

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

## June 2017

Dear Friends - Summer time reading, and our newsletter is full of interest, as usual!

*Gillian Turner*

### Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things -  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow:  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings  
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow and plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him

*Gerald Manley Hopkins*

### News of Friends

Our Friend **Anthea Underwood** died on 7 May 2017, and her funeral was held at Croydon Crematorium after the manner of Friends, on 2 June.

It was good to see Kitty McVey, John and Tima Beckett and Wilf Hayler again. We welcomed Anthea's son Ross and daughter Mary along with Nirvana, Ben and other members of the family. Anthea had been a great joiner, and representatives of a number of groups she had been part of, also joined us for refreshments at the meeting house.

### Much more than the absence of war

In a world of twenty-four hour news, social media feeds and concepts such as “fake news” and “post-truth” swirling around in the ether, it becomes very easy to pass judgement on others and see all that is regrettable embodied within them. Thomas Merton, the late Trappist monk, mystic and theologian took another view:

“Instead of hating the people you think are war-makers, hate the appetites and disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed but hate these things in yourself, not in another.” (*New Seeds of Contemplation*).

Merton's mother was a Quaker and his words resonate with our own Advices and Queries 31, “Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war”. Paying careful attention to our own frailties and being more conscious of how we impact upon others are tasks enough for the average person and we need not spend time focusing upon the perceived wrongs of others.

Promotion of peace, however, as the American politician Dennis Kucinich wrote, is so much more than the mere absence of war or dissent. It is, “the active presence of a capacity for love, compassion and reciprocity”.

In Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP) 10.18, we are often reminded that our opportunities for demonstrating love and peace may be present in the seemingly simple, humble tasks of everyday life, “to comfort one person in sorrow, to do one's work as efficiently as possible, to listen with understanding, to be gentle with the old and courteous to the young”. We may, of course, be called to greater tasks but should wait in readiness not “worried or anxious or envious”.

One Friend who did engender peace and reconciliation in both small and large enterprises was Elizabeth Fry, who devoted herself to work for prison reform in a spirit of love and hope. Working with the poor and abandoned, she always “put the most favourable construction possible ...upon every transaction”. She invariably made “some point of light and did not despair for others”. (QFP 23.99).

*Barbara Earl*

## The adventure of other people's creativity

Lists of things-to-do are very useful. They structure the day ahead; after all, they show clearly what must be done. In essence, if the truth is told, the purpose and the pattern of the day – every day – can be pre-determined. With this kind of mind-set, finding yourself on a cruise isn't really that much of a challenge. Meals are at specific times. There is a daily newsletter that sets out on board events and most importantly, makes it clear when the ship will sail – so get back in time and don't be late!

Then, totally unexpectedly, this well-ordered existence receives a shock. We're doing the tourist sightseeing thing in Barcelona. (Of course, we have a list of must-sees). As the taxi turns a corner, I hear myself gasp. It's the Basilica of the Sagrada Familia. How many times have we all seen photographs of the bell towers? But I'm really seeing it, really engaged in a way that the guidebook has not prepared for me for. There's an urgent need to get out of the taxi and to walk round the square to see the front of the building through the trees. Then walking round the whole building itself in a futile attempt to take in every detail. Yes, those are stone snails climbing the walls! There are musician angels, birds that seem to fly out of the stone, Roman soldiers that look like something out of 'Star Wars', Sanctus written in the walls....And those are just a few examples of the craziness! It is complex; it is strange; but most of all, it works.

Antoni Gaudi took over as the architect of the Basilica in 1884. Experts offer an explanation of his approach: "His own magnificent ability for invention....must have pushed towards that Divinity with which he felt connected to the innermost depths of his whole being". We are told that this iconic building in the heart of Catalonia is architecturally subversive and inventive but also observant of traditions. Specifically, Gaudi "constructs a 'cosmic image', or, in other words, a symbolic 'model' of universal totality." He was influenced by ancient Celtic culture and, nearer our own times, among others, by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and by the Glasgow School of architects and decorators. That's an academic explanation, academic talk. Standing in front of the building, it is possible just to be still and say: wow!

Things are not going to plan. We are already behind schedule. We stay a long time in the basilica's square. We all are sharing our amazement. We sit in a café and talk. We can see that the building is still under construction. Cranes stand next to the towers and workmen are hundreds of feet above our heads. Somehow this activity emphasises that the building is alive, not a sterile, dead monument on the tourist list (though we tourists are there in our hundreds, perhaps thousands).

My wristband from Friends House says 'Live adventurously'. I'm new to Quaker-speak, but I know where the phrase comes from but, as much as I'd like to, I'm not quite sure what I should be doing to act it out. Then occasionally, like this recent morning in Barcelona, I find myself engaging with something with an intensity that I didn't expect, certainly didn't plan. It's hardly walking across the Arctic with huskies or climbing the Himalayas. But I'm trying to do what I can to be adventurous – perhaps by seeking out others who are living or have lived with verve and imagination – in an attempt to stop my life from becoming all too orderly, rational, predictable and dull. So, yes indeed, there is the possibility of real excitement in life by enjoying, delighting in, exploring the creativity of others. It's certainly worth a try.

Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, Pere Vivas, Richard Pla (2017) Gaudi, Triangle Books  
The Lonely Planet Guide 7th edition (2009) Spain **Helen Johnson**

## Thoughts on community grieving

The dreadful events in Manchester resonated around the world and linked us all to the grief and suffering of the community there. Godfrey and I were in Ireland, staying in a holiday centre. We grieved with Manchester at a distance as we read the papers and watched television, filled with horror and pity, and admiration for the city's response. Other events where we were physically present, reminded us of the strength that comes from being part of the grieving community.

In 1998, on another holiday, we drove from Dublin to Westport in county Mayo. As we travelled we heard of the bombing in Omagh, a town over the border not many miles distance, news which filled us with horror and anguish, and when we arrived at our hotel there was a tangible pall over everyone there. People spoke in hushed voices and shared the latest news, but as the days dragged by feelings changed to anger. Fury at the perpetrators and the lack of arrests was expressed throughout Ireland. In an island divided by politics and religion, all the churches,

Catholic and Protestant, organised services of remembrance and we went to the one at the Knock Shrine, a place of Catholic pilgrimage. The first hymn was Whittier's *Dear Lord and father of mankind*, the Quaker hymn extolling peace, and there was comfort with being part of the community which so longed for the end of bloodshed.

In 2005 we were working in Lebanon, in a school founded by a British Quaker and under the wing of Middle East section at Friends House. It was not long after the end of the civil war, and the religious divisions in the country were evident. Staff and students were suffering from stress, areas around the school hadn't been cleared of landmines, and the memories of bloodshed and violence were vivid. The school was in one of the Christian villages at the top of a mountain range overlooking Beirut and served both the Christian and Muslim communities.

On February 14 we heard a huge explosion below us in Beirut and saw a dense plume of black smoke from a massive bomb planted to blow up a car, which was a common method of eliminating politicians and journalists. It was the assassination of ex-prime minister, Rafiq Hariri. Fear was the overwhelming emotion felt by us all. Was the country returning to the terrible times of the civil war? Who was responsible? Travelling to school and work was dangerous and memories of past bloodshed returned.

Six days of mourning followed, and during that time the country steadied itself to carry on and outface the violence. On the day of Hariri's funeral it seemed that the entire population travelled to Beirut and, remarkably, all the different faith groups came together in a simple show of unity Beirut is a city of mosques and Christian churches. Each has bells and loudspeakers, but all tolled in unison as the funeral cortege proceeded to the Great Mosque, where every faith group was represented.

In 2004 we were in Sri Lanka, visiting the Buddhist sites. On Boxing Day morning the tsunami struck, and when we left to go to our next destination, our driver told us about what had happened. All day as we travelled he told us of the increasing death toll, stopping at the little roadside shacks that drivers use, for glasses of tea and the company of small groups of local people sharing news and finding strength in being together.

Every day, we drove through the villages and little towns, now transformed with the white flags of mourning, with the UNESCO lorries going from place to place collecting donations of rice and vegetables from people already in poverty, before foreign aid arrived. Cut off from the media, we felt part of the grieving community. Here too, in a country divided by religion and politics, people supported each other. In the Buddhist community which we were temporarily part of, there was little anger or fear, but acceptance of the power of nature and the reality of death.

*Gillian Turner*

### Breath and a Light Bulb: Part two: Light Bulb

When your breathing is improved, every aspect of your life benefits: health, fitness, relaxation, sleep, reduced stress, calmness and better relationships, intuition – you name it, it benefits from better breathing.

The mind and the breath are so closely linked that when you describe one, you are also describing the other: Silent breath, silent mind; deep breath, deep relaxation; deep thought, deep breath; agitated breath, agitated mind; long breath, long relaxed muscles; and more.

Correcting bad habit of breathing takes a lot of time and mindfulness. This time is well spent as it reduces wasted time in other aspects of your life, saving far more time than you spend on breath improvement. I am saddened and concerned when I hear some Friends in Meeting for Worship huffing, panting and wheezing. Miraculously the Spirit may still come through, but why make it so difficult for the Spirit to be experienced?

#### **In my experience poor breathing can be corrected**

In my experience poor breathing can be corrected and I will be happy to commit time to helping members of this Quaker Meeting who are themselves prepared to commit time to attend sessions on breath improvement once a week before or after our Sunday Meeting for Worship, and time to practice during the week. What could be more worthwhile?

I did make this offer a few years ago, but attendance was sporadic and was not sustained.

The difficulty is as set out in the old joke:

Q "How many psychotherapists does it take to change a light bulb?"

A "Just one, but it really has to want to change!". How about you, do you want to change for a better life?

*Gordon Spence*

## Phoney talk

I often hear Quakers say they are not readers. "I need to have things explained to me in real words from the lips of real people, not have to read them up in some dreary book" seems to be a frequent refrain, and I do my best to have sympathy with it.

Sympathy, yes; but not empathy. I come from the other end of the spectrum. I can't remember a time when I couldn't read and didn't spend most of my leisure hours cultivating this peculiar habit. By the time I was nine I'd read pretty well all 7382 pages of the Children's Encyclopædia and was a regularly appointed Bible-reader at services held in the church associated with the C-of-E primary school I went to. I'd started using the local library before then, and always had a preference for the non-fiction section (I called it the "fact" section) of its junior department. Reading is what ultimately brought me to and into the Religious Society of Friends.

You might think I'm boasting. Please don't. The preamble above is intended to act not as a claim to fame but rather as an excuse for the converse communication problem that I have, and of which I've never heard anyone else say they suffer from – that is, an inherent difficulty with the spoken word. This has been with me as long as I can remember - certainly many years before I needed two hearing aids, so it has nothing to do with my audiosclerosis.

If I want to learn how to do something I need to read it. The spoken word just seems to go in one ear and out of the other. That's why I find it so frustrating when, for example, I go online to learn how to use a piece of electronic equipment, and instead of written text find myself confronted with an irritating talking head. I never even touch a piece of equipment until I've read the accompanying user manual. Nor will I play a new game till I've read and grasped the rules.

I never bother to turn on my computer's speakers, except when absolutely necessary. When watching a foreign-language film, I'm much happier with subtitles, which I read in the split second before the actor's mouth opens. If the speech is dubbed, I have to switch off, as dubbing just interferes with my lip-reading. A related peculiarity is that when I'm watching a film or TV programme with background music I often find myself listening to the music and ignoring the dialogue. In similar vein, I find opera meaningless but ballet more eloquent than words.

Finally, it will by now come as no surprise to admit that I've always had an aversion to telephones. If I have difficulty following instructions and trains of thought in face-to-face situations it's positively redoubled when it comes to phone conversations. I bless the day that email was invented – it's the only way I can communicate effectively at a distance.

So forgive me if I sound distant or abrupt on the phone. It's because I'm that rarely mentioned polar opposite of a non-reader: an inveterate non-listener. **David Parlett**

## New books for the library

### **From Friends' House:**

*Living our Beliefs*: an Exploration of the faith and practice of Quakers by Graham Ralph (aimed at attenders)

*Until we are free*: my fight for human rights in Iran by Shirin Ebadi, a human rights lawyer and activist

*Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster

*A little book of unknowing* by Jennifer Kavanagh

### **From Amazon:**

*Hanging by a Thread*, by Sam Wells, vicar of St Martin in the Fields

*Not in God's Name*, by Jonathan Sachs

*The Art of Meditation* and *Practising the Present*, both by Joel Goldsmith

### **From FeedaRead:**

*Discernment and inner knowing*, as recommended

**Kay Papadopoulos, Librarian**

## Room To Let

Two double rooms in Melfort Road, Thornton Heath, to let. £550 pcm all bills included. Contact Sophie at [sophiejcthompson@gmail.com](mailto:sophiejcthompson@gmail.com)

## Our June Fourth Sunday event

### Arias and Graces

Four singers and a pianist will give a recital of operatic and light music on 25 June in aid of Roko Academy in central Kenya. This is a primary school for orphaned and disadvantaged children and also works with the local community on a variety of projects. It will follow our usual shared lunch and begin at 2pm.

### Diary dates

**Friday 9 and 16 June: Listening with the heart, St Ethelburga's** 9.30 - 16:30 St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. This two-day Compassionate Listening workshop offers a road-map, skill-set and practice to empower individuals and communities to harness collective wisdom and build powerful cultures of peace. It provides a tool-kit - a package of communication skills and a process - which enables people to listen deeply and in a way which can be very healing for the speaker. Compassionate Listening was developed by Gene Knudsen Hoffman, Quaker and International Peacemaker. She developed this tool after realising that all parties in a conflict are wounded and need to be heard. Cost: £100

**Saturday 10 June: Exploding Colours** For voices and orchestra: 19:30 to 21:30 at St Pancras Church in Euston. Neoclassical French music by Stravinsky, Ravel and Poulenc, performed by Eclectic Voices.

**Thursday 15 June: Jonah and the Politics of Enemy Love** 19.00 to 21.00 at Kingston mh. David Benjamin Blower performs his folk musical The Book of Jonah, followed by a guided discussion about the challenges of enemy-love in today's divided world. There is an Eventbrite link but it doesn't work.

**Saturday 17 June: Board Games Afternoon** 17:30 to 20:30 at Finchley mh. You are invited to attend FREE Board Games at Finchley Quaker Meeting House, 58 Alexandra Grove N12 8HG. Also 15 July. 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.

### **Saturday 24 June: Adult School Hall Open Day as part of Croydon Heritage Festival Week**

**Saturday 8 July: London QLGF meeting** The next meeting of the London QLGF will be on Saturday 13th May at 5.30pm in the Library at Westminster Meeting House. This is a slightly later start time than usual, and we have the opportunity to extend the meeting later than usual too, as attendees see fit at the time. The discussion this month will be in 2 parts: London Pride is on Saturday 8th July - come and sign up for your armband to walk as a Quaker (while stocks last!), and/or volunteer to help with the tea and coffee on the afternoon of the march (from 3.30pm) and revive tired walkers and watchers who seek us out In light of the approach of Pride, a discussion on QF&P 10.19. Is there a 'best of' understanding of what community is or should be? The launch text for this part of the discussion is given below. How can we respond to this, and any other, challenge of belonging to a community? All are welcome - and we look forward to seeing you there!

**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.

## London Quakers – June 2017

### *1 Eldership and Oversight - Woodbrooke on the Road at Friends House*

Learn more - polish your skills - We're running a W-o-t-R training day on Eldership and Oversight at Friends House on 17 June. Everybody welcome - come and find out what elders and overseers do, or if already in post, come and share your experiences and deepen your understanding.

### *2 The Bundle by Journeymen Theatre*

- - at Kingston Quaker Centre on 2nd June at 1900 for 1930.

- - at Wanstead Meeting on 18th June at 13:30 Looking forward to Refugee week 2017.

### **3 Looking forward to Refugee Week 2017 19th - 25th June**

<b>Date and time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Monday 19 June, 11am – 3pm	<b>Sanctuary through history: Library open day</b>	Library
Monday 19 June, 6.30pm	<b>Sanctuary in the media</b>	Bookshop
Tuesday 20 June, 12.30pm	<b>World Refugee Day, Meeting for Worship (semi-programmed)</b>	Worship space
Tuesday 20 June, 6.30pm	<b>Sanctuary in writing</b>	Bookshop
Wednesday 21 June, evening, 6.30pm	<b>Sanctuary in the arts</b>	Bookshop
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> June, 6.30pm	<b>Sanctuary in fiction</b>	Bookshop
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> June, 11am-5pm	<b>Sanctuary Sunday at Friends House</b> Meeting for Worship (11am – 12 noon) Challenging Immigration Detention (1pm-3pm) RefuTEA (3pm-5pm).	George Fox Room and Courtyard

### **4 Banking Reform still on the agenda and still needed.**

We held a successful day conference last October” “**Break up the Banks - we need a Banking Revolution**”. Now North London AM has minuted its support for an All Party Parliamentary Group for Banking Reform. If you want to work with us on this, contact **Sue Newsom** of Winchmore Hill Local Meeting.

**Complaints, announcements, news etc to [clerkLondonquakers@gmail.com](mailto:clerkLondonquakers@gmail.com)**

### **Collected in May**

May 7 Christian Aid - £112

14 Médecins Sans Frontières - £105

21 OPEN (Quaker Social Action) - £43

28 Friends World Committee for Consultation - £47

**Collecting in June:** 4 Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs,  
11 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 18 OPEN 25 Brummana High School

**The deadline for the July edition is Sunday 25 June 2017**

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

### **E&OE**

Apologies for any errors, omissions, typos etc - the editors have both been exceptionally busy this past week and have had to produce the Newsletter in a rush.