

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

December 2017: January 2018

Dear Friends - This is by way of being a bumper edition, rounding off the year and nudging us towards the next. We hope that you enjoy it and that it gives a glimpse of our Quaker life here in Croydon and in our other local meetings.

Gillian Turner and David Parlett

And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, each one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And, so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2.i-vii

Christmas Sounds

Boeings wing softly over Earth
Humming like enormous *Messiahs*,
Bringing everyone home for Christmas.
Children wailing impossible wants,
Housewives worrying in case enough isn't,
Parsons, with prevenient care, sucking Strepsils,
Telly jingling twinkling mistletoe-ing
Cash tills recording glad tidings of profit
Office parties munching through menus -
Crackers! Champagne corks!
At the heart of it all, in the hay,
No sound at all but the cattle
Endlessly chewing it over.

UA Fanthorpe

Christmas Greetings To you from us

Marjorie Evans sends loving greetings to all her friends at Croydon Meeting.

Love and best wishes to you all in Croydon Meeting for a happy Christmas and New Year from
Mary Clarke

Yvonne Kassim sends warm greetings to all, with many thanks to those who have helped her recently with shopping and given her such loving support.

Rhiannon Rees sends warm greetings to all Friends, far and near, and best wishes for a peaceful holiday and a better year in 2018

Gillian and Godfrey Turner send love and best wishes to all at Croydon Meeting.

Seasons Greetings – wishing you light and love upon the way ahead, from **Cecily Taylor**

May the peace, love, light and life of the Christ's presence be with you and your loved ones.

Plenty love to everyone at Croydon Meeting, from **Joyce Trotman**

We send loving greetings to Friends far away

Jade Flahive Gilbert, completing her studies in gamelan at university in Indonesia on the last year of her scholarship. We look forward to having her back amongst us next May.

Gil Greiner in Dudley

Mavis Parker has moved home, still in Huntingdon.

Helen and Mark Shorey in Guernsey. They have a new granddaughter, Hayley Mae, daughter of Myra and Tom. **Olwyn** is reading German and Portuguese at Kings College, London.

Philip Barron in the Bernard Barron Homes in Polegate.

Reg Briscoe in the Sunset Homes in Purley.

Cecily Taylor, who is staying temporarily in a care home in Old Windsor, near one of her sons.

And to those nearer home...

Tima and John Beckett.

Mary, Nirvana and Ben Underwood following the death of their mother and grandmother, Anthea. **Pat Piqué** at Rylands Care Home in Sutton.

Jeff Grant and Anita Bennett. David Parlett has just been in touch with Jeff, who writes: Things are good really. Anita, as you know, has Parkinsons but without medication - her decision, fully supported by myself - is doing incredibly well - much physical exercising, singing in a choir being but two of her activities. And in herself she's in very good shape. And yes, I'm still writing - about a third of the way through another novel. The first one has some really excellent reviews, but self-publicising is one of my minor talents. And traditional publishing houses are now so geared up to fulfilling quotas of various pre-ordained genres and all that stuff that part of me just doesn't want to get involved in that sort of race for the money. Not that more money wouldn't be very pleasant!'

We welcome...

Chrys, Malakhi, Luka and Zubin Chijutoni-Ghosh. Luka and Zubin have joined Joshua and Olivia, Albie and Jacob French in our Children's group

We thank...

Peter Tayler, Megan Carmichael and Will Bitten for their work in keeping our meeting house and grounds running so well during 2017.

News of Friends

Matt Alton is coming to the end of his internship with the interfaith charity Three Faiths Forum, having been supporting the work of the team which delivers workshops in schools. Last month he started working as the Social Media Coordinator for Croydon Quakers, and has been growing our Meeting's online presence. He has been working for the past 10 weeks supporting an art class for adults with learning disabilities at Croydon's art and community space, Turf Projects. You can see an exhibition of art created over this term by the class attendees at Turf, in the Whitgift Centre, until 17 December.

Chris Alton has just finished a commission with the National Trust, at Croome Court. He designed and built a neo-classical treehouse which will be in Croome's grounds for visitors to enjoy for the next year.

A Quaker Ecumenical Service

Greetings from Room 24 at Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes.

I thought you might be interested in a recent event held here last Sunday. The present arrangement is that we have our Quaker Meeting at 10.45 for 45 minutes, as well as the main Polegate Meeting on Wednesdays at 3.30. On the notice board is a list of the visiting clergy for each Sunday and I was surprised that there were no occasions when Quakers took the service, so I proposed to our Quaker group that we should offer to take one.

Strangely enough, very soon after, we were approached by one of those arranging the services asking us if we were prepared to arrange a service on 19 November. We wondered whether our small group (four Friends plus our clerk, who lives in Hailsham) would be able to carry the task forward, but after three rehearsals and hymn practice, we were able to go ahead. We knew much compromise would be needed, but the Quaker message had to be put across in a way that was as familiar and acceptable as possible. Thus we commenced with saying the Lord's Prayer – we had three Quaker readings, and two periods of silent worship of two or three minutes. The hymns were *Immortal Love for ever full* (Whittier's words); *My God I thank you who hast made the earth so bright* and a song/hymn of the Iona Community, *A touching place*. I chose the Whittier hymn, knowing that they would be expecting *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind!* The other one is a favourite of mine; words by Frederick Maker (1844-1927). The four suitable verses we used were:-

My God I thank Thee, who hast made the earth so bright,
So full of splendour and of joy, beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here, noble and right.

I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast made joy to abound,
So many gentle thoughts and deeds circling us round,
That in the darkest spot on earth so love is found.

I thank Thee too that often joy is touched with pain,
That shadows fall on brightest hours, that thorns remain,
So earth's bliss may be our guide, and not our chain.

I thank Thee Lord, that Thou hast kept the best in store;
We have enough, yet not too much to long for more:
A yearning for a deeper peace not known before.

Five of us took part, sitting in the front, but to one side of the room. It was received well on the whole with only just a few criticisms (old people do not like change), and many said they had found it uplifting. I was particularly pleased that the Carers on duty that evening attended *en bloc* to support us – not a usual happening.

We have been given a date in June for our next Service. On this occasion we will include a Bible reading as this was cut due to time limits, and was missed. **Wilf Hayler**

A business demanding patience

The twentieth century psychoanalyst Karen Horney wrote of the susceptibility many have towards self-criticism and the harsh judgement of others that often goes hand-in-hand with this destructive tendency. Today, one only need peek into some areas of the Twittersphere or certain tabloid publications to see the most strident and bitter criticism of individuals and groups.

Horney believed that the root of this judgmental stance is deep and produces an inability to accept human frailty and personal differences. This prevents us from extending forgiveness to both self and others. She cites the “the discrepancy between what I could be and what I am” as one of the most damaging ideas that we hold. This idea that there is a much more acceptable version of ourselves out there if only we could just find it can be the cause of feelings of inadequacy and anger. Horney quotes from the German poet, Christian Morgenstern's, *Growing Pains*:

The 'would-be' is like a prancing steed
(‘I am’ is fettered to his tail),
Is like a wheel to which ‘I am’ is bound.

We live in a society where striving for external success and personal achievement are overriding goals. Self-acceptance for our imperfections and tolerance for the foibles of others can be hard to find in a culture of intense competition and material values. Higher attributes such as patience, humility, tenderness and honesty can be hard to source in a society driven by capitalist norms. In 1962, Aldous Huxley, writer, philosopher, humanist and pacifist, wrote in *Island* the following advice on taking some time out to reflect upon approaches to life:

It's dark because you are trying too hard.
Lightly, child, lightly. Learn to do everything lightly.
Yes, feel lightly even though you are feeling deeply.
Just lightly let things happen and lightly cope with them.

A more gentle, tolerant stance, a refusal to dwell too readily and too long on perceived weaknesses may be part of the bridge to communication with, and compassion for, our fellows and ourselves. It may help to consider that we are all doing the best we can from our own particular level of consciousness. As Maya Angelou once said: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better”.

The late, notable Quaker, John Punshon in QFP 22.07 gives us his blue-print for showing love: “I came to realise that the best way to deepen my love of God was to use my experience of the love in my everyday life in all its variety, subtlety and uncertainty. Getting on with those I love is often a business demanding patience, discretion, tact and understanding. It gets complicated sometimes.....but without expression it is barren”.

Barbara Earl

'Faith on the Move, Faith in the Future'

This event on 22 November was organised by Helen Bailey, who works at Friends House and at Croydon College, with Jonathan Clark, the Bishop of Croydon. It was held at St Mary Magdalene Church in East Croydon.

On a dark and windy night, I arrived rather late and, although I could see lights in the church and people inside, I seemed to be locked out and was about to give up, until someone stronger came and managed to push a door open. Once inside I met friends, including Cynthia, Paweł and Kitty.

Helen presented her research on the role of faith in the lives of young refugees. She found that faith communities, whether Christian or Muslim, could play a vital role in giving them a sense of belonging to a community, often denied by wider society. This helped them develop a sense of belonging to the place and of their own identity. Places of worship were often a place of solace to young people who had often been through traumatic experiences. Helen found that these young people had hope and looked to the future, often drawing significantly on their faith.

Jonathan Clark spoke about his work with 'Safe Passage'. He had long been convinced that how we responded to those seeking asylum was a test of our faith, given by God. Christians had, since the earliest days, cared for those that nobody else thought mattered. He said that the UK tried to 'defend itself' against asylum-seekers by making it difficult for them to get here. 'Safe Passage' had been set up to break open safe and legal routes for unaccompanied child refugees who had a legal right to be here, for example because they had relatives here. A growing network of workers across Europe had helped over 1,000 young people, trying to reunite them with family and provide continuing support with resettlement, but they needed other partners to help them with this. 'Safe Passage' would be grateful both for financial support and for ordinary people to 'change the conversation' and distorted beliefs about asylum-seekers.

Jo, the Director of 'Young Roots', spoke about a 13-year old boy who had been sleeping on the street in Croydon, with no support at all, until another boy brought him to St Mary Magdalene youth group and they helped him.

In discussion we heard that Government policy is to disperse adult asylum-seekers away from London, but Croydon Council must place unaccompanied children in foster families in Croydon or surrounding boroughs and find school places for them. This usually happens eventually, although children and young people often need support to access their rights and may find it difficult to prove their age.

There is a network of about 30 small organisations, such as 'Young Roots', working to support young asylum-seekers and refugees in Croydon with legal and emotional support, language teaching and grants for clothing etc, but there seems to be no authority co-ordinating support.

Rhiannon Rees

A fun moment at Joyce Trotman's 90th birthday party.

John Agard is a poet I have admired for many years, and I was thrilled when he stood up to read a poem at Joyce's bash.. It was written on a folded piece of what looked like scrap, and he vanished soon afterwards before I could ask him for a copy. Fortunately Joyce managed to extract one, and here it is. You must imagine it recited in a strong dialect accent, with emphasis on final syllables (*grieve—aanee*) to much laughter and cheers as he finished.

Diversity In De Market

To see how dis ting diversity does operate
 I went by Brixton market to investigate,
 yes, to see how dis ting diversity does operate
 I went by Brixton market to investigate
 how de fruit and veg dem does integrate
 I saw Apple and Mango conversing cosily
 Ripe Plantain had no quarrel with Broccoli.
 Aubergine don't bear grudge 'gainst piri-iri.
 I was impressed how Pineapple spoke sweetly
 and when Red Pepper responded discreetly
 I knew Fruit and Veg could teach a nation

the secret of peaceful cohabitation
 and how to let bygones be bygones
 yes, if you want to learn 'bout dis ting diversity
 observe Butternut Squash and de little Lychee
 In de fruit and veg market it was plain to see
 the red, yellow purple and green live in harmony.
 Then I saw Saltfish chatting up Chorizo
 likede tow o'them talk de same lingo.
 Between Scampi and Jerk Chicken, no grievance,
 they greeted Black Pudding to their alliance.
 Yes, if you want to learn about social etiquette,
 study de relation of Oxtail Veal and brisket.
 In de fish and meat market too it was plain to see
 the black white pink brown live in harmony.
 Yes, de fish and meat dem show each other respect,
 I never see a fight between two fillet yet.
 Man, I never see a fight between two fillet yet.

John Agard

Quality and depth of worship in a gathered meeting

Our Fourth Sunday discussion after meeting was about worship and ministry. We thought about the reality of what happens in meeting for worship having listened to the following:

It is easy to have the form of a Quaker meeting without the reality. On the surface a group of people sit in a circle, perhaps with someone occasionally standing up to speak, looks like Quaker worship. But an authentic meeting for worship is much more demanding than it appears; it requires the whole group of worshippers to faithfully practise the disciplines of listening and speaking...

The discipline of speaking in meeting for worship means discerning whether our intention to offer spoken ministry is a response to a specific leading of the Spirit. We have to learn to speak only when our message arises from the deeper place of responsiveness to spiritual reality. When we minister from this place, our simplest words have a special power to draw others into awareness, to encourage, to console or to challenge.

We discussed how we respond to ministry and noted that ministry is not part of a discussion or debate. We looked at two questions in particular: How do you recognise spoken ministry that is an integral part of the whole meeting for worship? How do you test that words coming to you in the silence carry a message that has to be shared with the whole meeting?

Finally we considered this passage in *Quaker Faith and Practice*:

Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Live, which is its portion. (Isaac Pennington 1661).

G.T.

The silence is not the worship

It is always with a slight feeling of discomfort that I hear a Friend, at the start of a committee or social meeting, call for a period of silence. I would prefer us to be called to a brief period of worship.

It is important to distinguish between the two. Despite what is sometimes said in Quaker converse the silence is not itself the worship: it is the medium in which the worship takes place. The two are not synonymous. To call for silence is to imply a prohibition on giving voice. Worship may be expressed in silence or it may be expressed in words, according to the leadings of the Spirit. Sometimes that silence is the only safe and appropriate space in which to utter them.

Is the substitution of 'silence' for 'worship' prompted by the perhaps kindly motivated suspicion that some present may feel uncomfortable with the word 'worship'? I fear it may be; but how can we go through life carefully avoiding words that someone, somewhere, may 'have difficulty' with? Traditionally, worship is the most appropriate word for what happens in a Quaker meeting. That doesn't mean that everybody has to subscribe to the same dictionary definition of it. Words are there to be used. They are portals into 'where words come from', that space 'beyond what words

can utter'; and to avoid such portals because of one's irrational verbal hang-ups is to deprive oneself of potentially enriching understandings. Words are there to be used. Embrace them, and often they will embrace you back. Words are your servants, not your masters.

Many of us have already benefited from Harvey Gillman's exploration of and in *Words*. I now hope the recent publication of *God, Words and Us*, of which a copy is being distributed to every local meeting in the country, will enable us to come together in a spirit of worship to share not just one another's words, but the understandings and experiences that lie behind them.

David Parlett

Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto, and Becoming a Sanctuary Meeting

The Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto has been discussed at the last two Meetings for Sufferings, and by November's Local and Area Meetings. Here is minute 5 from November's AM that tells us how we have been getting on and moving forward.

5.1 Sanctuary Meetings and Area Meeting

We have heard a report from our MfS Representative, Gillian Turner, about the invitation to become an Area and / or a Local 'Sanctuary Meeting'. As Meeting for Sufferings has yet to agree a final manifesto for Sanctuary Meetings we will return to consider whether to become an Area Sanctuary Meeting when it is agreed, early in 2018. In the meantime, Local Meetings may agree to proceed with joining this initiative now, if they wish to do so and details of the process are in the Sanctuary Meeting leaflet and at www.quaker.org.uk/migration

We are aware that Local Meetings and individual Friends are already involved in various activities that fit within the broad definition of a Sanctuary Meeting. Croydon is actively considering this in the context of their ongoing involvement with their local refugee community and Purley has already decided to become a Sanctuary Meeting (Minute 10 Purley Business Meeting 12th November 2017).

5.2 Sanctuary Meetings and Purley

We welcome the decision from Purley to support the Spiritual Concern of Jo Doherty in addressing the needs of pregnant local asylum seekers through their perinatal period, as part of their response to becoming a Sanctuary Meeting, an example of 'faith in action'. Details of the project are attached and we heard from Jo why she was led to initiate this work. Purley has already made a financial commitment of £1000 to funding it and we agree wholeheartedly that we will also support this Concern as an Area Meeting. We agree to providing £1000 immediately towards initial costs and holding a further £1000 funding in reserve. We ask our AM Treasurer to transfer this amount to Purley Meeting for disbursement to the project.

We ask our local meetings to consider also supporting the project directly. We ask Jo Doherty to update us at the end of 2018 on progress. To support and empower pregnant women and new mothers in initial asylum seekers' accommodation, through offering information and support around breastfeeding and early parenting, and by creating peer-to-peer support networks.

Providing perinatal support for asylum seekers in initial accommodation in Croydon

Asylum seekers entering the UK have to claim asylum either at their port of entry, or at UK Border Agency (UKBA) in Croydon. Thus, the Croydon borough contains a high concentration of emergency housing for asylum seekers (hostels with meals provided). Asylum seekers who are destitute stay in this initial accommodation whilst their claim for asylum *support* is being processed, before being dispersed to UKBA accommodation (outside London and the South East) whilst their claim for *asylum* is processed.

Most recent governmental guidelines have established that women asylum seekers are entitled to a protected period around birth, during which time they should not be dispersed (ie moved to another area of the country). This means that women who enter initial accommodation in the last 6-8 weeks of pregnancy are not moved on until their baby is at least 6 weeks old.

Thus, women who claim asylum whilst heavily pregnant usually stay in initial accommodation in Croydon for a period of 3-4 months around birth. It is worth noting that the recommendations from the Refugee Council that led to this change in governmental guidelines also specifically stated that this group of women should NOT be housed in initial accommodation during this period. Croydon maternity services therefore face particular challenges in providing maternity care and

support for this especially vulnerable, transient population of mothers of varying ethnicities/nationalities.

At present, there is a gap in the provision of support services for these women. There are currently no specific services from the third sector aimed at supporting them with perinatal issues. Organisations across Croydon working with refugees and vulnerable families, agree that this gap in provision exists, but so far, none have been in a position to fill it.

In setting up this project, Jo Doherty will be working with Homestart. The overall cost will be about £8400, which includes a hospital bag for mothers to take with them to the maternity hospital.

Diary

Sunday 17 December: Mystery play reading



Instead of our usual Christmas sharing music we will have an informal reading of some medieval mystery plays (scripts provided by Roger Haworth), from 1pm to about 2pm in the meeting room. We can all join in - no acting experience necessary! Roger writes: "The original texts of the mystery plays contain very few stage directions but this scene has one of them: Here the Holy Ghost descends with three beams to Our Lady, the Son of the Godhead next with three beams to the Holy Ghost, and the Father Godly with three beams to the son, and so enter all three into her bosom.

"The picture shows the climax of one of the plays I propose to read: The Parliament of Heaven and Annunciation. Mary is expressing her joy at having been impregnated. One of the reasons they are called mystery plays is because they expound mysteries such as this one - how could a virgin be impregnated?"

To get you into the mood, log onto the Calendar page on our website and follows links to photos and scripts.

A Sunday School teacher had just told her class about the flight into Egypt and got them to draw a picture. Sure enough one child drew them in a plane and proudly explained: that insect is the flea [as in "take Mary and the baby and flee into Egypt"] and in the cockpit, that is Pontius the pilot.

Monday 25 December: Meeting for Worship At 10:30 in Croydon Meeting House.

Sunday 7 January: Meeting for upholding (Prayer for healing), 10:10.

Sunday 14 January: Local business meeting.

Sunday 28 January: NEW YEAR SOCIAL. Games etc. Preceded by food, of course!

Dates and venues for Area Meetings in 2018: 18 February at Sutton; 20 May at Purley; 6 September at Croydon; 18 November at Streatham.

Area Committee Meetings: 21 January; 18 March; 17 June; 21 October,

How to make my life easier

As assistant editor, my part in the production of our Newsletter is to do what is known in the trade as copy-editing – that is, to check and, where necessary, correct misspellings (especially of names!) and slips of punctuation, and to present the whole in accordance with a consistent, if arbitrary, house style (such as the way in which dates or quotations are expressed). Most of your lovely contributions are produced by means of a word processor, typically MS Word or OpenOffice. May I take this opportunity to say how much easier this job would be if our writers could follow some basic guidelines? Please, then -

1. Ensure that your language is set to English (UK) and not English US).
2. Turn off automatic numbering.
3. Avoid superscript numerals (1st rather than 1st).
4. Do not isolate a punctuation mark by putting a space on each side of it.
5. Use the tab key instead of a string of spaces.
6. It would be really helpful if you would put titles (of books, hymns, etc) in italics rather than inverted commas.
7. Remember that to set a word or phrase at the right-hand end of a line the simple method is to press Control-R before typing it instead of inserting a string of spaces or tabs. Similarly, you can centre something with Control-E. (And just for fun, see what Control-J does to a paragraph of text!)

DP

Happy Birthdays in December to

Georgina Barton age 10 on the 19th

It was lovely to see you at Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick, Georgina

Malakhi Chijutoni-Ghosh age 13 on the 20th.

We value your presence at Meeting for Worship, Malakhi

Collected in November

5 Nightwatch £100

12 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad £30

19 South London Area Meeting £15

26 Medical Foundation £165

Donations in memory of Inge Barguss 17 November **£240**

The deadline for the February edition is Sunday 28 January 2018

Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner

Tel 020 8688 9659 email gillianturner033@gmail.com

Ring out, wild bells

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.
Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go...

Alfred, Lord Tennyson