

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

February 2019

Dear Friends: In our first newsletter of 2019 the articles are as varied as ever, as they reflect our life together, both personal and our faith through action, within our Quaker community. Thank you again to our regular contributors, and welcome to new ones. **Gillian Turner and David Parlett**

Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from, making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God. Advices and Queries 22

Heavenly Father, Heavenly Mother,
Holy and blessed is your true name.
We pray for your reign of peace to come,
We pray for your good will to be done,
Let heaven and earth become one.
Give us this day the bread we need,
Give it to those who have none.
Let forgiveness flow like a river between us,
From each one to each one to each one.
Lead us to holy innocence
Beyond the evil of our days -
Come swiftly Mother, father, come.
For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:
Forever your name is All in One.

Parker J. Palmer

News of Friends

We send loving sympathy to **Terry Wilkes** on the recent death of his mother.

Our Friend **Philip Barron** is no longer resident at Bernhard Baron homes in Eastbourne. Now suffering from vascular dementia he has moved to Cedar View Care Home, 1 Stanhope Road, Croydon CR0 5NS to be nearer to his daughter Liz and will be transferring his membership back to SLAQM, though he is unlikely to be able to attend meetings for worship. David Parlett was all set to visit him a week before Christmas but unfortunately had to cancel because Philip suddenly needed to spend 24 hours in hospital.

New faces

We welcome into our meeting **Maddy Ward**, who has just transferred her membership from Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting. Maddy is a member of Theos, about which she writes on page 4, and has recently become engaged. Congratulations, Maddy!

Kieran Duignan is a welcome returnee and writes for us on p.5

Katharine Locke, a practising Medical Herbalist and Orthodox Advanced First Aider, has recently moved to Croydon and attends meeting when she can. She writes: 'My grandparents became Quakers in early adulthood. My grandfather had served in the FAU in Belgium and France in WW1. He worked as Education Officer for Rowntrees for many years and lived in New Earswick. (I've done a lot of family history of this period.) My high Anglican mother encouraged my father to take us to meeting sometimes as children and we went to church sometimes with her.' We look forward to seeing her whenever she is free on a Sunday.

Our New Year Social

Thanks to everyone who came along, brought food to share, played games organised by the children, and board games, one of which was designed by David Parlett, and another by John Power, who has moved to Lewisham.

Nosy parker

We now have a barrier designed to admit only those with a fob or who have been given the code. It has made a tremendous difference as the car park is no longer clogged up with people who disregard the PRIVATE notices. It is sad to have to report that within a week someone, presumably a disgruntled driver no longer able to drive in at will, poured thick glue into the key pad. Fortunately we have been able to keep the barrier operational while we wait for a replacement.

The hole in the wall, such an eyesore for so many months, has at last been repaired.

Nor really a nosy parker, of course, more of a disgruntled one, but for the origin of the phrase see <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/nosy-parker.html>

Finding questions during a Boston walk

In between chest infections, I celebrated the New Year by having a trip to Boston, MA. I'd been before and of course, some things had changed but somehow the tone, the atmosphere seemed very much the same, well, certainly in the prosperous Back Bay area. It was Sunday so I decided to go to meeting.

I walked by the massive and magnificent Boston Public Library. As public libraries in England collapse through under-funding, indifference and neglect, the one in Boston asks questions about priorities and philanthropy. The library is now state funded but made possible initially through a donation from Joshua Bates, a merchant banker, who in 1852 donated \$50,000 for the library's establishment and another \$50,000 for the purchase of books. He was the first major benefactor of the BPL and initiated that its services be 'free to all.' (Interestingly, he was American born but became a British citizen). Later in the week I popped in to do the tour. The library seems well maintained and even has lots of books and staff.....don't get me started about the state that Croydon Central Library is in.... However, I won't get too carried away, as today public libraries, both here and in Boston (and probably lots of other places too) seem to be refuges for the homeless, perhaps in some instances, sadly the only ones.

Back to the walk: it was cold – the television weather forecasters had been talking, in great and lengthy detail, about the likelihood of snow – and the walk across Boston Common towards Chestnut Street was bracing. But was it wise? After all, the New England Puritans hanged Quakers there in the 1650s. (Why do people today think Puritans and Quakers are the same thing? Puritans are the ones with all the answers and Quakers seem to be the people with lots of questions. Mind you, today, Quakers are more likely to be confused with the Scientologists. Don't you wish you had a fiver for every time you've had to say 'Quakers are not a cult' and 'I've never met Tom Cruise'?)

However, this time it was safe and a convenient shortcut. Beacon Hill is clearly a historic, wealthy and attractive neighbourhood. (The name does bring to mind British and Quaker philanthropy, specifically the Cadbury gift to the City of Birmingham). It is primarily residential but also houses the Massachusetts State House. An area where an elite live, one that is affluent, has political power and influence, and is predominately white.... does all of this sound predictable?

The meeting house itself is an oldish building that sits easily in Chestnut Street. I climbed the steps, went through the doorway and was immediately welcomed. It did seem just like home. So much in fact, I was made to wonder why British Quakers and American Quakers don't seem to have much closer links. There's much to share, differences to explore – and much to question.

Helen Johnson

Art of America: Looking for Paradise

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b017755r/art-of-america-1-looking-for-paradise>

America's Biggest Fibs with Lucy Worsley

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m00024k8>

'Away from the Noisy Rush': In praise of Woodbrooke

Woodbrooke, the Quaker study centre in Birmingham has been offering courses and programmes of learning for over 115 years. It was originally founded back in 1903 by John Rowntree and George Cadbury as a centre for Quakers to learn and feed their souls in peace and quiet away from the 'noisy rush of modern life'. That idea still holds true today with the added advantage that the tranquil setting is open to all who are interested in its stimulating resources and rich array of programmes, which include post-graduate study. Having recently started the Equipping for Ministry

(EFM) course, I can testify to the warmth and skill of tutors in what comes across immediately as a safe and open atmosphere where each person may undertake their own spiritual journey.

The centre is reached by train from Euston to Birmingham New Street and I found it best to break my journey at Euston and grab a coffee and little rest at Friends House. On arrival in Brum, a bus or taxi will take you to Woodbrooke from the station. In order to enhance my next travel experience to the centre, practical adjustments will be made such as the use of minimalist packing techniques and a reassessment of what I consider to be 'essential'.

This oasis of peace certainly feeds the soul, the spirit and the intellect with a tapestry of courses on offer. A quick browse through the brochure gives a very small idea of the breadth of study on offer: A Friendly Introduction to the Quaker Way, Practical Skills in Non-Violence, Sing in the Spirit: a Chant-Based retreat, Pattern of Seasons: A Handicraft Workshop and, of course, online courses such a Deepening The Life of the Spirit: an online retreat. A large part of Woodbrooke's unique work is the provision made for developing and supporting those in Quaker roles. Eldership and Oversight and Being a Quaker Clerk are popular rolling events. Conferences take place regularly as do various groups such as Quaker Peace and Social Witness. Woodbrooke staff do outreach work with their on-the-road education.

Woodbrooke is available as a bed and breakfast centre and the last time I looked it was rated by Trip Advisor as the number one B &B in Birmingham! Room 12 is popular with some as it is reputed to be the room in which Gandhi stayed when he visited.

The body is not overlooked at Woodbrooke as it is a most welcoming place and a big part of this is the wonderful food which is freshly cooked and plentiful with much variety including vegetarian and non-vegetarian options at each meal. The large garden room is a stylish, sleek and comfortable space in which to sit with a hot drink and chat to others, read the papers or just gaze and appreciate the beauties of the extensive, interesting garden and lake. One may, of course explore the garden itself and walk the Labyrinth there if so inclined. The Library is well-stocked and beautifully kept and holds, among other items, fiction, non-fiction and rare early Quaker texts, all overseen and catalogued by a very knowledgeable Librarian and assistant. During the induction I felt privileged to hold and read a pamphlet called *Milk for Babes*, written by James Nayler whilst in prison.

Woodbrooke gives one a chance to meet interesting Friends from all over the UK and I've met some from places such as France, Switzerland and the USA. Friends in Residence (FIRS), provide a Quaker presence and all kinds of practical and spiritual support which is greatly appreciated by visitors. Bursaries are available as nobody should be prevented from attending owing to lack of funds. Speak to your Overseer or Woodbrooke itself if a bursary may be of interest to you.

Having said all this, I do admit that on my first weekend of the EFM course, I was at times feeling slight waves of anxiety and lack of confidence. I realise that this is more to do with me and my foibles than Woodbrooke. I did not, however, go uncomforted as during Ministry, one of the tutors rose and said: 'Live up to the light thou hast and more will be granted thee'. (Caroline Fox, QFP 26.04). Just the spiritual food that I needed!

Next course for me in February, 'Humility of the Heart'.

NB There is a hard copy of Woodbrooke's 2019 brochure available at the Meeting House.

Website: www.woodbrooke.org.uk Tel: 0121 4725171

Barbara Earl

What can faith groups do to bring people together?

'Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war.' – A&Q 31

Looking close to home and building peace in our neighbourhoods is a pragmatic way in which we can live out our Peace Testimony each day, and this is particularly pertinent as Brexit approaches. But the cohesion (or otherwise) of local communities has also been near the top of the political agenda for well over a decade, and this has led to a stream of government reports considering what faith groups can do to bring people together. These reports have often focused on areas of concern: are religious communities effective in combating radicalism in their midst? Do they cause greater divisions by reinforcing cultural and ethnic differences in the community? Are places of worship inviting to outsiders? Do people of faith reach outside their own communities, or simply preach to the converted? But they have also acknowledged that faith groups do have huge potential to 'do good' and to bring people together in their local neighbourhoods and beyond.

It is for this reason that the Free Churches Group (a group of 24 Christian denominations) recently commissioned Theos Think Tank to conduct independent research into the impact of local churches on social cohesion. This project is intended to identify challenges and opportunities for churches hoping to make a difference in this area, and to offer some recommendations for 'best practice' moving forward. The research will be framed around a series of twenty case study locations across England – and the exciting news is that Croydon has been chosen as one of the research areas!

I am a new member of Croydon Local Meeting (and enjoying meeting you all over time!) and I also happen to be the lead researcher on this project. So, I am very keen to hear all your thoughts on how local churches and faith groups are fostering social cohesion in Croydon, as well as what our local meeting is doing to help bring people together. More than this, if anybody would be willing to be interviewed as part of this project, I would love to involve you.

Working on the project has opened my eyes to some of the unique challenges that churches can face. Sometimes strongly-held identities can prevent people of faith from reaching out more widely. Sometimes faith groups are inward looking, and are so preoccupied by their own internal politics that they never reach beyond their own congregations. The time and energy it takes to maintain buildings, mailing lists, membership and funding can also exhaust the resources of smaller communities. However, faith communities also have special resources that put us in a great position to make a difference. Places of worship are sometimes the only community spaces left in areas where cuts to services have closed all the other shared buildings. Faith groups are often the only people reaching out to those who would otherwise fall into isolation and loneliness. Often faith leaders have the opportunity of a seat at the table with policy-makers, and in return can provide local authorities with vibrant networks through which to promote and strengthen new initiatives that would otherwise have to start from scratch. The visibility of church leaders can be of particular comfort in crisis situations. And churches' social action on poverty has been nothing short of phenomenal in recent times (regrettable as it is that such action should be necessary in a wealthy country like Britain). Indeed, it is often the local church or faith group that is running the local foodbank.

I think it's important for each faith community to consider what it *is doing* and what it *can do* to bring people together in its local area. Croydon Quakers can hopefully benefit from the additional insights that Theos' research uncovers regarding the most pressing issues facing our neighbours – both in other faith communities, and the broader life of Croydon. But what do you think? Do you recognise the challenges and opportunities I have outlined? What are our resources, and how might they foster peace in Croydon? I look forward to hearing your thoughts and feelings on this topic as the project progresses.

Maddy Ward

Diversity: where are we now?

Quakers in Britain are taking part in a survey that aims to map the diversity of the faith. Edwina Peart explains the thinking behind it, and how you can take part.

In 2017, Britain Yearly Meeting heard the call to 'examine its diversity.' From this decision came my one-year role, Diversity and Inclusion Project Coordinator, which began in June 2018.

I love my job. I love the variety of it, the challenge of it and the opportunity to make a difference. I am heartened by the appetite for discussion of these issues among Quakers, and by the commitment to equality that many individuals make.

But this doesn't mean that my job is an easy one. Calls of this nature have been made before. As one Quaker told me: 'It would be good if your initiative opened some eyes and produced significant change but I'm not holding my breath in hope. However each attempt has some positive ripples, so thank you.'

I want to help make a sustainable difference this time.

Working with meetings

Part of my role has been to visit and work with Quaker meetings at both a local and area level. From this I am learning that diversity in outlook and priority is already embedded in the Quaker population. It is part of the history of this faith community.

Where it exists, this diversity needs to be documented and quantified. Without this it remains an idea, or feeling, perceived through the prism of individual experience. Where it is absent, the same is also true.

I would like diversity, inclusion and belonging to be incorporated into the structure and workings of the Quaker community. So, halfway through my year, I have launched a short survey. I am calling it a 'baseline audit' and its purpose is to examine the diversity of the British Quaker community as it exists now.

This is the first time all Quakers, both members and attenders, are being asked individually to provide this kind of information, albeit in a totally anonymous form. I want to encourage all Quakers to engage with this initiative. To help build a more inclusive community – a long held Quaker goal – we need to know where we currently stand.

Knowing who we are

What ways are we already diverse? Where do our strengths and weaknesses lie in terms of inclusion? Both these questions need to be answered if we are to understand the nature and make up of this old and important faith community that has a history of significant contributions to British and international equality.

From that base we can start to chart a path for further development in terms of structures and membership. In 5 or 10 years' time, we can use the survey to check on our progress and see what worked.

All this relies on Quakers taking the time (15 minutes maximum) to complete the survey. It contains just 8 short questions, and I am inviting you to choose how to answer each question – there are no preordained categories or boxes to tick.

From this exercise, Quakers as a community can define themselves. Only through knowing who we are, can we plot our journey to where we want to be.

Edwina's survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/quakersurvey>. It is very short (just eight simple questions), but there are several other related surveys at SurveyMonkey.co.uk that are worth looking into. Perhaps the most substantial survey of Quaker Inclusion and Diversity is at

<http://centralenglandquakers.org.uk/2018/07/05/quaker-diversity-inclusion-survey/>,

compiled by Nim Njuguna as part of his Eva Koch fellowship. Nim also writes in the latest issue (No 1, 2019) of *The Friends Quarterly* an article entitled *Becoming a Quaker diversity and inclusion ally*. 'It should be concerning to every Friend that well-meaning as we are, we may be fostering inequalities, unintentionally and unknowingly, by just carrying on business as usual'.

Postcards from God - Sister Wendy the Musical

Sister Wendy Beckett lived for most of her adult life as a hermit in a caravan in the grounds of a Carmelite order near Norwich.

What differentiated her was her appearance during the 1990s on several BBC television and on American television programmes introducing viewers to classical and modern paintings. She did so with authority and with insight into diverse human motivations - religious, affectionate and conflicted.

A native of South Africa, Wendy Beckett studied English at Oxford University, graduating with a congratulatory First, and then taught in secondary schools for several years, to a stage where problems of health formed the basis of an agreement with a religious order that she could live a hermit's life as a consecrated virgin in their grounds.

After an upcoming musician from Croydon, Marcus Reeves, discovered her books about her programmes, he intuited that, along with material about her life, they provided a basis for a musical drama.

Educated at Alleyns School and Central St. Martin's College of Art, while Marcus' day jobs included working as a fingerprints technician with the London Metropolitan Police for some eighteen months, he devoted over three years developing the script and trialling music and lyrics. Doing so, he corresponded with Sister Wendy in person and visited a convent in central London to gather data about convent life today. He also noted how she had collected postcards about pictures in galleries.

The narrative of the play, *Postcards from God – Sister Wendy the Musical* includes scenes of conversation with her real world sister, dramatisations of people in scenes of paintings by artists, visits to art galleries in England and North America as well as television interviews.

The theme represented her central message, 'Art is for everyone!', which epitomises her ability to describe and enthuse about art in a way that engaged ordinary people watching television. The play was first produced with a professional team of actors in Jermyn Street Theatre in 2007 and in Hackney Empire Studio Theatre in 2008 more recently with an amateur-cum professional cast in South London Theatre, Norwood High St., in 2018. When he interviewed Sister Wendy on his television show, Irish humourist Graham Norton declared how she was the only person he interviewed who was the focal subject of a musical play.

After the death of Sister Wendy Beckett on 27 December, 2018, obituaries in leading British newspapers to the musical about her; the BBC website also presented a clip featuring her acknowledgment of the play as well as praising Reeves' imagination and respectful account of her work. Music and lyrics from the musical may be heard at the website www.postcardsfromgod.co.uk

Before writing *Postcards from God*, Marcus Reeves wrote a musical play about his own upbringing living in Croydon, *Cut Out and Keep*, which was produced in a pub-theatre for several weeks. Several of his songs are published on his cd, *Quicksilver, a Masquerade Macabre*. Information about his songs and poems are presented on his website, www.reevescorner.co.uk.

Kieran Duignan

Refugee Youth and APOW: A Report

RefugeeYouth is a small dynamic charity dedicated to combating the alienation and despair that exists amongst young refugees and newly arrived asylum seekers aged 14-20 in London.

During 2015, the UK received over 3,200 applications from young asylum seekers, a figure which had tripled in three years. Originating from over 40 different countries, they have escaped war and political and economic unrest. Many of these young people, separated from their immediate family, arrive traumatised and vulnerable facing a new set of challenges in the UK.

Four years ago Refugee Youth moved into Croydon to respond to the growing numbers of young unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. At that time Croydon ranked 6th of the top 10 boroughs in London with high numbers of supported asylum seekers.

Although statutory and voluntary services exist to address our young people's immediate material needs including foster care, education and health, there is a huge gap in terms of supporting emotional wellbeing. Evidence from Save the Children shows that very few young refugees receive any kind of emotional help at all.

All our work is centred around **creative activities** designed and led **by and with** the young people rather than **for** them. This way of working means that young refugees go on to reignite their power, self-belief, voice and confidence to become actively involved in the leadership of the organisation and contribute to strategic decisions.

APOW (Amazing People of the World)

By using creative activities, we help young refugees explore the issues they face and try and face/create solutions to them. This includes visual arts, film making, drama, discussions, dance and cookery sessions. Our flagship project is Amazing People of the World, (APOW) is held in the Croydon Quaker Meeting House on Friday nights and is attended by 35-50 young refugees weekly. We also offer training and leadership opportunities to those young people who no longer feel the vulnerability and isolation of being newly arrived. This enables participants to design and lead their own activities and projects. We hold these training sessions on Tuesdays at the meeting house, and recently started a Woman's Group.

With the support of Croydon Meeting and London Quaker Social Action, in 2018 we achieved the following:

- We worked with 153 different young refugees and newly arrived asylum seekers.
- Through discussion, debate and creative forms of self-expression such as role-play, drama and the arts, 90 young refugees improved their communication and listening skills.
- 25 young refugees increased their skills in leadership by supporting staff and volunteers in the management of the group at residential and events.

- Through our collaborative public events we have increased public awareness amongst 400 public attendees; thus contributing to improved community cohesion.
- Through residentials we have increased the life experiences for 20 young refugees.
- Through supporting young refugees to tackle issues important to them and learn how to effect change we have bettered the life chances of 50 young refugees.

This coming year, 2019, we will work with over 150 different young refugee and asylum seekers in APOW, improving their emotional wellbeing and enhancing their life experiences as described above. As an organisation this will cost £116,845 to deliver. RefugeeYouth is a small charity consisting of part-time staff and sessional workers and owe much to the team of volunteers and artists who give generously of their time and skills to support our work.

Our young people will participate in a range of activities including: animation, banner making, dance, discussions, film-making, mask-making, photography, poster designing, visual arts, meditation, yoga, capoeira, sports, public speaking and public performance.

We will run 45 weekly APOW sessions per annum, at the meeting house, attended weekly by 35 to 50 young asylum seekers and refugees. We estimate that 150 different young asylum seekers and refugees will be involved throughout the course of a year.

We will support skills development by holding 12 young leaders' meetings attended by at a team of at least 5 established young leaders. We then aim to develop at least 10 young people to become young leaders over the course of the year and begin at least another 5 on this journey.

We will run at least 4 annual residentials, each attended by between 15 and 20 young refugees and asylum seekers and engage with and develop at least 20 volunteers and placement students.

Through our involvement with external organisations, we will participate in or directly run approximately 5 collaborative events that will engage at least 25 of our young people each time and reach around 500 members of the public cumulatively raising the profile of the experiences of young refugees.

We will continue to grow our new Women's Circle sessions, of which we will run 12 per annum, attended by approximately 6 young women weekly, however this number is growing.

Federico Rivas

Note from Premises Committee. The weekly group meet on Fridays, using the Adult School Hall as long as the temperature allows, and store equipment etc in the basement. They use the meeting room during the winter months. They offer refreshments to the young people including a cooked meal twice a month, using the kitchen and the common room. They are responsible for keeping the rooms clean and tidy and for locking up behind them, and our trust in them has been justified over the years they have been with us. They very much appreciate the space of the ASH and the peaceful atmosphere of the meeting house.

Hospitality scheme at Yearly Meeting 2019

Dear Friends,

I am writing to ask London Friends if they would be willing to offer accommodation to Friends attending Yearly Meeting at Friends House from Friday 24 May to Monday 27 May.

For a number of years there has been a hospitality scheme to enable Friends attending Yearly Meeting in London to stay with local Friends.

This scheme aims to find accommodation for those Friends who need it, including visitors from other Yearly Meetings, those who need to stay close to Friends House, or those who require less expensive accommodation.

We ask Friends taking accommodation to pay a nominal charge of £15 per person per night to who they are staying with.

Friends who volunteer to provide accommodation get the opportunity to help people attend Yearly Meeting and meet interesting new people along the way.

Each year we need to have some new hosts to replace Friends who cannot take guests this time and to accommodate rising numbers of requests.

If you are able to help by offering a spare bed, please contact ymhosp@quaker.org.uk as soon as possible for more information. All offers of hospitality are much appreciated. In friendship,

Stephen Crouch

Events

Tuesday 5 February, 2019: Being White. 13:30 to 16:30 at Friends House. This series of workshops explores what it means to be white, and how the culture of whiteness is so normalised in our social, political, economic and cultural institutions and behaviour that it is barely visible to white people. It will look at the historical roots of this and how it plays out in our lived experience today.

Sunday 10 February: Local business meeting. In the meeting room from 12.15. All welcome.

Tuesday 12, 19 February, 12, 26 March: Being White. See 5 February.

Sunday 17 February: Area meeting at Sutton meeting house from 2pm. All welcome but attenders are asked to notify Margaret Skelton if they wish to attend. We will be looking at the topic of diversity (see p. 4) and hearing from three area meeting Friends who have started attending the 'Being White' workshops described above. We hope also to hear a report on a visit to a prospective new member.

Sunday 24 February: 'Simplicity': fourth-Sunday session led by Liz Collins.

Future fourth Sunday sessions: March 24 'Advices & Queries' (Pam Sellman), April 28 'Preparing for Yearly Meeting' led by Elders.

Collections

We haven't received the figures for January, nor have we yet received a collections schedule for 2019, but if we follow last year's pattern the recipients will be Friends Family Group, Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, South London Area Meeting, and Timanne School, Nairobi.

The deadline for the March edition is Sunday February 24

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



Quaker games: The ancestor of Monopoly was invented by Quaker Lizzie Magie in 1904. John Power's Crystal Hall (of which Josh is an expert player) was published by Gibsons Games in 2018, and David Parlett's Hare & Tortoise (1974) has just appeared in Chinese and Japanese editions. The English version is also published by Gibsons.

