

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

March 2018

Dear Friends - It is difficult to believe, as I write this housebound because of the treacherous weather, that this is the beginning of Spring. But come it will, with all the opportunities for enjoyment and enrichment!

Gillian Turner

You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God? **George Fox 1652**

Thirst

To all things there is a season:
A time to give out, a time to take in;
A time of being drained, a time for replenishing:
A time to say yes eagerly, a time to say no wisely.

I have come to the time of drinking in:
The thirst is great and terrible.
Time I need to drink in sunsets,
To wait like a blackbird listening for worms:
Time I need to hear
What the leaves have to tell me:
And time to sleep and sleep:
Time to hug to me sanity:
Time to hold silence like a promise
In my two cupped hands:
Time to think with God
Alone in some wilderness of solitude,
And then – with love returning,
Then only, to share.
Then only, to share.

Cecily Taylor

News of Friends

Marjorie Evans: Marjorie is safely tucked up warmly in her own home, well looked after by carers she likes and kind neighbours. She asked after her old friends by name and sends loving greetings to us all.

Wilf Hayler: In a lively conversation on the phone this morning, Wilf described how he was getting on at Bernhard Barron. His first comment was that he was warm and comfortable, unlike the workmen who are building extension accommodation in this extreme cold. The residents, including him, have been moved about while the interior work has been carried out. The library and quiet room have been used as bedrooms, and many of the outings have been cancelled, so life has been less organised recently. Like so many of the residents, he has had the flu virus, but feels recovered now.

Wilf is still playing his part in keeping daily life going. He filled in for the person taking round the post until she recovered, and is organising a music session next week

His house has still not sold, so he has put it with a different agent, which is a worry, because the fees has been raised, though not, he says, by much.

He promised an article for our next newsletter!

Yvonne Kassim: Yvonne tells us that she is now getting regular treatment for her legs and has visits from carers. She is hoping to get back to Meeting when the weather improves.

Cecily Tayler: Kay Papadopoulos visited Cecily in her care home in Old Windsor towards the end of February, and took with her all our love and best wishes. In return Cecily sent her many thanks for all the cards and letters she has received from all her Friends at Croydon Meeting. If she is well enough Kay hopes to visit her again early this month. In our newsletter last month we published a poem *Your Flowers* because it reminded us of the care Cecily gave to bringing in flowers for the table at Meeting for Worship. This month we publish one of Cecily's own poems:, 'Thirst'.

Be still and cool in thine own mind

In 1820 the noted wit, essayist and preacher The Reverend Sydney Smith learned that his friend, Lady Morpeth, was suffering with low spirits. He wrote her a beautiful letter full of tender understanding and uplifting, practical advice such as: 'read amusing books' and 'take short views of human life-not further than dinner or tea'. He advised her to be firm and constant in the practice of religion and to 'keep, good blazing fires'. A wry point about managing expectations was included, 'don't expect too much of human life - a sorry business at best'.



Years before, in 1658, our own George Fox offered similar, but perhaps more spiritual advice, insight and support to Oliver Cromwell's favourite daughter, Lady Claypole. After her youngest son had died, she fell ill and on learning that she was sorely troubled, Fox was moved to write and he counselled her thus:

'Be still and cool in thine own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive His strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blusterings and storms'. (QFP 2.18)

Evidently, Lady Claypole was much moved by Fox's compassion as were the many Friends suffering from unquiet minds who received copies of the letter.

Pointers to important aspects of self-care such as the above are still, of course, as meaningful today as they ever were. Contemporary American Quaker

and educator Parker J. Palmer feels strongly that we need to practise a good level of loving kindness to self and thereby, others

Barbara Earl

Elizabeth Claypole by John Michael Wright, National Portrait Gallery (image in public domain)

Getting back on the bus

Getting back to meeting after a considerable gap is a handy way of realising how much I had been missing.... the calming silence... and the warmth of the smiles and then what people say.... the ministry, the reading from *Advice and Queries*, the announcements at the end about things to do, places to go and afterwards this week, the lecture about early spiritual reformers. My notebook is out and I'm putting down leads to be followed up.... Rufus Jones upon whose work David has drawn in his presentation and Godfrey's suggestion of Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down*. (Clearly, you can take the girl out of the lecture hall but not the lecture hall out of the girl).

And then, there's the casual chat.... I can't remember quite how and why but somebody has asked me why the Presbyterianism that I was brought up in lost its magic or, at least, it's holding-power. Good question, and on the way home I think about it, yet again. It's the question that most Quaker members and attenders have considered, given that most of us started out somewhere else. So at some point in adult life, most of us have made the decision not to get on the same old bus that goes in the same old way. We want to find a new one that takes us where we need and want to go now, with some real life experience behind us. It's real life, not theory be it theological or

whatever, that has tested out and found the same old stuff wanting. (I did try to go back and lasted three Sundays. It was familiar....what's a Sunday without the 23rd Psalm....but I didn't engage....my fault/reaction not theirs....).

In my world *now*, things are rarely straightforward. Without succumbing to a dystopian vision or Corporal Fraser's warning that 'we're all doomed', life is complicated and complex. I'd suggest that we all live in world of pressure, stress and anxiety - and we attempt to devise means by which - if we don't solve or resolve these anxieties - we can cope positively with them. Whoever we are we're required to conform to certain modes and standards of behaviour on a personal, professional, organisational and societal levels. However, it's clear for them to be sustained these various codes should support each other in a coherent and comfortable fashion. One or other or perhaps even all could be contradictory and in conflict with each other. The question how can they be reconciled in such a fashion that gives each of us our own sense of personal, individual authenticity. Kierkegaard said that 'the biggest danger' is of losing oneself through extreme identification with society, through disappearing into the crowd. To survive we have to question what is given and go about constructing our own cognitive world and our own self. The minister standing in front of the communion table (and other experts with specialised knowledge) can, of course, assist us in this process but he or she cannot supply all the answers as they do not know, as each individual does, the scope and depth of the questions with which he or she are concerned. So, getting on the Quaker bus came about as I gave up the certainty of a pre-determined route and destination - and opted for convivial company on the ride in the general direction of what William James called 'the palpitating inward life of the truth self'.

Helen Johnson

South London Area Meeting

Area Meeting was held at Sutton on 18 February. After shared refreshments, we met for worship. Three extracts from *God, Words and Us*, edited by Helen Rowlands, were read and we then went into small groups and shared our experiences of worship.

The visiting speaker was Bernadette O'Shea, the new Clerk of London Quaker Property Trust (LQPT), which is responsible for Quaker property in the London area (except Friends House). The members are the London Area Meetings, who appoint representatives (although our Area Meeting has been unable to find any). She explained that LQPT was working on a medium-term strategy, looking at where they would hope to be in, say, ten years' time. She gave us a first draft and invited Meetings to comment (I have a paper copy).

Following a financial crisis at the turn of the century, Six Weeks Meeting (LQPT's predecessor) had increased its reserves, although they still fell short of the amount LQPT should really have for cover against contingent liabilities. More income was being raised from our Meeting Houses. Kingston Meeting House had been rebuilt and Westminster refurbished. Petts Wood had been sold. However London Quakers were still living beyond our means. This needed to change. Although the number of Meetings had increased slightly over the twentieth century, the number of members had declined. Another key issue was the shortage of Friends and energy to do the necessary work.

Bernadette asked us to comment on the options of a) doing 'just enough' to try and keep going as at present or b) having fewer but better Meeting Houses across London (their current recommendation). Unfortunately, the full agenda meant that there was very little time for discussion. It was clear we needed to increase our numbers, but there was no time for suggestions of how to do this. London Quakers are holding a 'one-day conversation', 'People and Buildings', about this on Saturday 28 April at Friends House I hope our Local and Area Meetings will also return to these vital questions.

Richard Chinn of Epsom Meeting was appointed a Trustee of Area Meeting and Helen Johnson of Croydon Meeting was appointed to attend the General Meeting of Leighton Park School on 17 March.

Meeting for Sufferings had asked Meetings to consider whether to become Sanctuary Meetings. The meeting noted that Purley had already agreed to become one and Croydon wished to become one, if two 'link people' could be found. Sutton and Streatham and Brixton were still considering this. The meeting decided that we wished to become an Area Sanctuary Meeting and asked Area Meeting Committee to find two 'link' people. We noted that there were complex issues

around Government policy relating to refugees and asylum-seekers and that it was important to work with others on this.

The children presented two miniature 'gardens' they had made, with accompanying sounds.

Frances Touch presented her Area Meeting Treasurer's Report and the core accounts for 2017. These were approved.

The next Area Meeting will be at Purley on 20 May.

Rhiannon Rees

God, Words and Us is the topic of the discussion group which meets on every second and fourth Mondays at 2pm in the Friends Room. The next meeting is on 12 March when we will be discussing chapters 1 and 2. Everyone is welcome.

Reading 'the Friend'

Do you read *The Friend*, either by taking out a subscription or by borrowing a copy from the rack in the vestibule? I have the feeling, from blank looks I get when I mention a really interesting or challenging article I have read, You are really missing out if you don't!

Maybe you say you haven't time to read it, but it's the kind of magazine that you can read in short bursts. When it arrives on Thursdays, a flick through the contents reveals the unexpected, such as the interview with David Parlett following the publication of his latest board game, the announcement that Chris Alton will give the next Swarthmore lecture, a review of a book by a familiar author, a letter by someone I know. Next are the regular headings - Thought for the Week, Reflections, Opinions, Reports, Letters.

I want to take you through one edition, chosen at random, **5 January 2018** to give you a flavour of the kinds of articles that come up.

The photo is a close-up of icy ivy leaves and the topic is *Quakers and Spirituality*.

Thought for the Week is a poem entitled Silence which ends

*Silence
and witness
are two pillars
of Quaker
spirituality.*

The two reports on conferences, ***The Sanctuary Everywhere*** asks how we deal with the populism that is threatening to upend European societies, and we learn what projects QCEA and other Quaker agencies have in place across Europe.

The Quaker Mental Health Forum entitled 'Dementia: what is our witness?' and ***Meetings and care homes*** and both ask: do we encounter dementia with love and honesty? Do we meet the person, not the illness?

A Life well Lived? reflected on Advices and Queries 30: *Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you?*

The article on Privilege asserts that Quakers have very little understanding of how privilege operates in our society. It claims that Quakers reject the idea that they are privileged, and cites that the existence of private schools creates a privileged elite.

An excellent article entitled ***Quakers and Spirituality: the nature of direct spiritual experience***, describes Experiment with Light as a way of opening ourselves to each other and the wider world, and also to a practice new to me, Focusing, devised by Eugene Gendlin, an American philosopher and psychologist, as a way of learning to be compassionate towards every aspect we find within ourselves. The writer, Madeleine Kay, is running a workshop on Focusing at Claridge House 16 – 18 March.

Discernment and Inner Values dealt with spirituality and activism, and looked at some 'Turning the Tide' resources and practices. How do your inner values shape what you do?

This is a pick-and-choose journal. Of the six articles I would read two or three with attention, have a quick look at the deaths and job vacancies, and feel I had had my money's worth at £69 pa.

GT

Meeting House News

Croydon Beekeepers - The beekeepers started using our premises in January this year and have remarked on the suitability of our premises together with the ample evening parking which is hard to beat at other venues in Croydon.

Indeed last Monday they were starting to make wooden hives in the Common Room.

Drink Drivers - This is a course held quarterly for three Saturdays in a row for people who have been caught drink driving. It is run by retired Police Officers and anybody who is more than ten minutes late is turned away.

It always amazes me when I see the people who come to this course as they do not look like what I imagine a drink driver would look like. They are of all ages young and old of both sexes.

Peter Tayler

Radio 4's Thought for the day

We are fairly regular listeners to this short programme. Sometimes it is instructive, sometimes irritating; at times profound, at other times banal; at other times it is obvious that the speaker has let a few pet bees (buzz buzz) out of their bonnet!

When I bought a new diary for 2018 it came neatly packaged with a calendar which has quotes from the Buddha. March's Thought for the Month is: *If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.*

Godfrey Turner

Donations Table

Friends might like to know that the following amounts were collected on the donations table:

October and November 2017: Quaker Homeless Action (QHA) £27

December and January 2018: Croydon Refugee Day Centre £ 35.

R.R.

Things to come

Thursday 8 March: Property Management for Non Property Managers. FREE property workshop for London voluntary organisations, 10:00 to 15:30, Ethical Property Foundation, Vintage House 36-7, Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TL. The Ethical Property Foundation is running a FREE property workshop for voluntary groups keen to learn the basics about managing their premises. Perfect for anyone on a Premises Committee seeking a fresh perspective and lot of good advice. Expert independent advice; free networking sandwich lunch plus a free confidential advice clinic with senior property professionals. LIMITED PLACES - Book today via <http://www.ethicalproperty.org.uk/nppe/>.

Friday 9 - Sunday 11 March: London Link Group, Jordans. Friday, 9 March, 2018 - 17:00 to Sunday, 11 March, 2018 - 16:00 Weekend event for young Quakers 11-18. The weekend will include lots of games, checking out the woods, some eating, some Quaker reflection, and plenty of other exciting things too. £20. Contact form at London Quakers web page.

Friday 9 - Sunday 11 March: NFN Conference. Annual open conference of the Nontheist Friends Network at Woodbrooke. 'Quakers in 2032: What will our society look like?', with Linda Murgatroyd, Harvey Gillman, David Boulton. See <https://nontheist-quakers.org.uk/>.

Sunday 11 March: Local business meeting From 12.15. All welcome.

Friday 16 March: Ceilidh fund raiser 6-9 pm, Forest Hill fund raiser for Refuge - at the Ivy House: <http://www.ivyhousesunhead.com/>

Saturday 17 March: Supporting Older Friends London Quakers/Quaker Life day conference – Eventbrite open, flyers sent

Monday 19 March: What future for Quakers? 1830, Friends house. Chris Venables of Quaker Life and Emily Provance, Storyteller. What future for Quakers? – Building communities of hope & faith.

Sunday 18 March: Area Committee meeting At Purley mh. All welcome.

Thursday 22 March: Triennial Churches Together South London Forum At Livability, a venue close to North Greenwich tube station. CTSL is particularly keen to see Quakers represented at the event. The relevant CTSL contact for RSVP purposes is Claire Crowley, Ecumenical Officer, Churches Together in South London, at claire@ctslondon.org.uk but if you plan to attend please also let Eleri Pengelly know (ragger54@gmail.com).

Saturday 24 March: Patterns and examples Patterns and examples: deep roots for strong communities, 10:00 to 16:00. Quaker Life and Woodbrooke are holding three 'Quaker roles' gatherings in 2018. Attendance at this event costs £20 per participant. Lunch and refreshments are included in the cost of the event. Booking form at <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/patterns-and-examples/>

Collected in December, January and February

December

3 Quaker work at home and oversees £33
 11 Refugee Youth £107.70
 17 SLAQM £51
 24 Friends Family group £50
 31 the Retreat £107

January

9 Quaker work at home and overseas £95
 14 SLAQM £33
 22 Woodbrooke £60
 28 Croydon Meeting £37

February

4 Friends Family group £77
 11 Quaker work £40
 18 SLAQM £50
 25 Timmane School Nairobi £31

Collecting in March

4 South London Area Meeting - 11 Croydon Local Meeting - 18 Young Friends General Meeting -
 25 Campaign Against the Arms Trade

The deadline for the April edition is Sunday 25 March 2018

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