

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

## MARCH 2015

Dear Friends,

This month in our Meeting, and reflected here in our Newsletter, our focus is on deepening our spiritual life and living out our faith in the world. The article on Becoming Friends Together details how we hope to use the material provided by Woodbrooke and Quaker Life to help us with the former, also the Woodbrooke-on-the Road event at Sutton Meeting House on 21 March. The article about preparing for the general election, and information from Friends House about hustings there, lead us to our Fourth Sunday discussion on our spiritual preparation for Yearly Meeting. As always I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and am always grateful for contributions. - **Gillian Turner**

### A message from Corrine Loos

Dear Friends,

As you all know, I will be moving to Cardiff on 28 February. I want to take this opportunity to say a big 'Thank You' for welcoming me to Croydon Quaker Meeting. I will miss sharing the silence on a Sunday morning with some lovely people who have provided me with some great examples of the Quaker spirit. Once I have settled into my new home, I intend attending Cardiff Quaker meeting and hopefully get more involved in QPSW. I have not forgotten that insightful week-end I had when I attended QPSW Conference last year, and in some small way, I would like to contribute towards the wonderful work that Quakers do. Hopefully, I will be able to come to Croydon meeting on the odd occasion that I am back in Croydon.

I will miss you all.

With Love and Friendship

Corrine

*(Our assistant clerk is sending the latest edition of Quaker Faith and Practice to remind her of us.)*

### News from West Scotland

On the last day of February, which happened to be the first anniversary of our moving into our flat at Auchlochan, I attended Christine Davis's Memorial Meeting, together with two other members of our Local Meeting. The Meeting was held in Dunblane, Christine's home city, in the Cathedral which is the only building large enough to accommodate the gathering which must have numbered well over three hundred. Christine, as Clerk of the central Stewardship Committee at Friends House, had been one of the speakers at every treasures' conference that I attended when I was Croydon treasurer. After the Memorial Meeting we went to the Cathedral Hall where a fine spread had been prepared. Apart from the few Friends I have met since coming to Scotland, there was only one that I recognized. This was Donald Southall, one time Recording Clerk, who had come up from Kendal for the occasion. I introduced myself and said that the last time we had spoken was at Yearly Meeting at Aberystwyth in 1997. He told me that he had been Christine's Assistant Clerk when Stewardship Committee was first set up.

The day before had been a very sad day for us at home because our pet cat Sophie had to be put to sleep. Her vital organs such as kidneys were malfunctioning and the decline was so rapid that her condition was plainly beyond hope. She was a rescue cat who had obviously known a good home for most of her life before becoming homeless. She gave us eight years of joy.

In November I attended Area Meeting for the first time since my membership was transferred. It was held in Glasgow Meeting House and was very well attended. A returned Ecumenical Accompanier, Bronwen Currie, gave an excellent power-point presentation. I have not missed Local Meeting on the first and third Sundays at Wiston Lodge since I started going in May 2014. A Friend, who has also become a dear friend, lives in Dunbarton and comes to Wiston Lodge on the first Sunday, picking me up from Auchlochan on her way. Her Local Meeting is Milngavie which meets on the second and fourth Sundays

After the very mild winter that we enjoyed last year, this is much more like the seasonal weather which we expected when coming to Scotland. We had some heavy snowfalls in February

which resulted in our community minibus getting stuck. The tractor/snowplough sent to free the minibus broke down so we were denied that facility for a whole day. We have had very little snow since then but plenty of high winds and heavy showers. Snowdrops are in bloom and crocuses and daffodils pushing up through the turf are sure signs that spring is coming.

Isabelle and I are now much more involved in community activities, from Bible studies and play readings (now in the middle of *Hobson's Choice*, a lovely comedy) to playing scrabble on Friday evenings. Our Burns Night dinner in the Auchlochan restaurant 'The Bistro' was a great success with a professional music-hall entertainer.

**David Rees**

### **February Fourth Sunday: Being Friends Together**

*Being Friends Together* offers Quaker meetings a fresh way of approaching their ongoing development as living communities of faithful people. It is designed to help us to develop spiritually, both as individuals and meetings, to -

- learn about aspects of the Quaker and Christian traditions
- develop and express their sense of Quaker identity
- grow as communities
- feel supported to live out Quaker testimony in their lives and localities
- integrate all generations into the life of meetings

There are four pathways:

- growing as community together
- deepening the life of the Spirit together
- exploring our living tradition together
- being in the world together

We agreed that separate groups would focus on each one. Convenors of each group volunteered:

**1 Growing as community together** and knowing each other in the things that are eternal. . . and everyday. **Godfrey Turner**

**2 Deepening the life of the Spirit together**, exploring Quaker spirituality, worship, spiritual practice and prayer. **Kay Papadopoulos** *meeting every second Monday at the meeting house at 2pm beginning on 8 March.*

**3 Exploring our living tradition together:** the Quaker Way, rooted in Christianity and open to new light, approaches to Jesus and the bible, Quaker history and roots. **Joyce Trotman**

**4 Being in the world together**, our testimonies. **Anthea Underwood**

*Please contact the Friend organising whatever theme you would like to follow. If you need an evening session, please let Gillian know.*

### **March Fourth Sunday: Spiritual Preparation for Yearly Meeting**

YM will be held from 1- 4 May at Friends House, Euston. The clerk, Deborah Rowlands, reminds us that *Even if you can't be with us in person, shared spiritual preparation creates the foundations upon which Yearly Meeting in session can build. This is the first of a new three-year arc on the theme 'living out our faith in the world.'* One of our focuses is housing as a particular example of a tested concern in the areas of inequality and injustice.

On 22 March elders and Socials Committee have planned a joint venture. We will serve our usual simple lunch at 12.45 and ask you, either during the meal or over tea afterwards, to discuss together at your table in the common room or vestibule, the questions posed for our consideration:

*How can we open ourselves fully to the pain of the world without despairing or turning away?*

*Might allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to each other transform pain into compassion and kindle a passion to heal?*

*How can meetings be places where individuals are both supported and challenged as they wrestle with the complex issues that face us?*

*How are we committed to Quaker values? How can we witness for a better social order? How can the testimonies of individuals bring more peace and economic justice?*

*What can we do to bring about justice and equality in the society in which we live?*

Further details will be available before the meeting.

*Are you alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate towards people on the basis of who or what they are or because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all*

people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?

**Advices and queries 33**

### Preparing for the General Election

A Woodbrooke weekend course, 13-15 February 2015, led by Jessica Metheringham, Parliamentary and Political Engagement Secretary for Quakers in Britain (tweets as @PoliticalQuaker)

We live in exciting times. The only predictable thing about the forthcoming general election is its unpredictability. In the space of a few years we have evolved from a two-party system to a six-party mish-mash with added Celtic fringes. How should we as Quakers respond?

The 11 of us on this course soon cohered as a group, perhaps helped by the fact that it took place in the bright and airy surrounding of the art room, though also because it soon became obvious that we mostly shared the same political sympathies. Even if I had not been appointed to represent Croydon meeting I would still have done so on my own account, as I needed some way of focusing my somewhat disparate, not to say haphazard, political thoughts and views. Under Jessica's expert guidance I think we all found ourselves emerging with a clearer picture of the issues, the parties and personalities, and above all of the part we as Quakers need to play in the forthcoming election.

Need to play? Can't we just let it all pass us by, and under the claim of "not being interested in politics" leave the voting to everyone else? No; our starting point must be faith-based, and our faith reminds us that "True Godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it..." (William Penn, 1682, Qfp 21.17), whence *Advices & Queries* (34) urges us to "Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand".

Jessica's plan for the weekend was to deal first with the nuts and bolts of calling and holding a general election, to consider what activities Quaker meetings could engage in, what messages we would want to put across, whom we should address and how, and what we were going to take back to our meetings as proposals for action. For an overall view, the nuts and bolts and issues are well presented in the booklet *General Election 2015 – a guide for Quakers*, published by Britain Yearly Meeting, recently distributed to local meetings, and available from the Friends House bookshop.

As to what meetings can actually do, a number of possibilities emerged. We can use our meeting houses as centres of information about the election, so that those who use our premises during the week can have no excuse for not knowing who their local candidates are and how to contact them, and when and where hustings will take place. The only caveat I would urge on this front is to ensure that we present such information as objectively as possible. It may be obvious from our other posters – about peace, equality, care for the environment, and so on – where most of our own sympathies lie, but we must not confuse them with apparent endorsements of particular party policies. We should only encourage hirers and visitors to think about the issues and then hope that they will arrive independently at what we believe are right decisions.

We could, as a meeting, hold a hustings ourselves. Several other participants came from meetings that had already done so at previous elections, and some planned to do so this time. However, my feeling was that we (Croydon) would have needed to think about this long before the election loomed. Another possibility that occurred to me was to offer our meeting house again as a polling station, but Gillian tells me we have already tried this, unsuccessfully.

Other activities include engaging with the media. Whatever we do decide to do, let it be known to the local press and radio stations. (That's my job, as recently appointed press officer.) If that much is obvious, perhaps less obvious is making use of social media, notably Facebook and Twitter. Several local meetings, including Exeter and our sister meeting Purley, already post regular tweets, often retweeted from @PaulParker or @PoliticalQuaker. One Friend advised the use of a closed group on Facebook to act as a coordination forum and Twitter itself to address the wider public. Digital media may not be everyone's cup of tea, but do you imagine the first generation of Friends would not have embraced it as avidly as they did what we now regard as ephemeral

pamphleteering?

The general election will be officially called on 30 March, and from then till polling day on 7 May (the period of parliamentary “purdah”) is when whatever we decide to do at our March business meeting will be put into operation. Please attend it with proposals and suggestions for action.

- David Parlett

### Hustings at Friends House

Jessica Metheringham, Parliamentary and Political Engagement Secretary for Quakers in Britain tells us that five political parties will take part in national hustings at Friends House in Euston in the run-up to the general election in May. Now we need an audience to ask the questions. We hope to engage Quakers and non-Quakers alike and wish to warmly invite members of your meeting to attend. She hopes that each meeting within easy reach of Friends House will confirm the attendance of at least 5-10 people at each hustings. She suggests we bring along banners or signs to show where you were from. Is there a Croydon one?

Each hustings has a different theme. They are:

#### **Tuesday, 31 March: ‘Our view onto the world’**

Including international affairs, conflict and immigration

To register to attend this hustings, [click here and choose “international affairs”](#)

To submit a question for this hustings, [click here and fill in the form](#)

#### **Thursday, 9 April: ‘Building a sustainable community’**

Including inclusion, community and sustainability

To register to attend this hustings, [click here and choose “environment, community and sustainability”](#). To submit a question for this hustings, [click here and fill in the form](#).

#### **Tuesday, 21 April: ‘Paying for society’**

Including economy, equality and social justice

To register to attend this hustings, [click here and choose “economy, equality and social justice”](#)

To submit a question for this hustings, [click here and fill in the form](#).

To register to attend one of our hustings, go to [www.quakervote.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.quakervote.eventbrite.co.uk) and choose the hustings you want to attend. We would also like to invite you to submit questions for the hustings. While we will take some from the floor, the first five questions will be selected in advance – so [please do submit some!](#) I’ll email you a week before the hustings if you’ve been successful.

Doors will open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. All three hustings will be held in The Large Meeting House, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, NW1 2BJ.

If the links in this aren’t working, go to the “Hustings and webinars” page of [www.quakervote.org.uk](http://www.quakervote.org.uk).

### ‘A Friendly Introduction to Discernment’

Although this course was advertised as suitable for elders and overseers, it was also helpful for me as a newly-appointed clerk. Led by Linda Craig and Jocelyn Dawes, who both have recent experience as Quaker Trustees, we explored how we discern the leadings of the Spirit in a wide variety of situations, including personal discernment; supporting each other in following our leadings (in meetings for clearness); and group discernment (particularly in Quaker meetings for worship for business). Each of these could easily fill a whole week-end, so it was only an introduction, and I will just mention a few lessons that I brought home. Of course it is harder to put them into practice.

The course emphasised that our discernment should be grounded in our spiritual practice. We should be attentive to the leadings of the Spirit in our everyday lives: discernment should not be a separate ‘mode’ that we go into when we have a major decision to make. We should look after ourselves and our spiritual lives: Linda reminded us of the notices in aeroplanes that tell us to put on our own oxygen mask before we try to fit anyone else’s, or we will be of no use to them!

Meetings for clearness were originally used for decisions about marriages and have been more popular among American Quakers, but have increasingly been used by Friends in this country to support each other in taking other personal decisions.

As well as time spent in worship, we had time for discussion of how we take decisions as a group. I realised how easily we drift away from good Quaker practice in our business meetings. It is so easy to get drawn into answering each other back, as if we were in an ordinary business

meeting, and forget that it is a Quaker meeting for worship, where we should allow silence between the spoken contributions, as we listen to each other and try together to discern the leadings of the Spirit.

As always, it was a joy to spend time at Woodbrooke, and I am grateful to the Meeting for supporting me to go.

- *Rhiannon Rees*

### **February Area Meeting at Sutton**

The first hour of the business meeting was taken up with required business, that is: a report the deaths of Ted Battle and Rosalind Emberson; two applications for membership (Neal Webb and Joanna Doherty). There were a number of appointments and requests to attend courses, and three transfers of membership into our AM, and a discussion on the difference between a Minute of Record and a testimony. The minute says: *AQM committee has asked us to consider whether a Testimony to the Grace of God should be written for every Friend who dies in membership of this Area Meeting. We agree to consult the secretary of Quaker Life about this procedure.*

### **The Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme for Palestine and Israel**

There then followed a most interesting power point presentation by Nikki Ray, who took part in the QPSW-organised EAPPI programme during 2014. She was based with the Hanoun team in the West Bank from August to October 2014. This is an area of herding and subsistence farming, and she described the hardship suffered by the Palestinians because of the controls and expansion of Israeli illegal settlements.

She explained that these spreading outposts used violence and aggression to prevent the local inhabitants from herding their flocks and till their soil. They were under civil law but the local community was under military law. They could not build a house or replace demolished electricity pylons without a permit. Apparently there are very many different types of permits, including permission to travel, 96% of which are rejected. The settlers need no permits.

She emphasised that the EAPPI is not neutral but impartial in what it reports, and emphasised the number of Israeli Human Rights organisations and websites which reports and monitors, eg [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org) Gives reports and statistics on abuses and policies in the occupied Territories.

[www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org) An Israeli website which details exports, and businesses that profit from the settlements and occupation

The blog of Nikki's time as an EAPPI is well worth reading – see [StoriesFromYanounAndBeyond.wordpress.com/](http://StoriesFromYanounAndBeyond.wordpress.com/)

### **Adult School Hall:**

Readers of last month's newsletter may be interested to know that, following my worries about hiring the building for filming on 22 February because of the lack of heating, the filming went ahead from 7am to 8.30 pm. The crew had been filming another episode the day before in a pumping station in Walthamstow and said that by comparison, the ASH was positively balmy! Our scene was set in a hospital ward during a global epidemic. They are going to be doing some clever digital edits, and the Hall will be made to look about twice as long, and to be filled with hospital beds, rather than the 8 that were there. Apparently they are hoping to take the film to Cannes if they get financial backing. They also used the common room for their catering, make-up and changing room. This meant that they were given, through our posters and literature, a good idea of who Quakers are and what we are about. They donated their unused teabags, coffee and milk to Nightwatch.

You may also be interested to know that the cost of repairing the damage to the gutters and drains of the ASH after the winter storms in January and February last year was covered by the income in 2014 from letting the Hall.

### **Recommended Reading by two Quaker authors**

#### **MISS CARTER'S WAR Sheila Hancock £7.99 \***

It is 1948 and the young and beautiful Marguerite Carter has lost her parents and survived a terrifying war, working for the SOE behind enemy lines. She returns to England to be one of the first women to receive a degree from the University of Cambridge. Now she pins back her unruly auburn curls, draws a pencil seam up her legs, ties the laces on her sensible black shoes and sets

out towards her future as an English teacher in a girl's grammar school. For Miss Carter has a mission – to social justice, to prevent war and to educate her girls.

(\* Gillian adds: I bought a copy in the supermarket for £4.99.)

### **THE EMANCIPATION OF B Jennifer Kavanagh £7.99**

B is not a child of his time. As an outsider, he hides his secrets well. Freedom is all he dreams of. But when it comes at last, it is in the most unexpected way – and at a considerable cost.

– From the blurb

A hymn to mindfulness and a moving meditation on our conflicting ideas of home in a novel that explores one solitary man's efforts to find sanctuary in the most unlikely of places.

### **Events for March at Friends House**

#### **Friday 6 March: Book launch**

Westminster meeting house, 18:30 to 20:00. Geoffrey Durham interviews Jennifer Kavanagh about her first novel, *The Emancipation of B*: how she came to write it, moving from non-fiction to fiction, and what it feels like to move from being an agent for novels to writing them.

#### **Saturday 14 March: Thinking through threshing**

Friends House Euston, 11:00 to 15:00, free entry. Rhiannon Grant and Rachel Muers invite volunteers to come and discuss their ideas about and any experiences of threshing processes as used among Quakers today. As part of a research project looking at how threshing is understood as one of our business methods, we are seeking feedback from Friends about how it is used and talked about. Threshing can - but doesn't always! - help to diffuse tension around a topic before a Meeting for Worship for Business, and we are especially interested in how Friends decide when to use it and for which topics.

#### **Saturday 21 March** The Spiritual Life of the Meeting with John and Diana Lampen at Sutton Meeting House. Woodbrooke on the Road. 10.0am to 4.30pm

#### **Saturday 21 March: Quaker Way Next steps** "Encountering the Spirit" - first of three one-day courses for those new to Quakers. 10:30-4:15pm. £10 each course, includes lunch. Please book via [henshawd@gmail.com](mailto:henshawd@gmail.com) or call 020 7486 3229

#### **Saturday 21 March: Answering that of God** Friends House Euston, 10:00 to 17:00, £10 at door (no advance booking). The third of five monthly Saturday workshops by The Kindlers, led by James McCarthy and Peter Parr. What does 'that of God in everyone' imply? How might relationships reflect this understanding? How do we let go of ego-self to know the greater self? 10.0 refreshments for 10.30 am start - 4.30 tea for 5.0 pm finish. Workshops will be participatory with input, group-work and worship. Bring your own picnic lunch or eat in the Friends House Quaker Centre.

#### **Saturday 28 March: Quaker Way Next steps** "Membership and Community" - second of three one-day courses for those new to Quakers. 10:30-4:15pm. £10 each course, includes lunch. Please book via [henshawd@gmail.com](mailto:henshawd@gmail.com) or call 020 7486 3229

### **March diary**

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

**Sunday 8** - Croydon meeting for worship for business, from 12.15. All welcome

**Friday 13** - "Things that help me grow", 7.30 at Sutton FMH

**Sunday 15** - Ted Battle memorial meeting At Purley fmh. Details to follow.

**Sunday 22** - Spiritual Preparation for Yearly Meeting 2015 Discussion and lunch

*Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.*

*Please join us for porridge, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15*

### **February Collections**

1 Friends Family Group £948, 8 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad £30 (£87), 15 Area Meeting £24 (£69), 22 Timanne Academy, Nairobi £122

**The deadline for the April edition is Sunday 29 March 2015**

**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)**