on the Quaker website and a full report in *The Friend*.

Gillian Turner, South London AM rep.

Hustings at Friends House

Thursday, 9 April: 'Building a sustainable community'

Including inclusion, community and sustainability

To register to attend this hustings, [click here and choose "environment, community and sustainability"](#). To submit a question for this hustings, [click here and fill in the form](#).

Tuesday, 21 April: 'Paying for society'

Including economy, equality and social justice

To register to attend this hustings, [click here and choose "economy, equality and social justice"](#)

To submit a question for this hustings, [click here and fill in the form](#).

To register to attend one of our hustings, go to www.quakervote.eventbrite.co.uk and choose the hustings you want to attend. We would also like to invite you to submit questions for the hustings. While we will take some from the floor, the first five questions will be selected in advance – so [please do submit some!](#) I'll email you a week before the hustings if you've been successful.

Doors will open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. All three hustings will be held in The Large Meeting House, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, NW1 2BJ.

If the links in this aren't working, go to the "Hustings and webinars" page of www.quakervote.org.uk.

Adult School Hall:

We have had another film shot at the ASH, a music video which involved a number of delivery vans and an enormous truck containing a generator. We had few problems inside the hall, but outside was a different matter, what with the outside lighting, catering vans delivering rolls, fruit etc (the leftovers went to Nightwatch), vans delivering scenery and equipment and going again.

Unfortunately the truck with the generator, the last to leave, decided not to reverse out but to turn within the limited space, and managed to hit the small wall by the front door. The firm employing him is being faced with a large bill, and we hope to see the wall rebuilt after Easter.

We hope to see another badminton group start up after Easter, also a regular meeting of the Croydon Police Cadet Group. Anthea Underwood's granddaughter, Nirvana, who is a team leader at the LV insurance office opposite, is planning to organise various sports activities. More details in our next newsletter.

Recommended Reading: by a local Quaker author

'He is our cousin, Cousin' by Antony Barlow

Antony is a member of Sutton Meeting and has written a fascinating book about his Quaker family, stretching back to the very beginning of the Society over 350 years ago. The story starts with James Lancaster, George Fox's right-hand man, in 1661, and takes us through Quaker social history with its preoccupation with peace, anti-slavery and justice.

Antony will be discussing his book after Meeting for Worship on Sunday 28 April.

At Sutton's conference on **Nurturing the spiritual life of our meetings**, we had an exercise where we judged different types of ministry to be Helpful, to be Possibly Helpful, or Not Helpful. One was 'Daffodil Ministry,' which is Quakerspeak for waffly thought arising from the vase of flowers on the table. We argued for some time whether it was definitely unhelpful or not, and I remembered the poem below.

One of the more difficult denominations.
 No artless formula of psalm, collect,
And-now-to-God-the-father, unrelenting ministry
 Of the solo conscience. Mankind's cheerless concerns
 Can drop in here like friends.

And yet, the daffodils, she says.

And yettishness: a state of mind.

*O yes, of course the world is harsh,
 And suffering, O yes-and yet
 This morning, as I walked along
 And saw the daffodils, I thought-
 And so forth, daffodilling on.*

Easier not to meet each others' eyes.
 And yet, and yes, the daffodils
 Making their point, in scurfy gardens,
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
 Municipally distributed, like grit.
 Wherever a bulb can lodge and multiply,
 Long-legged, gape-mouthed, a yellow hop in air,
 Daffodils are.
 Homelessness, poverty,
 Injustice, executions, arms trade, war
 Are too.

The stillness isn't easy with itself.

And yet, and yet.

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Events for April at Friends House

April diary

*Events at Croydon meeting house unless otherwise stated
 For details of items marked * see <http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/events>*

Friday 3 – Easter Sharing of Words and Music

Sunday 5 – Meeting for Upholding (Prayer for Healing)

Sunday 12 - Croydon meeting for worship for business, from 12.15. All welcome

Sunday 26 – Fourth Sunday Talk: Antony Barlow, a member of Sutton meeting, describes the background to writing his recently-published book. Followed by a shared lunch.

*Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.
 Please join us for porridge, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15*

Special Business Meeting on Sunday 12 April

Croydon Meeting has been fortunate to receive a generous legacy from our late Friend Erica Johnson. After disposal of her property our share amounted to around £115,000. On 12 April we will be holding a special Meeting for Worship for business at 12.15pm to consider how best to allocate the capital and interest on this. I hope that as many members and regular attenders as possible will attend. Here is the relevant minute from our business meeting on 11 January:

"15.007 Erica Johnson bequest

Following our Meeting for Discernment on 30 November (minute 14.087), our committees and groups are considering the proposals that were put forward then as follows:

1. Improving our buildings (e.g. heating, disabled toilets, sustainability): Premises Committee;
2. Outreach/visibility (e.g. external notice boards, signage including at East Croydon station, mounting a Quaker Tapestry exhibition in the Adult School Hall): Outreach Committee, in consultation with Premises Committee as appropriate;
3. Nurturing the life of the meeting (e.g. Woodbrooke courses): Elders;
4. Establishing a hardship fund: Overseers;
5. Benefiting the local community: we note that an informal group of Veronica Double, Mary Jakeman, Maureen Pembridge and Margaret Skelton has formed to consider proposals.

We ask these committees and groups to put forward proposals with indicative costs by the end of March for our consideration at a meeting on 12 April."

In considering the right use of all our assets, let us remember 'Advices and Queries' 42: 'We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will.' **Rhiannon Rees, Clerk**

March Collections

Figures in parentheses = by standing order

- 1 March South London Area Meeting £54 (£294)
- 8 March South London Area Meeting £43
- 15 March Young Friends General Meeting £64
- 22 March Campaign against the Arms Trade £54
- 29 March Croydon Local Meeting £87* (£429) *Includes £50 donation

Collections in April

- 5 St Christopher's Hospice, 12 Quaker work at home and abroad,
- 29 South London Area Meeting, 26 Quaker Concern for Animals

The deadline for the May edition is Sunday 26 April 2015

**Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner
Tel 020 8688 9659 email gillianturner033@gmail.com**



Croydon Friends invite you to

An Easter Sharing

of words and music on a seasonal theme
on Friday 3 April at 2.15 pm at Croydon meeting house