

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

May 2020



*'This is a marvellous world' – photo by Liz Collins*

**Dear Friends:** A month on since our last Croydon Newsletter and we are all still in lockdown. Nothing much has changed apart from the dreadful death toll. We ourselves have become more used to this strange new way of living.

We hope that you received your copy of April's newsletter, with its information about the different lives we're now living: working from home; working from home and home-educating children; travelling to work as core workers in different roles and so on. We've learned what being furloughed means, how to queue keeping the correct distance, the new etiquette for pedestrians passing each other on the pavement, and how to zoom.

We hope you enjoy reading about our lives together.

***Gillian Turner, 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 above all and doth reign. And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth.

George Fox, 1663 - *Quaker Faith and Practice* 20.23 (Read at Zoomed meeting for worship 3 May)

## News of Friends

**Mary Clarke** has tested positive for the Coronavirus and is in isolation in her care home. She is able to have short walks in the garden each day and is in good spirits. She very much welcomes phone calls.

**Anita Morris** sends love to us all via her friend Bill. She too is in lockdown.

## Covid-19 at Home

*Knowing that we were anxious about his well-being at the Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes, Wilf Hayler sent us the following:*

Since we heard the alarming news from the figures about the situation in many care homes, I will try to tell of my experiences in an effort to reassure those who have been concerned. At Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes we have not had any cases of the virus to date; whether we have been lucky or whether it is due to how the home's management have dealt with the situation is of course unknown at this stage.

We have been split into two separate entities, those in the cottages and those in the main building. We are not able to mix or be in contact with one another. Lunch is taken to the cottages by two volunteers from the outside world (these are now the only volunteers in evidence in the homes). Those from the cottages queue up six feet apart in the entrance porch between 10.30 and 11.30 to obtain their other provisions; during this time those in the homes must avoid the porch and the reception area. Later Main Building lunch partakers are limited to two to a table, sitting diagonally. This has caused much confusion to those not into geography or cartography. Of course there is much less conversation. Those who have made hospital visits must remain in their rooms on their return for the prescribed time and meals are served to them there.

So, how do we spend our days? We have tried, wherever possible, to keep regular activities as normal, but these have to be limited to conform to social contact rules.

Quakers have continued to hold meetings for worship, one inside the quiet room for four of us and one outside in the Peace Garden, at the same time. Readings from *Quaker Faith and Practice* are shared between the two groups. The Sunday evening Ecumenical Service has become a virtual one because the congregation is too large to fit into a small space without breaking government rules.

Music is playing a large part in our inside activities; as we cannot receive our regular entertainment, we have had to entertain ourselves. I don't think I have ever sung *Roll Out The Barrel* before, or some other First World War songs, but I do draw the line at some. Also, we have exercises, some to music such as *Hokey Cokey*, *The Chestnut Tree*, *Simon Says*, *YMCA* and *The Music Man*, which is pure hysteria.

In the autumn, with outside help, we've formed a choir, singing a large variety of music. Numbers have greatly reduced due to the loss of the cottages and the volunteers, but we are actually trying to learn some new music. Every Saturday evening we are entertained with a wide variety of films, with choc ices served.

Apart from the exercises, our two activity ladies keep us occupied if we wish, with quizzes, discussions using the local or daily papers, or board games. We also have a poetry group. We are fortunate in having reasonably extensive grounds, although we are restricted in what part we can go to (and in which direction to avoid meeting the others). There are of course advantages to being confined - we get to know each other and may make new friends.

I cannot finish without mentioning the management and staff who are so nice to all of us, and particularly the carers who must all have some worries at this time without having to put up with us and our grumbles, and who remain unruffled and helpful. Each Thursday evening a few of us, with the carers and the cottage dwellers (at a safe distance) join the weekly clapping session. I am told that the people living opposite also join in from their houses. **Wilf Hayler**





Inspired by all of the wonderful rainbow pictures and messages of hope and gratitude we see on our daily walks, Eka and I made a video of the Indonesian children's song *Pelangi*, which translates as *Rainbow*. We projected a rainbow onto our bedroom wall, got out our ukulele and flute and sang the song first in Indonesian and then English. If you would like to see the video please check out Jade's Instagram 'Jade Jenong' or

ask us to send it to you. You can even join in as the lyrics come up on the bottom of the video.

### My Week

I started off quite well, my morning routine went along and I was quite positive about the next few weeks. Then sad news came: relatives not well, ordered goods not arriving on time, could not find some banking details, etc. The dog was barking! And can I make time for sorting my craft shed (long overdue).

Then, it's the domestic bit, washing up, bedmaking, housework again and again.

Finally some rain !

The grass became green once more, the garden shrubs looking colourful and strong.

I started checking the daily meditation reading that Gillian suggests via WhatsApp. They are so helpful, that prompts me to slow down, read and think.

Really think ...

How lucky we are,

Having people that care, offers of help from many areas , the many NHS workers that work hard, ancillary workers plus so many others.

Very blessed that we can make contact by phone , internet and other methods.

Having good weather mostly. What a magical Spring we had, blue skies and wonderful sunsets!

And always to remember that each day is a blessing,

yesterday is done,  
tomorrow hasn't come.

Today is a gift, a precious gift, a present.  
use it, not lose it!

Enjoy.

*Margi Ashley*

My unexpected pleasures have been discovering running outside and appreciating the weather, flowers and trees.

Also I never would have thought that meeting at home via WhatsApp and reading *Advices and Queries* could be so enriching.

However....reading the Magic Faraway Tree with my nephew Michael over FaceTime has been the best....unexpected as he usually resists reading.

*Julia Abley*

### What we do with what happens to us

I have always been interested in how we as individuals cope with difficult situations. Obviously one person may see difficulty while another sees an opportunity as we react to different circumstances. In the current lockdown, some will find it very difficult while others find it really isn't that bad. Like others, I often find inspiration in books and when sorting out some books

(what else is there to do in lockdown?), I re-discovered some thoughts in books that I cherish because they make me question how I react to circumstances.

'The answer is that love is inside us, just waiting to be unleashed. The darkness is an invitation to light, calling forth the spirit in all of us. Every problem implies a question: Are you ready to embody what you say you believe? Can you reach within yourself for enough clarity, strength, forgiveness, serenity, love, patience and faith to turn this around? That's the spiritual meaning of every situation: not what happens to us, but what we do with what happens to us and who we decide to become because of what happens to us.' (Marianne Williamson, *The Gift of Change*, 2004).

'You will pass through storms, and you may suffer defeat. The essence of the creative life, however, is to persevere in the face of defeat and to follow the rainbow within your heart. Indulgence and indolence are not creative. Complaints and evasions are cowardly, and corrupt life's natural tendency towards creation... Creativeness means pushing open the heavy door to life. This is not an easy struggle. Indeed it may be the hardest task in the world. For opening the door to your own life is more difficult than opening the doors to the mysteries of the universe.'  
(Daisaku Ikeda, quoted by Edward Cantor-Dumas, *The Buddha, Geoff and Me* (2005).

'Life itself is your career, and your interaction with life is your most meaningful relationship. Everything else you're doing is just focusing on a tiny subset of life in the attempt to give life some meaning. What actually gives life meaning is the willingness to live it. It isn't any particular event; it's the willingness to experience life's events.' (Michael Singer, *The Untethered Soul: the journey beyond yourself*(2007).

**Pam Sellman**

### The search for authenticity: cruising with real history and Mr Rogers

The Caribbean cruise had been a great success. It was certainly enjoyable but now the ship had turned north heading back to reality... British weather in March and the coronavirus... it can't get much more real than that.

There is and had been plenty of time for thought. Amid all the relaxation... the walks through seaside towns trying not to buy even more T-shirts and other tourist junk... serious issues insist on making themselves available for thought. At the top of Broad Street in Bridgetown, Barbados, the start of the shopping district, there's the palpable shock - which has remained with me - of a plaque on the wall that tells the story of the slave cage that once stood there to hold recaptured escaped slaves. They were imprisoned within it while they waited for their owners to reclaim them and take them back to the plantations. Interestingly, perhaps significantly, the cruise ship's entertainment programme included lectures on Mary, Queen of Scots and Catherine the Great, but nothing on the history of the Caribbean itself.

Back on the ship, there were movies to fill in the time as it sailed homeward. There's an unusual mix on offer... 'Official Secrets' (why didn't I know about the story of the Iraq War, Katherine Gun and the British Government backing down from the court case that it had brought?); the appallingly bogus history of 'Downtown Abbey 2' (rant warning: why do people accept this rubbish in which the servants at the big house seemingly accept and delight in their servitude?) and then a Tom Hanks film called *A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood*. Well, that's going to be a simple time-filler... And, of course, that's when the surprises start.

It's about an American called Mr Rogers whose programmes for children made him a national figure. Because I'm British and a certain age, I'm expecting revelations of a particular and unfortunate kind (the words 'Jimmy Savile' explain what I'm getting at)... that means scandal, disillusionment... the usual... But it's anything but that. It's about an emotionally damaged journalist who goes to get a story and instead faces up to the complications in his life... and with Mr Rogers' help learns to cope. He gets over his childhood trauma and finds love and support from his family and friends around him. At the end of the film, my sister-in-law and I turn to each other. We're both amazed to find out how we both - in our own way, for our own reasons - had *really* watched this movie. There were no sly looks at our watches. The time had just flown by. It was - here comes the word - yes, an *authentic* experience. (This has a lot to do with feelings. I

remember a long time ago when my father explained the difference between 'sentiment' and 'sentimentality'. The former is desirable, the latter is not). Other people had not found it so and had left the cinema early.

So clearly the problem is 'authenticity'. What's real? Is there an objective standard? Clearly, I've been living in the Wikipedia world for too long and am looking for a snappy sentence that will define its characteristics. Everything will be made clear, made definitive. No such luck... my response to a list of possible definitions does make it clear that authenticity is an inward experience, subject to an individual and personal interpretation. I have to live with my own responses, my own truth... and other people will live with theirs. **Helen Johnson**

### Keeping in touch

As always with groups of people loosely bound together, we still mix and mingle, although in some different ways now we are in lockdown.

We phone each other. We even use the post to send cards and presents. Mostly we email, use the internet with WhatsApp, and Messenger, and to some extent we Zoom.

Rhiannon monitors the Croydon Quaker emails and forwards information we might want to have, from local voluntary groups and from Woodbrooke.

She told me there was a Quaker chat group on Facebook, which I have joined. It is there to ask for advice and receive comments. Yesterday it dealt with how we could respond to Friday 8 May's VE Day celebrations. My neighbours are planning a celebration and I wasn't sure how to respond, but the advice was that we are celebrating peace not war, and joining with our neighbours can only be a good thing.

For those with smartphones who use WhatsApp, we have a Croydon chat group where we post news, photos, details of courses we are following online, and every day I send an extract from *Quaker Faith and Practice*.

For those who don't want to use WhatsApp I email each day's extract to your inbox. If you are not receiving the nightly extract and would like to have them, my email address is at the back of the newsletter and I'll add you to the list. Also contact me if you wish to join the WhatsApp group.

Our meeting for worship is still held every Sunday from 10.30 to 11.30. There are two ways to join in. Those who wish can ask to receive the *Advices and Queries* reading from Julia to start you off, and you join in spirit with all the members of the meeting worshipping with you.

Or you can join the Zoom meeting for worship by going to [zoom.us/j/786763002](https://zoom.us/j/786763002). Further details of how to do this are on our website at <http://croydonquakers.org.uk/>. **Gillian Turner**

### From Croydon Elders and Overseers

While we are all finding new ways to manage during the lockdown, Elders and Overseers have been meeting every week through Zoom to consider how best to support the spiritual and pastoral care of our friends at Croydon meeting.

We are sharing what we know of how all are coping as a community and as individuals and where perhaps additional support might be welcomed.

If Friends would like to contact any of us, our details are in the *Who's Who* in the online members area.

*Margie Ashley, David Parlett, Cathy Spence, Brian Skeet  
Liz Collins, Roger Howarth, Pam Sellman, Gordon Spence*

### Collections: from the treasurer

Sunday 3 May was the seventh week when we have not been able to meet for worship in our meeting house. In an attempt to maintain normality, we are looking at the matter of retiring collections. I propose:

- for the collections during the past six weeks, we donate from meeting funds the amounts tabulated below. These are carefully calculated averages based on at least three previous collections for each beneficiary

- for forthcoming weeks, friends are invited to donate directly to the charity or via me. I have put instructions for the next few weeks on the website on a new "Collections" page.

**Roger Haworth**

**Collected in March: 22** Campaign Against the Arms Trade £75 - **29** St Christopher's Hospice £90 - **April 5** 50 Britain Yearly Meeting £50, **12** South London Area Meeting £40 - **19** Quaker Concern for Animals £70 - **26** Quaker UN Office Geneva £65

**The deadline for the June edition is Sunday 31 May 2020**  
**Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner [Te/07805087981](tel:07805087981) [email/gillianturner033@gmail.com](mailto:gillianturner033@gmail.com)**

### From *The Quarantine Quatrains* by Martin Guite

*Here in my garden hut, just on the brink  
 Of making some new song of all I think,  
 A sudden thrill and ripple of true song  
 Makes mockery of my poor pen and ink.*

*Beyond my hut a vivid glimpse of red:  
 A bright-eyed robin by the garden bed  
 Sings his mellifluous and liquid notes,  
 That utter more than all I've ever said.*

*Three busy sparrows soon take up the song,  
 Chaffinches and blue tits join the throng,  
 A pattern of bright music nets the air  
 And catches me off guard and makes me long,*

*Long for the joys that I have yet to sing  
 Long for the sudden flight, the lifting wing,  
 Long for the songs of summers yet to come  
 Long for the freedom future days may bring.*

*Though sorrow runs so deep, and our brief  
 songs  
 Are burdened still with all the ills and wrongs  
 Of this sad exile, something in us sings,  
 Sings from that garden where the soul belongs.*

*The grass grows green in every city square,  
 The little foxes, once so shy and rare,  
 Saunter our streets and boulevards by day  
 Whilst birds and insects throng the cleaner air*

*How soon the tide of nature has returned  
 How soon renew the forests that we burned  
 How soon they seed and repossess our streets  
 Those precious plants and animals we  
 spurned.*

*Perhaps in all this crisis, all this pain,  
 This reassessment of our loss and gain  
 Nature rebukes our brief authority  
 Yet offers us the chance to start again*

*And this time with a new humility,  
 With chastened awe, and mutual courtesy;  
 To re-accept the unearned gift of life  
 With gratitude, with joy and charity.*

*Perhaps we'll learn to live without so much  
 To nurture and to cherish, not to clutch,  
 And, if I'm spared, I'll hold the years I'm given  
 With gentler tenure and a lighter touch*