

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

JULY 2015

Dear Friends,

This month gives us the opportunity to participate in an important decision which will affect us all, namely, at what time our Meeting for Worship starts on Sundays. *Quaker Faith and Practice* chapter 3 is well worth reading, with its advice about how we reach decisions in our business meetings.

Our clerk writes:

At our business meeting on 12 July we will be returning to the question of whether we might change the time of our Meeting for Worship on Sundays from 10.30am to 11.00am. When we first considered this at our May business meeting it was decided that we should consult more widely with Friends who might not have been able to attend that meeting.

Thank you to the many Friends who have responded by filling in the slips I sent out or spoken to me about this. My impression is that opinions are fairly evenly divided between 10.30am and 11am. Decisions on Quaker business are, of course, taken as a gathered community, not by voting, so I hope that as many members and attenders as possible will be at our meeting for worship for business. Quaker Faith and Practice 3.06 reminds us why Quakers do not vote on our business: *"We do not vote in our meetings, because we believe that this would emphasise the divisions between differing views and inhibit the process of seeking to know the will of God. We must recognise, however, that a minority view may well continue to exist. When we unite with a minute offered by our clerk, we express, not a sudden agreement of everyone present with the prevailing view, but rather a confidence in our tried and tested way of seeking to recognise God's will. We act as a community, whose members love and trust each other."*

Gillian Turner

News of Friends

Joyce Trotman is visiting her sister and other close relatives in New York and Maryland during July, and hopes to visit other relatives in Guyana in August. We expect her back at the beginning of September.

Jade Flahive Gilbert has returned home safely from her year in Indonesia, where she has been studying gabalan at the university in Jakarta. It has been a time of great adventure, living in a different culture in third world conditions, adapting to gender customs and focusing on her musical education. She has decided to follow a career teaching and playing gabalan, and so is returning for a second year, from the end of August, as her university term begins at the beginning of September. We hope to see her in meeting for worship and to hear her music, and about her adventures, before she returns.

Chris Alton, with his brother Matt, attended our meeting as children until the family moved to Devon. He writes:

On **July 18th** I will be leading a drawing tour as part of 'Stones of Croydon', a series of library drawing tours organised by TURF Projects, who are an artist run space, based in Croydon. The tour coincides with Thornton Heath Arts Week. I would absolutely love it if any Quakers were able to attend the drawing tour and would really appreciate it if this message could be communicated to Croydon Friends.

We'll be meeting in Thornton Heath Library reception at 11am, the event runs until 1pm. All materials will be provided and admission is free, donations are welcome and will be used for future TURF Projects events and exhibitions. I will be providing participants with a selection of texts (poems, short stories, excerpts from literature) which are all on the subject of libraries. The texts will be used as the 'ground' for drawing and it is hoped that the surroundings (Thornton Heath Library) and the written texts will co-inspire the drawings made by participants.

TURF Projects website for more information: <http://turf-projects.com/stones-of-croydon/>

Tickets (free, booking advised and appreciated): <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/summer-stones-of-croydon-drawing-tours-tickets-17338703529>

Facebook event (for those on Facebook): <https://www.facebook.com/events/1454049861577700/>

Anne Maonga received an email from Sheillah her daughter living in UK to say that her mother had been found unconscious and taken to a High Dependency Unit and kept in hospital for a week, as they thought she had had a heart attack but the cause was high blood pressure.

She is now at home recuperating but is still dizzy and shaken.

She will have to take medication for high blood pressure which she is upset about.

She has been under a lot of stress as a son had a serious accident in her car and needed hospitalisation and another daughter who lives outside of Nairobi was taken seriously ill. The whole family will go to Kenya after term finishes by a slow roundabout way as it is cheaper.

David Parlett is to have a cataract operation on 27 July and is looking forward to looking forward (plus sideways, upwards, etc) with greater clarity. He has had two new games published in Germany this year and a third due out in October, and has just signed contracts for two more games – one in France and the USA, the other initially in Russia and eastern Europe, but with more widespread possibilities later.

Consider the lilies

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Luke 12:27

Which of us can add a single hour to his life by worrying? The current exhausting obsession with chasing visions of supposed self-improvement in areas such as earning potential and physical perfection lead many to believe that they are just not good enough. Poor emotional health of an increasing number of already challenged adolescents may be the result of not feeling as if they come up to the mark set by whichever media guru is holding forth on any given day. In particular, impressionable teens who may, for unseen reasons, have a shaky sense of identity and low self-esteem are not helped by air-brushed images of impossible standards of beauty and material wealth. The emphasis on this continual message to change unacceptable aspects of the self and accumulate goods overwhelms the healthier goal of learning how to develop both self-worth and acceptance of oneself as a loved and valued human-being who is welcome on this earth.

Lilies, like all flowers, grow and thrive in their own God-given beauty and purpose and do not seek to struggle unnecessarily. Perhaps the message here is something about acceptance and letting go of rigid and inappropriate expectations, ideals and compulsive desires. We tend to suffer if we cling to rigid requirements of self and others. When these stringent stipulations are not met we can experience anxiety, disappointment and rage which are not only toxic to our systems but invariably lead to the hurt of those around us.

Living in the moment and working towards letting go of the tyranny of excessive material desires and pre-conceived social outcomes may help us to find a life filled with more meaning and peace. Of course, many of the world’s greatest thinkers have advised us to follow the gentler path of non-attachment. Many centuries ago, the ancient Chinese poet and philosopher, Lao Tzu wrote in *The Tao Te Ching*: “A good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving.”

More recently, *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle delivered a similarly powerful message: Stress is caused by being ‘here’ but wanting to be ‘there’.

I will, however, leave the last word to St. Francis: “Wear the world like a loose garment”.

Barbara Earl

A small group has been discussing ‘The Infinite Way’ by Joel Goldsmith on fortnightly Mondays at 2.30. Anyone is welcome to come along. Our next meeting is on the 27th July. Barbara facilitates the group, and the article above rose out of our discussion.

Mass Lobby of MPs about Climate Change

On 17 June I joined thousands of people, including about eighty Quakers, at a mass lobby of Parliament. It was organised by the Climate Coalition of over 100 organisations, including Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW). The aim was to show our newly-elected MPs that their constituents cared about climate change and to call for justice for the poorest people, who are being most affected by climate change. In particular, we called for a fair agreement at the international climate negotiations in December; a massive increase in support for energy efficiency and renewable energy; and reform of the energy sector in the UK.

The theme of the lobby was 'For the Love of...' and people were encouraged to bring bunting or send messages about things they loved that were threatened by climate change. The *Daily Mail* noted that snowboarders and surfers came together with bee-keepers and nuns!

The day started with two ecumenical services. Quakers were at the Emmanuel Centre, where there was a well-attended service with preachers ranging from Catholic and Anglican bishops to Pentecostals. Maya Williams from QPSW read prayers alongside a Pentecostal pastor. A Christian Aid fieldworker from Mali told us that climate change was already affecting his people, as the rains failed, land became too parched to farm and they had to move to shanty towns.

At the mass lobby over 330 MPs met with their constituents. Seven or eight of us from different churches met Gavin Barwell, MP for Croydon Central, together with a couple from Croydon South, as their MP was speaking in a debate and could not be there. Gavin Barwell said that, as a science graduate, he was convinced that man-made climate change was one of the crucial issues of our time. He agreed that the climate talks in December were very important. Improving energy-efficiency in homes was a high priority and fossil fuels were his least favoured energy source. As a middle-ranking Minister in the Whips' Office he could not speak in the House on these issues, but he did have access to senior Ministers. However he did not make any specific commitments. He talked about the need to balance long-term considerations with short-term economic growth and the unpopularity of wind turbines in the shire counties. It was disappointing that the next day the Government announced it was ending subsidies for wind energy.

At the evening rally the Bishop of Croydon shared a platform with a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim woman wearing hijab, showing that we can work together for what we love. If you could not come, you can still send your MP a message, asking them to protect what you love, at web-site www.fortheloveof.org.uk/speakup.

Pope Francis has said: "*I invite all to pause to think about the challenges we face regarding care for our common home.*" What are we doing, both as individuals and as a Meeting, to reduce our carbon footprint and care for our common home, the earth?

Rhiannon Rees

What can we do with what we've got?

Woodbrooke on the road conference June 20 2015 Simon Best facilitating

There were 33 Friends present, mostly from meetings within Six Weeks Meeting, including Susan Northrop (Epsom), Lyn Beazley (Purley), Helen George (Brixton & Streatham), Blair Hunwick, Gillian and Godfrey Turner (Croydon). The structure was typical of a Woodbrooke event, with clearly defined sessions which varied from an individual response to a small group of four, to Friends from the same Area meetings and whole group discussions. Simon emphasised that he had no answers to the questions, and we were there to discuss, share experiences and form our own opinions.

The focus was on the well-being of our meetings. Our role within the community was raised in discussion but was not a key issue. We were encouraged to approach each session from a positive point of view, looking at what we had rather than what we lacked.

We considered the following questions. Each was followed by a group discussion.

- 1 **What nourishes our Meetings?** A myriad of things were volunteered including ministry, discussion groups, meals together etc.
- 2 **What challenges our Meetings?** A number of things you would expect – not enough people to keep the meeting going, not enough time, people over- burdened, people not suited for the job etc. It was interesting that having a building both nourished a meeting and was a challenge.
- 3 **What are the basic needs of a Meeting?** A meeting for worship and people attending who follow the Quaker way. Then we added all the other things – someone to open and close the door, someone to end the Meeting for Worship, someone to be responsible for money, a clerk etc.
- 4 **What are our resources?** Human/People; Spiritual; Financial; A Meeting place
- 5 **What does love require of each of us?** A personal moment for reflection
- 6 **How can we respond to the challenges of our Meeting?**
 - Create a learning environment so that everyone knows how things work.
 - Be honest with the Meeting about what is sustainable.
 - Offer service as ministry, not jobs

- Look to see what can be let go,
- Seek other ways of doing things including paid help.
- Have job descriptions.
- Ask what gifts individuals can bring, and keep an up-to-date list.
- Be aware of the needs of individuals in their lives outside the meeting.

Erica Johnson Bequest: Update on Premises

Friends will be pleased to know that, following our Meeting for Worship for Business on 12 April, Premises Committee is planning to begin the painting of the meeting house at the beginning of August. This means that we will need to move any hirings to the Adult School Hall if rooms are not ready for use.

The building consultant Richard Turner has been employed to draw up a feasibility study to include an accessibility toilet within the ladies' toilet.

We hope to bring estimates for double glazing throughout the building to a meeting in September, having consulted Six Weeks Meeting.

Adult School Hall

Nightwatch: Our liaison trustee, Roger Davies, reports that the numbers of tins of soup has become very low much earlier than usual in the year. Maureen Pembridge, who volunteers on Fridays, has asked us to provide as many tins of tomato and oxtail or chicken soups as possible, telling us that volunteers use 20 tins of vegetable and the same of meat every night, and that none is left. Roger is now visiting food banks in the Croydon area to be given tins that are not required there, but has discovered that food banks are asking their supporters to give them packets of powdered soup, so that source is drying up.



On Sunday nights, volunteers make up 125 food bags to hand out, containing whatever assortment of tins and packets they have had donated. (cf photo below.) They also take orders for household items such as duvets, clothes and boots. I was told that a client told a volunteer that a pair of work boots had changed his life. They enabled him to get a job, pay for a room, later find a girlfriend and make a home.

Hirers

- Junior Citizenship Scheme for all Croydon Year 6 Primary school pupils, organised by Croydon police. 6 – 17 July
- SDA Reformed church weekend conference weekend 10, 11, 12 July
- Refugee Youth charity organising an Eid party for young, unaccompanied refugees 19 July
- Croydon Festival. Drama Production 25, 26 July
- NB Painting of the walls and ceilings in the areas outside the ladies and gents toilets, and the back door entrance, will take place in the week of 27 July

Galway Quaker Meeting

Galway is a very old, picturesque city situated on the river Corrib which flows into Galway Bay. Its population is mainly Catholic, but the Protestant Cathedral of St Nicholas boasts (if that's the right word) the footprints of the horses Cromwell stabled in the nave when his army was rampaging through the city.

I was surprised to find that a Quaker meeting was held every Sunday, as Protestants as a whole are few and I expected Quakers to be even fewer, but there they were, meeting in St Nicholas National (Primary) School.

The school is fairly difficult to locate as it is in a cul-de-sac in a one-way system which leads straight into the river. Irish Quakers Meetings, at least the ones we have attended, tend to open their doors at the last minute. No comfortable chats and cups of coffee for them. So, as we sheltered from the Atlantic storm that arrived when we did, we welcomed with relief the car that

drove up and the two people who climbed out, at 3 minutes to 11. They were called Rachel and Eamon, and they ushered us into the hall where the pupils had their PE and Brownies and Guides held their meetings. In no time a trestle table was unfolded and surrounded by a circle of 10 chairs, a couple of bibles put on the table, some leaflets on the stage and we were being introduced to the other Friends four of whom arrived. Rachel told us that normally they had 12 or more, but this was a bank holiday so people were away.

Meeting started just past the hour, and as I usually do when I am worshipping elsewhere, I had a mental picture of Croydon Friends in their cosy meeting room with Celia's flowers on the table and their circle of comfy chairs! It was very cold in the gym, the wind beating against the windows and it was a real exercise of will to settle into worship. The silence deepened, and Rachel prayed for a member of the Meeting serving as an Accompanier in Palestine, and another working in a hospital in Sierra Leone. In a little while the door opened and an elderly Romanian woman in her traditional dress joined us. I thought she had wandered in by mistake, but no, she worships there regularly. Eamon next spoke about our care for the earth, and after a break the Romanian lady asked us to pray for her daughter who was sick.

I suppose it was because of where I was, a poem by Yeats that I learned as a child came into my mind, and I said it to myself several times. I decided not to use it in ministry though, as I did not want to break the silence, and before long Meeting ended.

While Rachel spoke to the Romanian, whose name I did not catch, the rest of us chatted away, and soon the kettle was on and the biscuits opened. Then Eamon reappeared with a huge bag of greens, kale, parsley rocket, spinach, and divided it into small bags which he presented to everyone there. Over coffee he told us, in his Tipperary accent, that the business he owned and ran collapsed in the Crash. He bought a smallholding and began to farm it sustainably, with beehives and apple trees and a variety of vegetables. He buys his seeds from a seed bank similar to the one at Kew, and gives most of his produce away.

Before we left, I headed to the loo, taking care to go into the one marked Cailini and not the one marked Buachali.

Irish schools are run by the churches still – I went to a Methodist and then a Church of Ireland school; all of them teach Gaelish. I was interested to hear that the government is making every effort to settle Travellers and that schools are given grants if they take in a proportion of their children, who did not go to school while their parents moved about. My cousin, a man of decided views, spoke his mind freely about the preferential treatment these people received and that the benefits they received meant they did no work and battered on the taxpayer. The Travellers are the ethnic minority of Ireland and Quakers play their part in supporting them and others, such as the refugees.

Gillian Turner

Plumbing the depths

This passage, taken from Daily Readings from Quaker Writings, was read at July's meeting for upholding. Friends present asked for it to be reproduced in the Newsletter.

Whenever a great spirit plumbs the depths of human experience, she or he does indeed summon us to something which, if not awful and unnatural, is at least beyond the commonplace. Whether they speak about becoming Enlightened, as Buddhists do, entering the Moksha, as Hindus do, or finding the Kingdom of God within us, as Christians do, they indicate to us that we have within us something very great, something of God, something farseeing and all-transcending, something which, if we ever receive the grace to get in touch with it, enables us to be born again of the Spirit and to live in a new and different way.

This new way of living is not the property of any particular religious faith. One line in the film [*Gandhi*], has him proclaiming: "I am a Hindu, I am a Muslim, I am a Christian, I am a Jew, I am a Sikh." And Indeed, when an individual or a company finds this new level of life— George Fox and the Valiant Sixty, St. Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, Mother Theresa, or Ham Sok Hon— we immediately recognize in them something which is neither of the East nor the West, neither ancient nor modern, but something which is simply the Truth, the plain Truth. And the works of social change and of service which are born out of this great Truth are at once so awesome and so sweet, so firm and so clear, that they fill us with joy and hope and wonder,

Daniel A. Seeger, 1983.

Message from Oliver Drewery

We are continuing to sort through things at Howard Road and have a favour to ask. I'm sure that you are aware of Brynmor's love of making pots and vases. Having already kept a large quantity ourselves, we still have approx 20 pots to find homes for. We wondered if it might be possible to bring some down to meeting on **Sunday 19 July** for people to take a pot for a donation towards the meeting.

Visit to the New Quaker Centre at Kingston.

Sutton Friends have arranged a visit to the new Quaker Centre at Kingston on **Sunday 26 July**. We will travel by private cars and public transport, aiming to arrive at 3pm.

Graham Torr, who guided the Kingston project over many years, has agreed to give us a talk about the project. We will have a guided tour of the building and finish with tea and cakes around 4.30-5.00pm.

We are happy to invite Friends from the rest of the Area Meeting to join us. Sutton Friends will be providing the refreshments and we therefore need to know how many to expect.

This invitation follows our Fourth Sunday talk and lunch, which usually ends about 2.30, so going on to Kingston for 3pm would be very tight. Please let Gillian know if you intend to join Sutton Friends.

July diary

Events at Croydon meeting house unless otherwise stated

*For details of items marked * see <http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/events>*

Sunday 5 - Meeting for Upholding (Prayer for Healing)

Saturday 11 - Wandsworth Pop-up Tea Shop and exhibition, 14:30 to 16:30. An opportunity to visit the historic Wandsworth Friends Meeting House and Burial Ground - a peaceful green jewel in the heart of Wandsworth - and enjoy tea and home made cake, possibly in glorious sunshine outside (failing that in the library).

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

Saturday 18* - Area Meeting at Epsom

Sunday 26 - Fourth Sunday Talk on speaking our faith given by David Parlett. Followed by a shared lunch.

Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.

Please join us for muesli, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15

June Collections + Standing orders

Jun	7	Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs	55.5	LM 209
	14	Quaker work at home and abroad	30	YM 87
	21	Alternatives to Violence Project, Ukraine	90	
	28	Brummana High School, Lebanon	150	AM 94

The collection for Brummana, along with the donation from Legacies Committee, has reached £900 and is paid directly into the school's Bursary fund. 1.2 million Syrian refugees have flooded into Lebanon, a country of 4 million, putting tremendous strain on schools, hospitals and other services. The fund provides financial support for parents, both Lebanese and Syrian, struggling to pay school fees. There are currently 90 Syrian students from 56 families attending the school, along with other Muslim students from the Middle East. The Bursary scheme underpins the secure education of those in financial need and helps families to trust their children to Quaker education in a safe environment.

The deadline for the August edition is Sunday 24 July 2015

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

One of the poems by Rumi, read to us by Christopher Head on 4 June, is being held over to the next issue.