

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

July/August 2019

Dear Friends: July and August are usually quiet months with summer reading, holidays and relaxing times although our premises will be as busy as usual. We offer you this mix of news and events, articles and poems, with best wishes for a relaxing season.

Gillian Turner, David Parlett

Read as part of ministry in meeting for worship in July

Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations? Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility? Taking oaths implies a double standard of truth; in choosing to affirm instead, be aware of the claim to integrity you are making.

Advices and queries 37

The Empty Church

They laid this stone trap
for him, enticing him with candles,
as though he would come like some huge moth
out of the darkness to beat there.
Ah, he had burned himself
in the human flame
and escaped, leaving the reason
torn. He will not come any more
to our lure. Why then do I kneel still
striking my prayers on a stone
heart? Is it in hope one
of them will ignite yet and throw
on its illumed walls the shadow
of someone greater than I can understand.

R.S. Thomas

News of Friends

The Marriage of Jade Flahive Gilbert and Eka Rahmawan took place on 7 July in Central Java. It was live-streamed on YouTube and watched by her family in Croydon and her friends at Croydon Meeting. It was a simple ceremony, with many flowers, in a rustic setting with guests seated on mats, the bride and groom before a small table. Jade looked beautiful and very happy, dressed in a white wedding gown and veil; Eka wore traditional dress with his long hair tied neatly back. Mary's letter welcoming her new son-in-law to the family was read out and Jade made her vows in English. They exchanged rings made by Eka, and the whole congregation walked in procession with much music and rejoicing, for the traditional feasting.

Nirvana Underwood, daughter of Mary and granddaughter of Anthea, met with Cathy, Kay and Gillian to share the exciting news of her pregnancy. The baby is due in September and Nirvana is blooming with health and happiness. We look forward to welcoming her and her son at Meeting. Helen Shorey of Guernsey Meeting paid us a short visit with news of her daughters, Myra, married with a little girl Hayley-Mae and living in Southampton, and Olwyn, continuing her languages studies in Portugal.

Gemma Tighe tells us that her daughter Clair and husband Ishan are planning to spend August in India, visiting his parents.

Alex Plunkett, David Parlett's 19-year-old grandson, has just passed his Computer Science exam

with distinction, thus converting his provisional university acceptance into a confirmed one. He is down for a course in computer games programming at Kingston(-upon-Thames) university starting this autumn, and will be commuting from home in Mitcham. This is particularly pleasing, as Friends may remember that he fell victim to childhood leukaemia at age 11 and missed several years of sustained schooling.

How do you say goodbye to a friend?

Mary Jakeman's Funeral, 17th June 2019

(*Pam Sellman*.) How do you say goodbye to a friend? With love and gratitude for that person having been in your life.

Mary was a Friend (i.e. Quaker) and a friend to those around her in the true sense of the word. Her funeral in Cambridge was an occasion where much love was expressed for this special person.

Mary's sons (Jeremy, Peter and Martin) spoke of their memories of their mum, known as 'Mary, Mum and Nana' to her family. Her grandchildren also spoke of their time with Mary: she helped a granddaughter to have long nails with the help of pistachio shells and Sellotape! She liked to race her old three wheeled bubble car (and was speedy in her new electric car) and she loved her food!

The funeral included a time for reflection, which was followed by a reading of the poem 'She is Gone' by David Harkins.

The woodland burial was beautiful and the following poem by Pam Ayres read out at the burial was so Mary:

*Don't lay me down in some gloom cemetery shaded by a wall,
Where the dust of ancient bones has spread dryness over all.
Lay me in some leafy loam where, sheltered from the cold, little
seeds investigate and tender leaves unfold.
There kindly and affectionately, plant a native tree, to grow
resplendent before God and hold some part of me.
The roots will not disturb me, as they wend their peaceful way,
to build the fine and bountiful, from closure and decay.
To seek their small requirements so that when their work is done,
I'll be tall and standing strongly in the beauty of the Sun.*

Memorial meeting, 23rd June 2019

(*Gillian Turner and Cathy Spence*.) The memorial meeting was held in the Adult School Hall, looking its best in the summer sunshine. All Mary's immediate family were there, sons and their wives and the full set of grandchildren.

Also present, along with members and attenders of Croydon and South London Meetings, were representatives of the many groups she belonged to such as the golf club and bridge club, along with neighbours and long-term friends

Mary had always loved the quiet of a Quaker meeting for worship and welcomed ministry. Into the silence her family and friends spoke of her life. a rounded life well-lived, full of wisdom, love and fun. We in Croydon learned of her family life and her family heard how she was respected and appreciated here.

As always, we ended with refreshments, giving us all the opportunity to get to know each other and to share our memories in an informal way.

(*Kay Papadopoulos*.) The practical preparations for Mary's memorial meeting provided another example of how Friends come together to give help and support in times of need. Friends had signed up for various tasks, but in the event, as always seems to happen with Friends' events, at different times in the process, when it began to feel a little overwhelming, exactly the right person turned up and helped to make the right decisions.

On the day before the meeting, the Saturday, Will Bitten (Peter's stand-in) had brought about a hundred chairs out of storage. Four of us, including Malachi, then cleaned and set out the chairs and the tables for refreshments so that the setting for the memorial meeting was in place.

On the Sunday Kate Orchard arrived with masses of roses from her mum's garden, which she set up to greet visitors as they arrived. With the flowers, the chairs set out in a large oval and a table with more flowers in the centre, the ASH looked beautiful.

*And what does the Lord require of you,
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah, 6:8 (memorably quoted by Mary J.)

School's Out Lebanon July 2019

The school year has reached its conclusion, marked by graduation events culminating in a splendid Speech Day occasion held outside the original buildings of Brummana High School constructed around 1870, and within reach of the bust of Theophilus Waldmeier, the Founder of the school, the Quaker values of which: individuality, respect for others, tolerance and peaceful resolution, resonate quite as powerfully now as they did nearly one hundred and fifty years ago. For the Grade 12 graduates they should remember the values they have learned, the motto "I serve" and seek, not only to succeed in their respective fields, but also to improve on what they find, aiming to build a peaceful, prosperous society for all.

We were privileged on this occasion to be addressed by ME Ziyad Baroud the Former Minister of the Interior and Municipalities who gave an inspirational address to the students.

Amidst the celebrations, I was privileged to witness an outstanding theatrical production in *Metamorphosis*, performed by Grade 8 and 9 students, and directed by Mrs. Lama Najjar. This play, rehearsed over months, demonstrated what sustained application and commitment to a project can achieve.

It acts as a metaphor to us all at school about the adoption of a purpose and the willingness and determination to stick to it until it is fulfilled. The English seafarer, Sir Francis Drake, the first person to circumnavigate the world, wrote a prayer which states that "in undertaking any great endeavour it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it is thoroughly finished which yields the true glory".

It is fitting to remember these words as students come to the finishing of the school year. Holidays await to refresh us in advance of the next set of challenges which lie ahead in September.

David Gray, Principal

A Point of Light

Whenever I come across the quotation, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.23), I try to remind myself that the Greek for 'sin' is *hamartia* which means 'missing the mark' or to err. When contemplating the phrase I find this interpretation of the word far more helpful than the more traditional idea of sin which tends to induce a sense of shame or worthlessness. I know that I have missed the mark on many occasions owing to aspects of unskilful behaviour such as thoughtlessness, vanity, overreaching and selfishness. Luckily, I am a member of a Society which helps me to develop the ability to think mindfully, exercise more patience and, if it should become necessary, make amends to others more readily. Admittedly, I am still on the nursery slopes and bear in mind regularly Maya Angelou's advice: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better".

Recently I watched a documentary about Peter Green, the founder of the super-band Fleetwood Mac. Green is a man of prodigious musical talent who has gained both enormous worldly success and endured many difficulties including serious emotional ill-health and addiction. I was intrigued to hear him say that the concept of coming short of the glory of God had interested him greatly and had inspired him to write *Oh, Well*, one of the most beautiful and unique songs of the late 1960s.

In another time and place, Elizabeth Fry, Quaker social and prison reformer, had used this same biblical phrase to explain her attitude towards the 'wretched and degraded' prisoners with whom she came into contact. According to Priscilla Buxton writing in 1847, she always put the

most 'favourable construction' upon every transaction and offered hope rather than humiliation and despair (Qfp23.99) Knowing her own failings allowed her to forgive others in a genuine way and find 'a point of light' with all.

Elizabeth felt it important that the spirit in which one approached those vulnerable, imprisoned souls was one of mercy rather than judgement, "She must not say in her heart, I am more holier than thou, but must rather keep in perpetual remembrance, 'that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'". (QFP 23.98)

It may help to consider that each of us operates from our own particular level of consciousness and experience. Our own *Advices and Queries* prompts us to consider what has nourished the lives of others (17). Ernest Hemingway once wrote, "And who understands? Not me, because if I did I would forgive it all". **Barbara Earl**

The Peter Green Story: Man of the World (DVD)

The Quaker Business Method (QBM)

A wise person once said that there are two kinds of people in this world: people who say there are two kinds of people in this world – and those who don't. But, nevertheless, sometimes there really is a need to differentiate between groups of people and how they go about things.

A newcomer to Quakerism is likely to tell you that, unlike other denominations, Quakers don't have a dogma but they certainly have a culture. What you're thinking, feeling, experiencing in the silent worship of a meeting is your business – but there are instances when there is an expected way to behave. There are the basics: if called to minister, do it only once in the meeting and make sure there's a gap between each ministry. And, of course, wear sandals (only joking).

So much in *Quaker Faith and Practice* is setting out these norms. For example, Chapter 3 'General counsel on church affairs' discusses the principles of the Quaker Business Method, the means by which a meeting, a committee, any group makes its decisions. Paragraph 3.03 states '...meetings are not merely occasions for transacting with proper efficiency the affairs of the church but also opportunities when we can learn to bear and forbear, to practise to one another that love which 'suffereth long and is kind'. The next paragraph advises that we are 'not to set great store by rhetoric or clever argument'. At this point, it is possible to have a Powerpoint moment and recall all those management lectures about the most effective way to make decisions. (Who could forget the 'bounded rationality' of Herbert Simon, the 'disjointed incrementalism' of Charles Lindblom...? Only those people with a life...). So QBM carries with it an ethical and sympathetic agenda. But importantly, and perhaps this is the most important point, the meeting, the process is seeking unity. There is no voting. Nobody wins, which brings us back to the two kinds of people in the world: there are those who want to be powerful, to establish superiority over the supposed inferiority of others - and there are those who seek equality and unity.

Quakers are proud of the QBM. Is proud the right word? But it is seen as a clear statement of Quaker values and as a way of acting out those values. At this point, it might be possible to make the usual mention of Quaker history and businesses....you know what's comingthe Cadburys, Rowntrees, Frys ... But would it be relevant? The question would seem to be how do these values and this process fit into today's and tomorrow's many types of organisations? QBM would seem to have two aspects in terms of its spiritual dimension and decision-making process (Anderson, 1995). Both of these would seem to have relevance in a world beyond the meeting-house. For some of us, at least, there is a pressing need for a withdrawal from the 'confrontational, ego-based debate' (Burton, 2016) of those who always need to win and a move to a collaborative and inclusive style of decision-making that seeks equality and unity. **Helen Johnson**

Anderson, P. (1995) *The world as influenced by Quaker conviction*
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs/128>

Burton, N. (2016) *Quaker Business Method: A Contemporary Decision-Making Process?*
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/27780>

Note: Our next local business meeting will be on Sunday 14 July at 12 15 pm

Two book reviews

1. The joy of tax

Tax is the price we pay for living in a civilised society, so I'm against any political party whose claim to votes is that it will cut taxes and, thereby, reduce the civility of life. Thus I couldn't resist picking up a copy of *The Joy Of Tax* when last at Woodbrooke, intrigued as much by the title as anything else. (I have no interest in economics.) But it proved be a very enjoyable and informative read. Author Richard Murphy, described in the blurb as "A rare voice of sanity at a time of economic madness", is a chartered accountant, a founder of the Tax Justice Network, and director of Tax Research UK, so he knows his stuff. Which is more than he credits with most current MPs with doing.

Three interesting things I learnt from it almost immediately were the following. First, it's not true that there's no such thing as a magic money tree. All money is created "out of thin air" by the process of banks making loans (p.47). And since the government owns the biggest bank (of England) they can print as much money as they like. Second, when politicians talk about "spending tax-payers' money" they're being economical with the truth: what they're spending is their own money, and theirs by right of law. It just happens to be contributed by tax-payers. Third, when people talk of "paying tax" they mostly mean personal income tax, while possibly acknowledging also corporation tax and so-called "value added tax" (i.e., more honestly, purchase tax). But these account for only about one tenth of the types of tax raised. Murphy presents a government-produced table of taxes for the tax year 2013-14 listing 31 sources of revenue. About 86% is collected by HMRC, the bulk of it by income tax (27%), national insurance contributions (19%), and VAT (18%). The rest comes from business rates, council tax, vehicle excise duties, and smaller fry.

In a chapter on the underpinnings of a good tax system, Murphy summarises the four maxims for tax propounded by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) as: equity, certainty, convenience, simplicity. But, he adds, "I suggest it is time to move on from Adam Smith and that there are at least four such further principles we need to take into account, which are: 1, Peace; 2, Equality; 3, Truth; 4, Simplicity".

Now where have I heard that before?

Read this book. It will change your life!

Murphy, Richard, *The Joy of Tax*, (Penguin, 2015, ISBN 978059307517-3). You can order it via www.taxresearch.org.uk

P.S. After writing the above I came across the following comment by Donald Trump's son Eric on the former's continuing refusal to reveal his tax returns: "It's funny how taxes work. They sort of punish the hardest working and most productive members of our society while taking nothing from those who would rather be lazy and beg on the streets. That's kind of not fair. What we have here is a system that flat out punishes those who want to contribute and make their lives better and at the same time, rewards those who want to be nothing more than dead weight... I'm not saying something revolutionary here; this system has been in place ever since the country was established. My father, regardless of the fact that he's president, is just one person out of millions who are capable enough to be successful but are simultaneously struck down by our tax system." (Peter Bloom and Carl Roads, *CEO Society: the Corporate Takeover of Everyday Life* (Zed, 2018), p.215.)

2. Jesus Today – a Quaker Perspective

Michael Wright was an Anglican priest for 40 years before leaving ordained ministry and becoming a Quaker, so he knows whereof he speaks. Furthermore, his knowledge is up to date: while most of his quotations are from the bible and *Quaker Faith and Practice*, he also draws valuable references from such modern writers as John Spong, Karen Armstrong and Marcus Borg. "What I am seeking to share with those who read this", he explains, "is a fresh appreciation of Jesus, his life and teaching, which is not trapped in the mindset of the past". He regrets that "Few [Quakers] refer to Jesus or the gospels in meeting for worship. Mention of him can even be unwelcome to some. I hope now to stimulate an interest in the significance of his teaching from which we can draw inspiration for our values and practice today... There is a significant contrast between Jesus' original teaching and behaviour and the authoritative doctrines and orthodoxies

later developed and then imposed by the institutional churches. Quakers have largely either challenged or sidelined these since the foundations of our movement in the 17th century."

If Chapter 3, devoted to "some elements of the Quaker way", will serve well for newcomers and enquirers who find some of our language and attitudes unusual and perhaps baffling, chapter 4, "A Quaker approach to the bible" is essential reading or rereading for many of us who think we know it well enough already. "Quakers share the biblical narrative with other Christians, and we value the scriptures without taking everything at face value. We pay attention to the spirit who gave the scriptures, rather than abiding by the letter of them." (This is almost word-for-word Robert Barclay). "Our approach to the scriptures is distinctive and not widely understood, even among Quakers". Rather than adopt creeds, he adds: "The early Quakers [...] delved into the scriptures and drew from them inspiration to shape their lives in the circumstances of their own time. This we can do in our day. Our Quaker testimony to truth and to integrity, to equality and justice, to peace, to simplicity and sustainability, all spring from gospel principles which Jesus taught".

In chapter 5 Michael looks again at the four gospels, and here he throws a novel light that particularly appeals to me. As a former journalist, he likens the style of Mark to *The Daily Mirror*, Matthew to *The Daily Telegraph*, Luke to *The Guardian*, and John to *The Sunday Times* as it used to be.

Chapter 6, 'Revising our understanding of the Jesus story', precedes 'Some Quaker Responses to Jesus', in which we are reminded of George Fox's central experience of discovering Jesus within himself and of the impact of the Quaker message in English life when first shared publicly. But the scene in Britain today is very different from the 1640s: "Then Christian religious practice and teaching was the shared experience of just about everybody, although there were lots of disagreements between different groups about what should be taught and practised. Today Christian congregations are clearly a minority, in which the distinctive Quaker voice is a minority within a minority".

David Parlett

Wright, Michael, *Jesus Today – a Quaker Perspective* (Sixth Element Publishing, 2019, ISBN 978191221857-8)

Premises Committee News

Two events for young people aged 15 - 18 at the Adult School Hall in August.
NCS The National Community Service *aka* the Challenge is back again for the third year;
Summermix for the first time using the meeting house as well as the ASH for its venue. This is for asylum seekers and refugee young people.

Events

12 June-31 October Windrush exhibition at Croydon Museums Windrush Generation artefacts from the 1940s & 1950s. COMING HOME is a major new project which sees the National Portrait Gallery lend 50 portraits of iconic individuals to places across the UK with which they are most closely associated. To find out more about the installation follow @museumofcroydon on twitter and Instagram.

Sunday 14 July Meeting for worship for business in the meeting room after refreshments (approximately 12.15). All welcome.

Saturday 20 July 'Protest Songs' singing workshop, Watford meeting house. 11:00 to 16:00 This one day workshop is for anyone who wishes to learn the songs that sing out against injustice and to sing the words of hope for a changed world. Led by Woodbrooke tutors – Mark Russ and Maud Grainger. Bring a packed lunch. Email enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk to book a place. Cost: £20 Watford meeting house, Church Road, Watford, WD17 4QB. 10 mins walk from Watford Junction station which is a 20 min train ride from Euston.

Wednesday 24 July 8 pm Epsom Methodist Church (11-13 Ashley Road, Epsom, KT18 5AQ) Hope into Action: open meeting anyone interested in helping, supporting, investing or just knowing about the Hope into Action – Epsom project. Churches Together in Epsom (CTiE) have agreed to support the project that will purchase a house in Epsom to provide temporary supported accommodation for the homeless. Please note car parking at EMC is very limited

Sunday 28 July Our 4th Sunday session will be on the peace testimony, led by Gordon. There won't be a 4th Sunday session in August

26 Aug – 1 September Exploration course at Claridge House. A retreat to consider personal spiritual development. "Live the questions . . . learn to love the questions themselves . . ." (Rilke) An enquiry into Spiritual Philosophy to help our own spiritual development. A retreat to each explore our personal questions which arise at a particular stage of life, using moving text from spiritual philosophers, poetry, the personal wisdom we have gained through our own life experience, and the collective wisdom of the group. Residential price: £230.00

Monday 26 August (Bank holiday) Sutton Environmental Fair; Carshalton Park

Monday 2 September Roots of Resistance training day at Friends House. Get briefed about the Arms Fair. RoR will hold a briefing session at Friends House in London. This will include a full briefing, legal information and Meeting for Worship, to make sure hearts and minds are prepared for the week of action ahead.

Recently collected

June 2 Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs **63.00**
 9 Britain Yearly Meeting **57.00**
 16 Children's choice – Childline **50.00**
 23 Britain Yearly Meeting **65.00**
 30 Brummana High School **75.00**
 July 7 South London Area Meeting **39.00**

Coming up: Jul 14 Woodbrooke, Jul 21 Croydon Local Meeting, Jul 28 The Retreat, York, Aug 4 Britain Yearly Meeting, Aug 11 Croydon Refugee Centre, Aug 18 Croydon Local Meeting, Aug 25 Mind in Croydon, Sep 1 South East Cancer Help Centre

The deadline for the September edition is Sunday August 24 2019
Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to
Gillian Turner *Tel/07805 087 981 email gillianturner033@gmail.com*

Piano

Like having a piano in the house
We all need someone on whom to practise
Love. Arpeggios of passion, chords of content,
Persistent scales of care, with sharps or flats.
Not necessarily the great concerto
Of long established wedded partnership -
Short practice pieces, over telephones,
To solitary friends, quick suburban thrills
In shopping mall or high street.
Cadenzas in airmail envelopes
For dears Down Under.
But practise, practise. That's the thing:
Beethoven sonatas can't be achieved
In a week. Unpractised of love
Won't be sure or supple enough
When a concert performance is urgently needed
For child, father, friend, neighbour,
Stranger, enemy.