

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

October 2017

Dear Friends - Welcome to the October edition of our newsletter. I welcome articles and poems from all our readers, and thank all our contributors.

Gillian Turner

Quaker faith and practice 19.61

The truth is one and the same always, and though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and power and spirit of the living God endures for ever, and is the same and never changes. (Margaret Fell, 1694)

News of Friends

September was the month for welcoming babies into the wider Quaker family. Kay Papadopoulos has a granddaughter, her first: Paige; and Veronica Double her first grandson, Freddy. Both beautiful, thriving and adorable!

Gil Greiner writes: "I'm settling into my new job well; it's a brand new £11 Million building, with state of the art facilities (once we learn how to use some of them!). As well as that, there are some timetabling and organisational issues to address, at this time of year (nothing changes). I think I'm doing OK and consider myself to 'be in there'. I've started attending Edgbaston meeting for worship, which is very welcoming and homely." He has also written this article:

What is our purpose? 'To see that of God in everyone'

We all come from and are part of God, which means love, divine order and intelligence; this is our absolute reality.

Many have turned away from this truth to create a relative reality in which we let our intellect rule. The intellect and true intelligence are different because the intelligent idea of being will always get to the route of the problem, whereas the intellectual idea of being will target the causes of the problem, for example:

If we look at the problem of hunger in the world the intellect has created; fertilizers, pesticides, GMO's and irrigation systems to preserve and to improve crops. All of which are at a cost.

The intelligent being could see though, that by perhaps, eating more of a vegetarian diet, would free up at least '60% of crops currently used to feed animal stock in the world'*; by reducing this, there would be enough food to feed everyone in the world and even be a surplus. So, we can see that the intelligent being, always finds a solution at the route of the problem, which is often free with no cost.

There is always a price for intellect solutions, whereas the intelligent solutions are usually free and true. The intelligence comes from love and the heart, whereas the intellect comes from the head and confusion.

Many have become disconnected from their higher purpose on earth; this is to reconnect with God. When we reconnect through prayer and meditation, we gain insight into ways in which we can help others, relieve loneliness and will begin to realise that we are all one and connected. Meetings for worship are the ideal way to pursue these ideas.

Reference: *<http://www.globalagriculture.org/report-topics/meat-and-animal-feed.html>

Given to us by grace

The actor John Gielgud had this to say about his fellow thespian, James Mason, with whom he starred in the 1953 epic adaptation of *Julius Caesar*. "He was a punctilious man, beautifully-mannered, quiet, generous and amusing. I never heard him say a vicious or bitter thing about anything or anyone". (Mason was a conscientious objector during World War Two causing his family to break with him for many years.)

For a friend to be able to say words of this kind about one is surely a most high accolade. Living together in community is not always easy, be it with family, Friends, colleagues, fellow cast members or those of wider society. Conflicting needs and strongly held opinions can lead to

tension and misunderstandings which may add fuel to existing differences. Added to which, Parker J. Palmer reminds us that in true community we do not choose our companions, “for our choices are so often limited by self serving –motives”. (QFP 10.19)

Instead, our companions “will be given to us by grace”. They may indeed be the kind of persons who shake our complacency and unseat our hard - won sense of self. Palmer defines true community “as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!” Of course, if any form of community is to exist, many and varied factors have to be in place. It could be suggested, for example, that certain important intentions, characteristics, and skills such as, loving kindness, forbearance, honesty, cooperation, clear communication and personal restraint may need to be present for community to be successful and fruitful in a meaningful sense.

Isaac Pennington in 1667, wrote a piece of utter beauty on the focus of a truly loving life. It is placed in Chapter 10 of *Quaker Faith and Practice* under the heading “Our Community”:

“Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand” (QFP 10.01).

Barbara Earl

Listening, questioning and discussing ‘Faith in Politics

The Swarthmore Lecture 2017

This year’s lecture was delivered by Catherine West (Labour MP for Hornsey and Wood Green). From the start, she made it clear that her Quaker faith drives her political actions. The essence of her faith is that ‘every life is equal and holy’. That leads her to tackle (or confront) rampant inequality ‘where the richest 62 individuals on the planet have the same combined wealth as’, what she called, ‘the bottom half of humanity’. That’s 3.6 billion people in absolute and relative poverty. These are people to try to survive on a \$1 a day, people who in comparison with other people around them have very little or not so much.

Catherine West went on to examine the state of British housing, employment and income. She urged everyone to work for equality, saying ‘If we cannot change what is happening in our street, why should we believe we can change the wider world? Politics starts with the local. As Quakers, we should own the challenge of inequality, offering civic leadership in all our communities.’

She is well qualified to speak about the local level, about our streets. After all, she spent eight years as the leader of the Labour Group on Islington Council and in the pamphlet of her lecture, she goes into detail about their equality initiatives. Interestingly for us, the Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission is also mentioned.

As you will know, the Croydon Opportunities and Fairness Commission was an independent body set up in January 2015 by Croydon Council at the eventual cost of £200,000. Headed by the Bishop of Croydon, its terms of reference saw Croydon as ‘an aspirant, young and diverse borough. It combines areas of endemic poverty with those of relative prosperity’. After speaking to thousands of Croydon residents, the Commission reported back in January 2016 and made 58 recommendations, including the need for vibrant, responsible communities and a town centre ‘that lifts the whole borough’.

Of course, many politicians are well intentioned (and it certainly cannot be forgotten and must be respected that this lecture was given in the memory of Catherine’s friend, Jo Cox MP). But how do we assess their effectiveness? Does that list of recommendations sound like the Croydon you know (or likely to be in the near future), the one you walk through to get to our meeting house? (Now for an unQuakerly rant: don’t get me started on the Whitgift/Westfield debacle, the Nestlé Building that’s been empty and seemingly untouched for years, and the Fairfield Halls closed....).

Catherine did not dodge that issue as she directly addressed the disillusionment that people seem to have about politicians and what they do or fail to do. Specifically, she said (p.18) ‘If established politics, however, fails to address deepening inequality or worse, is seen to facilitate and endorse it, populism can rise in response’– as was seen in 2016 (and as we have just seen in the German election results on 24 September 2017). ‘Put bluntly, many people are fed up with having things done to them and being let down by a system that does not feel as if it is designed for their benefit’.

So her lecture title about ‘Faith in politics’ is perhaps both a description of her own motivation and a plea for less cynicism about politicians. ...or at least for us not to lump them all together.

After all, as she said, for her, 'Advancing the cause of equality is both a political imperative and a spiritual vocation'.

For others of the breed, it is possible to assert the way that they go about things, how they actually behave as individuals and as an elite, reeks of game-playing, deceit and downright lying. Is the behaviour of some politicians authentic? Isn't the core of Quakerism – let's talk about this and how other people see us – the expression of authenticity....where an individual, above all, is trying to be true to one's self, values and beliefs. Isn't that what makes Quakerism so tough, in a way so forbidding....after all, it has to be lived, there's no ignoring that requirement....otherwise there's no point. Clearly Catherine West has not opted for an easy life.

As those of us in Sunday's discussion group found, it's clear that this year's Swarthmore Lecture, did its usual work... in a complex world, there are no easy answers - but we still have the obligation to identify and discuss important questions from a declared moral position.

Helen Johnson

My experience as a Quaker Prison Visitor at Highdown

There are very few Quaker prisoners but some men ask to see the QPC because they have had good experiences with Quakers in the past. They may have gone to a Quaker meeting and been welcomed with respect and kindness, and this experience has never been forgotten. One of the men I see has strong links with another Meeting and it has been possible for us all to work together in various ways to do the best we can for him.

The Chaplaincy at HD represents a wide range of religious faiths from Roman Catholic, through to a Pagan Chaplain. Some are volunteers, others sessional workers across different prisons, and a few are career Chaplains employed by the Prison Service.

My day starts at around 10.30. I currently have two men who have asked for the QPC, though neither are actually Quakers themselves. They are both sex offenders and like all SOs they work in the Laundry. Their hours are slightly different from other prisoners because they can only be moved around the prison when others are locked up

I get to the Laundry as early as I can and the Officers allow us to use a little glass-fronted room away from the noise of the washing machines etc for a kind of MfW. Silence is not something that you ever get in a prison, but 'the still small voice of calm' can be quite resonant when required, so we manage.

I then go on to the Health Care Centre. By law, a Chaplain has to visit every man in Health Care every day, so I do this on a Thursday. There can be as many as 23 men at any time, and not all are there for health reasons.

This is where you encounter a wide range of people, some very disturbed and venting their misery and rage by constant shouting, swearing and kicking the cell door. It makes life harder for the other men with disturbed sleep, and tempers flare more easily because everyone is tired.

Most of the men appreciate a Chaplaincy visit, even if it is just to have someone to complain to about their difficulties. Sometimes it's enough to know that a Chaplain is there to listen if they want to talk, but for others it's a lifeline to be listened to without censure or judgement, and can be deeply healing in itself.

Some men ask for a prayer, which I found difficult at first, especially when they had special requests. "Miss, can I have the one about the shepherd?" I just about managed to stumble my way through the first verse of "The Lord is my Shepherd" half remembered from schooldays, but fortunately he knew it well and filled in the gaps!

Now I have developed a more confident approach. Physical contact means so much to someone who is locked away from the rest of society, so joining hands through the cell door makes a connection that helps when praying. I try to reflect back what the man has told me about his hopes and fears, and by offering it to God in an act of prayer, it can help to bring about a peace at having been heard.

For many their problems are made worse by isolation and boredom. Sometimes they can spend hours alone in a cell with no TV or reading matter - many men cannot read anyway. One of the most popular publications is the Salvation Army magazine, *The War Cry*, because they have a page of number puzzles at the back even if you can't read. Once they get to a House Block, life improves for many, providing they get on with their cell-mate, and there is a wider social network available as men can socialise with others on the same Wing.

Even in my time at HD, the staff cuts have bitten. If there are only two officers on the wing, the men cannot be allowed out of their cells. At one time you would often see officers and prisoners chatting in the corridor but now this is rare.

After filling in the Observation Forms for more vulnerable prisoners, I can return to Chaplaincy for a much-needed coffee and sit-down.

Then I will look through the Visits Request Box and if it is something that I can deal with, I will find the prisoner, but if I have any doubts, I report back to a more experienced Chaplain. Even apparently innocent requests can turn out to be anything but, so they must always be vetted. You learn to be security-conscious pretty quickly!

As I become more familiar with Chaplaincy work, other ideas are starting to take shape. I have been asked to run a Support Group for some of the bereavement counsellors in the prison. I would also like to run a Quiet Group like other QPCS elsewhere - like a Mf W but shorter followed by tea and biscuits and a chance for the men to talk to each other and to Quakers who come in and join the Group. The Managing Chaplain is open to this idea so it could be possible if any Quakers would be willing to take part.

A while ago a party from Croydon meeting and Area Meeting also enjoyed a lunch at "The Clink", the restaurant run by prisoners at Highdown. The staff are training for qualifications in the catering field and the quality of the food and the service is extremely high. If anyone would like to join, please let me know.

Veronica Double

Should our Meeting become a 'Sanctuary Meeting'?

All Quaker Meetings in Britain (Local and Area Meetings) are being asked to consider whether to become a 'Sanctuary Meeting'. We will be considering this at our Local Business Meeting on 8 October.

A number of Quaker Meetings across Britain have been working locally to support refugees and asylum-seekers for many years. Some have been linked through the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN), which has also supported Friends campaigning for reform of the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, so that justice and compassion are the guiding principles. Quakers in Britain have made statements condemning discrimination and racism and calling for safe passage, particularly for unaccompanied minors, but, following appeals from a number of Area Meetings, Meeting for Sufferings discerned that Quakers should be doing more.

Early in 2017 Quakers in Britain launched a project to support Quakers who act in solidarity with refugees and migrants. An initiative that supports practical action and political advocacy began to take shape, and in July, the project became the Sanctuary Everywhere programme. This programme will support a network of Sanctuary Meetings.

Meetings that decide to become a Sanctuary Meeting will be supported through training, networking and retreats to help welcome newcomers to Britain, build alliances against racism and work together for political change. Meetings choose their actions based on local circumstances. This might involve hosting public meetings with migrant-led groups, assisting with campaigns to resist removals and deportations, supporting City of Sanctuary initiatives, or even establishing houses of hospitality, where longer-term residents and destitute asylum seekers live together.

The project also provides the framework to campaign on a joint manifesto for change, including restrictions on the use of immigration detention and for the right for asylum seekers to work. A leaflet explaining what would be involved is here: sanctuary@quaker.org.uk

The proposal is, of course, particularly relevant to us in Croydon Meeting, situated as we are just down the road from Lunar House, where asylum-seekers have to come to claim asylum. The leaflet makes clear that this would be a commitment for the whole Meeting and it could potentially be a very significant commitment, although the starting point would just be to identify one or two Friends willing to act as links with the Programme Co-ordinator for one or two years. I hope, therefore, that we will give careful consideration before our Local Business Meeting to whether this is something that the Meeting should commit to and that Friends will consider whether this is something that they personally feel led to work on.

It would be great to see you at the meeting, so that you can give your views as to whether you think this is something that would be right for us.

Rhiannon Rees

£10,000 REWARD

for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person/s responsible for the killing and mutilation of cats and foxes in the Greater London, Surrey, Hampshire, Kent, Berkshire, Sussex, Manchester, Birmingham, St Albans and Northamptonshire areas. If you find any mutilated bodies or body parts, please contact SNARL on 07961 030064 or 07957 830490 and also report to the Police on 101. If you have any information on who may be committing these offences, please contact the Operation Takahe team on 020 8649 0216, the Police on 101, or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Reward being offered by Peta UK (£5,000) and Outpaced (£5,000).

Interfaith Forum with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Croydon

On 10 September I represented Croydon Quakers at the third interfaith forum organised by the Croydon Ahmadiyya Muslims at their mosque in St James Road. This aimed to "...allow for peace, love and unity to be effectively established". The topic was 'Religion, Path to Peace or Corridor to Conflict?'

The event was well attended by representatives of different Croydon faiths and organisations, including Action for Children, Croydon Citizens, Croydon Community against Trafficking, the Fire Brigade and Nightwatch. The main speakers were Catherine Tucker, vicar of Holy Saviour church, Imam Mansoor Clarke and Mayura Patel, Chairperson of Croydon Hindu Council. The Mayor, Toni Letts, made the closing remarks.

Following a recitation from the Qu'ran we heard short descriptions from faith representatives of Islam, Christianity and Hinduism.

Catherine Tucker said there were links between faith communities in Croydon, through visits between women's groups, mutual hospitality and shared activities, such as litter-picking. However we should not avoid some of the more difficult issues. Last year she made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with an equal number of Christians and Muslims, which also included a Jewish perspective on issues such as 'Is the conflict in Jerusalem religious or political?' This had been a seminal experience. She wondered whether we might try something similar in Croydon, perhaps with a Hindu, rather than a Jewish, perspective? She preferred the term 'multifaith' to 'interfaith'. Just as there was coherence as well as difference in the architecture in Jerusalem, faith communities could be 'together but different'. We should not try to make our neighbour the same as ourselves: *'...in my father's house are many mansions.'*

Mayura Patel said the Hindu community in Croydon was very diverse and embraced yoga and dance as well as worship. Religion was a path to God; loving your neighbour; and a practical pathway. Hindus believed in a direct relationship with God, who was in every one of us. Hindus had many deities, but only one God, who was Light. Conflict only occurred when we did not understand our own religion and tried to impose our religion on others. We were all looking for peace when we prayed, and she led us in a few minutes of meditation.

Mansoor Clarke said that the Ahmadiyya, whose motto is 'Love for All, Hatred for none', had been established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Messiah.¹ The word 'Muslim' meant 'one who spreads peace'. Mohammed had said 'you are not a true Muslim until you love your brother the way you would wish to be loved.' You should love your neighbour, regardless of religion. The Ahmadiyya had raised £30,000 for the Grenfell appeal and flood relief and millions for UK charities. Events like terrorist attacks occurred when we lost love.

In questions and answers more common themes emerged, including how we could understand more about our own faith by learning about others.

Rhiannon Rees

¹ *The Almadiyya are regarded as heretical by some branches of Islam.*

Final Thoughts on 'Epistles and Testimonies' at YMG

These are published at the time of our own Yearly Meeting but are dated the previous year. So in 2016 I read with interest the main concern of Alaska YM is global warming, of New York it's racial tension and aggression, in Cuba, reconciliation, in New Zealand it's recovery after the earthquake, and so much more.

All worry about the urgent work that needs to be done and the lack of Friends to carry it forward, and all rejoice in the presence of their children and young people, the beauty of their meeting place, and the fun and pleasure of coming together as a community.

All in all, a very interesting and rewarding read.

Diary dates

Wednesday 4 October: Games4all afternoon - Westminster mh (52 St Martin's Lane, London WC2), 14:30 to 17:29. An afternoon of board games for Quaker week. All welcome. Mah Jong, Scrabble, Journey Home, etc. Free. All welcome.

Friday 6 October: Quaker Myths and Legends - Tales from the Meeting House - Sutton mh, 19:30 to 21:30 An evening of storytelling for adults told by Cindylou Turner-Taylor. Cindylou has been telling stories for over 30 years. She is a storyteller, artist, teacher and a graduate of the International School of Storytelling. The stories are for adults and young people 14-plus.

Saturday 7 October: Games Day at Croydon meeting house from 10:30am to 5pm. Bring and play indoor board/card games, or try some provided. David Parlett will mount a small exhibition of games of historic and international interest and give an illustrated talk on games history, including some little-known Quaker facts about Monopoly. Refreshments and light lunch provided. Bring your friends!

Sunday 8 October: Business meeting - Meeting for worship for business at Croydon meeting house from 12:15.

Sunday 8 October: Woodbrooke Study Day - 'Woodbrooke on the Road' workshop 'Deepening the Life of the Spirit', facilitated by Gill Pennington, Woodbrooke's Ministry Programmes co-ordinator, at Streatham meeting house. Lunch at 12.30pm (provided by local Friends), workshop runs from 1.30pm to 5.30pm.

Saturday 14: Endings and Beginnings - 2.0 pm – 5.0 pm, at Friends House, Euston. A warm invitation to all who took part, as participants or audiences, in the projects of The Leaveners (1976 – 2016). Endings and Beginnings will celebrate 40 years of song, theatre and music-making, and launch The Singing Quakers and The Quaker Music Network. Free! All welcome! Encourage others to come! Please confirm if you are coming: email [alec.davison \[at\] btinternet.com](mailto:alec.davison[at]btinternet.com)

Sunday 15 October: Area Committee meeting - At Streatham meeting house from 12:30.

Wednesday 18 October: Meet Mark Rylance and Caroline Lucas - House of Commons, Portcullis House, in the Boothroyd Room, 7.15pm for a prompt 7.30pm start. Conscience invites you for an evening with Sir Mark Rylance (international star of stage and screen) and Caroline Lucas (co-leader of the Green Party and the former Vice Chair of the Stop The War Campaign) for a discussion on "What Does an Ethical Foreign Policy Look Like?" Capacity is very limited and this will be a sell-out, so reserve your free place now at Event brite

Saturday 28 October: Retreat Day at Golders Green - 10:45 to 16:00 Golders Green Meeting House NW11 7AD. Open to anyone who welcomes the opportunity to spend a day in silence, simply BEING in nurturing surroundings. As well as being a beautiful building, Golders Green Meeting House is situated on the edge of ancient woodland.

Collected in September

3 South East Cancer Help Centre **70**

10 Croydon Local Meeting **55**

17 Friends World Committee for Consultation **96**

24 Worldwide Alternatives to Violence (WAVE) **105**

Collecting in October: **1** Quaker Work at Home and Abroad - **8** South London Area Meeting

15 Croydon Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Support Group

22 Hlekweni Quaker Training Centre, Zimbabwe - **29** Homeless Floating Shelter

The deadline for the November edition is Sunday 29 October 2017

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