

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

September 2015

Dear Friends,

As I collated the articles sent in for this edition of the newsletter, it struck me that they respond to Quaker faith and practice: there are articles to do with our spiritual lives, our community, our faith in action, and that challenge us. In ministry last Sunday we were asked 'What does our hour's silence mean to us?' *Gillian Turner*

Advices and queries 20 'Do you give sufficient time to sharing with others in the meeting, both newcomers and long-term members, your understanding of worship'

News of Young Friends

Joshua Edgson will be 10 on 4 September. Happy Birthday, Josh.

(He shares a birth date with Marjorie Evans, so we take the opportunity to wish Marjorie Happy Birthday also, as she is young in heart!)

Sophie Collins has moved to the Netherlands to take her Master's degree at Maastricht University.

Chris Alton, Emily Collins and Olwyn Shorey participated in Senior Conference at Sibford School In August, Chris and Emily as adult speakers and Olwyn as co-clerk. Olwyn is beginning her degree studies at St. Andrews University.

Simone Weil's "Waiting on God" : one "petition" of The Lord's Prayer.

Concerning the "Our Father" :

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

In 1950, Simone Weil, the French philosopher and mystic, wrote in "Waiting on God", of her understanding of each part of The Lord's Prayer. I was struck, in particular, with her ideas about forgiveness. She believed that before starting to pray and going on to ask God to "forgive us our trespasses...." we must have already prepared ourselves by cancelling out everything that we feel is owing to us.

Reparations for any wrongs we think we have suffered and any expectations of receiving gratitude for the good we think we have done are the kind of things which we may consider wiping out. Weil writes:

" All these are the rights which we think the past has given us over the future...Then there is the right to a compensation for every effort whatever it's nature, be it work, suffering or desire".

Weil suggests that to forgive those whom she calls our debtors, we need to renounce the past in "a lump". It is to accept that the future should be "virgin" and quite free from the bonds imposed upon it by our imaginations and expectations.

In renouncing the trespasses of others we can then ask of God that our past sins or mistakes may not bear fruit.

Our debts will be forgiven in precisely the same measure as we forgive our debtors.

Weil ends the chapter with the following:

"The Our Father contains all possible petitions; we cannot conceive of any prayer which is not already contained in it. It is to prayer what Christ is to humanity. It is impossible to say it once through, giving the fullest possible attention to each word, without a change, infinitesimal perhaps but real, taking place in the soul."

Simone Weil died in a sanatorium in Ashford, Kent in 1942 aged 34.

Barbara Earl

A thought for the day

Because of my hearing problem, I can't have the radio on in the background while I do something else. This means I rarely hear Radio 4's Thought for the Day, as I'm usually up and busy by 7:50. The other day, having overslept, I was fortunate enough to hear one of my favourite speakers, the former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. At the time, Jewish congregations were reading Deuteronomy.

Jonathan mentioned in particular chapter 21, where it is specified that if the victim of an unknown murderer was found in the countryside the elders of the nearest town were to be responsible for dealing with it. They were to perform a sacrifice, at the same time averring "Our hands did not shed this blood". Pondering the significance of this command, Jonathan drew the conclusion that society as a whole must undertake some degree of responsibility for the crimes committed in it.

This reminded me of an observation I've made. Every morning before breakfast I go round the corner for the paper. In doing so, I go past a free-standing advertisement stand and am usually passed by several buses bearing adverts on their sides. All too often these ads are posters for newly-released films featuring men (even, occasionally, women) brandishing guns. Almost invariably, not to say inevitably, they are imported from America, whose gun-culture is of world-wide notoriety.

I see this as a sign of society's failure of responsibility towards its citizens' behaviour. If we can enact laws to prohibit the advertising of cigarettes and alcohol, why can't we enact a prohibition on posters advertising a gun culture which is alien to the British way of life?

David Parlett

Flushing Meeting House, New York

During my holiday visiting relatives, friends and ex-students in New York, Maryland, Toronto and Guyana, I visited Flushing Meeting House. This is how it is described on the website:

The Old Quaker Meeting House has been used by the Flushing Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends as a house of worship for over 300 years. The house remains today much as when it was first built, with dark, warm floorboards, simple benches and hand-hewn timber ceiling beams. To step across the threshold is to leave the present behind and to enter a profoundly sacred space seasoned by centuries of devotion. To those who visit, the Meeting House is a peaceful reminder of an eventful and historic past.

Built in 1694, the Old Quaker Meeting House is the oldest house of worship in New York State and the second oldest Quaker meeting house in the nation. Visitors to the Meeting House have included George Washington, John Woolman and William Penn. The Meeting House is recognised as a rare example of ecclesiastical architecture and as a monument to an important event in the struggle for religious freedom in America, the Flushing Remonstrance, a document which is perhaps the earliest demand for religious freedom in America. The Meeting House also saw the beginnings of the abolitionist movement and the first school in Flushing. The building is the only surviving example in New York State of a typical 17th century ecclesiastical frame structure of medieval design.

A lovely graveyard planted with indigenous trees and flowers is part of the Meeting House's grounds. Although it is no longer used for interments, the burial ground is the final resting place for individuals and families who were prominent in Long Island history.

Here, in midst of the ambitious and rapidly growing business district of Flushing, the Meeting House stands as a peaceful reminder that there is more to strive for than wealth and fame. For 300 years, Flushing Meeting members have made history struggling against religious intolerance, slavery, injustice and violence. And here Flushing Meeting continues to work, hope, and pray for a peaceful, just world.

On the Sunday I visited, there were only a dozen people present, and four of those were a family from Reading Meeting. There was no ministry until right at the end, when the clerk asked whether anyone would like to share something that wasn't quite ministry. The family I had been staying with were very evangelical, and they took me on a day the previous week to their church's Vacation Biblical Class, which operated each day in the holidays and attracted many children in the area for bible study. The day I went, the story was from Acts, about Peter arriving from prison, and the child who opened the door ran to tell the adults who was at the door, without letting Peter in. The children acted out the story, and I was very impressed by their familiarity with the bible, and how confidently teenagers and younger children answered the question 'What is your favourite bible story?' I felt envious of those children and wished ours had been given the same experience.

I also felt that Croydon Meeting too stands as *a peaceful reminder that there is more to strive for than wealth and fame and that we too work, hope, and pray for a peaceful, just world.*

Joyce Trotman

More Morning Thoughts

It was a fine morning in August in the 1960s, and I was attending a non-Quaker Summer School for young people (mostly Methodists) in Derbyshire. Morning and evening, the students, in turn, had to take the Morning Worship and the Epilogue choosing the hymns. I remember that I chose Whittier's 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' and the rather overpowering piano accompanist told me that we must sing it to the tune 'Rest', which is not the tune we are most familiar with these days, but, as I remember that was an epilogue, so not appropriate to this article.

As a general rule, I prefer evening hymns to morning hymns, but on this particular morning, the worship was taken by one of a small group with whom I had become friendly, and, for the first time, in my recollection, I heard and sang:-

*Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee*

It is no longer in recent Methodist hymn books, and the 19th century hymn perhaps sounds dated today, but it was in my favourite meter of 11.10.11.10. It was a lovely tune; it was chosen by someone who became a lifelong friend; it was in a lovely little chapel, in a building which has now become a home for children with difficulties, and it has remained with me.

Researching later, I was surprised to find that the words were written by Harriet Becher Stowe, together with two other hymns, for her brother's 'Plymouth Hymnal' in 1855, three years after she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

It later appeared in a more recent Baptist hymn book, where it is set to the theme from *Finlandia* by Sibelius, too gloomy for these words, which fit the hymn 'Be still, my soul'

*When sinks the soul, subdued by toil to slumber,
Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer
Sweet the repose beneath thy wings o'er shading
But sweeter still, to wake and find Thee there.*

Wilf Hayler

Our Site and Buildings

Yearly Meeting this year thought particularly about the housing crisis. The following are extracts from Minute 25, which records its discernment (it is worth reading in full):

"Responding to social inequality and injustice: housing as a tested concern.

We have been reminded that our concern for housing has a long history within our Society, carried since 1967 by the Quaker Housing Trust. It is driven by our belief that all are equally children of God and our experience that a home is essential for our spiritual wellbeing not just for our physical and mental health. There is a continuing housing crisis in this country and inequality in housing is a highly visible and damaging symptom of injustice in our society.

.....we have heard of the increasing sense of urgency that this problem needs a solution – a sense of urgency that is felt in other parts of wider society so that there are allies, not least the other churches, with whom we could work.

A number of ideas have been shared, such as offering spare rooms for those in need, working with local housing associations, including social housing as part of a building project associated with a meeting house, supporting those who want to move from larger houses to smaller accommodation, but who are daunted by the upheaval involved.

These are simple things which we can all think of doing. Our meetings and organisations like the Quaker Housing Trust can provide practical support and discernment to help us to act....."

The housing crisis is particularly acute in London, partly as a result of the cost of land. Croydon is also known now as the place where refugees and asylum-seekers come to claim asylum. Sometimes asylum-seekers have been literally on our door-step. How can we respond as a Meeting? Despite the recent generous bequest we do not have large financial resources. As many of us are elderly or have work and family pressures we are already having to consider how we can run the Meeting with fewer Friends to do all the jobs. The main assets associated with the Meeting (although we do not directly own them) are our buildings and the prime land in central Croydon on which they stand.

I hope that we will take time this autumn to consider the question Paul Parker asked us when he visited: “What is our Mission?” How do our buildings contribute to that mission or are they a hindrance? Are we making the best use of our assets in the service of the Meeting and of the wider community in Croydon?

We have considered this question before and have found it difficult. Nevertheless the Meeting did say that we would return to it. As Minute 29 from YM 2015 says:

“.....We must remember that what makes the real difference is not adding further to the words in the world but being and living out the new social order, testing our leadings together and trusting to our Quaker processes, ‘opening ourselves to the Light to guide us in each small step’.”

Rhiannon Rees

Jade’s Farewell Concert

On Sunday 23 August, after refreshments, we were treated to a musical concert organised by Jade Flahive Gilbert before she returned to Indonesia for another university year studying gamelan. It was a wonderful programme, showing us the musical talents of some members of our Meeting, as well as Jade, her family and friends.

We began with a flute duo played by Jade and her friend from Sixth Form, next Jade accompanied by her brother Dylan on guitar. Gordon Spence gave us a medley on harmonica, then one of her friends played a short piece on a Chinese flute. Next we had Wilf Hayler giving us a lively and witty rendition of Java Jive. Gil Greiner, accompanied by Dylan and himself on guitar, played and sang three songs, one of his own composition. A friend from Kenya sang a song in

Swahili and had us all on our feet performing the actions and singing the chorus. Another of Jades’ friends, a Romanian who had been with her in Indonesia, showed us examples of batik and wooden puppetry.

Finally, Jade and Mary her mum showed their prowess on the ukulele, and we all joined in the chorus.

It was a lovely occasion. And good to know that she reached her destination safely and has started her lectures and music practice.



Photo by Roger Haworth.

More concert pictures at

<http://southlondonquakers.org.uk/nletr/shenl.php?pg=conc158.php>

Activities in the Adult School Hall

WAVE: Our Friend George Hosking organised a training session in the building on **20 August**.

The training today was crucial to WAVE’s work as it added a dimension to child development that we had not been aware of. As you know WAVE has specialised in the area of reducing the formation of violent personalities and the lifelong disadvantages that follow from educational failure. Our view has been that the soft skills and social and emotional development of babies affects their ability to succeed in education and life.

The training today, Fit To Learn, provided another dimension but a highly important one. The concept is that proper physical development is vital for children to learn and succeed in life and at school. What is missing is that the bulk of the UK school population does not have adequate development of motor skills and this hampers learning. Part of the problem stems from the fact that children are not playing sufficiently well enough to develop good motor skills. I recall as a child having Maypole dancing, country dancing, weekly gym and games etc. Apparently a lot of autistic people benefit from these activities as do children with ADHD. But Fit To Learn is not just for children either.

At WAVE we are totally convinced that physical activity is essential and we are looking at ways to promote the practical methods for assessing and improving children’s motor skills. George and

the team are planning to use this learning in several different ways e.g. advocacy with policy makers, in presentations to professionals, in potential FTL/WAVE joint projects, as an item in our new Scottish Government parenting project in schools etc. We have already started using this to shape a project we are in the middle of, the 70/30 Campaign. ***Anthoulla Koutsoudi***

Documentary about the homeless, shot in the local streets and in the ASH on **4 September**.

The Challenge. The building used as a core location each weekend in September. Voluntary activities for Sixth Formers in Croydon..

southlondonquakers.org.uk and slaqm.org.uk

We recently registered the domain name slaqm.org.uk as a preferred alternative to the more long-winded southlondonquakers.org.uk. Here's how it affects (1) the website and (2) email.

1. The website can now be accessed by entering either the long or the short title. Although it can be reached through slaqm.org.uk, it will automatically appear on screen as southlondonquakers.org.uk, as this is more meaningful to website visitors and enquirers to whom AQM means nothing.
2. Things are different with email. There are now three specific email addresses with the following distinct functions:

clerk@slaqm.org.uk is for Area Meeting business of any description. When we have an Area Meeting clerk any messages so addressed will go directly to her/him for attention. For the time being, however, they will be attended to by Margaret Onians on behalf of Area Meeting Committee. This address is will be circulated throughout Britain Yearly Meeting as the primary contact point for Quaker business concerning South London AQM.

treasurer@slaqm.org.uk is self-explanatory and all messages pertaining to it will be handled by our Treasurer Frances Touch. Please note that it replaces the former slaqmtreasurer@gmail.com, which was specific to Frances's predecessor John Drewery.

info@slaqm.org.uk is a general address which will be monitored by David Parlett on behalf of Website Committee and either answered or redirected as appropriate. We envisage that this address will be used by enquirers and other non-Quaker correspondents who are unaware of our organisational structure.

The address southlondonquakers@gmail.com will fall into abeyance and eventually be closed down. Its problem was that for some time there had been no one specifically appointed to check it for messages, or to take responsibility for responding to or redirecting them.

If you have any problems or queries, please address them to info@slaqm.org.uk for attention.

David Parlett, for Website Committee

Changes to Railcard Charges

Virgin trains are changing their pricing structure for railcard users and this may affect a number of committee members going to Woodbrooke from London.

Virgin Trains, who now control both the West Coast and the East Coast rail lines to Scotland and the north of England, have quietly scrapped the concession which has allowed Senior Railcard holders to travel at peak times but at off-peak fares with one-third off. This has meant that senior railcard users have been able to travel in the morning for a committee meeting at Friends House starting at 10.00, at peak time, for just over £50 return. After 6 September this will no longer be possible, full peak fares (with a concession) will be charged. So in future, at that hour, this fare will be well over £200. Virgin say that if tickets are booked before 6 September they will honour the old fares for journeys for the next three months, ie until 6 December. Here is the statement from Virgin Trains:

We're changing the way our Railcards work. From 6 September 2015, Railcard holders will no longer be able to use Off-Peak, Railcard discounted tickets on Peak trains on the Virgin Trains network. For more information, visit our [FAQs](#) and search 'Railcard changes'.

Further information is available from the railcard section of their website at <https://www.virgintrains.co.uk/help-and-contact>

Events calendar

Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.

Please join us for muesli, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15

Tuesday 8 September: Meeting for Worship at the home of Alan Yardley in Upper Warlingham at 3 for 3.30pm. Details from Brian Skeet.

Tuesday 8 September: No faith in war 09:00 to 15:00 Join other faith groups for a day of prayer and nonviolent action against the arms trade and war profiteering at the Excel Centre

Saturday 12 September: Stop the Arms Fair - big day of action 12:00 to 16:00, ExCel exhibition centre, London E16 1XL.

Sunday 13 September: Meeting for worship for business From 12:15.

Sunday 13 September: Meeting for Worship at anti-oil festival 12:30 to 14:30. A group of Quakers from across London will join the day of action to protest against the oil sponsorship of public institutions. They plan to hold a meeting for worship at the festival for 30 minutes from 1:30; all are welcome. Meet at Friends House at 12:30 and then travel together to the space.

Sunday 13 September: Candle-lit vigil in solidarity with victims of the Arms Trade ... at the arms fair, ExCel exhibition centre.

Wednesday 16 September: Wimbledon Discussion Group 18:00 to 21:00. Joan Bulmer will give a talk entitled "Being Mortal", based on the book of that title by Atul Gawande.

Saturday 19 September: Area meeting Croydon mh from 2:30pm.

Saturday 26 September: London Quakers Workshop "Being my enemy - the spiritual aspect of letting go", 10:00 to 13:00 at Friends House Euston. This event is for anyone who has got into a wrangle with anyone that they wished they could resolve but it just hangs around. They have a feeling that if they were willing to suspend some cherished bit of emotional or spiritual self-image they could loosen up the wrangle, but they need support while they do it and the ability to backtrack. This short event, which uses the AVP approach, is about making a safe space to do the loosening, and working out whether it is worth it. There is a charge of £10 for this workshop (which exists mainly to make Friends think twice about booking and then not coming. If this is a problem please say so). Please use the contact form on <http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/events/>, giving your name and meeting.

Collections in August

Figures in parentheses are for donations by standing order

2 Quaker work at home and abroad 64.6 (YM 87)

9 Croydon Refugee Day Centre 87

16 South London Area Meeting 6 (AM 69)

23 Claridge House 98 (LM 164)

30 Mind in Croydon 52

September collections: 6 South East Cancer Help Centre, 13 Croydon Local Meeting, 20 Friends Family Group, 27 Worldwide Alternatives to Violence (WAVE)

The deadline for the October edition is Sunday 26 September 2015

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

Tel 020 8688 9659 email gillianturner033@gmail.com