

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

May 2018

Dear Friends - May's edition is shorter than last month's, as we are in print just before Yearly Meeting, which starts on 4 May. Such a lot going on then, with many opportunities to learn more about what Quakers do nationally. There are lots of things going on locally as well, including more news about Sanctuary Everywhere and the hostile environment so much in the news at present.

Gillian Turner and David Parlett

Sing and rejoice, ye Children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt; and truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play.

And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign.

And so, be of good faith, and valiant for the Truth. George Fox 1663

What is love?

It is the sweetness of life,
It is the sweet, tender, melting
nature of God, flowing up
through his seed of life
into our hearts.
It excludes all evil;
it perfects all the good in the heart.
A touch of love does this in part;
perfect love does it in full.

Isaac Penington

News of Friends

Albie and Jacob French are looking forward to taking part in the Children's Programme during Yearly Meeting.

Rachel Edgson writes: I am walking 10k for the London Legal charity on 21 May. The London Legal charity is an independent charity seeking to raise funds for free access to legal aid services. They support the provision of specialist legal advice through law centres, advice agencies and citizens advice bureaux. I am walking along with a few of my colleagues from work to raise money together for this important charity. Please could you sponsor me on the just giving page: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Jubilee> .

Kay Papadopoulos has taken part in the Bluebell Walk at Chudham, near Down, in aid of St. Christopher's Hospice. She went with friends who have been supported by the Hospice. She said the weather was dreadful, but despite that there was a very good turnout.

Marjorie Evans is still in good form, living in her own home, well looked after by carers she likes and with kind neighbours. She asks after her old friends by name and sends loving greetings to us all.

Yvonne Kassim is now attending meeting regularly.

Celia Snaith spoke to the collection at the end of April, in support of Quaker Concern for Animals, and it was good to see her again.

Cecily Tayler has moved to a smaller care home in Windsor where she is more comfortable. We continue to hold her in the Light and send her loving greetings.

Quakers and jazz

Am I the only one who gets angry and anxious when walking by the Fairfield Hall? Angry that it was ever allowed to get in to such a rundown state - remember when we kept being told that the concert hall had better acoustics than the Royal Festival Hall – and anxious that it might not, despite all the scaffolding and promises, reopen again. We can all remember some great evenings there – off the top of my head, Louis Jordan, the Yardbirds (yes, with Eric Clapton), Chris Barber

and his Jazz Band. (Go on, make your own list!) These and other performers and musicians were exceptional and memorable, who seemed to be saying something real and authentic in their music, something that those of us in the audience could connect with and be moved by sufficiently to remember it many years on.

I'm not a betting woman but I'd put money on it that your list is not the same as mine or, if there are similarities, they are there for different reasons. So, even in shared experiences there's no one way of explaining and understanding things. It's for individuals to do it for themselves. There is a sense of personalisation and improvisation.

So, of course, that brings us to jazz and Quakers. There's a new Quakerspeak video on YouTube: How a Quaker meeting is like jazz (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oH6zZk0LPkg>). The jazz guitarist, Colton Weatherson, explores the links between the jazz ensemble and the Quaker meeting experience. Both encourage the individual make their own contribution in their own voice and with the responsibility to listen to others. Both meeting and jazz ensemble need a balance between those participating.

He points out that when listening to music it is possible to feel in the presence of the spirit. He feels that there are some jazz musicians – for him John Coltrane is one – whose playing sounds like an incantation, 'meditating deeply on the meaning of life' and expressing their own truth in their music.

Interestingly, given the current theist/non-theist discussion, Colton Weatherson emphasises that we all can't have the same point of view. After all, we are all carrying a lot of baggage (and given that most people in the UK come to Quakers after forty years of age, this is especially true). He makes the highly relevant point that like the players in the jazz ensemble we need to 'feel free to express (our) ideas without feeling 'told by the leader' to do so and that things should be worked out as an ensemble.

Time passes, and my liking for the traditional revivalist Chris Barber Jazz Band (and not forgetting the wonderful Otilie Patterson) has been joined by a fondness for Miles Davis in all his coolness. Nevertheless the lesson seems clear: for the group to stay together and make meaningful music, we must all improvise in our own way - but recognise, that deep down, we're sharing the same external reference point as we play the same song.

Helen Johnson

An Openness to learn other ways

Our study groups and individual Friends have been reading *God, Words and Us* (ed. Helen Rowlands), as preparation for Yearly Meeting. Considerations of such important and perhaps, controversial concepts such as theism and non-theism are dealt with in the book as contributors give expression to their own thoughts and experiences. A wide range of ideas and beliefs are represented, not least "that there is a wide spectrum of understandings of the divine" within the Quaker fellowship.

Back in 1984, Beth Allen gave sound advice regarding the need for us to accept both each other and each other's relationship with God:

"Our vision of the truth has to be big enough to include other people's truth as well as our own". (QFP 10.28)

Similarly, the Armchair Theologian, an online blogger, references Jim Pym's "The Pure Principle". Pym, a Quaker and a Buddhist wrote that for some Friends the language of say, the Upanishads or the Tao Te Ching may express their feelings about the divine far more closely than more traditional Christian texts. There may be many words which help us describe our experience of God: the Presence, Life, Spirit, Buddha-mind, Love, Divine Consciousness and Light being a selection.

Early Friends, through their experiences, brought about "language greater and more inclusive than could be found in Christian theological tradition." This openness led Friends to adopt an attitude towards other faiths, philosophies and practices, while remaining true to their own revelation, which included "an openness to learn other ways of finding and expressing the same truth".

The Bhagavad Gita part of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* written in Sanskrit as far back as 5th or 6th century BCE, gives a certain kind of insight into the ineffable:

"I am the origin of this world. I am the taste in the waters; I am the light in the sun; I am the sound in the ether and the manliness in men. I am the pure fragrance in the earth, and brightness

in the fire. I am the life of all creatures”.

Mahatma Gandhi referred to the Gita as his “spiritual dictionary”.

Barbara Earl

The Monday afternoon discussion group, which is facilitated by Barbara and Kay, is on The second and fourth Mondays of the month. On Monday 14 May we will share our own spiritual readings, and decide which book we will study next.

Where will London Quakers meet in 2030?

This one-day workshop was held by London Quakers and London Quakers Property Trust (LQPT) and was well attended by Quakers from across London. Jean, Kitty and I were there from Croydon. In a video, Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Quakers in Britain, asked Meetings to consider several questions about our buildings:

- We want to be visible. Are they easy to find and get to?
- Young Friends have been working on barriers to inclusion. Are our buildings accessible and welcoming for everyone?
- What do our buildings say about us? Are they calm and peaceful? Are they good bases for action and campaigns? Do they help us confidently express our way to anyone who asks?

Bernadette O’Shea, Clerk of LQPT, which is responsible for Quaker buildings in the London area, explained that they had been considering the long-term sustainability of the current pattern of meeting houses. John Dash, the Secretary of LQPT, gave a presentation which showed that, whilst the number of Quakers across London had declined significantly over the last century, the number of Meeting Houses had not. LQPT was in a healthier financial state than it had been around 2000 and currently had sufficient assets to maintain the buildings adequately.

Several members of the Younger Quaker Worship group explained that they met twice a month at Westminster Meeting House on Sunday evenings but also had a monthly meeting elsewhere and experimented with different ways of doing things. At a time when young adults in London have to move because of the housing situation, some valued the stability of a Quaker ‘home’ but they also felt that what was needed was a ‘hub’ for Quaker action that reflected our values. So if we sold land, it should be to community groups, and rents should be affordable.

We heard from Ben Pink Dandelion in Cumbria and Ursula Fuller, from East Kent, about how their Meetings had moved or closed Meetings to adapt to current needs.

In working groups we considered: how to adapt to falling numbers; how to carry out a buildings review; our vision for where Quakers should meet in 2030; and the experience of Meetings with no buildings.

One theme emerged strongly. Whilst many of us loved and valued our buildings, we had become Quakers to follow our spiritual journey, not to manage buildings. Our buildings should meet the needs of the Meeting, rather than the other way around.

However (Kitty adds) There was an important amendment to the minute to put that point rather differently. I don’t have the words to hand, but the gist of it was that the purpose of Quaker property is not to serve the needs of the Meeting, but to enable the Meeting to serve a wider purpose in the world.

It was when Ben Pink Dandelion’s Meeting realised this, that they overturned a decision they had made in 2009. At that time they had seen their role as being guardians of an ancient Quaker heritage centre. Later, when they became involved in work with refugees, they realised that their building did not suit that purpose. So they sold it and moved from their historic site into the town centre. (K McV)

This was not a formal meeting, but at the end of the day enough important themes had emerged to draft a minute, which will come to Local and Area Meetings, asking us to give careful consideration to these issues.

Rhiannon Rees

Sanctuary Meetings

‘That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right.’ Yearly Meeting 1822
Quoted in the Asylum and Refugee Network : Britain’s Hostile Environment

There are now 70 Sanctuary meetings, strengthening our movement for Racial Justice by building Sanctuary Everywhere - Thank you all for everything that you do. Below you will find a few updates and actions for you.

Four new *Sanctuary Everywhere* booklets can be found online at <https://bit.ly/2r3z9GR> - Also, three new leaflets produced by the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN) and a flyer for our event for Refugee week on the 23rd June [#TheseWallsMustFall](#).

Alternatives to Detention and messaging on 29th May: As we start lobbying MPs and others in our local communities, we will need to talk about the alternatives that we want to immigration detention, also having in mind that we are working towards closing down all detention centres as they break down our civil liberties. Please note that this is a whole day training session at Friends House in London delivered by Detention Forum. This training session is aimed at people who have read some of the reports that have come out in regards to detention in advance and who have realistic understanding of what is already happening in the UK.

Ensuring equal access to the NHS on the 4th June 2:30pm to 4:00pm: This workshop is led by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and is part of a series of workshops aiming to unpack the consequences of imposing upfront charges in hospitals for perceived “overseas visitors”. The NHS Charging Regulations require most secondary care provided by the NHS, now including secondary care provided by non-NHS bodies and community health services, to identify individuals who are not eligible for treatment free at the point of use and to charge them up-front for their treatment. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ensuring-equal-access-to-the-nhs-free-workshop-london-tickets-43889982118?err=29>

Ask the Co-op to stop funding hate: Members of the Co-op are calling upon the Board to review the impact of current advertising policies and to report to members. If you’re a member of the Co-op, you can vote now for the “Responsible Advertising” motion to help embed an ethical approach to Co-op’s advertising spending. By applying an ethical approach to its advertising, the Co-op will continue their proud tradition as one of the UK’s leading ethical brands, and set an example for others to follow.

Tatiana Garavito
Programme Manager – Sanctuary Everywhere
Quaker Peace And Social Witness

Refugee Youth Groups at the Adult School Hall

Two groups are putting on displays and performances in May.

Pan Arts, who meet on Monday evenings, are having a performance on Wednesday 30 May, details to follow.

Amazing People of the World, who meet on Friday evenings, are having an Art Exhibition entitled *Memories and Dreams* from 6 – 8pm with a performance at 7pm.

Fourth Sunday talks

Our talk after meeting for worship on 27 May will be an Ignatian meditation. It will last about 45 minutes and will be led by Gillian.

Collected in April

1 St Christopher’s Hospice **£65.50**
8 Croydon Local Meeting **£41**
15 South London Area Meeting **£54**
22 Quaker Concern for Animals **£65.50**
29 Quaker House Geneva **£78**

Collecting in May: 6 Médecins Sans Frontières, 13 Christian Aid, 20 Quaker Social Action,
27 Friends World Committee for Consultation

The deadline for the June edition is Sunday May 27 2018

**Please give, send or email contributions (no longer that 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner
Tel 020 8688 9659 email gillianturner033@gmail.com**

APOW Art Exhibition

M
e
m
o
r
i
e
s



&
D
r
e
a
m
s



Saturday 5th May 2018: 6-8pm

Friends Meeting House (Quakers), 60 Park Lane, CR0 2JE