

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2014

DEAR FRIENDS,

June looks like being a very busy month for us at Croydon Meeting, what with the Croydon Heritage Festival (21 June – 4 July) and the variety of events listed below. As usual our newsletter reflects on some of the events of May, but unusually, rather than beginning with a quotation from Quaker Faith and Practice, I'm including a poem I stumbled across when searching through an anthology for something else entirely. It does not contain any typing errors and I hope you enjoy it.

Gillian Turner

i thank you god for most this amazing
day for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky, and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any – lifted from the no
of all nothing – human merely being
doubt unimaginable you?

(now the ears of my ears awake
and the eyes of my eyes are opened)

e e cummings

Meeting with Gavin Barwell, MP for Croydon Central, about Trident

Anthea Underwood, Godfrey Turner, Gordon Spence and I were appointed to meet Gavin Barwell to express the Meeting's concerns about the replacement of Trident nuclear missiles. We met him on 9 May and had a full discussion.

We asked him what he would write in the 'letter of last resort' that every Prime Minister has to write, with orders to the commander of the Trident submarine if contact with Britain is lost as a result of a nuclear attack. He did not reply directly, but said the purpose of Trident was to deter attack, so he hoped that it would never be used. It was interesting that he said that this was the issue that had brought him into politics, having grown up in the 1980s at the time of the Cruise missile debate. He was convinced that Trident was essential for our national security- the world was increasingly uncertain (he mentioned Ukraine) and we could not predict what threats might arise in the next twenty or thirty years.

We asked how nuclear weapons would protect us against terrorism, and pointed to the dangers of terrorists obtaining nuclear materials. He said he had visited Faslane and assured himself that the base was secure- the Trident option minimised transport of nuclear materials around the country.

We asked what would happen if Scotland voted for independence. He said that there would have to be a negotiation if the Scottish Government wanted Trident removed.

We pointed out the massive cost of Trident replacement - estimated at £100 billion - and said that this was unaffordable at a time when basic services were being cut to reduce the deficit. He said the deficit would be reduced by the time the major cost of Trident was incurred and it would be affordable.

We pointed out that the UK had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, under which the existing nuclear weapons states committed themselves to pursue negotiations in good faith to eliminate nuclear weapons. He said that nuclear weapons could not be 'uninvented'. The

Conservative party favoured 'like-for-like' replacement of Trident missiles, but he hinted he personally might be open to considering a reduction in the number of operational warheads. He denied the Conservatives supported Trident for reasons of national prestige.

We raised the recent Chatham House report, which says that on 13 occasions since 1962 nuclear weapons have nearly been launched, as a result of communications failures, and that this was only averted by individuals in effect disobeying orders. He said that the Government would ensure that a human being always took the decision: we pointed out that the report also mentioned the heavy drinking of at least two Presidents.

We asked why the UK Government was not participating in the international conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, unlike the majority of UN member states. He did not know the answer to this and promised to find out and write to us. **Rhiannon Rees**

Quaker Quest 12 May 2014 held at Friends House

This evening's Quaker Quest was an all-Croydon Meeting event as it was organised by Terry Wilkes and the speakers, on the topic of '**Quakers and Evil**' were Joyce Trotman, Blair Hunwick and George Hosking.

Joyce in her talk was influenced by an article she had read in Quaker Voices' where Stuart Masters observed, "The early Quaker vision was realistic in accepting the active presence of evil in the world. At the same time, however, it was fundamentally optimistic, since it witnessed to an eternal living spirit with the power to overcome the darkness."

She began her talk by giving examples of evil actions from the Bible, and early Quaker experiences because of the evil acts of people who did not agree with them - imprisonment, torture, distraint of goods, whippings, destruction of meeting houses, execution. She finished with examples from history including slavery, the German holocaust, apartheid, and civil wars in our own time.

She went on: 'Masters in his article gives the darkness/evil list: war, torture, poverty, hunger, hatred, injustice, animal cruelty, environmental destruction. I would like to add, murder, rape, betrayal, genocide, persecution of minorities- women, black people, homosexuals, travellers.

With relation to the evils in our time, I would like to draw your attention to the recent exhibition at Friends House, namely The Light That Pushes Me. If there is any doubt that there is evil in the world, the testimonies given by these 25 witnesses is proof positive that it does exist.

What was of interest to me was the fact that they were all victims of the evil acts of others, but four of them were also admitted to doing evil acts or to being tempted to do so. A teacher caned his pupils to make them learn, a young woman wanted to have her stepbrother killed, one man was guilty of domestic violence against the mother of his child, another suffered stomach pains and ulcers, brought on by the bitterness in his heart.

It is for us to discern that they took "heed of the promptings of love and truth" in their hearts, and trusted them "as the leadings of God." They were "pushed" first, by the pure openings of the Light. This was their authority. The advice given in Psalm 34:14, and Romans 12:17 and 12:21. provided scriptural reinforcement.

During the Worship that followed I had this as an Opening. Most weekday mornings I share in the Daily Service broadcast on BBC radio 4. Invariably The Lord's Prayer is said. During the session I found myself quietly repeating "and deliver us from evil." Until Monday evening I would say this as a prayer to protect me from the evil that someone might do to me until I thought again of the four witnesses who did or were tempted to do "evil", and so I amended the phrase to mean "and deliver me both from the temptation to do evil, and from those who would do me evil."

The whole evening's experience was one in which my spirit was fertilised by giving me time to consider a familiar subject in a new way. **Joyce Trotman**

Quaker Prison Chaplain

I can finally report some progress on the Chaplaincy nomination. It has taken three attempts and the best part of a year, but I am now through the Security Clearance process, have had the 'key' talk at the prison and am now cleared to take keys so that I can move around HMP Highdown independently. A bit nerve wracking but I'm gradually getting the hang of all the security technology and went solo yesterday for the first time - it feels like real progress!

I will be doing the Chaplaincy rounds in the Health Care Block on Thursday mornings and Sue,

the Coordinating Chaplain, is arranging for me to meet a colleague of hers at HMP Wandsworth who runs Meditation Groups in prisons. I should be able to learn a great deal from him and then take that back to Highdown where we are hoping to run a more distinctively Quaker 'quiet group' every week.

HMP Downview is still closed, it will eventually reopen as a men's prison, but I have met and am in touch with, the Coordinating Chaplain there and she is keeping me in the loop - it doesn't look as if it's going to be opening until the Autumn.

I am hoping to organise a lunch at The Clink restaurant at Highdown in mid July for anyone who would be interested in coming, so please let me know if you would like to be included

Veronica Double

Easter in Bethlehem

Liam Hilton works for Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) as an ecumenical accompanier serving on the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). He is at present in **Beit Jala** a Palestinian Christian town in the Bethlehem Governorate of the West Bank.. Beit Jala is located 10 km south of Jerusalem on the western side of the Hebron road. In 2007, and has about 11,758 inhabitants About 75% of the population were Christian (mostly Greek Orthodox) and about 25% Muslim
Liam stayed for a short period in our Quaker flat while he applied to undertake this service, and went for interviews at Friends House.

The following is the first of his newsletters. More information about EA's can be found on the website <http://eappi.org/resources/eappi-publications.html>

As the fifty-second EAPPI team in Bethlehem, we found our first week in placement coincided with Easter, a momentous occasion for Christians around the world but especially so for those living in the Holy Land.

We spoke with Antoinette Knezevich on Thursday 17th, the day before Good Friday, and discovered she was still waiting for her permit to be able to travel to Jerusalem for Easter celebrations. Antoinette used to teach at Schmitt College just outside the Old City in East Jerusalem but, when the Separation Barrier was built by the Israelis, she was no longer permitted to drive to work and is not physically able to walk the distances required to pass through Checkpoint 300 – which cuts Bethlehem off from Jerusalem. Now she lives with her brother and his family, close to Ayda refugee camp, with the Separation Barrier and its cameras looking into their kitchen.

Antoinette described how, before the permit system, she used to attend St. George's Cathedral, the Anglican church in Jerusalem, and tended to the garden there: "My husband and I were members of the church...my husband had a British passport because his father was the first British Consul to Gaza during the British Mandate for Palestine. But since the building of the Wall I cannot anymore go to Jerusalem and to the church there." If you have a Palestinian ID, Israel requires you have a permit even if you have an international passport.

Antoinette explained the process of applying for permits to worship: "We are catholic and the priest took all the names and gave them to the Israelis and some got permits and some not. The husband might but not the wife . Since Jesus was here, we have been here. Do you need permission to visit the Church by your government? " Individuals cannot apply for worship permits and are "awarded" permits much akin to a lottery, yet preventing people access to worship is in contravention of International Humanitarian Law. Her brother and his wife succeeded but Antoinette did not. The Catholic Church in Bethlehem requested 5000 permits for the Easter period and received just 700 from the Israeli District Coordination Office,.

Antoinette told of how Muslims and Christians live peacefully with each other, with Muslim families even sharing Santa gifts at Christmas and coloured eggs at Easter: "They respect us and we respect them. Near my home are Muslim neighbours and we have no problems. The only problem is the occupation". Standing on her balcony, looking out towards the stark grey wall with its imposing watching presence; Antoinette said: "When they built the wall, it was like they built it on my heart".

We had worked at Checkpoint 300 on the morning of Holy Saturday, greeting and wishing a "Happy Easter" to those passing through. Later in the afternoon, we saw many of the same people in Beit Jala for the parade to welcome the miraculous light from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

When we asked why they were in Beit Jala and not the Old City, we were told that the Israeli administration had put the Christian Quarter on lockdown so, despite being some of the lucky few to receive a permit, they were still not allowed to enter the holy sites and engage in worship. One man said: "Only here do we have freedom to worship".

Israel has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, which provides that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." Movement restrictions that impede access to religious institutions -and are not necessary for the maintenance of public order - infringe on the rights of the Palestinian population to freedom of religion and worship, according to article 46 of the Hague Regulations, article 58 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, article 75 of the First Additional Protocol (IAP). (McGivern 2011:69)

Liam Hilton

Dublin Quaker Meeting

At our last business meeting it was suggested that we make the effort to go to other Quaker Meetings, and I thought that, with holidays coming up, I would ask readers to write a brief article about a meeting they attended while on holiday. The following is to set the ball rolling.

There are four Quaker meetings in Dublin, and we attended the one in the centre of the city, in Temple Bar. It is held on the first floor of a business building, and has a library, a refreshment area, toilets, and the meeting room. This is a long rectangular room with high windows, old wooden benches – very uncomfortable – around the sides of the room and across the middle, and a table in the centre which held a vase of flowers, a bible, and a copy of Quaker Life and Practice, a Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland.

The Meeting began at 11am and we walked from our hotel to the great chimings of the bells of Christchurch Cathedral, and throughout the hour the quarter hours struck softly from without, while within a clock ticked loudly and rapidly, which I found difficult to shut out..

Soon after Meeting began, we were told of a Friend who was about to go into a hospice, and we were asked to hold her in the Light. After a long period of silent worship, ministry focused on the image of Light and that we are channels rather than agents of the Light. Just before the close, a man spoke about how, in dealing with hurt and pain, he tries to stand away from it and be still and nourished by the silence.

Then we had the notices, during which visitors were asked to introduce themselves. Apart from us there was a young man from Philadelphia Meeting. Next we had two teenage boys telling us about their time working in an Oxfam shop as part of their Faith in Action course. They told us about Oxfam and its Quaker connection, how the shop worked, and appealed for us to support the charity even though there are so many others striving for our attention.

When we went for coffee there were copies of The Friend, Quaker Voices and so on, but also The Friendly Word, Ireland's Quaker journal. Many of the issues that concern us feature there, including an article about the plight of Christian Palestinians in Hebron. I particularly liked 'Window on the Past: A letter, headlined Cork Friends accused of Tumultuous and Riotous Assembly, addressed to the Earl of Orrery, Lord President of Munster, and signed W.Penn.

There were some thirty Friends present, mostly young to middle aged and about two thirds men. When I remarked on this I was told it was because it was an inner city Meeting, and that families usually went to the other, suburban meetings.

Gillian and Godfrey Turner

From the Leavers' new Director

Adam Clarke writes: I am writing to introduce myself as the new Director of the Leavers, to let you know about a job vacancy and to tell you about our Annual General Meeting.

We are currently recruiting for a new Programme Leader (Full time). We are seeking to appoint a dynamic and enthusiastic Programme Leader to create and deliver arts projects, events and workshops for the Quaker community and beyond. The position is based at our office in Selly Oak, Birmingham. More information can be found at www.artsjobs.org.uk

Our AGM takes place at Selly Oak meeting house, Birmingham, on 28 June from 2 to 4 pm, preceded by a picnic. I hope I'll have the opportunity to introduce myself in person then!

I am thrilled to have joined the Leaveners. I was previously managing Director of Cheltenham Film Festival, and have considerable experience of event management and working within the performing arts. I very much look forward to working with you and your Meeting during future Leaveners projects.

Since starting work for the Leaveners I have become keenly aware of the enormous amount of support and good will amongst Friends, not least in Birmingham close to our office. I am looking forward to getting to know some of you as time goes by. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you like more information.

Best wishes, Adam Clarke / Director The Leaveners Ground Floor 1 The Lodge 1046 Bristol Road Birmingham B29 6LJ Tel: 0121 414 0099 Fax: 0121 414 0090

Food banks – day seminar

London Churches Social Action, as part of its theological enquiry into food banks will be holding an extended day-seminar in partnership with the Contextual Theology Centre at St Katherine's Foundation (2 Butcher Row, London, E14 8DS) from 10am-3pm on Monday 9th June.

You are welcome to come from 10am-1.15pm (lunch provided) or for both morning and afternoon sessions. The seminar will explore three themes which the core research team have developed through attending to the "operant voice" of those engaged in running or volunteering at a number of church-led food banks across London. We will be bringing this operant voice into conversation with the "espoused voice" (what food banks proclaim to be about officially), the "normative voice" (of the scriptural and theological traditions of the churches) and the "normative voice" (what is emerging from academic theology and other disciplines) in relation to food banks. We are asking all participants to bring with them a passage of scripture which they relate to food banks.

Throughout the day we will be having times of prayer and silence as we seek to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches. We are asking all participants to bring with them a passage of scripture which they relate to food banks. The afternoon (1.15pm-3pm) will focus on drafting some learning to feed into the London Churches' "common voice" on food banks.

There are still some places available so please let me know asap if you would like to join us. Canon Steven Saxby, Executive Officer, London Churches Social Action, Room 309, Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, SW1H 9NH Tel: 020 7654 3857 Text: 078 5555 1050. E-mail: londonchurches@btinternet.com

Extract from a book review...

I was struck by these paragraphs in a review by Rowan Williams, published in The New Statesman, of Mammon's Kingdom: an Essay on Britain, Now by David Marquand:-

Putting us back into the natural order as a participant not a proprietor is an essential move in breaking away from what currently enslaves us. Hence Marquand's interest in the resources of religious language: he is crystal-clear that we cannot write off religious traditions because they have some toxic manifestations; but this makes it all the more important to grasp what matters most in them, which is the way in which they affirm simultaneously a human dignity that is not dependent on status or productivity or political convenience and a human finitude that demands to be taken seriously. We are not our own creators; we are not magically protected from what happens to the material world we live in. We are more dependent than we might like to be. And far from this pushing us towards passivity, it intensifies the weight of taking responsibility for each other.

This is a good deal more than just a general appeal to "religious values" as part of our social capital (lots of goodwill to make volunteer organisations work, and so on). Marquand, who has no confessional axe to grind, has actually done some of the necessary reflection on religious doctrine that so many commentators find too taxing. Readers will doubtless disagree about whether these themes outweigh what they see as the less constructive elements in communities of faith. But at least there is the material here for informed argument.

DP

Sponsored run for leukaemia research

Friends may remember that my grandson Alex Plunkett was diagnosed with Childhood leukaemia two years ago and has been undergoing regular treatment, including chemotherapy, ever since. It has been going well and he has been given an end-of-treatment date of 17 May 2015. By a happy coincidence my daughter-in-law Lisa Kennedy has recently taken up a post with the charity Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research and is going to do a sponsored run in September to raise money for Alex and the LLR. If you would like to sponsor her, please go to <https://leukaemialymphomaresearch.org.uk/people/lisa-kennedy/run-beat-2014>.

David Parlett

June diary

*Events at Croydon meeting house unless otherwise stated
For details of items marked * see <http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/events>*

Sunday 8 – Local Business Meeting

Tuesday 10 – Discussion on issues arising at Yearly Meeting Gathering. Refreshments at 6.30
Discussion at 7.30

Saturday 21 and 28 – Croydon Heritage Festival Fortnight, ASH Open day, also

*Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.
Please join us for cereal, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15*

Happy Birthdays in June

To those adults who have birthdays in June, we celebrate them all with Quaker Tottenham cake on the first Sunday. **Olivia Edgson, who was 7 on the 31 May**, was present on 1 June and wished a Happy Birthday after meeting.

Collections in May

(Figures in brackets by standing order, awaiting verification)

4 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad £25.00 (£87)
11 Quaker UN Office Geneva £105.00
18 South London Area Meeting £25 (£69)
25 Circles South-east £93.00

Donation Table

April and May: Syrian Refugees in Lebanon / Save the Children £85

June and July: Friends Family Group

A reminder that our collection for Quaker Work at Home and Abroad includes a contribution to the Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme. Area Meeting supports work done on our buildings, such as painting the meeting house doors and windows.

Collections for Local Business Meeting helps pay for the new fridge which was urgently needed when the old one broke down for good in May.

The deadline for the July edition is Sunday 29 June 2014

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