

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

July/August 2017

Dear Friends - A bumper edition for two months instead of one. And to start you off, a poem to celebrate the beautiful sunny weather we are currently enjoying. **Gillian Turner**

Adlestrop

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Edward Thomas

News of Friends

Marjorie Evans is in Purley 1 ward in Croydon University Hospital at the time of writing.

Finding balance in our lives

When a child is born into this world, *they* have no say in the political or environmental circumstances that they find themselves faced with. These, as well as the family and social factors, have a massive impact on the way the child will grow and develop. The main thing the child needs is care and this means plenty of love and support.

As the child becomes an adult, they should begin to see how the circumstances of their development have moulded them into the person that they have become.

They will also have developed their own ego, or, in other words, a perspective of how they believe people and their surroundings should operate. This ego of course isn't always correct, as they may have developed biased or unfair ideas and conditioning that they may not be aware of, as well as, the fact that they may not be aware that their way isn't always the best way. This could lead to their becoming offended when others correct or enlighten their outlook and perspectives. Often the adult will need to recondition their beliefs and egos, which can be difficult for many and takes reflected thinking and time to do.

The holistic/well-rounded adult needs to have an awareness and understanding of the areas that make them whole. These are:

The physical body
The mental body
The spiritual body

The physical body needs nutrition, exercise, and to be free from pain, if possible.

The mental body needs stimulus, ideas, imagination, and emotional support, to be free from the stress and worries that can lead to mental health problems.

The spiritual body needs to be discovered and nurtured in the pursuit of finding a meaning, or a reason for their being. Ergo, it is so important to know that this developed area of the person will help to support the other two areas of the whole body.

This spiritual area of the adult is often overlooked by many, in the pursuit of other worldly interests of the ego, which is for many the pursuit of the materialistic and the vanity of their physical wellbeing. This again is partly due to the circumstances of the modern age that we find ourselves living in today. The belief that it is only by supporting the two areas of the physical and the mental body will make the person happy and provide them with a fulfilling and meaningful existence.

It should be advised that it's only when the three areas of the whole are in balance that the individual will find a true purpose and fulfilment with their lives.

This is partly why we should come to meeting for worship, to nurture and to connect with the spirituality aspect of our being which is so vital for our overall wellbeing, to reflect on our lives and to gain insight into ways in which we can grow and develop further.

Another, amazing truth about this life is that we are given a free will to choose our own destinies and lifestyles; this then gives the individual the freedom to discover and rediscover the way of life that hopefully will bring them the happiness and fulfilment that they are looking for.

This free will allows us to make the choices we want, though we should be aware that the choices we make are accountable and that we should aim to make every action and interaction have a positive and loving outcome, so that we will know that we have delivered the best of what we are and will be accountable to ourselves without feelings of regrets, anger or bitterness. This is of course easier said than done.

One of the best things about Christianity, though, is the fundamental principle of forgiveness; so, an individual can be forgiven if they, being only human, make a mistake.

Which not many of us can say we have not done.

The main thing the adult needs is care - and this means plenty of love and support.

Gil Greiner

An aristocracy of the sensitive

In a world of fierce political, social and economic division, never a day seems to go by without some staunch soul in the media highlighting the importance of remembering Jo Cox's words from her 2015 maiden speech in the House of Commons : "We are far more united and have far more in common with each other than the things that divide us". Others before her have, of course, appealed for the same sense of unity and decency. In his *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951) E.M. Forster spoke admiringly of those who manage courageously to embody this spirit by being sensitive to the needs others:

"I believe in an aristocracy.... not an aristocracy of power based upon rank and influence but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are found in all nations and classes and all through the ages and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet."

Forster believed that such people represent the true human tradition and the one permanent victory over cruelty and chaos. Forster's sentiments put one in mind of William Penn's words of 1693 :

"The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here make them strangers". (Qfp 19.28)

In our informal discussion group we are exploring the work of Parker J. Palmer, an American Quaker and educationalist who places the idea of sharing and community at the centre of a balanced and fulfilled life. He speaks of the joint creation of an "incredibly complex ecology, in which each part functions on behalf of the whole, and, in return, is sustained by the whole". The concept of community doesn't just create abundance-- "community *is* abundance". He cites our very human fear of being short-changed as the reason-- that we hoard power and fail to permit others the same rights, dignity and benefits that we claim for ourselves. Palmer's message is that there is enough for all of us to thrive if all of us share. ("40-day Journey with Parker J. Palmer", Henry F. French)

Barbara Earl

New Light

I recently paid a visit to Mitcham Parish Church. I was there for a memorial service for my friend Sheila. I called her my Daily Service friend because we both listened to the service broadcast every morning on BBC Radio 4 from 9.45 to 10.00 . If my telephone rang shortly after 10 o'clock it would be Sheila on the line wanting to share her thoughts about it with me. My telephone no longer rings at 10 a.m. I miss her.

So here I was entering the building and at door I read this advice:

Before the service, speak to God

During the service let God speak to you

After the service, speak to one another

During the following days afterwards I kept thinking about this advice and started to see if I could express the same in Quaker language. This is how I made the translation.

Before the service, speak to God

I found that the nearest equivalent to that could be Advices and Queries 9: "Come to Meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared." I remember reading about an American Quaker who said that as a child his mother would tell him that they were going to Meeting "To greet The Light". For my part my young great-nephew and I would read together Psalm 121 together, shake hands , then go out to wait for the bus. I think of a Friend who would come into the Meeting Room lobby with such a cheerful attitude as if she had come expecting something wonderful to happen, and yet, of another Friend who some minutes before the start of Meeting would sit quietly reading. Each person , I think was talking to God in their own way, coming "with heart and mind prepared."

During the service let God speak to you

When the young Samuel asked Eli the priest what he should do when next he heard a voice, he told him to answer, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

The Quaker corollary would be, "Speak Lord, for thy servant is listening." During Meeting for Worship, it is "listen to what God says to you". In the silence as we centre down we prepare to listen. Alice Hoffman, in *The Dovekeepers*, writes, "Perhaps it is possible to discover more in silence than in speech. Or perhaps, it is only those who are silent among us learn to listen."

In the silence of our Meeting for Worship we learn to listen to what God has to say to us, and when one of us stands to minister, we learn to listen to the words, and more deeply find the place where the words came from. One Quaker writer remarked that it is in the quiet of the Quaker Meeting for Worship that you can begin to establish a relationship with God.

After the service speak to one another

"As we learn more about worship we learn to listen more deeply so that we can be channels through which God's love reaches the other person" (Diana Lampen, Qfp 2.26). Our Meeting for worship ended, we leave the worship room and go out of the door to the outside where the service begins, and when we speak with one another and listen to one another we become the channels that Diana wrote about.

Joyce Trotman

Quaker Social Action

I applied to be a Trustee for Quaker Social Action (QSA) in 2012 after seeing an advert at Croydon Friends meeting, and I'm so glad I did! QSA is a Quaker organisation founded in 1867 to tackle poverty (originally named the Bedford Institute Association, after Peter Bedford, a Quaker silk merchant and philanthropist) which turns 150 this year. During my time with the charity I have been hugely inspired by the positive, practical work which it does, both in East London and increasingly nationally, all of which is driven by Quaker values. Last year QSA worked directly with over 3,000 people, but improved the lives of many more through training professionals and campaigning for social justice. Current projects include: *Homestore*, a furniture recycling scheme, *Made of Money*, financial capability training which looks at the emotions and attitudes which influence financial decisions, *This Way Up*, which uses life-coaching and mindfulness to help people build resilience and well-being, and *Down to Earth*, a pioneering project to support people facing funeral poverty.

The average basic cost of a funeral has risen to £3,897 (£5,529 in London), yet only some people on certain working age benefits are eligible for Government support from a Social Fund

Funeral Payment to help meet this cost – this excludes anyone on Disability Living Allowance or a Basic State Pension. Even those who qualify find it now only covers around 37% of the overall bill, leaving people already struggling to make ends meet to make up the shortfall at a time when they are already in distress. Down to Earth provides valuable advice and support for people on low incomes struggling with funeral costs and can be contacted at downtoearth@qsa.org.uk -please do encourage anyone who might be in this situation to contact them. In 2014 QSA launched *Fair Funerals*, the UK's first national campaign to tackle the root causes of funeral poverty, aiming to influence both Government and the funeral industry as well as to educate people about their choices. This, QSA's first ever campaign, was named the Guardian charity campaign of the month in October 2015: "There aren't many campaigns underway that have achieved both significant cross-party support and, in just over a year, made lasting changes to an industry. Charities could learn a great deal from the apolitical moves made by QSA."

The Quaker community is an incredibly valuable source of support for QSA, and donations from individuals and meetings, as well as legacies, give the charity the freedom to innovate to respond to new needs. This year we will be launching a new project Move on Up which will house a small group of young adult carers aged 18-24 in east London, also offering them a package of support to help them successfully transition into an independent adult life. If anyone would like to find out more about QSA, please visit their website www.quakersocialaction.org.uk, speak to me, or visit one of their sessions at Yearly Meeting Gathering. **Laura Roling**

Faith Schools: some questions

Readers of recent editions of *The Friend* will have noticed the debate in the letters page about Quaker schools. It is a far from a new area of controversy and one that can provoke Quakers to lose their cool, or certainly, not seek some form of middle way consensus. Quaker schools – as fee-paying, independent ones – are a Marmite issue par excellence. They are a means to transmit Quaker values and nurture children or they are elitist and socially divisive. You want them or you don't.

Of course, the controversy is not limited to Quaker and other independent schools. Faith schools in the state sector are controversial too. There are pros and there are cons. So quite what are some of the main questions that can be asked about them?

What is a faith school?

It is sometimes claimed that faith schools just teach children about their particular religion and not much else. Is this true? A closer look shows that a faith school in the state sector is funded from public funds, and is required to teach a general curriculum. However it does have a declared religious perspective and perhaps formal links with a religious organisation. Importantly, all are subject to OFSTED inspection. Independent schools are also subject to inspection.

Until 1997, only Christian and Jewish schools were so funded. Then the term 'faith school' replaced the earlier 'church schools' in response to the increasing religious and cultural diversity in England and the state funding of Muslim schools. Entry to these schools by applicants who are not the faith of the school (to fill unfilled places) remains a much-debated issue. There are many types of faith schools in England: e.g. Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Greek Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventist – and the William Penn primary school near Billingshurst, run jointly by West Sussex County council and Quakers. About one third of England's 20,000 or so state funded schools are faith schools.

Why are they popular with parents?

There is a parental perception that faith schools are academically excellent and have good discipline – and it can be argued that this view is supported by state school league tables. (Of the almost 2,200 Catholic state schools in England around three quarters have been ranked by Ofsted as 'good' or better. Only two thirds of other schools were so ranked).

But are these schools socially divisive? While not all faith schools are in the 'top ten' in every locality, it should be noted that the churches themselves are aware of this criticism that they 'cream off' the best pupils or create social ghettos. (But is any social divisiveness so caused very much different from the social segregation caused by high house prices near excellent schools? That's not a reason to accept such segregation, but it does illustrate the difficulties that need to be overcome to pursue the laudable aim of social equality).

But what about the young people themselves?

Parents and the supporters of such schools (whether state or independent) may claim the values education offered within them is so worthwhile that any social divisiveness is worth 'living with'. Opponents of the schools see such values education as simply propaganda that is rejected by the children subjected to it. A website called Faith School Anonymous (<https://www.google.com/#q=faith+school+anonymous>), which may or may not be representative, makes it clear that some attenders of such schools do reject such exposure to such values, and sometimes reject them with more than a little bitterness.

And if the young people *do* accept such exposure, will their minds be closed, perhaps making them intolerant of others? Of course, in a best case scenario, attendance at a faith school could expose young people to a coherent and examinable morality drawn from one of the great world cultures. But is critical analysis enough? The philosopher Anthony Appiah, the son of a Ghanaian politician and the daughter an English Chancellor of the Exchequer, has argued for a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' in which attachments to our families, friends, communities and religion are deep enough to matter but unrestricting enough to allow us to 'move on' and grow in our own self-actualising way, in our own chosen context. (Such self-actualisation does have a Quakerly tone to it, doesn't it?)

It is for parents to assess what they want for their own children in today's and tomorrow's world but it is clear that some types of faith schools can help supply that 'rootedness'. In this way, their existence is (in the words of Balfour way back in 1902) entirely appropriate 'to the needs and objectives of a progressive community'. Could that appropriateness be the ultimate test for such a school, for *any* school?

Helen Johnson

AM Newsletter

Roger Haworth writes: Although I have not produced a proper Area Meeting Newsletter for a while, I have been adding various sets of photos to <http://southlondonquakers.org.uk/nletr/>. The latest show a mosque, a funeral, and (below) members of 'Relaxed Recitals' – a group who attend classes at the City Lit, including Isobel Lane (second from right) of Streatham and Brixton Meeting. Their recital of operatic and light music, entitled 'Arias and Graces', took place at Croydon meeting house on 25 June in aid of Roko Academy in central Kenya.



Brummana High School, Lebanon: Roko 20 Primary School

During June we had a collection for two schools, Brummana, a Quaker foundation in 1873, and Roko 20, a school founded in 2014 to answer the need of orphaned children in a remote village in Kenya.

Brummana is a day and boarding school providing a multi-faith, open, peaceful and tolerant education in a country surrounded by violence and instability. With half a million Palestinian refugees and 1.2 million displaced Syrians, and Lebanese families struggling to make ends meet, the school provides a vital centre of learning from nursery to university entrance. As a non-profit, fee-paying school with a bursary fund designed to help needy families meet the school fees, which are average compared to similar schools in Lebanon, it offers parents and students more than academic success. There is a strong community spirit which bonds children divided by their nationalities and faiths. Community service is part of the ethos of the school, whose motto is, I serve. There is a great sense of camaraderie and public spirit in the school, a scouts troupe, a first aid group similar to St Johns Ambulance and so on which girls and boys are encouraged to join.

The majority of Lebanese children are educated in the independent sector. Never very strong, the system suffered from the effects of the civil war, and with the conflict in Syria the economic situation in the country has deteriorated. The school offers them, and Syrian children, a way forward and hope for the future.

When I taught there, I was told by Saudi parents that they wanted their children to experience Western-style education, where their girls could move freely and their boys could learn to look after themselves. For many of the wealthy students, whose fees helped to pay for bursaries, this was the first time they lived without a driver or maid and mixed on equal terms with children of other faiths. The boy who arrived in Lebanon in his father's private jet, one of a fleet of five, he told me, discovered that he could not cheat or bribe his way through his exams. The testimony to equality covers the wealthy as well as the poor after all.

Roko 20 Academy was opened in January 2014, in a rural area of Kenya, for disadvantaged children and orphans with four classes, from baby to class one. It has under 100 pupils, some of whom pay a small fee. It also works with the community. And is working with a number of projects to assist them out of poverty. The school prides itself on offering gentle instruction, approval and praise.

The school runs a rabbit project where the family builds a hutch and is given a female rabbit and loaned a male. When nature takes its course they return the male to be loaned elsewhere and the family keeps the progeny. With a high rate of death from HIV/AIDS in the community many of the children are brought up by grandparents. The school runs a project where grandmothers come together to weave baskets, which are sold abroad and give them a small income, and are also provided with a meal and a chance to socialise.

Our Fourth Sunday Concert of operatic and light music was in aid of this school, and not only were a number of baskets on sale, but one of the singers told us about the school and its founder, who used her life savings to open it. Whether it can survive without proper funding remains to be seen.

The charities we support are chosen by the committee appointed to draw up the collections rota. All of us have the opportunity to propose a charity which is important to us and ask to have it included. We have open collections when someone can suggest a charity which answers a need at the time, such as the Jo Cox Appeal also in June. It is important that all our giving is transparent and decided by us all.

Gillian Turner

Refugee Youth Club

Last week I made a special journey to the Adult School Hall to see how the members of the Friday night club that meet there had enjoyed Eid. A group of them had spent the Saturday of Quaker Week on the South Bank organising and teaching a printing session. One of them told me, in his careful English, that it had gone very well and many people had filled in the forms to say how good it had been.

The young people, older teenagers, all in foster care, were standing in a large circle, about 25 of them I reckon, playing team games, and naturally, when I was asked to join them I did, even contributing one of my own, Duck, Duck Drake. They had been put into teams to plan and run a game each, all of which met with laughter and applause. I was a bit surprised that they were

enjoying themselves so much. However, I also stayed for the session where the facilitator reviewed the activity, and realised the importance of what had been happening.

Federico asked how well they had worked together in planning their game and agreeing who was going to run it. He pointed out the importance of explaining the rules carefully so everyone understood it; they all had to listen intently and ask questions if they were not clear; and they had to play the game properly and not mess around. They listened with great good humour.

I noticed that two girls had not joined in but were sitting together on the seat outside the kitchen, heads bent over the form one of them had to fill in. They would have an opportunity to go through it with one of the helpers, they told me, and it was so good to know that there was someone who understood what they had to do.

The club has two planning groups that meet once a month, one for girls, one for boys, which consists of adult volunteers and some young people. Decisions are made collaboratively and there is much listening and talking. They feel very much at home with us. Having a base makes all the difference, they say.

Gillian Turner

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

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Diary dates

Sunday 9 July: Meeting for Worship for Business Croydon's monthly business meeting from 12.15. All welcome

Saturday 15 July: Board Games Afternoon 14:30 to 17:30 at Finchley mh. You are invited to attend FREE Board Games at Finchley Quaker Meeting House, 58 Alexandra Grove N12 8HG. Lots of games will be available but we welcome you to bring your own. (You are responsible for your own games.) Please bring snacks (crisps etc.) to share.

Thursday 27 July: Cape Town Quaker Peace Centre 18:30 to 20:00 in the Marjorie Sykes Room, Friends House. Carol Lynn Bower, Chairperson of the QPC board, introduces: here QPC started and why - A changing South Africa - Where QPC is going Struggling against wasteful and corrupt arms deals - Fighting corruption.

Saturdays 19 - 26 August: Junior Gathering and Senior Conference 16:00 Saturday 19 to 16:00 Saturday, 26 August. Week-long Quaker gatherings for young people. Junior Gathering (ages 11-14) is at Leighton Park School, Senior Conference at Sibford School.

Saturday 29 July - Saturday 5 August: YEARLY MEETING GATHERING University of Warwick.

Collected in June

4 Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs **93.5**

11 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad **60.5**

18 Hope Not Hate **79.00**

25 Brummana High School **115.00**

Collecting in July: 9 South London Area Meeting, 16 Woodbrooke, 23 Croydon Local Meeting, 30 Support and Help in Education (SHINE). **August:** 6 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 13 Croydon Refugee Centre, 20 South London Area Meeting, 27 Mind in Croydon. **September:** 3 South East Cancer Help Centre, 10 Croydon Local Meeting, 17 Friends World Committee for Consultation, 24 Worldwide Alternatives to Violence (WAVE).

The deadline for the September edition is Sunday 27 August 2017

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

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