

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

June 2019

Dear Friends: Our newsletter reflects as usual the life of our meeting, with its sadness as well as happy times, reflections and reports, including varied accounts of Britain Yearly Meeting 2019. Remember that you can ask for a printed copy. Tell us what you thought.

Gillian Turner, David Parlett

Read as part of ministry in meeting for worship in June:

*I asked for strength that I might achieve;
I was made weak that I might humbly to obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness that I might feel my love of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I received nothing that I had asked for
But everything that I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered;
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.*

News of Friends

Mary Jakeman. We record with great sadness the death, on 4 June, of our Friend Mary Jakeman. Her funeral will be at 1pm on Monday 17 June, at a woodland burial site outside Cambridge. There will then be a memorial meeting at the Meeting House on the afternoon of Sunday 23 June.

George Haworth and Maria Rujea (*pictured*) were married in Croydon Registry Office on 1 May 2019.

Jade Flahive Gilbert and Aka Rahmawan will marry on 7 July in Central Java. Jade will be accompanied by her brother Dylan and two close friends for a traditional Muslim wedding, followed by a fortnight's honeymoon in the beautiful islands of Indonesia. We send her on her way with our love and blessings, and look forward to seeing them both here in Croydon where they plan to live.

Celia Snaith has transferred her membership and the membership clerk has received a certificate of acceptance by Mid-Thames Area Meeting.

Philip Barron, who moved to the Bernhard Baron Homes some years ago, is now back in Croydon and resident at the Cedar View Care Home, 1 Stanhope Road, CR0 5NS, where he will be nearer to his daughter Liz. Unfortunately he is suffering from macular dementia and would be unlikely to recognise any of his former friends from our meeting. David Parlett hopes to visit him soon. We have received and accepted the certificate of transfer.



Indonesian Gamelan Degung reaches Croydon Meeting House

I am so excited and happy to share the news that our Meeting House is now home to a beautiful set of Indonesian musical instruments all the way from Sunda, West Java. Actually, in truth they've

been living in a cupboard in London for the last few years, not being played at all, and their owner Ian Rowland (a Friend from Bedford meeting) was looking for a new home for them, where they would be played. So they have moved to sunny Croydon where I have lots of ideas for how they can be used!

The set of instruments is called Gamelan Degung and is made up of gongs, metallophones, drums and bamboo flute. It looks beautiful and sounds like nothing we have in the UK! I spent the academic year of 2017-18 in West Java, studying how to play these instruments and I currently play in the Gamelan Degung group in London called Sekar Enggal, regularly rehearsing and performing. The previous years I spent in Indonesia I was studying a different type of Gamelan, which is much more common to find in the UK-Javanese Gamelan.

As the instruments have not been played for a while they are a little out of tune and so the plan is to get them sounding wonderful, and then to set up various projects and workshops. Firstly, we would like to put on a concert to welcome the instruments to our meeting, and to give them a name (Gamelan sets usually have their own name- we are hoping to think of a Quakerly Sundanese word). Then we hope to arrange workshops for during Quaker week, and regular sessions for our Quaker community, the young refugee groups who use the ASH, the wider community of Croydon, schools and other groups around Croydon and beyond. Gamelan is particularly great for community music making as it is a group activity and can be played by beginners alongside experienced musicians. It also is so new and different for audiences in the UK that people don't come to it with preconceived notions or prejudice. The arrival of these instruments is all very exciting and I look forward to sharing more news with you as plans come together. Watch this space!

Jade Flahive-Gilbert

Our spiritual review

Quaker Faith and Practice 12.16 advises every Quaker meeting regularly to conduct a review of our spiritual life and its expression in caring. It suggests that the process might start in small groups, in which unmet needs could be revealed and confidentially respected, then move on to an occasion drawing all together. Elders have sought to arrange the first set of meetings before the end of June, based on the following series of queries for us to discuss in small groups (or answered individually in writing if preferred):

- 1 In the time you have been coming to Croydon Meeting, do you feel the meeting has changed, either spiritually or in its caring?
- 2 What does meeting for worship mean to you?
- 3 What has been your experience of ministry?
- 4 How does the meeting foster a spirit of community? What is your experience of the Meeting as a community?
- 5 What is your experience and understanding of our meetings for business?
- 6 How do you feel our meeting engages with and welcomes the wider community?
- 7 Are there any other matters not covered in these questions you would like to raise?

There is a sign-up sheet for a number of slots for group discussion at the meeting house, with a wide variety of dates and times. Please look out for it and sign up!

Reshaping London Quakers

'*The Future Shape of Quakers in London*' document, initiated by Quaker Property Housing Trust, has now been discussed by trustees, open meetings at Friends House, all London Area Meeting Business meetings, our South London AM, our Local Business meeting, and finally, it reached us at our Croydon Premises Committee meeting on 10 June.

The proposal is to have a single pan-London charity, with a single trustee body drawn from across London, including the role currently played by LQPT, by merging the eight charities; employing or procuring support services (eg accountancy and bookkeeping, employment advice, safeguarding, data protection, charity commission compliance, property maintenance etc), and employing staff; with seven Area Meetings, for worship, community, learning, concerns,

appointments and big decisions affecting local meetings. We could also see a role for a yearly, or twice-yearly meeting of the pan-London Meeting, to discern significant decisions.

This would

- substantially reduce the number of trustees needed,
- maximise the opportunities to use paid staff to reduce the load on trustees and on local premises committees,
- retain existing Area Meeting groups of local meetings,
- unite decision making on compliance and financial administration within one organisation instead of eight, reducing repetition and duplication.

We realised the points emphasised most immediately concern us, as we need to make sure our contracting, hiring rooms, financial administration of rents etc, are in line with the preferred operating systems for Quaker buildings. Financially we are following LQPT guidelines, and our books are in order, but we tend to do our own thing as far as hirings are concerned.

We agreed to make a start to set this in place. Gillian has had an initial meeting with Wendrie Heywood, who manages various meeting houses including Kingston, so that we can start the new system. Our paid staff are enthusiastic about improved clarity and communication, and happy to attend a workshop with Wendrie. Elders will welcome the new contracts which include information about who we are. We recognise that it will take time to complete this new process but it cannot be put off, as we will be audited in 2020 and must have charity commission compliance in 2021.

We have lost the wisdom of Mary Jakeman, who was our elder and rock for six years, making sure all our meetings were held in right ordering according to the Quaker business method. We will do our best to follow her example, and serve the Meeting with diligence and integrity.

Steve Betts, Rachel Edgson, Wan Hing Tonothy, Gillian Turner

The Erica Johnson Legacy

From the Business Meeting held on 9 June 2019:

We would like to review the use of our money through inviting those interested to join a small discussion group, including Legacies Committee members, in order to make proposals for this.

We ask for announcements about this to be put into the notices and the newsletter, inviting suggestions from members of the Meeting, in order to start the process.

We last made decisions about how to use the very generous legacy from our late Friend Erica Johnson in 2015.

We decided on keeping a balance between investing part of the money and spending the other part. We then accepted proposals on how best to use the money we intended to spend and ended up with three main areas:

- Supporting concerns of Croydon Meeting
- Assisting others in need, in our own community and beyond
- Carrying out necessary work on our buildings

We have used these area as our general principles for spending since then. However, we now think the time is right to review the use of this generous gift,

We are starting this process by inviting those interested to join a small discussion group, which will include Legacies Committee members, in order to put together a set of proposals to be taken to business meeting.

So, if you have thoughts about how we could take this forward, or have a good idea for how some of the money could be spent, especially now that our buildings are listed and should be more known about in the community, please let our clerk, Margaret, know - especially if would like to join the discussion group.

The history, the values and the ministry

As I write this, the rain is pouring down. But I refuse to forget the recent sunny weather and the joy of sitting outside on one particular afternoon. I'm with some old mates, relaxing in the shade, struggling (as usual) to open a bottle of Prosecco. Life couldn't be better. We're talking about an exhibition of photographs, called *Here I am*, that was held in May at the Oxo Tower on the South Bank.

Twenty five years ago, in 1994, women were admitted for the first time to the priesthood of the

Church of England. (The first attempt to put women's ordination on the agenda of the Lambeth Conference was nearly one hundred years ago in 1920). The exhibition's website says that '25 years later, it is impossible to imagine life without them'. To celebrate this memorable anniversary, photographer Jim Grover followed twelve very different female priests in the Southwark Diocese, to capture an impression of women's ministry. One of the female priests so photographed is the daughter of a friend. So the oldies under the umbrella are all very interested in a personal and wider way.

Women and the priesthood is a very complex issue – for Anglicans (and others). The controversy of women in the priesthood is more than about occupational enclosure by men. The Protestant Reformation's idea of a priesthood of all believers is also worth bringing in to the discussion, as a theological issue. But the one that can really irritate some of us is the ontological superiority claimed then and now by some men.

So, where are we today in terms of equality between men and women? Perhaps some things are not so self-evident or have become parts of our national values more recently than we remember. It is part of our culture, part of British values, for girls to be offered the same educational opportunities as boys and to be regarded as social equals. But how recent has all of this been? Women (of all social classes) only obtained the vote in 1928. Twenty years on, echoing Plato, Dorothy Sayers, could still find it relevant in 1947 to ask the question: are women human? From today's perspective, not surprisingly, she claimed a full humanity for women. Though acknowledging how women were and can be treated in a patronising and discriminatory way, she declined to claim the status of victim for women. Women, said Sayers, can be their own people, recognising and devising their own identity and self.

As we've seen, the Anglican discussion and action on the status of women in society and in the priesthood in particular, is very recent. This is, of course, significant as Anglicanism in English society, has been the conventional, been the mainstream. In other contexts, other groups have been different. (You know what's coming). Though women's roles were not completely equal with men for many years, from the start of the Quakers in 1650s women were allowed to participate in ministry. Margaret Fell wrote in 1666 (yes, nearly five hundred years ago) 'God hath out no such difference between Male and Female as men would make'. Perhaps these are the kinds of differences and realities - historical, organisational, theological and social - that Quakers should remind the world about themselves more clearly and strongly?

Helen Johnson

Fell, M. (1666) *Womens Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed by the Scriptures*:

<http://users.wfu.edu/zulick/340/Felltext.html>

MacCulloch, D. (2004) *Reformation Europe's House Divided*, London: Penguin

Ross, I. (1996) (3rd edition) *Margaret Fell Mother of Quakerism*, York: Sessions

Sayers, D. (1947) *Are Women Human?* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co.

Contact Spiritual Healing

Dear Friends, It has been a failing on my part that our new spiritual healing group has not had the interest that I had originally envisaged. So, a few words on contact healing, and what I/we are trying to do. May it be God's will that we can offer this type of healing to any who request it.

Contact spiritual healing is not ministered by the few souls who have received a gift from God. It is through all of us, should we be open and willing channels, that healing will come. It has been my pleasure to be led to the Quaker Spiritual Healers course for probationary healers at Claridge House. I am now registered with the QSH and Friends Fellowship of Healing.

My knowledge of the many approaches to contact spiritual healing is limited. This I do not worry myself about. There are many good articles on the internet concerned with this subject. Suffice to say that I am not God nor do I see myself as having any 'spiritual qualifications' for such a task; I am merely open to the way - and this without judgment or reward.

A theological debate in a Quaker meeting House is, in my opinion, quite pointless. So your vision of that light is yours to nurture.

With God in mind, Jesus and his followers laid hands on the sick and troubled. We are told that Jesus spoke with authority when healing the sick and this, often in conjunction with the forgiveness of sins. When he acted like this it was, for me, only to show the fullness of the father. Not in fact to join physical or mental distress with sin. He sought to heal, one way or another, those who came to him.

The words that I use are within a language that means something to me. My vision of that light is that when one person lays hands upon another – with the spirit in mind – something happens. Perhaps not there and then nor as we think it should happen. The spirit does indeed move in mysterious ways. (The Hebrew word for wind and spirit, *ruach*, is the same).

In my own experience, change, healing of old wounds, letting go of harmful thinking and behaviour, have all been fruits of such healing. My intention being more open to the spirit has been part of the journey into contact healing.

Over twelve years ago I was directed to an elderly man called Jack Alder. Jack is a member of Wallington United Reform Church, and had a healing ministry there every Monday night from around 1994 until his recent retirement. Every week he would be there waiting for whoever would come. Often he would close up and go home if no pilgrims appeared. Over twenty years of service to any and all. Quite an undertaking.

I went along in desperation and emotional anguish only to find an old man in an empty church who told me 'I have nothing to give you. I only ask to be a channel for the spirit'. And that was what he became for me. I was never judged, never asked for money, never told to believe anything and never given advice on how to live my life. All that I had to do was to turn up! 'Never offer healing' he told me. A person will ask for it and that will be the beginning for themselves to want to offer the same!

Now that I begin my own journey of trying to be a channel of that peace these few words of his are loud within me. I have nothing to give nor advice to offer. My aim is to be around for other seekers like myself, like ourselves. The 'art' as I see it is to be able to get out of the way of the spirit and to be the physical presence that some people need. Easier said than done. It is an undertaking of humility.

In seeking out spiritual healing I have put myself in front of the troubled and the short-tempered, who, in their own journey have yet to get out of the way. These experiences have been off-putting and counter-productive.

Unfortunately Jesus' compassion often seems to lay upon the wayside. Trampled by the ego and the magical demands for miracles. *John* ch 14 is a beautiful discourse on this.

I do not know how the spirit works or what a pilgrim really needs, but I do know that this type of ministry is important.

Friends need not be afraid that I am offering to heal them! So put your minds at rest. If I were able to do that I would have done it for myself. Lord knows I need it.

Join me in this endeavour. If it be God's will we will be channels of that peace. **Steve Betts**

REFLECTIONS ON BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING 2019

The Quaker Young People's Programme (YPP)

This event took place on Friday 24th May and ended on Monday 27th May. We took a coach or mini bus from Friends House to High Leigh. My favourite part of Friday was making friends, having fun and enjoying the dinner which was cottage pie and a side of hot chocolate, tea or just water. The rooms were nice and cosy with an en suite and our roommate to keep us happy and always be there for each other when we were sad.

In the mornings we chose between cereal or English breakfast then going into meeting for worship for about 10 minutes, then at the end of the day we sit in silence for epilogue. During the day we play fun games such as capture the flag, rounders, giant Jenga [*woodblock game*], playing the piano, and many other exciting activities. Throughout the weekend, we had sessions about privilege, finding ourselves in Quakerism, Climate Change Justice, Diversity and Tolerance, chat groups involving Climate Change, Gender Diversity or inclusion, also the Swarthmore Lecture.

At 7:30pm on Sunday we had a talent show and it was very amusing and entertaining. It included something at the start which made me laugh. They said it was rock and roll, but instead they held a rock and the other rolled all over the floor, also singing, acting, magic and playing the piano.

On Monday we travelled back to Friends House and made our goodbyes. Overall it was an amazing weekend only by the help of the trusted adults. **Olivia Edgson**

On Friday 24th May 2019 I arrived at High Leigh, which was more a style of a Premier Inn if you ask me, but anyway I arrived at High Leigh after a one and a half hour coach journey from Euston. After introductions and dinner it was time for bed.

The next morning I had a three hot chocolate breakfast. It was then time for Meeting for Worship and then base groups for more introductions. Then we had a session on privilege which taught us how privileged we are compared to others. After lunch, we had another session on Climate Change, and went outside to play games, and then it was time for dinner. After dinner we had a quiz which went well, and then it was time for bed.

The following morning there was breakfast, then meeting and then another session on Diversity and Tolerance. Then followed activities, and in particular a card game which I am “Unable or Unwilling” to remember the name of. Then we had lunch, which was followed by a session where we talked about Climate Justice. After that we had the Swarthmore lecturer come in to speak to us. After dinner we had epilogue then bed.

The following morning was the final day and after clearing up, it was time to head to meeting for business, then home time. I really enjoyed my time. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

Josh Edgson

A day at BYM

I only attended Yearly Meeting (YM) on the Sunday, which was not the same as going for the whole week-end. I arrived during the All-age Worship. The babies and children were participating in their own way at floor level, which included energetic crawling, playing, contented gurgling or loud protest, but one boy responded to a story about the fragile earth with an eloquent plea to save the planet. Older Friends also expressed pain about what we are doing to the earth and called for urgent action on the climate crisis.

The Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Trustees, presenting their annual report, explained that they were responsible for all the central work. The aims were set out in *Our Faith in the Future*. Trustees were clear that a ‘Simple Church’ was needed, supported by a ‘Simple Charity’: our structures needed to be simplified at all levels, in order to reinvigorate Quakers. There would be less emphasis on central work and more on supporting Local Meetings. In 2018 voluntary contributions had fallen by around £0.75m and expenditure had exceeded income by nearly £3m. We might need to lay down work that was close to our hearts. The central organisation was changing to reinvigorate Friends, but were Local Meetings willing to change? She appealed to us all to review our donations, according to our means.

The theme of YM was Inclusion and Diversity, including examining our privilege. Junior Yearly Meeting asked whether we made newcomers feel comfortable. ‘We recognise the exclusion we may create is not intentional but it doesn’t mean we aren’t responsible for it. There is a feeling Quakers are passively inclusive. Our testimony to equality makes us complacent. However, it is not enough that this testimony exists, our words and actions as a community and individually should back it up as well.’ They said younger Quakers felt excluded by Meetings held at dates, times and places that were not accessible to them.

In the session ‘Hearing other Voices’ different media were used to bring us Quaker voices we might not otherwise hear. We saw a vlog (video blog) made by a young disabled lesbian vlogger about her experience. Then two speakers ministered from among us: one about being non-binary and one about being an environmental activist. The fourth contributor was a Filipino environmental activist whose words had to be read by a British Friend because it had proved impossible to get a British visa. All these contributions are accessible at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents>.

These themes were continued in the afternoon worship and in the Epistle. We heard passionate appeals for a greater sense of urgency about the climate emergency and some Friends spoke about their sense of being excluded from the wider society and our Society. However a Kenyan Friend asked why British Friends were full of despair and guilt and urged us to celebrate our positive contribution. The number of well-attended special interest groups showed that British Quakers are still lively and active.

Rhiannon Rees

Diverse and inclusive

At BYM each person who spoke from the stage was required to speak of their own privilege before giving their report. This meant that we got to know a little about each speaker, the clerk to Meeting for Sufferings, the clerk to BYM Trustees, the clerk to Quaker Stewardship Committee among others. I was impressed by the personal stories as each friend had clearly thought deeply about what they were saying.

There were others who had been asked to prepare ministry. Two in particular spring to mind. One woman was speaking about climate and plastic and her plea was that we not judge too harshly those who are doing their very best to reduce their use of plastic but were not able to be totally plastic free. She described her own situation and said that due to her condition she had to take all her food (or was it only drink?) through a straw. She had tried and tested metal straws, glass straws (not very safe), paper straws and every other kind and had found that actually, for her, only plastic straws worked.

The second person I remember was a man who said how he was privileged to be a man, to be white, to be educated, and to be in a wheel chair. He said he got to be first on the aircraft, he had people rushing to open doors for him as he approached and he got a really good view at a football match. His message was that he had to be really careful not to abuse that privilege and that we should all be careful not to abuse the privileges we had but to use them for good.

What else shall I remember from this BYM? The Godly Play story that we shared at Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning engendered ministry from many of the children and was continued by several adults after the children had gone off to their programme. It was called Fragile Earth.

And, of course, I shall remember sharing my home with a young family which included two seven year old identical twin girls. I find my settee is quite comfortable enough for sleeping.

Frances Touch (Epsom Meeting)

Just a few of my thoughts...

My overall impression is that there was recognition that Privileged/ Underprivileged as a blanket term does not exist. However, that did not stop Friends giving Ministry on the various ways that they feel privileged and their sense of guilt about that. Also, the YM Clerk, Clerk of Trustees, Clerk of MfS and the YM Treasurer were asked to preface their reports with a summary of how Privileged they were in their lives. I am afraid that rather jarred with me and I did not feel it was right to ask them to do that. Some pretty personal stuff was aired in front of the whole YM.

I did warm to one of the main speakers, Nim Juvener, and the gist of his comments are below:

We have complex identities rooted in human difference. Guilt and shame, he said, were not helpful in addressing the issue of privilege. It does not move us forward.

The question we need to ask ourselves is how are we progressing the cause of social injustice and Quaker values in our lives? What sort of society do we want to live in?.

Our tendency when working with the underprivileged is to do it 'our way'. That does not work for them and does not work for us because it does not change us or free us. We need to work with others to free ourselves - to restrict our comfort zone and reach out.

We need self-transformation and to embrace the reality of progressive revelation.

Ruth Hustler (ex Croydon Meeting, now Sidmouth Meeting)

Events

Sunday 16 June, Area Committee meeting 1pm at Croydon meeting house. All welcome.

Thursday 20 June, 18.30, book launch at Waterstones (Angel) Islington 1830. In *Angeland*, by David Sunderland (formerly a Quaker at Hampstead, now in New York), "Tony inhales an archangel's eyelash, becomes part angel, and enters the realms of angels, where everything is more human than might be imagined. 'Angeland' is quirky, unclassifiable and entertaining, and follows Tony's adventures and the machinations of seven archangels to free the eyelash at all costs". All welcome. Find the link and more at www.david-s.site

Saturday, 22 June, 2019 - 19:00 to 21:00 *The Merger* – a film to mark Refugee Week, Ealing Meeting House, 17 Woodville Rd, Ealing, London W5 2SE. A former football star returns to his home town in rural Australia and is persuaded to coach the struggling footy team. He decides to recruit refugees from a local refugee centre. (103 minutes, followed by refreshments.)

Collected in May

5 Médecins Sans Frontières **73.70**

12 Christian Aid **38.00**

19 Quaker Social Action **100.00**

26 Friends World Committee for Consultation **70.80**

Forthcoming collections: June 16 Children's choice (Childline?), **23** Brummana High School, **30** Britain Yearly Meeting, **Jul 07** South London Area Meeting, **14** Woodbrooke, **21** Croydon Local Meeting, **28** The Retreat, York

The deadline for the July edition is **Sunday 30 June 2019**

Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner
Tel 07805087981 email gillianturner033@gmail.com

Beannacht (Blessing)

*On the day when the weight deadens on your
shoulders and you stumble
May the clay dance to steady you.
And when your eyes freeze behind the grey window
and the ghost of loss gets into you,
May a flock of colours, indigo, red, green and azure
blue come to awaken in you a meadow of delight.
When the canvas frays in the curach of thought and a
stain of ocean blackens beneath you,
May there come across the waters a path of yellow
moonlight to bring you safely home.
May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
May the clarity of the light be yours.
May the fluency of the ocean be yours,
May the protection of the ancestor be yours.
And so may a slow wind work these words of love
around you,
An invisible cloak to mind your life.*

John O'Donohue