

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

September 2019

Dear Friends: Much of our newsletter looks back at events in August, as well as looking forward to September. The focus for August was the number of events for young people, and September looks forward to the aftermath of the Arms Fair as well as Area Meeting. Our Young Friends are starting their new terms and we send them our best wishes. **Gillian Turner, David Parlett**

Do you make a place in your daily life in reading, meditation and waiting upon God in prayer, that you may know more of the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit? Do you remember the need to pray for others, holding them in the presence of God? Queries 1984

News of Young Friends



Nirvana Underwood and Stevie Waite's baby arrived on 3 September. Max Colin Waite weighed 7lb 5oz (3331g) and is a nephew for our Friend Ben.

My first Quaker Summer School

From 17th to 24th August, I attended the Summer Junior gathering held at Leighton Park School in Reading with other young people aged 11 -14 , where we took part in meetings for worship, a variety of activities, games, and ending the day with an epilogue

to impart our thoughts and memories. It was really fun and I hope to go next year as I made friends and I would like to meet more new people.

The theme for this year was modern equality. The week was very interesting with several speaker sessions including talks about Extinction Rebellion and Fair Trade which I found very helpful as I now know more about these organisations, their campaigns and subjects such as climate change. I returned wanting to learn more about how to take environmental action. I also learnt about the situation in Palestine from a Quaker speaker called Svenn, who had spent six months there. He talked about how he saw more military bases than detached houses.

I enjoyed being away from home in a new place. Leighton Park School was huge with lots of land, sports grounds and two swimming pools!

I took my cajón* with me and played it at one of the sharing sessions. Together with a couple of my friends, I performed a freestyle as part of the talent show on the final day.

Overall, my favourite experience was our day trip to Oxford, where we were allowed to explore the city in small groups with our friends and new acquaintances from the Senior Conference. This was a great way to meet new people.

Everyone was polite and it was an energetic and safe environment. I would recommend anyone who wants to have some relaxing time away from the hubbub to attend as there was a positive vibe around the activities and throughout the week.

I would like to thank Croydon Quaker and Area Meeting and my grandma for making my trip possible. **Zubin Chijutomi-Ghosh**

** A box-shaped percussion instrument originally from Peru, played by slapping the front or rear faces with the hands, fingers, or sometimes various implements such as brushes, mallets, or sticks. (Wikipedia)*

News of Weddings

Recently, we have had a lot of sad news of friends in the notices, so it was a great joy to hear a Notice of Intention of Marriage read recently. **Maddy Ward and Tom Pennington** are getting married in December, at Maddy's home Meeting in Yorkshire. We send our warmest congratulations to both of them and look forward to seeing their photos after the event.

Jade and Eka's Wedding

Having been brought up a Quaker, and becoming a member of Croydon Meeting at a young age, I had never imagined that I would have a huge, colourful, extravagant wedding with costume changes, heavy make-up and one thousand guests. That picture just didn't match with my Quaker value of simplicity. However, I also hadn't ever imagined going to Indonesia and falling in love with a Muslim Javanese man. Life sometimes has other plans for us.

So, after months of thinking, reflecting, researching and discussing I flew to Central Java, to marry my fiancé in a Javanese-style Muslim wedding.

Eka's family, friends, and the whole neighbourhood, came together to organise the wedding. This reflected the community-culture I had seen where everyone pulls together in times of need, celebration and daily activities.



The evening before our wedding was a special ceremony to prepare for the day, where Eka's family, Eka and I, and my brother stood on a stage in front of an audience of family, friends and neighbours, while Eka's dad cut the top off of a tower of rice called *tumpeng*. This is a feature of many Javanese ceremonies and symbolises gratitude, and a prayer for blessings. Next, various groups performed music, dance, blessing rituals, puppetry and mime. This all took place under a huge marquee the men of the village had put up in the days before, blocking the road, which is a normal and acceptable thing to do for celebrations and funerals in Java.

The next day was the wedding. The first part was the Muslim Nikah ceremony, in the Musholla (Muslim prayer room). All the guests were already there waiting for our arrival. However, a majority of the ceremony was in Javanese which Eka had translated beforehand so that I felt very happy and content in the ceremony. Eka's neighbour gave the introduction, Eka's youngest sister gave recitation from the Qur'an, the representative from the village's marriage office officially checking our details. then I said the Shahada, the Muslim declaration of faith, alone in Arabic, followed by English. The whole room said these words three times. Eka declared that he was marrying me and giving the traditional gifts of Muslim prayer equipment and the ring, To which everyone loudly said 'Sah', meaning they agree to the marriage. After signing papers, we went outside the Musholla for the *saweran* where money is thrown to all the guests.

The second part of the wedding was held in the *pendopo* (outdoor roofed Javanese building), which was decorated lavishly. We processed in following a traditional Javanese dancer and sat on stage at the front. There were speeches and prayers, and a letter written by my mum was read. Groups of our friends performed music and dance. For several hours we stood on the stage, shaking hands with all of the guests. Although this was exhausting, it was really lovely how we received wishes and prayers directly from each guest. The most fun part was when we left the stage to have our first dance (not a tradition in Java, but one we brought from home) to the song *You are My Sunshine*, which we have taken as 'our song', sung by Hannah, an American friend of ours.

I really believe that everything that comes to your life is a lesson, and through meeting Eka and joining together in this life-long partnership, I feel it has also brought us both understanding in openness regarding spirituality and culture.

I felt heart-warmed that some friends watched our wedding on the livestream and it was really lovely to receive the card from the meeting. Thank you so much. **Terima kasih Jade F-G**

Abide at the Centre of Your Being

Joel S. Goldsmith (1892- 1964) was an internationally known American mystic, spiritual teacher, author and healer. He founded the Infinite Way movement upon a set of spiritual principles which, among other ideas, promoted the importance of making conscious contact with God through meditation, contemplation and prayer. The realisation of 'one spiritual Essence, one Presence' which flows through all and the understanding of the Oneness of living beings and nature was of paramount importance in the unfolding of Goldsmith's teaching. In *Leave Your Nets*, we read:

'Turn within! Be assured of this: the Master made no mistake when He revealed that 'the Kingdom of God is within you". (Luke 17:21)

An important message of the Infinite Way is the revelation that, contrary to everything that human limitation, unskilful behaviour, world belief and appearance would suggest, God is our individual spiritual identity and the very fabric and substance of all form. Our own awareness as Quakers of 'that of God' in everyone may correspond to these thoughts of spiritual activity, influence or impulse within.

Goldsmith referred to God in many ways, including: the Infinite Invisible, divine consciousness, the Source of all good, the Sea of Spirit, the Word, the universal Soul and the creative Principle. Many have found these terms useful when referring to that which may be so difficult to define. Much like the early Quakers with their absolute belief in the 'indwelling Christ' and 'the brotherhood of all' (*Qfp* 24.08), Goldsmith felt that God was our common ground, a living experience and the reality of our being.

Meditation allows us to break through the layers of material sense and retire quietly into the centre of our being to 'ask, seek and knock for more spiritual light, more spiritual wisdom'. This has been described as 'listening for a feeling'. With receptive ear and open, uplifted consciousness we await the 'still, small voice' (Kings 19:11), which may not of course, be verbal but may come as a sense of deep peace, assurance or release from discord. This measure of attunement with the gentle Presence within chimes well with our own *Advices and Queries* (8): 'when we join with others in expectant waiting, we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence'.

'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit'. *Zechariah* 4:6

Goldsmith wrote in his *Letters* (1955) that there is no need to strive personally in this communion, we have only to be still, patient and let It flow as 'It presents Itself so silently, so secretly that no one of the world knows or recognises what It is, and yet, Its influence and effect can be felt by all.' As we feel this closeness with our spiritual identity we 'automatically recognise our Oneness with all others'. Each is then the light to the other.

Modern thinkers such as Eckhart Tolle, who wrote *The Power of Now*, have found guidance in Joel's work. Tolle writes:

'A new generation of mature seekers, receptive to spiritual truth, is now discovering Joel Goldsmith's teachings, which have lost none of their relevance, aliveness and power'.

In his first book, *The Infinite Way*, Goldsmith quotes from Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*:

*To you,
To whom this already belongs,
There is no need to run outside
For better seeing, nor to peer from a window,
Rather abide at the centre of your being;
For the more you leave it, the less you learn'.*

Barbara Earl

Copies available in the library in the Common Room: *Practising the Presence, The Art of Meditation, Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture*. See also www.joelgoldsmith.com

Other reading suggestions

In our last edition David Parlett recommended reading *Jesus today, a Quaker Perspective*, by Michael Wright. Helen (below) discussed *Jesus in Bad Company* by Adolf Holl, and I have just finished *Jesus before he was God* by Kathleen Folliot.

It was the title that first attracted me to the book, which I found in Godfrey's bookcase. The back cover sums up the content well:

The deification of Christ answered a political and social need at a particular time in history, and it has remained an article of faith ever since. But what truly matters about the Christian phenomenon is not whether Jesus was born of a divine father and a virgin mother, performed supernatural exploits, or even resurrected from the dead - all claims which attracted the crowds of yesteryear but which tend to alienate most modern people today. It was the fact that Jesus was the first to discover the essential importance of compassion and love in the struggle for human survival.

By rediscovering this extraordinary man, who gave his own life in order to transmit to others what he had understood, by trying to re-create in our imagination the person he must have been and the true circumstances of his life, we may perhaps appreciate more fully the extent of his wisdom, compassion and courage, and hopefully find that his message becomes clearer and more relevant.

Gillian Turner

Keep on reading: you never know what you'll find!

It had been a really enjoyable afternoon at Trotman Towers: lots of tea and even more chat. As I was leaving, Joyce kindly lent me one of her books (*Jesus in Bad Company* by Adolf Holl). I didn't realise then how it was going to pull together and explain lots of notions that had been floating incoherently in my head.

I hold my hands up. I'd never heard of Adolf Holl. I've never been much interested in theology and my attempts on the Internet to find out something about him didn't bring up much. His work at the University of Vienna would suggest that he's Austrian and, if still alive, very old. He was a Catholic priest who was suspended from his priestly duties in 1973 because, I think, of the content of his books. (But there wasn't much else about him in English though quite a lot in German of which I do not speak a word). The surprises really started when I began reading the book. Well, it is readable, politically aware and so relevant to today's world.

So what is it about? It is about Jesus, and a Jesus who usually doesn't get much of a look-in. This Jesus is something other, something more than a spiritual tool of a controlling Establishment. Holl presents Jesus as a radical, an outsider, somebody who kept company with those who were and are on the margins of society, the heretics, the revolutionaries, fools and sinners... you get the idea... these people were not likely not be in the mainstream of society. 'The radical nature of his thought brought Jesus into conflict with the society in which he lived and by whose standards his own behaviour was considered beyond the law' (p.34). Holl also makes the important point that Jesus did the then unheard thing of addressing his message to women as though they were fully human! Whatever next...?

Holl also discusses the church organisation (of all types) that has been imposed on the teachings of Jesus and the subsequent Gospels. He writes that 'The reader searches in vain for anything in John's gospel about founding a church, baptising people, a world mission, and a hierarchy of office in a yet-to-be created major religious complex. Even the kingdom of God, so important to Jesus, features here as something quite lowly and free from the notion of kingship'. Wow! No hierarchy, no top-down power relationships... (sounds familiar...) Holl also reminds us about the importance of the conventions of speech and how even the type of language used, simple or complex, can also be a means of control (p.83).

So this book is highly recommended. Is there one in our library? Is there one in most libraries? I quickly realised that this book was going to be important to me and started the search to find a copy to buy. Interestingly – perhaps significantly – there seems to be no current edition in print. (Mine, believe it or not, is very much a second hand copy that came from Milan Public Library, Ohio. Sometimes it is a small, inter-connected world.)

Helen Johnson

Adolf Holl (1971), English translation (1972), *Jesus in Bad Company*, New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston. [Holl was born in 1930 and is still alive, according to Wikipedia.]

On the premises...

A Sanctuary Meeting's Summer

Croydon Quaker Meeting's two listed buildings played host to over 200 unaccompanied migrants and asylum seekers aged 15 – 18 between May and August.

Two groups have been meeting weekly for several years. PanArts focuses on acting, singing and dancing to create a community which is welcoming and exciting. In August they created an inspiring performance on the theme of friendship, using a variety of mixed media and theatre styles.

Refugee Youth aka Amazing People of the World, focuses on building a social community for young people who are newly arrived without family. They are encouraged to support each other, to develop in confidence and to take on leadership roles. This year they organise a one day event, with six different creative workshops, and an outstanding piece of dance and theatre entitled 'The masks we wear'.

In contrast, for the summer term 60+ young people attended a mornings-only virtual school focusing on English, maths and IT and money-management to prepare them for full-time education in September. In August the same team ran a whole day project Summermix, funded by Croydon Council. This offered over 100 young people a rich timetable, covering intensive English, maths, IT, sports and keep fit, visual and performing arts, and other activities not held on our premises. None of these young people had attended school in England and this project was designed not just to prepare them for full-time education but to give them the opportunity to experience a school timetable, to form friendships across race and culture barriers, to relate to their adult instructors, both women and men, and to spend five weeks of the summer happily and safely, preparing for the education they longed for.

The peaceful atmosphere of the buildings, the space in the large hall, the use of the garden, the friendliness of other hirers, the professionalism and kindness of the teachers and instructors, made this a valuable and memorable time for these young people, who had travelled on their own in dangerous conditions, and arrived to the hostile environment of the UK. So many vulnerable children, hopefully now more confident to face the future in a foreign country without parents or siblings.

Gillian Turner

Purley meetings for worship

Purley Friends held their last meeting in their Meeting House on Sunday 25th August. From Sunday 1st September, we will meet at

**St Mark's Church
Church Road, Woodcote
Purley, CR8 3QQ**

Details of parking and bus routes at <http://www.stmarkswoodcote.org.uk/contact-us/> Our MfW will start at 11.15 am.

Jo Doherty (Purley LQM CoClerk)

Events

Mon 2 to Sun 9 September Quaker 'Roots of Resistance' and other groups protesting against the DSEi arms fair being held from 10 September in London every day. Contact Rhiannon or Isobella for further details.

Thu 6 to Sat 8 Sept: 'Finding out about Quakers'. A week-end event for newcomers at Charney Manor, Charney Bassett, Oxfordshire OX12 0EJ. Discover more about core Quaker beliefs, worship and how Quakers live their lives. Also 6-8 Sept 'Space for Grace' retreat Claridge House. Come and join Ann-Marie for this weekend retreat where you can totally surrender and remember the truth of who you really are

Mon 9 Sept Silent candle-lit peace vigil in solidarity with victims of the arms trade 19.00h to 20.00h. Quakers are helping to organise a silent, candle-lit vigil outside the ExCel Centre in Docklands. Held on the evening before the arms fair opens, it will be in solidarity with victims of the arms Please contact Rhiannon or Isobella for details of any of these events.

Thu 14 Sept Quaker Life and Woodbrooke are holding a 'Patterns and Examples' gathering for all role holders, at Friends House. It will be an opportunity to make friends, share ideas and

worries and develop skills. 10:00h–16.00h. Patterns and Examples' days are gatherings for all adult role holders, and children and young people aged 6 to 18. Adults £20, including lunch and refreshments.

Mon 16 to Wed 18 Sept Creativity and ministry course at Woodbrooke. We will be using a variety of craft and natural materials, individually and as a group. As we will be spending time in the garden, participants will need a moderate degree of mobility. Residential £65. Book via: www.woodbrooke.org.uk/creativity-and-ministry

Friday 20 Sept Global Climate Strike, coinciding with the global climate strike on the same date.. <https://globalclimatactive.net/> , <https://act.350.org/event/globalclimatactive/17902> . Staff at friends house are organising a banner-making session and Meeting for Worship outside government.

Sun 22 Sept New Economy discussion group, Streatham meeting house. Details will be announced in notices.

Friday 27 Sept 'Protecting our Planet: Yes, we can.' talk at Blackheath meeting house, 1930-2100, Reserve a place at blackheathquakers@gmail.com

Friday 27–29 Sept Woodbrooke are holding a weekend conference learning about asylum and migration, called 'Envisioning a world that is open to all: let us see what love can do'. A weekend conference learning about asylum and migration, hearing from those who have felt its impact, and working together to create the change that we need. Speakers, workshops, performances and panel discussions will explore the interplay between race, privilege and migration. Register at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/envisioning

Sat 28 Sept to 6 Oct QUAKER WEEK This year's theme is 'Quaker Stories'. 4 Oct. The trial of Penn and Mead (play).

Collected in July and August

Jul 7 South London Area Meeting **47.00**
Jul 14 Woodbrooke **35.00**
Jul 21 South London Area Meeting **47.00**
Jul 28 The Retreat, York **50.00**

Aug 04 Britain Yearly Meeting **38.00**
Aug 11 Croydon Refugee Centre **84.00**
Aug 18 Croydon Local Meeting **38.00**
Aug 25 Mind in Croydon **70.00**

Collecting in September: **1** South East Cancer Help Centre, **8** South London Area Meeting, **15** Friends World Committee for Consultation, **22** Worldwide Alternatives to Violence (WAVE), **29** Praxis Community Projects



Just visiting...

I visited Wincanton meeting house, set in beautiful Somerset countryside, in 2010. There have been Quakers in Wincanton since 1654 and the Meeting House was built in 1876, but it bears a plaque dated 1729, which may have come from a predecessor.

DP