

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

November 2017

Dear Friends - Welcome to the November edition of our newsletter, and thank you to all our contributors. I edit this at the turn of the month, the seasons, and the clocks. Light is on my mind as our theme this time.

Gillian Turner

The Light Within, which is the central Quaker idea, is no abstract phase. It is an experience. It is a type of religion that turns away from arid theological notions and that insists upon a real and vital experience of God revealed to persons in their own souls, in their own personal lives.

Rufus M Jones 1930

Drinking the Sky

Raindrops splash into my cup
I drink good morning coffee
Look up into the sky
and ponder the journey of a raindrop
From the depths of the ocean,
Twisted by tides,
Pulled to and fro by the moon,
Rising, surfacing, steaming
Steaming from the scathing scold of the sun
The sun, a fiery furnace forging chemical
concoctions
Two parts H, one part O, water from fire
The sun strikes the surface of the deep
and
the droplet rises
carried into cloud
Swirling into the winds of the Gulf Stream
Twisting and tumbling,

A tear tearing through thundering storms
Lightning lashes and the droplet carries
Until, still
goes the storm
Cloud carries and
In my sky, over my head
Condensing
Plummeting
Splashing
Right into my cup
I drink, good morning coffee
I drink the ocean
I drink the sun
I drink the storm
I drink the cloud
I drink the sky

Samir Malak

News of Friends

Inge Barguss has died aged 94. She was married to Paul, an Old Scholar of Bootham School and a birthright Friend. They both attended Croydon Meeting for many years. She will be cremated at Croydon Crematorium after the manner of Friends on either 17 or 24 November, with refreshments afterwards at the meeting house.

Joyce Trotman celebrated her 90th birthday with a party on 21 October. The three branches of her family, the Trotmans, Tysons and Petres, were all represented, along with friends from every part of her personal and professional life. Chief among the guests was her brother Donald and the poet John Agard, who read one of his unpublished poems on the theme of diversity. Joyce spoke about the joy that celebrating her birthday with so many relatives, friends and neighbours had given her at meeting for Worship the following Sunday. She brought in the birthday cake she had had specially made for all of us to share, and sang the hymn that was printed in a bookmark beside each place setting at her party.

*Great is Thy faithfulness O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not,
As Thou hast been Thou forever will be.*

Yvonne Kassim is staying for three weeks at the Red Court residential Home in Stanhope Road, South Croydon.

Pat Piqué is now a resident at Rylands Care Home in Sutton, and welcomes visitors.

David Parlett has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Games Design by the University of Suffolk, where last year he was appointed a Visiting Professor. His most recent game, Katarena, was launched at the annual games Fair in Essen last week.

You have done it unto me

Recently, the BBC's oft maligned *The One Show* presented a fascinating piece on Paul Robeson, the famous actor, singer and civil rights activist who had very strong links with the people of Wales. Appearing in the musical *Showboat* in London in 1928, he met Welsh miners who had walked to the capital to highlight the suffering of thousands of families owing to prolonged unemployment. Robeson, the son of a slave and a fierce exponent of racial equality and workers' rights, was moved by their spirit and plight and subsequently visited Wales on many occasions to sing, support and address the NUM.

In 1958, Robeson's passport was cancelled by the US government as he was suspected of communism. A transatlantic telephone link allowed him to sing from his apartment in New York to the miners and their families in Porthcawl and a male voice choir sang back in grateful response to this huge star who had offered so much to them.



The people of Wales have another strong link with the USA in the form of a stunningly beautiful stained-glass window donated to the 16th Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1963, a bomb was placed in the building causing utter devastation and killing four schoolgirls in the blast. Outrage at this attack was, understandably, international, and in Wales, John Petts, a Carmarthenshire artist, formulated the idea of raising funds from the Welsh people to provide a replacement church window in support of the grieving congregation.

Petts travelled to Alabama to get a feel for the kind of design the people of Alabama might want. None had heard of Wales and did not know where it was but understood that the hand of solidarity and friendship had been extended in the worst of times. Petts returned home still unsure of his brief. How to represent in modern times and in very particular circumstances the idea of Christian love and compassion in stained glass? Inspiration came from Jesus' words of grace:

"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (*Matthew 25: 40*)

Jesus' identification with every member of humanity was an ideal starting point for Petts's creative process. As a result, The Wales Window in Alabama stands as a bold piece depicting a black Christ as on a cross, his right hand pushing away oppression and hatred and his left offering forgiveness. A bold piece indeed for the times.

At the foot of the window, the paraphrase is written, "You Do It To Me", along with "Given by the People of Wales".

For more details, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-12692760>

Barbara Earl

Margaret versus 'The Hill'

I have been wrestling with 'The Hill' for a long time and, yesterday, I beat it! The hill in question is very steep and lies between my house and the local shops. Whenever I walked to the shops, I had to stop half-way up and get my breath back, then do the same, puffing and gasping, when I got to the top. However, yesterday I managed to walk fairly briskly to the top without stopping and only had to pause very briefly at the top.

What has changed, you may ask yourself? Have I been going to the gym? Have I been training for a 10K race? No, Gordon has been teaching me how to breathe properly. I've had the privilege of having one-to-one breathing sessions, with a very experienced yoga teacher, each Sunday before Meeting, for about 6 weeks. Seeing him every week has really kept me focusing on

breathing and I think I can see an improvement in my posture as well as being able to breathe much more deeply. I can now use more of my lung capacity than previously (most of the time!). If my breathing can be improved, I'm sure anyone's can be. Why not come and join us? If you are interested let Gordon know – don't waste this great opportunity!

Margaret Skelton

Bullying Behaviour

There are and will be many bullies in our lives, found in the workplace, schools, playgrounds etc. The bully becomes so, because of their projection of inner feelings of inadequacy and other emotional problems, that are projected to another person.

Whatever the bully hates within themselves, they will try to pass onto the other person, saying things like 'you're stupid, an idiot, Worthless' etc. To make themselves feel better about themselves.

This problem then can be passed on, so that the person who has been bullied starts to believe what they are told by the bully and begin to bully others, to take away these new negative feelings and also to protect themselves from the attention they believe to be on them.

Victims of bullying must do or tell somebody, so that this harmful and damaging behaviour may be stopped before it causes harm. We are spiritual beings and do not deserve to carry the negative karma of the bully mentality in our lives.

We need to break the chain of negative behaviour.

We can also become a prisoner of the bully too. This means that we can become spiritually connected to the bully and that we have to live with this negative force in our lives and perhaps in future ones.

There are good and bad angels all around us. The bad angels feed off and gain strength by negative behaviour and want to encourage it, so will try to influence this energy and behaviour. We are reminded in John 8:12: *Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."*

We will need to encourage and influence this truth to ensure we meet our true purpose on earth.

Gil Greiner

The Quaker Life Representative Council

The QLRC held its autumn meeting at Woodbrooke 13 October – 15 October 2017. Its title was "Shape Shifting – New Model of Meeting and Community".

Deborah Rowlands (Clerk to British Yearly Meeting) and Paul Parker (Recording Clerk, BYM) had visited the USA to see the many different ways in which Quaker meetings there are organising themselves and how they are interacting with a much changed and still rapidly evolving environment. In terms of what Deborah and Paul called the three legged stool of Quaker life:

*** the inward life of worship and discernment**

They noted that meetings in the USA used clearness committees much more frequently than here in the UK. Some meetings had a care committee, and others had an extended form of worship, some had singing, and others had worship sharing and responding to a single question.

*** functioning of the church community**

They visited two Yearly Meetings, one in Baltimore and another in Philadelphia. The latter had consolidated all their committees into two and these had young people heading them up. Deborah and Paul noted that the essential question both in the USA and the UK revolves around about ways to grow leadership and membership – and in so doing to find out what young people want.

*** social testimonies**

In Baltimore, the Quaker Voluntary Service was an important feature. There were communities of young adults very much involved – and a very American habit of identifying the gifts that people possess and, yes, telling them! Many meetings were very much engaged in political lobbying across the USA, particularly through engagement with young adults through the American Service Committee.

* new meetings in Eastern Europe

Additionally, Julia Ryberg (Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator FWCC/EMES) talked about how new meetings in the old communist countries are finding new ways of setting up meetings (e.g. Skype) and building structures from need.

This Saturday morning session became the backdrop for the discussion throughout the whole weekend about how British meetings are organised and the effectiveness of their functioning. Are meetings here spending a great deal of time just keeping themselves going? If so, does this mean they have a limited impact on their local communities? What do our own meetings focus on? There was also the reminder that there are different types of meeting – e.g. outside the meeting house (when the sun shines!) and meeting held on days other than Sunday and without time limits. The emphasis was on experimentation: Be bold! Break free! Abandon old habits!

The message of the weekend seemed clear: demographic trends within RSoF are such that Quaker structures and processes need to be examined. It was indicated that Friends House would continue to do the 'centralised' functions and that local meetings are being encouraged to see if their administration can be restructured into something easier to operate, so giving time and energy to spend on the exciting challenges facing each meeting. It is for each meeting to determine for itself what they do but clearly there is a need to engage young Quakers, to have a feeling of shared purpose and community and to function in the community appropriately and effectively.

On a personal note, I found the openness and breadth of the discussions very impressive (and reassuring). Nobody was being pushed into hasty decisions; there were no suggestions that Quaker values should be undermined or abandoned; but it was clear that there are important issues of organisation that need to be addressed by local and area meetings (e.g. how to make the most of scarce resources, both financial and human). As ever, I came back from a Quaker conference informed, encouraged - and exhausted!

Helen Johnson

Sanctuary Meetings

Meeting for Sufferings in October discussed the project initiated at Yearly Meeting in Warwick and the Manifesto that underlined it. While the Manifesto was felt to need more thought, Local and Area Meetings were asked to discuss the project referring to the document Being a Sanctuary Meeting Questions and Answers.

The Question and Answer document, to be found on the www.quaker.org.uk webpage, begins *Your meeting is invited to become a Sanctuary Meeting – part of a national network of Quaker Meetings working together to replace the government policy of creating a 'hostile environment' for immigrants in Britain with a culture of welcoming hospitality which answers that of God in every person.*

The document goes on to list 10 things we could do as a Sanctuary Meeting, a somewhat daunting list. especially for a meeting to undertake on its own.

Basically, Meetings are asked to make three commitments: that two Friends agree to be the contract people between Friends House and their local community; that the Meeting agrees to focus on one advocacy project every four months, lobbying for policy change; and that they undertake or assist with one local project.

Tim Gee, who is facilitating the initiative at Friends House, suggests that Local Meetings could join together to form an Area Meeting Sanctuary Meeting. This could mean that the two contact people can be drawn from across the Area Meeting rather than from one LM. The whole AM could join together to support one or more local initiative.

The two contacts would be linked with local refugee council groups, Quaker Action Refugee Network, Quaker Peace and Social Action, and local interfaith welcome projects.

Tim Gee emphasised that Sanctuary Meetings were not expected to offer accommodation, either in their meeting houses or in their own homes, but rather to be part of a protective community working with other groups. Being a Sanctuary Meeting means a commitment to building a culture of welcome, challenging racism in all of its forms and helping change the laws on destitution, detention and deportation.

This will be an item for discussion at our Area Meeting at Streatham & Brixton FMH on 18 November, and the manifesto which Quaker Peace and Social Witness Sanctuary Everywhere Programme, is working on, is hoped will return to Meeting for Sufferings in December.

Gillian Turner AM MfS representative

White Poppies

will be on sale, or to give away to interested people, from 5 November (if not before), remembering all those involved in areas of conflict past and present. Donations are welcome. **Cecily Taylor**

Quaker Week 30 October – 8 November

Our Local Meetings reported the events they held during this national event.

Croydon: David Parlett's Games Day. This went well, although David reported that all the participants but one were Quakers or their friends or relatives.

Epsom put on a display of leaflets and copies of the Friend outside the library, which were taken away. and had a visitor at their next meeting for worship.

Purley had a Harvest Lunch for members of the meeting and their families, which was very much enjoyed.

Streatham & Brixton: Woodbrooke on the road "Deepening the Life of the Spirit" event was very well attended and successful. Friends were offered about a dozen different practices and the opportunity to explore some of these as approaches into silent worship. They discussed questions afterwards such as 'How has this practice helped you to find your inner light?' and 'In what ways are you able to 'answer that of God within yourself today?'. The final exercise involved small groups discussing ways to deepen the life of our meetings.

Sutton: Storytelling: *Quaker myths and legends* with CindyLou Turner-Taylor. This was extremely successful with an audience of over 40.

Diary dates

Sunday 5 November: Meeting for Upholding Aka Prayer for Healing. 10.10 preceding meeting for worship. All welcome.

Saturday 11 November: Singing Workshop with Croydon Bach Choir . Spend a day with members of the Croydon Bach Choir exploring and performing Elgar's oratorio, *The Kingdom*. This is a full day's workshop open to singers of any standard who are able to follow a score. Time: 10.30am - 6.00pm. Venue: St Matthew's Church, Chichester Road, Croydon CR0 5NQ. Cost: £18 for singers including score hire. Free for students.

Sunday 12 November: Meeting for worship for business 12.15. All welcome. (Date to be confirmed.)

Wednesday 15 November: Churches Together South London Big Gathering CTSL holds two big gatherings each year. Senior church leaders from all church traditions in South London are invited, as well as representatives and clergy who are part of the many ecumenical networks here. CTSL covers 10 boroughs South of the river, and over 50 ecumenical networks. The topic for this gathering will be announced soon. If you are interested in joining this event, please email claire@ctslondon.org.uk for further details.

Friday 17 November: Funeral of Inge Barguss 11:15am at Croydon Crematorium, after the manner of Friends, followed by refreshments at the meeting house, finishing by 3pm.

Friday 17 November: "This Evil Thing". 7.30 pm, with Q&A to follow. Former National Theatre and RSC actor Michael Mears performs his acclaimed solo play at Sands Film Studios, Rotherhithe. He has already performed it around the UK including at the Quaker schools, Sibford, Mount School, Bootham and Ackworth. The play tells the compelling and inspiring story of the men who in 1916 said no to war.

Sunday 19 November: Area Meeting Following mfw at Streatham meeting house. All welcome.

Tuesday & Wednesday, 21-22 November: "This Evil Thing" 7.30 pm. National Theatre and RSC actor Michael Mears performs his acclaimed play about Britain's First World War conscientious objectors at London's only surviving Elizabethan Church, the Old Church in Stoke Newington High Street, North London.

Wednesday 22 November: Faith on the move – faith in the future? St Mary Magdalene, Canning Road, Croydon CR0 6QD Doors open from 7pm – event from 7.30-9pm. An evening exploring the situation of child refugees in Croydon and the UK, the faith and hope they maintain and how we can all respond. With Bishop Jonathan Clark of Croydon and Helen Bailey (& local refugee groups have been invited). Refreshments will be served. Free event – all welcome! More information from Helen Bailey, mshbailey@gmail.com

Saturday 2 December: "This Evil Thing". 7.30 pm. National Theatre and RSC actor Michael Mears performs his acclaimed play about Britain's First World War conscientious objectors at Wandsworth mh.

Collected in October

- 1 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad - £38
- 8 South London Area Meeting £42
- 15 Croydon Sickle Cell and Thalassæmia Support Group £90
- 22 Hlekweni Quaker Training Centre, Zimbabwe £109
- 29 Homeless Floating Shelter £80

Collecting in November: 5 Croydon Nightwatch; 12 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad; 19 South London Area Meeting; 26 Freedom from Torture

The deadline for the December edition is Sunday 26 November 2017
Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner
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