

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

June 2018

**Dear Friends** - This month's newsletter is slightly different from our usual mixture of articles and reports as it consists of reports interspersed with poems and extracts. As usual it reflects the busy life of Croydon Meeting.  
*Gillian Turner and David Parlett*

## Morning prayer C21

*The person you are calling knows you are waiting  
O Lord, who hast safely brought us  
to the beginning of this day,  
Your call is important to us  
Defend us in the same with thy mighty power  
Do not hang up, caller  
And grant that this day we may fall  
into no sin, neither run  
into any kind of danger,  
We are trying to connect you  
but that all our doings may be  
ordered by thy governance  
to do always that is righteous in thy sight  
The person you are calling knows you are waiting*

Gillian writes: *I picked up RV Bailey's book of verse A Scrappy Little Harvest at Yearly Meeting in May and was intrigued by this poem in particular. I would be glad to know how you responded to it.*

## Cecily Taylor

Our beloved Friend Cecily Tayler died on 10 May. Her funeral was held after the manner of Friends on the 24th, followed by a memorial meeting. Along with members of her family we also welcomed Tima and John Beckett, and Meg Barnes and Susan Northrop from Epsom Meeting. We were sorry not to see Wilf Hayler, who was unable to make the journey, and we had a message from Dave Perry, who has recently lost a dear friend. Cecily's grandson read from a poetry book about cats which she had given him, her daughter-in-law read her own poem in memory of her mother-in-law, and son Paul read the poem below. Woodie sent us a card thanking us for hosting the refreshments.

## Spirit of Affirmation

I had walked through a wild meadow, buttercups gold-dusting my shoes, and reached the mown slopes of a park stretching down to a lake. As I neared the water I could see a family of ducklings with their attentive mother – half a dozen balls of fluff-feathers surprised at the new wet world they were able to move across, so light that gravity was the last thing on their minds. I sat on a nearby bench while spring sunshine lit the scene, somehow especially golden as only light on brand new leaves can be before summer paints them a darker green.

It was an oasis of a day within a chunk of years in which tranquillity was an extremely rare commodity. But the park with the ducklings was brimming over with it, and this incredible peace wrapped me round, permeating my being so that nothing else mattered, because I too had become part of it. There was a feeling of being linked with something vaster, for its very essence seemed to fill everything.

My concept of time – past, present and future – was like an enormously long narrow carpet. Looking back I couldn't see where it began; there was the present piece I was standing on, and all of the future was already there too, but rolled up in front of me – ready to unwind slowly.

If the indefinable essence of the experience was what might be called God's presence, to me at that moment it seemed like the atmosphere – a multi-dimensional all-pervading Spirit. The overwhelming understanding within me was that if I stopped struggling in my own strength and

plugged into its goodness and love in an act of trust, then I truly needn't worry about anything ever again – just like those ducklings, never concerned that the water might not support them.

After a long while I got out a notebook, as poets are inclined to do where other people reach for cameras, and started to jot down words to try and encapsulate my impression: an impossible task of course because it belonged to a wordless dimension.

By the time I left the park a kind of poem had evolved, and this is probably as near as I am ever likely to get in defining what I called this *Spirit of Affirmation*:

*I am the way that stretches out before –  
I am the journey you are on,  
I am the present moment that you tread –  
I am the next place that you stand upon.*

*I am the air you breathe –  
I am of every part and of the whole,  
I am the love you cannot fall beyond –  
I am the inner silence of your soul.*

*I am the question that you ask –  
I am the answer that you crave,  
I am the reality of truth,  
I am the ever-living thread that leaps the grave.*

*I am all time in now,  
I am this moment to begin,  
I am the one that you have always known;  
I am the peace that you may dwell within.*

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### Quaker Life Representative Council 27-29 April 2018

The council was held at Woodbrooke and nearly hundred representatives attended. The weather was disappointingly dull but the event and the company was certainly lively. Each representative was given a welcome pack that seemed to contain every leaflet that the QLRC have ever published and covering most aspects of life in our communities! For example: A Quaker wedding, maintaining safe communities, mental health in our meetings, resources and support for children and young people's work, and our faith in the future. The focus was, in the words of Charles Braithwaite, on 'the changing needs of the time'.

The strategy was to hold a series of workshops together with plenty of time for reflection and discussion. There were eight workshops (and attendance at two was possible): **1.** Discovering being Friends together: tools for Quaker learning, run by Mark Wuss, Woodbrooke's Nurturing Friends and Meetings Tutor **2.** Mental health – for ourselves, our Meetings and across Quakers, run by Alison Mitchell, Mental Health Development Officer, employed by the Retreat Benevolent Fund; **3.** Nourishing ourselves: nurturing our meetings, run by Alistair Fuller, Head of Ministry and Outreach; **4.** Resources for events and exhibitions in our meetings, run by Libby Adams, head of Library and Archives; **5.** Room for more, about outreach, run by Gill Sewell, Ministry and Outreach Officer; **6.** Sharing Quaker community, about the Quaker communications, run by Elizabeth Payne, the BYM Communications Co-ordinator; **7.** Simpler meetings, about the three year project, attempting to rationalise the Society's administration, run by Helen Drewery, Head of Witness and Worship, and **8.** "What do we do NOW?", how to help meetings in difficulty, run by Pip Harris and Wendy Hampton, two workers within the 'Vibrancy in Meetings' Pilot Programme. It was clear, even from just reading the programme that there is a lot going on, many toolkits for change, both big and small. (I attended the sessions run by Helen Drewery and Gill Sewell and found them interesting and helpful).

One message seemed to emerge from the sessions that I attended (those run by Helen Drewery and Gill Sewell) and from the discussions in the home groups that reflected on what had happened during the workshops and through each whole day was the need to streamline our way

of doing things. This is much needed in a world where there is less time available as people become busier and busier in all aspects of their lives.

On Saturday evening, there several options on offer: a bonfire in the garden, homemade music and poetry, the use of the quiet room, and a showing of the Martin Sheen film *The Way*, about a pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago.

The message of the Conference seemed clear (and supported by the various workshops):

- that major changes in the ways that the RSOF organises and manages its affairs and business should be considered. For example, can small meetings function properly when the number of formal roles exceeds the actual membership and where, sometimes, it is necessary for members to carry out multiple roles? Should the Area Meeting become the shared place for worship (perhaps effectively replacing the local meeting as 'home' for members and attenders)?
- In the face of the realities brought about by declining and ageing memberships, meetings themselves are finding new ways to do things. Should these changes be formalised and encouraged across the Society as a whole?

**Helen Johnson**

### Muse frustrated

*A poem trembles on my lips;  
It vanishes in air  
Because of dirty dishes  
And dust upon the stair.*

*A painting blossoms in my eyes;  
It mists and fades away  
Because the beds are rumpled  
And it is washing day.*

*A sculpture forms within my hands;  
it falls away and goes  
To where my other vision lie  
Beneath unmended clothes.*

*Break, break my bonds. Unloose me  
From guilt of undone chores  
And I will be creative  
Upon unpolished floors.*

**Bridget Hodgkin**

### Junior Yearly Meeting 2018

#### *Friday 4 May*

It all started when I arrived at Friends Meeting House in Euston. We had a short meeting for worship and then we set off by coach to Felden Lodge. After dinner, we had an introduction and a welcome. Then we had base groups which was great fun as the base group leader had a packet of starbursts. Later was epilogue; I enjoyed this because when we went in, an adult friend gave us all a square of Cadburys chocolate. After that, I went to bed, the Quaker I was sharing a bedroom with liked to stay up late and so, we were the last ones to go to sleep by about an hour.

#### *Saturday*

The next morning, we had meeting for worship, then it was time for a base group challenge; which was pretty fun as we were trying to move smarties only using eco-friendly straws. After that, we started to learn about Quaker history. Then we looked at the matter of should we revise *Quaker faith and practice*. Later, we made the journey to Friends House in Euston. After we got there, we had meeting for worship followed by games which in turn was followed by a business meeting. Then we had the Swarthmore lecture which was presented by Chris Alton. Afterwards, we headed back to Felden Lodge; when we got back, it was time for epilogue then bed.

#### *Sunday*

The next morning, we continued to discuss *Quaker faith and practice*; we came to the conclusion that it was time to rewrite the Big Red Book because it included a lot of words that the younger

generation did not understand. Later, we played capture the flag and after that, Chris Alton came to Felden Lodge and talked to us a little bit more about his life story (which was quite interesting). After dinner, we had a Quaker related quiz (I knew the answers to about three out of fifty of them – shockingly bad and embarrassing, I know! I think I need to learn a bit more Quaker history). Later, we had epilogue around the campfire which was nice, but for some reason, the flame began to turn green (and I have no idea why). Then it was time for bed.

*Monday*

The next morning was the final morning which was rather sad because I had enjoyed my stay so much. After breakfast, we packed our stuff and got on a coach back to Euston and Friends House. We had a short business meeting before we were dismissed.

Overall, I really enjoyed my time at the Junior Yearly Meeting Gathering and can't wait to go back next year. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend. It was one of the best Quaker weekends I have ever had.

**Joshua Edgson**

### Yearly meeting 2018

With Britain Yearly Meeting being held in London again we were really glad to have the opportunity to attend this year. It was our third time, the last being in 2016 and Albie in particular had enjoyed going and stayed for a day longer than planned.

This time Jacob and Albie were in the 'Spiritual Adventurers' 9-11 age group which felt a positive step-up given they are now so much more grown-up than last time.

They both found it a positive experience, and especially liked having a journal to write or draw in and quiet worship with other children, although the trip to the park was curtailed due to the very hot weather. The boys also enjoyed playing outside in the Friends House garden and joining in with other children, and Laura and I enjoyed some occasional time out and chatting to Friends. We liked Albie and Jacob joining us for the all-age worship on Sunday morning - one moment when Yearly Meeting did feel really inclusive.

Jacob and Albie's group considered Yearly Meeting's main agenda item of whether to revise *Quaker Faith and Practice*, and it was clear that if it is to remain relevant to children of their age group it will need to look to the future.

**Andy French**

*We are delighted to hear that Andy is starting a new job as a Committee Specialist at the House of Commons, initially working on the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee. The role involves scoping inquiries, planning who the committee will hear evidence from or where it will visit, briefing Committee members and drafting inquiry reports.*

### Managing our Meeting Houses

I attended the course Managing Our Meeting Houses at Woodbrooke from Friday 11 May to the 13th. The course was facilitated by Sam McNair and Oliver Waterhouse.

The first meeting on 11 May 2018 pointed out the Quaker values manifest in the running of the Quaker Meeting Houses. The purpose is to provide safe, welcoming and well-maintained spaces for Quaker Meetings, activities and community sharing.

One required knowledge common to all participants is Health and Safety. A brief presentation was given by Darrell Farnsworth, the Head of Services at Woodbrooke. We learned the basic requirement of safe access, for example by secure doors and non-slippery floors; food hygiene, for example by correct refrigerator temperatures, food transport duration and condition, kitchen equipment; and fire safety. First aid training for Quaker Meeting members is recommended. Further courses on general health and safety legislation are available.

There were about fifteen of us attending the course, mostly wardens. Apart from the Northern Irish attendee, our home bases were spread quite evenly throughout England. Apart from a few problems common to all areas, such as endless maintenance work, on-call duties, availabilities, problems with hirers, lack of practical skills, money, no defined working hours, and being overworked, cultures seemed to differ widely. Under such diverse conditions formal lectures would not have been fruitful. To solve this problem the facilitators derived two programmes, called Nuts and Bolts 1 and Nuts and Bolts 2. All agreed to open discussions, confidentiality, sharing and respect. This resulted in happy, fruitful and satisfying discussions.

As a new member of the Croydon Premises Committee, I did not have much to contribute. I did identify a few areas related to our Meeting House in Croydon, such as cleaning staff, hirers, lodgers, and employee contracts. Several wardens reminded us of the importance of DBS checks and clearly written contracts. The overwhelming consensus was to employ suitably qualified staff as managers and accountants. As for cleaning staff, experience strongly favoured using agencies rather than individual cleaners, thus avoiding legal and financial complications.

Due to dwindling Meeting sizes, some felt that definition of their contracts, agreement and working hours are becoming blurred, creating grievances. A talk on Boundary was given. Clear personal boundaries must be set and maintained, for the sake of smooth, safe, happy and efficient working space.

I am a relatively new Meeting attender, and a very new member of the Premises Committee. On 11 May I approached Woodbrooke with worry and apprehension, but also an eager gastronomic expectation because everyone had assured me of the excellence of the food served at Woodbrooke. I came back with a satisfied full stomach and a tightly packed brain. I learned so much, met so many nice people and enjoyed the beautiful surroundings. Thank you, Croydon Premises Committee, for nominating me.

**Wan-Hing Tonothy**

### May Area Meeting *Sunday 20 May at Purley*

Purley Friends welcomed us very hospitably for Area Meeting (AM). After a shared lunch, in the spiritual activity we considered the Quaker process of discernment. In a thoughtful introduction, Purley Friends related four examples. First we heard about the difficulty of holding the Society together during the First World War. I was surprised to hear that about a third of Quaker men of military age decided to fight. Of those who did not, some were 'absolutists' who would have nothing to do with the War effort, whereas others served as non-combatants, for example in the Friends Ambulance Unit. Although Quakers had always been a Peace Church, different views continued even after the Armistice. Should Friends always follow their individual conscience?

The second example was the long process of discernment that led to the decision by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) in 2009 to recognise same-sex marriage. This is described in an article by Michael Booth on the BYM website. He comments that many Friends are still on a spiritual journey.

Joanna described how her concern over pregnant refugees and asylum-seekers had been tested and supported in her Local Meeting and in AM. The process had strengthened and supported her concern and enabled it to grow.

Fourthly, a current controversy was described. This relates to proposals in the Gender Recognition Bill and hiring of rooms in Meeting Houses to a group perceived by some as anti-trans. Could Quakers bring our discernment process to this bitter debate?

We considered what worked or did not work in our discernment processes. It was important to listen to others and what lay behind their words in a spirit of mutual respect. Sometimes we needed to take a step back to try to find common ground. It was difficult in an age of digital communications, but perhaps we just needed to get back to our Quaker process - taking our time and 'thinking it possible that we might be mistaken'?

The deaths were recorded of Peter Barnes and Jenny Steele (Sutton), Elizabeth Brown (Epsom), Cecily Taylor (Croydon) and Anne Bartholomew (Streatham and Brixton).

Visitors are being appointed for a joint application for membership from a couple from Streatham and Brixton. Tessa Lockyer has resigned her membership.

Eva Kalmus and Bob Rogers (Sutton) have been appointed as our representatives on Meeting for Sufferings. Barbara Earl was appointed as our distributor for the Pollard and Dickson Trust. Kevin Vento (Sutton) has been appointed to AM Committee. Our AM has still not been able to appoint a representative on London Quakers Property Trust.

We received Helen Johnson's interesting report on the Quaker Life Representative Council and the Trustees' Report and Accounts for 2017. The accounts were accepted subject to audit. We heard that the finances were in a healthy state and were reminded to consider what the money was for and how we could use it to do more good in the world.

AM received a minute from the London Quakers event which discussed 'Where shall we meet in 2030?' This asked Area and Local Meetings to consider... 'where does the Spirit lead us?...can

we be bold and envision a pattern of meeting places fit for the next generation?' AM will return to this later in the year.

The next AM will take place on 16 September at Croydon.

**Rhiannon Rees**

### **"The Banners of Peace are Flying in Croydon"**

These Banners, '[Cut From the Same Cloth](#)' by [Katrin Albrecht](#), made from combined flags, are the first artwork to go up at [St John the Evangelist, Upper Norwood](#) as part of an exhibition with [Celebrate Life](#) working with [Amazing People of the World](#), [RefugeeYouth](#) for the Festival.

**Tuesday 12 June:** 6-8.30pm Banner-making workshop, Adult School Hall;

**Thursday 14 June:** 6-8.30pm Banner-making workshop, ASH.

We will be making our Quaker banner to display in our plot in the Peace Garden at Park Hill Park, along with other groups who will be making theirs. There may also be an afternoon workshop during this week.

#### **Saturday 16 June to Saturday 23 June inclusive: Croydon Festival of Peace:**

There will be a full programme of interesting peace-related arts and creative events at venues across Croydon during this week. Visit the Festival web-site for full details at:

<https://festivalofpeacecroydon.wordpress.com/>

Croydon Quakers will be involved in the following activities:

**Saturday 16 June (morning)** planting roses in our plot in the Peace Garden at Park Hill Park, along with other groups who will be planting theirs;

**Friday 22 June 8.45 - 9.30pm** Gordon Spence will be offering an opportunity to experience meditation and yoga at the Meeting House at sunset;

**Saturday 23 June, 12 noon to 7pm** Festival of Peace and Wellbeing at Park Hill Park. 8.45-9.30pm. Gordon will be offering another meditation and yoga session.

#### **Appeal for support**

Croydon Quakers will have two stalls at Park Hill Park, one displaying peace education materials and the other for the 'Collateral Damage' project, displaying crafted white poppies and offering people the opportunity to craft their own white poppies, in memory of a victim of war or the arms trade, and talk about what peace means to them.

We need as many of you as possible to help with these events. If you can make a white poppy, either at home or at Park Hill Park on 23 June, please contact Liz Collins. If you would like to go to one of Gordon's meditation and yoga sessions, please contact him. If you can help with banner-making, with gardening in the Peace Garden plot at Park Hill Park, with the stall on 23 June or in any other way, please contact Rhiannon.

#### **Happy birthdays!**

**Olivia Edgson** was 11 on 31 April

**Zubin Chijiutomi** was 10 on 1 June

**Luca Chijiutomi** was 9 on 26 June

#### **Collected in May**

**6 Médecins Sans Frontières, £70**

**13 Christian Aid, £68**

**20 Quaker Social Action, £76**

**27 Friends World Committee for Consultation, £53**

**Collecting in June** **3** Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs, **10** Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, **17** Open (Children's choice), **24** Brummana High School

**The deadline for the July edition is Sunday June 24 2018**

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