

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

June 2021



**Dear Friends: We are fast approaching June 21, the final date on the roadmap we have all been following since the beginning of 2021. At this time we are not sure how far life will then return to normal. It is possible that our hopes of meeting without the need to social distance so much, or to wear masks, will not happen yet.**

**Our Meeting House for meetings for worship in person and on Zoom opened for blended meetings on 23 May. Gillian took these photos when she opened the building on that first Sunday, accompanied by Kay with flowers for the table in the meeting room and biscuits for refreshments, and Roger with the laptop and microphone. She said 'I felt the rooms waiting for us to arrive and happy for us to be there!'**

*Gillian Turner, David Parlett*

## Words to encourage us in tough times

*June 2021 from A Candle in the Window \**

These days will come to an end. We will be able to travel the country, swim in the sea, sit in each others rooms, lean over tables and chairs in restaurants and pubs, dance, hug each other at last. But we mustn't go back to the world we lived in before or unlearn the hard-won lessons of collaboration, kindness, empathy and human vulnerability. We mustn't stop seeing and valuing the delivery driver, the hospital cleaner, the residential worker, the person at the checkout, the neighbour over the fence, the stranger on the other side of the road, the person in need, the old and the frail and the forgotten, those hidden in life's shadow. We can do better. No going back.

**Nicci Gerrard**

*\*A Candle in the Window Hospitality Network is a growing online, worldwide network of Christian households delighting in hospitality. Our hope is to multiply the blessings we have experienced in our own home through hospitality as our members travel, share a meal and open up their homes to one another.*  
(<https://acandle.wildapricot.org/>)

## News of Friends

**Brian Skeet** has returned home and is recovering well from his broken hip. He sends greetings and love to us all, and welcomes phone calls.

**Graham Parlett**, one of David's younger brothers, died on 20 May at the age of 75 from respiratory failure due to motor neurone disease. Although it was diagnosed only in January he had been

developing preliminary symptoms for over a year. He had joined us in meeting for worship on several occasions and some Friends knew him fairly well in other contexts, notably musical events. He had been a curator in the Indian Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum and in retirement devoted his life to the study of British music. Besides composing he also orchestrated and in some case completed works left unfinished by others. He was unmarried.

### Meeting for Worship - what is it?

At the beginning of May's fourth Sunday session (23 May), Michelle read out the *Invitation to Brave Space* poem. I first came across this poem at a recent retreat and the questions it raised have stayed with me. The first part of the poem below raises the question for me of what is our Meeting for Worship?

#### ***Invitation to Brave Space***

*Listen*

*Together we will create brave space.*

*Because there is no such thing as a 'safe space' —*

*We exist in the real world.*

*We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.*

*In this space*

*We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,*

*We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,*

*We call each other to more truth and love.*

*Micky ScottBey Jones*

Why do we come to Meeting for Worship? Is it a safe space to sit quietly and think? Somewhere to get away from others? A habit that has developed over the years? Or is it a brave space where we are challenged to grow?

Many years ago, in a Yearly Meeting Gathering a Friend said that love should turn your world upside down. If we are experiencing love in a Meeting for Worship, does the Meeting turn our world upside down? Do we go out of Meeting better people than when we came in? If not, what are we doing at Meeting? Do we think of the Meeting as a safe space rather than a brave space? A brave space challenges me, whereas a safe space can be comforting and perhaps just a warm space to sit - no different than sitting in a public library (when they reopen) and having a space to think about my life. However, sitting in a public library is not usually going to turn my world upside down.

Guidance in *Quaker Faith and Practice* reminds me that in a Meeting for Worship '...there is a power known only by experience, and mysterious even when most familiar...' (Caroline E Stephen, 1908 (*Qfp* 2.39))

The following extract also reminds me that a Meeting for Worship is a brave space where I will be challenged and called to face myself.

'Meeting is the chance to escape from the trivial thoughts of everyday living and to find answers from yourself or from God. Some people are scared of the silence. Without the noise that serves to reassure us, that blocks out thoughts we'd rather not have, we're vulnerable and find it's time to face ourselves. We can never hide from God, but it's easy to minimise the effect he has on our lives - except in the silence where he can be heard...' Rachel Needham, 1987 (*Qfp* 2.17)

***Pam Sellman***

### Epilogue

I thank Michelle for bringing back into my vocabulary the word 'epilogue'.

The Oxford dictionary gives as its meaning: 'The concluding part of a literary work', but over the years it has come to mean a final concluding act or event. It was in this latter meaning that I encountered it when I was at Woodbrooke for two terms of 1994 as Friend in Residence. At the end of each day there was a gathering in the large room for Epilogue led by a member of the community. It was as if all the happenings of the day were being gathered in a parcel and gently put away in a spirit of thanksgiving, or perhaps it was like saying one's prayers before going to bed. When it was my turn, I shared with those present the poem *The Day Is Done* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

In hindsight, it seems that I took part in many an end-of-day or end-of-week ritual that was an epilogue in all but name. Sometimes we would sing *Now the Day is Over* and my favourite stanza was *Grant to little children/Visions bright of thee/ Guard the sailors tossing, On the bright blue sea*. Sometimes we sang that at the end of Sunday School.

At the Roman Catholic school that I attended aged about seven there was epilogue at the end of lessons every Friday afternoon. All the classes were on one floor, open plan, so we could see one another's faces and we always sang '*Sweet saviour bless us ere we go/ Thy word into our minds instil/And make our lukewarm hearts to glow/With lowly love and fervent will*. This was the first stanza which was followed by the refrain, *Through life's long day and death's dark night/ O gentle Jesus be our light*. There were four other stanzas, but I did not sing them, I would listen to the others singing, and then join in with the refrain. We used to have this peaceful all-is-well feeling that I have even now that I am recalling the event. I think the tune had something to do with it too, and I took home with me: *O gentle Jesus, be our light*.

When I started out as a teacher, my first appointment was at The Broad Street Government School in Georgetown. All primary schools were run by the churches; Broad Street was the exception as it was the only one controlled by the Government. We were British, and because the Church of England was still the established church so the school also had a religious remit. Every Wednesday I had to accompany my class to the nearby Anglican church for a service presided over either by the vicar or by one of the headteachers. That is when I learned to sing the Nicene creed. The Friday afternoon ritual that I had taken part in as a pupil at The Roman Catholic School so many years ago, was now in force at this Church of England school where I was teaching. The classroom screens were shifted back so that the headmaster could see every body and in this case the chosen hymn was *Holy Father cheer our way/With thy love's perpetual ray /Grant us every closing day/ Light at evening time*. Again there is the prayer for light.

We all know that at the end of most religious gatherings the epilogue hymn would invariably be *The day thou gavest Lord is ended*.

In Longfellow's poem the poet tells his friend that he has a feeling of sadness that his soul cannot resist. He asks him to read him a poem *That shall soothe this restless feeling / And banish the thoughts of day*.

He doesn't want a poem from 'the grand old masters,' but from a humbler poet *whose songs gushed from his heart/ As showers from the clouds of summer/Or tears from the eyelids start*.

I am thinking that if I were that friend, my choice would be from my hymn book, either the whole poem of *Holy Father cheer our way/ With thy love's perpetual ray* or just the last stanza: *Holy, blessed Trinity/Darkness in not dark with thee./ Those thou keepest always see/Light at evening time*.

The poet is expecting that *The night will be filled with music/And the cares that infest the day/ Shall fold their tents like the Arabs/and as silently steal away*. **Joyce Trotman**

### Margie's holiday

While in Cornwall my sister and I took her grandchildren with friends to visit 'The Lodge'.

These gardens had just been reopened to the public. Money raised goes to various medical charities, hospice care, Mind, and medical research.

The owner had worked on the gardens, set in a valley, for over 20 years.

The results are stunning. The stream was diverted to create ornamental ponds, and with the river still flowing on one side we were able to walk on grassy banks that gave a panoramic view across the landscape. Many abstract sculptures can to be seen where the varying wind helps the pieces move and sparkle in the sunshine.

At the start of our walk the owner proudly said we can take any route. It was a pleasure, having the feeling of a private garden and not a museum! Plants were labelled very discreetly, maybe for the gardener or 'Just in case we didn't know'.



*Photo: Margie Ashley*

Chairs or benches were in scenic places, enabling us to enjoy a picnic one on side of a large lake. The boys went paddling and the two dogs just basked in the sun. A wonderful interlude during my visit down west!

We also enjoyed an early morning's walk from Chapel Porth to Porthdown where I took this photo. The weather was wonderful and the scene so beautiful, not crowded at all.

**Margie Ashley**

### **The Divine Glance that Heals**

As we move away from the need to follow the more stringent lockdown rules and inch towards life with essential precautions but fewer restrictions, there have been various articles in the media concerning the understandable apprehension felt by some in facing the 'new normal.' Recently, *The Times* splashed the anxiety-inducing strapline *Are You Office Ready?* on its front-page. It seems that there is a measure of reluctance at the thought of face-to-face meetings at work and the rekindling of what feels like unfamiliar social interaction. Not long ago an article in *The Guardian* by Alex Mistlin, was headlined: *Socially, how do we navigate this?* Lifting lockdown is stressful for some. Those who do not work in areas such as public service, transport and delivery, trades and supermarkets etc, have enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time alone or with family and pets alongside the ability to explore life in a different, less structured way. The thought of giving up the more flexible schedules which pandemic arrangements may have allowed and returning to the daily commute doesn't suit

everybody. Others have been counting the days and write of raring to go, free from enforced home-based routines, keen to take back at least some vestige of traditional working practice. Relishing indoor hospitality and the joy of being set free from enduring what seems like Groundhog Day have been mentioned by some.

Mistlin's article highlights the disquiet felt by those with specific concerns such as physical or mental health issues who feel stressed when considering such thoughts as with lockdown ending I'm anxious that I'll have to come into contact with people even though I'll be unvaccinated for a while longer yet. An architect from Yorkshire expressed fears that all the old expectations will return. We each live within a unique set of circumstances and experience the idea of lifted restrictions in a variety of different ways. Support might well be needed to negotiate next steps. If possible, risk management, setting personal boundaries, (and letting go of the outcomes) and continuing to follow practical guidelines could help to alleviate some fears. Time to meditate upon spiritual thought may offer a deeper means of processing unease about a perceived lack of control.

In 1661, Isaac Penington wrote these beautiful and comforting words of advice concerning the universal Light that is always available and shines for us all:

*Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion. (Qfp 26:70)*

Recognising both our common humanity and the power of shared spiritual inheritance may help in defining our own values and limits in times of change. Sometimes when feeling overwhelmed by human interaction it might be more appropriate to give a little and step back whilst continuing to hold in consciousness our true nature and that of the other.

Walter C. Lanyon (1887-1967), an American-born writer and mystic of Cornish stock, wrote more than forty books on New Thought (as well as secular stories and two light operas) based

entirely on the 'revelation of Jesus Christ'. He suggested that when challenged, our need is to look again with single vision and recognise the omnipotence of the divine Presence within each of us:

The looking again, the Divine Glance that heals, does nothing - but, become aware of the Presence, and the flames of the hell of belief subside.

**Barbara Earl**

*The Temple not Made by Hands*, Walter C. Lanyon (Kessinger)

### Summer in the Meeting House Garden

Notice the surface of the soil, which in spring had been soft and crumbly to the touch. It is now likely a dry hard crust that repels water quite well, leaving plants struggling to find moisture under this impenetrable surface. There are two ways to treat this problem. The first is to cultivate the soil and open it up to the air, which is a lot of work and must be repeated often as the dirt will harden after the first rainfall or watering. The second approach is to apply a protective layer of mulch.

'Popular mulching materials range from bark to straw or even leaves saved from the previous autumn. After the soil is fully warmed, apply the mulch in a layer of about two inches thick. Allow it to sit on top of the soil to shade it, preventing the surface baking that sets up a hard crusty surface. Best of all, the mulch blocks sunlight so that weeds seeds do not sprout. You will be please to find that you do not need to water so often and that plants will cease to wilt in the hot afternoon sun' (from *God in the Garden* by Maureen Gilmer).

(NB Note that, under Kate's guidance, our soil has indeed been covered with mulch.

**GT**

### Rain



*Photo: Liz Collins*

What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone,  
in the forest, at night, cherished by this  
wonderful, unintelligible,  
perfectly innocent speech,  
the most comforting speech in the world,  
the talk that rain makes by itself all over the ridges,  
and the talk of the watercourses everywhere in the  
hollows!

Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it.  
It will talk as long as it wants, this rain,  
As long as it talks, I am going to listen.

**Thomas Merton**

### Yearly Meeting Gathering

Bookings are now open for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021 (YMG), which this year has the theme 'For our comfort and discomfort: living equality and truth in a time of crisis'.

Around 200 special interest groups are already lined up for the YMG Fringe. From 19 July, there will be worship and community-building activities and theme-related events. Yearly Meeting in session will be over two weekends from 30 July to 8 August. Find out more on the YMG website at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym>

### Gender Diversity - London Quakers event

Please help us achieve good attendance for the London Quakers event on Gender Diversity.

This tender topic is important to all Quakers and still quite controversial. We will hold the event on **Saturday 12 June at 10:00 by Zoom**.

'To provide a forum in which Quakers can learn and talk about gender diversity, hear personal testimonies from Friends and others about how gender issues have affected their lives and discuss the issues in a Quaker space'.

Access to this meeting is by registration only. Use <http://bit.ly/ToThyTrueSelf>

**Fred Ashmore** (London Quakers) 07976 299721

## Gender Diversity at Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021

As part of preparation material for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC) is commissioning a video about 'Acknowledging and Welcoming Gender Diverse People'.

We are clear that this consideration is a small step in a process in which Friends are already engaged. We would like to consider a broad range of experiences and therefore are asking Friends to contribute from the heart. Your contribution could be about your experience relating to your own gender, or about encountering gender diversity in your relationships, family or community. We are particularly interested in hearing about your experiences in the context of our Quaker communities.

Ideally, the video will include people of all ages, backgrounds, races, and orientations. We understand the emotional labour involved in speaking truthfully from your experience, and humbly ask that you consider adding your voice to this preparation for our discernment.

Do consider whether this is the right time for you to share your experience. Sending in a video clip may make you feel vulnerable. Please bear in mind that although the video will sit in a private area of YouTube with restricted access, it isn't possible to guarantee that restricted access.

If you feel moved to contribute, please record a short clip for our video. Please send your clip to [gender@quaker.org.uk](mailto:gender@quaker.org.uk) by 13 June.

You can video yourself using the camera on a smartphone, tablet, or iPad; please prop the device up on a piece of furniture rather than holding it in your hand to film. Please ensure that you film in landscape. On a Windows computer with a webcam, you can use the 'Camera' app. On a Mac computer with a webcam, you can use the 'Photo booth' app.

Please make your clip no longer than two and a half minutes. Depending on repetition, adhering to theme, respectful language, or just sheer quantity of responses, we may not be able to include all submissions. Thank you. In Friendship,

***Adwoa Bittle, Fred Langridge, James McCarthy***

## Reflecting on George Floyd

Listen again to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's service marking one year since the murder of George Floyd, which was broadcast on BBC Local Radio. Edwina Peart, from Quakers in Britain, is among those sharing reflections on his death. You can also sign up to our Racial Justice Workshop which begins on 15 June.

## Becoming blended worshipping communities

Quakers around the world will be exploring what it means to be a 'blended' community (meeting both online and in-person) in an online weekend workshop hosted by Woodbrooke and Pendle Hill Quaker Study Centre in the USA. Taking place from 11 June to 13 June, it will include a mixture of individual reflection, small group discussion and plenaries.

## Journeys in the Spirit

The June edition of the Journeys in the Spirit newsletter is now available online. As usual it's packed with information and ideas for children, young people and families connected to Quaker meetings and communities. <https://mailchi.mp/quaker.org.uk/jis-april-1495174?e=bc02da480c>

## Pan London Governance – the Next Stage

The Pan London Governance Steering Group and Working Group met together by Zoom on 26 May to consider the responses of Area Meetings and Local Meetings to the proposed outline system of one set of Trustees for the seven Area Meetings in the London area. The Meeting also considered the responses from the London Quakers gathering by Zoom on 10 April. Details of the current proposals are available on the London Quakers website – [www.londonquakers.org.uk](http://www.londonquakers.org.uk).

There was broad agreement with the proposals so far, although concern about the details to be worked out. North West London Area Meeting, which has been doubtful about participating in the proposed organisation, has at least agreed to continue for the time being in the consideration of more detailed proposals. Area Meetings will not be asked to finally decide about participating until more details are available.

The areas of concern, in the responses received, included communication, finance, the employment of staff to support the Trustees of the new body, and the need for a discerning group which all members of the participating Area Meetings would be eligible to attend, similar to the role of Meeting for Sufferings in relation to BYM Trustees.

The immediate next stage is to classify all the responses and make a list of all the matters to be discussed, in various subject groups. A small group was appointed to do this work. Members of the Steering Group and the Working Group will meet again when this list is available, so that individuals from both groups can volunteer for the various subject groups to work out the practical details. We hope to involve other members of the London Area Meetings in this process: if you'd like to be involved in this work please contact Alan Smillie (tel: 07734 113 437).

We agreed that more work is needed before we seek legal advice.

From our Area Meeting, Helen Drewery (Sutton) is clerk of the Steering Group and Barbara Cairns (Epsom) is also a member; Alan Smillie (Purley) is clerk of the Working Group and Sarah Totterdell (Streatham & Brixton) is also a member.

**Barbara Cairns**

## Exploring Racism

*Minute 4 from AM 16 May 2021*

Frances Touch has offered to facilitate the establishment of a small group or groups examining our approach to and/or our experience of racism.

Frances introduced us to a workbook on this topic *Me and white supremacy* by Layla Saad which she has worked through in a small group and found invaluable.

We thank Frances for offering to organise people who request it into small groups and we ask our meetings to communicate this opportunity to Friends and Attenders. We ask that people email Frances if interested. We ask Frances to write a short introduction for dissemination in meetings.

A very short introduction: Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees have written a minute about racism among Quakers. Accordingly Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) considered racism within our society as a major part of its November meeting in 2020. MfS minute reads:

'MfS/20/12/13 Action on racism Edwina Peart, BYM's Diversity and Inclusion Officer, introduced this item. She reflected on the three stages of an approach to action on racism – learning, acknowledging and acting and we reflected on the following questions:

'1. Can we make an active commitment to dismantling institutional racism within Quakers and Society?

'2. Based on our testimonies, what is our vision for this work?

'Our Yearly Meeting has been struggling to engage with issues of racism for generations. Momentum has been building particularly over this year.

'Our testimonies to equality and truth demand that we engage in a drive towards real change, turning our declared intentions into reality. We are called to commit to becoming an actively anti-racist church. Individually we are all on different stages of this journey, which is based on learning, moves through acknowledgment and on to commitment to action based on discernment.'

As part of that first step, which is 'learning', I can recommend joining a group exploring together the book *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F Saad.

This book assists us to examine our own internal attitudes some of which we are completely unaware of. Although it is a personal examination nevertheless I found it very beneficial to be in a group (three people in my group) telling the others what my answers were to the questions at the end of each short chapter. You are encouraged to write your answers down.

I have an electronic version of all the questions which I can send to you if you like. I found it helpful.

Another good reason to be in a group is for support. It is incredibly easy to change from self-examination to being critical of the writer of the book. There are all sorts of good reasons to criticise the book, but it is only a tool and others in the group can point out if you are wandering away from the purpose of the questions. Also they can support if you begin to feel guilty, which is not helpful.

If you would like to join a small group to work through this book I will be happy to group people together if you contact me at [ftepsom@gmail.com](mailto:ftepsom@gmail.com) or phone 07790 997 489. We have two small groups in our area meeting so far.

**Frances Touch**

## Collecting in June

6 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 13 Children's choice: 'Send a cow', 20 Médecins sans Frontières, 27 Brummana High School

The deadline for the July edition is 27 June 2021

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



# VIRGIL'S BEES



Photo: Liz Collins

Bless air's gift of sweetness, honey  
from the bees, inspired by clover,  
marigold, eucalyptus, thyme,  
the hundred perfumes of the wind.

Bless the beekeeper  
who chooses for her hives  
a site near water, violet beds, no yew,  
no echo. Let the light lilt, leak, green  
or gold, pigment for queens,  
and joy be inexplicable but there  
in harmony of willowherb and stream,  
of summer heat and breeze,  
each bee's body  
at its brilliant flower, lover-stunned,  
strumming on fragrance, smitten.

For this,  
let gardens grow, where beelines end,  
sighing in roses, saffron blooms, buddleia;  
where bees pray on their knees, sing, praise  
in pear trees, plum trees; bees  
are the batteries of orchards, gardens, guard  
them.

**Carol Ann Duffy**