

MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING NEWSLETTER NO 28 FEBRUARY 2024



New sign outside Sale Meeting House

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The Spirit Level : why more equal societies almost always do better (2009)

**The Spirit Level : why equality is better for everyone (2010)
by Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson**

Article by Phoebe Spence

These epidemiologists wrote this prescient book in 2009, and it's not only playing out more widely but is getting worse.

More and more heart-breaking facts emerge about malnutrition, child poverty, homelessness, etc. But also the fear, the envy, mental distress and insecurity engendered, a breakdown in morals and trust, crime and corruption.

Why do we tolerate this? Are we really so selfish? Obsessed with our own status at the expense of someone else?

The Equality Trust (founded by Pickett and Wilkinson) shares research on inequality. Some interesting attitudes emerge:

Public Attitudes to the Impact of Wealth Inequality

In general, attitudes suggest high concern about the impact of wealth inequality. In 2013:

- 41% of respondents strongly agreed that large differences in people's wealth gave some people too much political power, with a further 35% tending to agree (76% agreement in total).
- There was widespread concern that wealth inequality made Britain a divided society (72% agreement).
- A small majority (51%) thought that the wealth gap was unfair.
- A significant minority of the public thought that large differences in wealth were necessary for Britain's prosperity (27%) and gave people incentives to work hard (33 %).

Also inheritance was seen as the main reason that some had more wealth than others

(Source: Ipsos MORI to carry out an online survey of attitudes to wealth inequality among 1,016 members of the general public commissioned by Policy Commission on the Distribution of Wealth, the University of Birmingham)

I would want to promote paying tax – patriotic millionaires – but sadly without more transparency, responsibility and democratic accountability it is difficult to ensure that funds paid into the collective wealth are spent wisely and equitably for the common good. And what about abolishing inheritance tax?? So it is left to redistribution and alleviating poverty by charity and philanthropy – who has control? Who sets the agenda?

The Spirit level – why Equality is better for everyone has slides available

see

<https://equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/SpiritLevel%20slides.pptx> this includes the scatter diagrams, and the sources of the data.

There is criticism that correlation shown in the graphs is not causation, also how these aspects are measured

Update – the Guardian has some recent articles:

<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2023/nov/27/uk-spends-more-financing-inequality-in-favour-of-rich-than-rest-of-europe-report-finds>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/23/the-guardian-view-on-inequality-and-the-super-rich-the-status-quo-is-unsustainable>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/24/britain-richest-10-per-cent-wealthy-inequality-labour-private-schools>

LETTER FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP TO MICHAEL GOVE

Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting Social Justice Group
5 Mount Street
Manchester M2 6NS

Michael Gove
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
4 th Floor, Fry Building
Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

January 7th 2024

The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

Dear Michael Gove

The Social Justice Committee of Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting is beseeching you to think again about this Bill. We object to it in principle as we believe a vibrant democratic culture is not created by a highly centralised approach. The strand of liberal democracy which champions the separation of powers and a diversity of centres of influence needs to be rediscovered and allowed to flourish. Democracy benefits from differences of approach.

Now, however, we have a more immediate concern. The whole of Israel and Palestine is in turmoil and all efforts need to be devoted to first ending the harrowing destruction and loss of life both in Israel and the West Bank but, of course especially in Gaza; and then immediately to securing a just settlement leading probably to two independent states. That is what the people of this country clearly want. Anything which gives the impression of giving free rein to the oppression of Palestinians by hindering bodies from refusing to deal with settlements which are illegal will be seen – and rightly – as collusion with that oppression. This Bill, if it becomes law, will only make that impression of the Government taking

sides in this conflict much more obvious. The very fact that Israel is singled out by name reinforces that point.

The provisions of this Bill will do nothing at all to help in this crisis; it will make it even harder for the UK to exercise a helpful and even-handed diplomacy in the Middle East. The Government should drop it. There are much more important matters to attend to.

Please think again. This sends all the wrong signals, both to the Palestinians and to the Israeli Government. And, indeed, to the wider world.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Dale (On behalf of Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting's Social Justice Group)

A VERSE FROM TENNYSON

He refers to Man:

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed

From "In Memoriam"

TEENAGE GENERAL MEETING

Tom Taylor, Convenor of TGM, asked us to share this report with our area meetings to give them an idea of how they spend any donations they are given, and hopefully gain the interest of a few more teenagers.

2023 report of TGM (shortened)

TGM is a subcommittee of Wirral and Chester Area Meeting. The TGM catchment area includes North Wales, Wirral & Chester, Pendle Hill, Manchester & Warrington, Lancashire Central & North, Hardshaw & Mann, and East Cheshire. We also attract smaller numbers of teenagers from Worcester & Shropshire and Central England.

We have roughly 60 young people on our mailing list and we ask each area meeting to ensure that our information is passed on to their teenagers (and those approaching that age). Please ask them to contact Johnny Robinson (john.lindon.robinson@gmail.com) or Damian Entwistle (damian5461@live.co.uk) to be added to the mailing list.

There were three TGMs this year: Manchester, Liverpool and Stockport. Our numbers remained stable at around 20 young people per TGM and hopefully they will continue to rise as more young people become interested.

17th – 19th February 2023 Manchester Meeting House Ella Otomewo ran a poetry and creative writing workshop. The theme of this TGM was ‘Crossroads,’ and we explored it through a range of creative activities.

14th – 16th April 2023 Liverpool Meeting House. Instead of having a speaker, TGM went on an excursion to the Maritime Museum.

17 20th – 22nd October 2023 Stockport Meeting House and Stockport Museum The theme for this TGM was ‘Building Community’.

We hope to hold three more TGMs in 2024.

16th – 18th February 2024 Bolton MH

April 2024 Venue TBC – we are currently looking for smaller meeting houses that meet the accessibility needs of our young people.

October 2024 Venue TBC – we are currently looking for smaller meeting houses that meet the accessibility needs of our young people.

TGM is a fantastic chance for young Quakers to connect with each other and be part of a Quaker community. Unfortunately, young people often move away from Quakerism as they become teenagers, and events like TGM provide a fantastic opportunity for them to stay involved. Every weekend provides a fresh opportunity for the young people to offer opinions on our themes, develop their independence and grow into fantastic young adults. Once young people become too old for TGM, it does not mean they need to stop being involved with similar events. Young Friend's Regional Meeting is an event for 18 – 25 year olds that has recently been developed by ex-TGM'ers under the purview of East Cheshire AM. Its creation is a fantastic example of the impact events like TGM have in keeping young people involved in Quakerism, even as they grow from teenagers into young adults.

NEWS FROM QUAKER TRUTH AND INTEGRITY GROUP Truth & Integrity – an Interfaith exchange. Joint seminar with Woodbrooke

Our next webinar will be held on Wednesday 21 February beginning at 7pm and ending at 8.30pm. For this seminar we will be joined in conversation by Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland, and Jamie Creswell, Director of the Centre for Applied Buddhism. We will be discussing the place of Truth and Integrity in different faiths - what is demanded of us and how do our faiths support us.

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/truth-and-integrity-an-interfaith-exchange-feb/>

**REPARATIONS:
A LIBERATION INTO TRUTH: MIND, HEART AND SPIRIT
(AND PURSE??)
by Jonathan Dale**

As for many of us, the initial impetus came through the horrific murder of George Floyd. Neither my Local Meeting (Central Manchester) nor my Area Meeting (Manchester and Warrington) had a Racial Justice Group at that time. This was perhaps a blessing as it meant that Local Elders took on the challenge of finding ways of opening ourselves up. Several reading groups were held and others read texts individually – in my case Akala’s *Natives*. Straight talking indeed. Several of us watched Steve McQueen’s *Small Axe* on television. We set up a Black Lives Matter Group and a Facebook Page. We wrote letters in support of the Chagos Islanders – their expulsion from the home islands was a disgraceful abuse of power by the British state; we supported the National Trust threatened with Governmental displeasure for daring to show how their stately homes were entangled in wealth from slavery and colonialism; we protested at the totally inadequate scale and pace of compensation to those of the Windward Generation who had been illegally sanctioned or deported.

Eventually the Black Lives Matters informal group became an Area Meeting Racial Justice Group; some members of adjacent Meetings joined in. A Regional Gathering was held, with contributions from a group of Black nurses telling of the many manifestations of racism in the NHS. There have been creative listening exercises at local level to share our experience of ethnic diversity as we grew up. And several of us shared an illuminating visit to the Liverpool Biennial, an impressive array of art all over the city, addressing the experience of slavery and colonialism from the perspective of those whose countries have suffered their effects. I have no doubt that our minds, hearts and spirits have been enriched. And some insights have been gained and truths have become less abstract and more urgent.

But, what of reparations? Our Area Meeting is still on the edge, after just one exploratory session. But for me personally it has begun to live. I was shocked out of my complacency ... I had always seen my Nineteenth Century Quaker forbears as progressives, even financing the release of slaves etc. Then I heard Ann Morgan’s depiction of the Lancaster Quakers

who trafficked slaves in their boats. I hadn't known! At first I didn't connect this information with my family .. but the names of two slave traders: Foster and Birket crept into my mind. Surely not ... but I knew Myles Birket Foster was a relation and eventually I had it confirmed. Another shock.

By this time I was enrolled in the brilliant Woodbrooke/ QPSW course, Exploring Faith and Climate Justice (modules still available to read via QPSW's Climate Justice pages). An excellent choice of reading, including from Olufemi Taiwo on reparations, in Module 2. This combined with my local Climate Justice work brought a new insight.

I now see Reparations as having four connected components: our nation has stolen the labour of slaves to build its riches; it has stolen objects, materials, trading opportunities etc etc from the colonies; thirdly our wealth has been produced by using more than our fair share of carbon. We have a lot to pay back. But there is a huge fourth reparation that is due: the urgent and vital repair to the natural world and all the other creatures that live in it.

It's huge. Some will say it's so huge it's impossible. Some Friends have argued that it is all too vague and in the past and we should focus on contemporary slavery instead. As well, please. Instead would be to minimise the awareness of white privilege that can liberate our spirit into a hard but liberating truth: the illegitimacy of white privilege. Huge maybe. But it's simple. We have taken what was never ours and we need to repay. That's hard but that seems to me to be true. If it is that is our guidance. For me, the need is to work more urgently at how I personally respond in the direction of a major shift in the world order towards equality for all. Whatever the next years bring, I am profoundly grateful to all those who have contributed to my heart's being slowly but firmly being prised open. My eyesight may be dimmer with macular degeneration but the work on climate justice, racism and reparations over these last few years has given me a much clearer vision of what has made me what I am and it has liberated me into a fuller vision of what I owe. I now know it is more than I could ever repay. And that is no excuse at all for not starting.

(A shortened version of this article was published in The Friend on 15 December.)

THE SECOND WHITE POPPY WREATH by Mandy King (Sale Meeting)



This is the story of the second white poppy wreath. In November 2023, I assembled with 75 other wreath layers outside Sale Town Hall, as part of the Remembrance Day ceremony. I was pleased I had been invited but my solo white poppy wreath was greatly outnumbered by the 75 red poppy wreaths. I was proud to lay it at the cenotaph on that very rainy day. However, it soon disappeared, probably due to the frequent storms we experienced soon after the ceremony. The idea of a second (replacement) white poppy wreath grew in my mind & I laid the second one, (without ceremony) at the cenotaph outside Sale Town Hall, on January 6th. How long it will stay there, is impossible to say, but at the moment, the hope for peace is represented by the white poppy wreath.

SUPPORT FOR ROLE-HOLDERS

As Clerk of Nominations Committee, I have been concerned about the need for support for people taking on new roles, particularly if they are not part of a group such as Elders or Pastoral Care Team. Our Local Development Worker, Wendy Hampton, has a helpful suggestion – see email below from Hilary Tucker. Please contact me or Wendy if interested. Elizabeth Coleman elizcol@dialstart.net

EMAIL FROM HILARY

I'm part of a reference group in the NW which our LDW, Wendy Hampton, uses to touch base with every few months. Wendy has suggested in an email that role holders in our AM may be interested in joining a group of those Friends in other NW AMs undertaking the same roles.

EMAIL FROM WENDY

Might you talk with different role holders about whether they are interested in joining a multi AM peer group for their role. Friends have found it useful in the past to share experience, practice, questions and ideas in their role across the NW area. I hope that the interest is there for some and am happy to set up any that role holders are wanting to join. The groups would meet once a month or once a quarter depending on interest and will cover the subject matter raised by the groups.

I would love to hear what you find out.

with all good wishes,

Wendy

PART OF A BLESSING READ BY SANDRA DUTSON AT SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP MEETING

May God bless us with the foolishness to think that we can make a difference in the world

So that we will do the things which others tell us cannot be done.

Teaching in a war zone by Bonnie Meekums

I recently taught two whole days for students in Ukraine, by Zoom. Some were working together in a studio in Kyiv, while others were zooming in from various locations, some from outside of Ukraine. I was teaching them about my creative change processes theory, and the role of movement metaphor. It was an intense two days. At the start, I decided not to demand the usual 'phones off' rule. How could I, when no one knew whose family members might be at risk? It was a strange experience, but I look forward to teaching them about attachment theory in March. It feels both tricky and important to be training the next lot of carers in a country where trauma abounds, and no one is safe. Given the way the world is going, any of us could be next.

INCREDIBLE EDIBLE ORDSALL BRANCH



Jane, Sharon and Mike from Eccles meeting are in the picture.

Extract from “The Friend” 5 January

War in Israel and Gaza

Manchester and Cambridge Meetings had to cancel events booked by the Socialist Workers Party, which called for ‘Victory to the Palestinians’, after backlash on social media.

Comment from Liz O’Neill

As described in the November newsletter – and noted recently in *The Friend* – we cancelled a Socialist Workers Party (SWP) event scheduled to take place at Mount Street in October, at very short notice. SWP have been meeting regularly in our building for a good 20 years and currently meet here every Wednesday, but the nature of their meeting on this particular occasion had changed in response to events in Palestine/Israel and publicity for the altered meeting included a clear depiction of violence. Since then, we have held discussions with the SWP team and with our colleagues at Friends House in London as well as at Quaker Centres in Edinburgh and elsewhere. Our peace testimony means that we have never accepted bookings for activity that supports armed conflict. What has emerged from these discussions is a clear and strong position that this includes any public meeting that is focused on supporting one party in a current armed conflict.

The staff team appreciates the support of Friends which has been helpful in clarifying this position.

2024 WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The 2024 WORLD DAY OF PRAYER was prepared by Christian women of Palestine many months before the carnage of 7 October.

Theme: *"I beg you, bear with one another in love"*.

You might want to look for a church near you hosting a service. In Sale it is **2pm FRIDAY 1st MARCH** at **KINGSWAY CHURCH** on Carrington Lane, Ashton on Mersey.

From the global leaders of World Day of Prayer:

Each time we participate in these World Day of Prayer services, we become part of a great wave of prayer in native languages encircling the globe.

Beginning as the sun rises over Samoa, people in over 146 countries and islands around the world unite in prayer; this year we pray with and for the people of Palestine.

Who could doubt there is a great need for us to join together to pray for just and harmonious solutions that would bring this heart breaking war to an end and achieve security and peace for the peoples of Israel and Palestine.

(item submitted by Margaret Calvert)

RACISM by Kate McNally, Eva Koch scholar (Woodbrooke)

When we think of racism we often think of the extreme examples: the police violence, the ransacked shops, the slurs hurled across a street. It's the overt actions that come to mind. Perhaps we add to that list actions that are not so extreme, the microaggressions that non-white people face - "where are you REALLY from?" or checking for our wallet when a non-white person sits next to us on the bus.

While these are the result of racism, they aren't racism itself. Nor are the hidden prejudices that white people have, the automatic assumption that a lawyer will be white, for example, or the preference for a doctor who is white. Those are also the result of racism.

Racism itself is more subtle and more pervasive. It's a lens through which we see the world. It's a lens that tells us that white people are better on almost every measure of worth. This subtle lens tells us that white people are smarter, cleaner, more honest, less dangerous, nicer, kinder, harder-working, more articulate, etc, than non-white people.

We have trouble seeing this lens, our racism, because almost everyone we know shares it. Even non-white people. We have trouble seeing our own racism because we don't do the overt actions that we define as racism. But the lens comes with being born and growing up in western society. This society was made by and for white people, and was built on the labour of poor whites and non-whites. We acquire this lens the same way that we acquire our mother tongue -- we absorb it with mother's milk.

When we see this, we can understand that it's probably not our fault if we're racist. But it IS our fault if we choose to stay that way. When we accept the false judgements that we grow up with we accept the racism from which they spring.

COMMENT ON KATE MCNALLY'S DEFINITION BY ELIZABETH COLEMAN

I find Kate's concept of the lens through which we see the world very helpful. However, I am not happy with this sentence:

The lens tells us that white people are smarter, cleaner, more honest, less dangerous, nicer, kinder, harder-working, more articulate, etc, than non-white people.

This seems to me to miss the point. I and many other Quakers do not hold these views, and I would not want any black members or attenders to think that we do. But the racism that matters is the acceptance of the present world order where black lives are considered less valuable than white lives, and where the Global North exploits the Global South for its resources, causing untold suffering.

KATE MCNALLY'S RESPONSE

This seems to me to miss the point.

The sentence this refers to (This lens tells us that white people are smarter, etc) is simply an expansion of the one before – it is not bringing new ideas. It's the same point that you said was helpful just before this.

I and many other Quakers do not hold these views ...

I think it's more accurate that many Quakers do not THINK that they hold these views. I have seen some painful examples of unintended racism that came from 'nice' Quakers, good people who had the best of intentions. The word that is perhaps missing in my text is 'unconscious'. And maybe also 'unacknowledged'.

... I would not want any black members or attenders to think that we do (hold these views).

I cannot speak for Friends of Color, but I am told that they already know that we hold these views, and that we are largely unaware of them.

But the racism that matters is the acceptance of the present world order where black lives are considered less valuable than white lives, and where the Global North exploits the Global South for its resources, causing untold suffering.

You are absolutely right - we must work at changing this. But I think we must also understand that the lens through which we see the world was formed by this world order that assumed that black and brown lives were less valuable than white lives and that the Global South is there for our exploitation. It's this world order that taught us to believe that white people are better on almost every measure. I believe that we must understand and acknowledge this or we will re-create a world order with the same injustices.

'Compassion, to be effective, requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works... What is important is... that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is.'

Grigor McClelland in *Quaker faith & practice* 23.47

NEWS FROM THE WITNESS GROUPS

Our Area Meeting has four Witness Groups. While some people are active in more than one group, and the groups sometimes work together, they each have a distinctive area of concern. They are:

Social Justice Group
Environment Group
Peace Promotion Group
Racial Justice Group

SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

The group is beginning to plan for action in the run-up to the General Election, working with other witness groups.

Normally at this time of year, we are reminding you to mark Fair Trade Fortnight. However, in 2024 and subsequent years, Fair Trade Fortnight will be in September.

We have missed meeting face to face, and have decided to meet informally at Elizabeth Coleman's home in Moss Side, for tea, coffee and cake on Tuesday 13 February at 2.30pm. Address in LOMA, or email elizcol@dialstart.net or ring/text 07969 385080. All are welcome.

ENVIRONMENT GROUP

A "mapping exercise" has been completed, collecting information from Area Meeting Friends about their concerns and actions relating to the environment. The group is now considering how to make use of these findings. We are considering choosing one theme for each month, and putting something in the newsletter, giving information and suggesting action. The first theme (February 2024) is veganism.

PEACE PROMOTION GROUP

Twickenham Stadium is due to host an 'International Armoured Vehicles' event from 22-25th January 2024 and an 'International Military Helicopter' event from 27-29th February 2024. These are organised by Defence IQ

and will be 'attended by a range of arms companies producing weapons and military technology being used by Israel in its ongoing devastating and illegal assault on Palestinians.' - www.defenceiq.com/events

An alterable template letter calling for the events to be cancelled can be signed at

<https://palestinecampaign.eaction.online/NoTwickenhamArmsFair>

RACIAL JUSTICE GROUP

They organised a group visit to the John Rylands Library on Saturday 27th January. "We will be given an introduction to the exhibition, 'Founders and Funders: Slavery and the building of a University' by Dr Natalie Zacek, who was one of the exhibition's organisers. This will be an opportunity to learn more about the research project that gave rise to the exhibition, which explores how profits from transatlantic enslavement funded the cultural and educational development of Manchester."

BOLTON MEETING ONLINE "TALKS AND THOUGHTS" SESSIONS

TUE 13 FEBRUARY 19.30-21.00

David Pollard: Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness.

TUE 20 FEBRUARY 19.30-21.00

Catherine de Neergaard: "Christiana You Have My Heart" personal stories about Christiana, a Danish Free State and a social experiment 50+ years on.

For information about how to join these events, please go to <https://boltonquakermeeting.org/> and message using the "Contact Us" page and select "Talks and Thoughts" from the drop-down menu.

SKILLS AND INTERESTS FORM

Area Meeting Nominations Committee considers that we will be better equipped to put forward names for roles if we know more about people's skills and interests, and also things that limit their ability to serve (eg family, health, work). They have designed this form which will shortly be distributed to Friends to complete and return to their rep on Nominations Committee.

Skills and Interests Form (Area Meeting Nominations Committee)

The Religious Society of Friends does not have a hierarchy of ministers and priests to undertake the many tasks needed to 'keep the show on the road'. What we do have is the 'priesthood of all believers' (Quaker Faith and Practice 27;35) and the understanding that members of our Meetings will 'serve the Truth and one another' (Quaker Faith and Practice 19.57) in whatever ways they can and as far as they are able.

It is helpful to our Area Meeting Nominations Committee to know about what skills and interests our members and attenders bring to our Meetings and what activities interest them. It may also be useful to our Local Meeting Nominations Committees. This will help our discernment when we seek to fill Quaker roles.

You do not have to fill out this form if you do not want to. It is entirely voluntary but we do encourage you to do so.

.....

1. What Quakers roles do you currently hold or have held within the last 5 years ? (These could be at Local Meeting, Area Meeting or National level)

2. Do you have any skills, experience or knowledge which you would be prepared to offer? (e.g. listening skills, working with children, committee work, editing and writing, financial management, IT skills)
Please tell us about them:

3. Are there particular interests you would like to pursue or would wish us to bear in mind?
Please tell us about them:

4. Are there things in your life that might affect your ability to serve (e.g. family, health, work)?

5 Is there anything else you would like us to know?

Name.....Date.....

Please give/send this completed form to your Local Meeting Representative to Area Meeting Nominations Committee.

Elizabeth Coleman (Eccles) John Banks and Valerie Clark (Central Manchester) Ursula Sharma (South Manchester) Janet Roberts (Sale) Kath Redmond (Warrington)

HAPPINESS

by Elizabeth Coleman

I listened to a podcast where two doctors, Michael Mosley and Rangan Chatterjee, discussed the various things that people can do to increase their happiness. At the end, Michael Mosley asked Rangan Chatterjee if he could only choose one thing, which he would choose. Rangan Chatterjee said, using social friction as free therapy. Michael Mosley said he would have chosen the same thing.

This was explained using an example. If you are driving to work, and someone drives inconsiderately and in a way that could cause an accident, you could get angry and stressed. Alternatively, you could think, maybe he's got a reason for acting like this. Maybe he was up all night with his daughter who had earache.

It seems that achieving a generous attitude to other people's motivation increases your happiness.

The Problems with having Principles. by Nick Tyldesley. Citizen of Bolton

At first sight it would seem that preferring peace to war; speaking truth to power; going for the simple life and being against sin is to be recommended if we want to be good, morally upright citizens. We can feel pleased that our stance is both right and logical. The opposite viewpoints are seen as dubious, selfish and just no cricket. We stand on the moral high ground and can thus feel superior.

But it is too easy to talk the talk rather than walk the walk. Wringing our hands in outrage, sending off letters of protest, waving a banner costs little in terms of personal inconvenience and can be just an add-on activity in a busy life. Taking a principled stand is to ignore the complexities behind issues.

For peaceniks there is the matter of standing up to bullies, defending our legitimate interests, arguing for a “just war”. The Hobbesian view of life being “nasty, brutish and short” has dominated history over the centuries: wars, imperialism, pillage, genocide have always been with us. Leadership is too often synonymous with domination. Athenian democracy wasn't quite the assembly of equals in a society where slavery and patriarchy ruled OK. Voltaire wickedly satirised uncritical utopianism in “Candide” with the mantra: “Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds when events proved the contrary. Calling for peace talks, per se, doesn't get warring sides immediately together to sink their differences. Calling for a compromise is often just a cop out. Reaching peace is a complex process that can take decades as the Irish can testify. International affairs conducted in committees is just naïve and anyway, politicking in committees can be malicious and game playing leading to bullying around the table as well as the battlefield.

Yes, it might be nice to downsize our wardrobes, spin our own wool and go to charity shops for stuff. Poor child labourers and exploited foreign workers are a proper cause for concern but if we interrupt the supply chain, then there could be a global economic crisis of unemployment. Our high streets will be further decimated if we reduce our shopping for new things.

Putting our fingers in our ears, refusing to watch the news and trashy reality programmes may make us feel intellectually superior but we are like the ostrich, head in the sand letting the wicked world continue as usual. We need a bit of grit to react against.

Speaking truth to power is theologically sound but there are penalties for those who speak against totalitarian governments, however peacefully. Few of us are saints or martyrs and would go along with the majority- however wrong – for the sake of our health and safety. We can justify the telling of white lies for the best of reasons to support others facing the truth about appearance / a medical condition, which might be hurtful.

So, do we accept the biblical notion of humanity being unutterably corrupt due to The Fall? Is utopia logically unachievable and would a

utopian state resemble Barbieland? Could we follow religious orders, retreat into a life of prayer intercession for a better world? Alternatively we can take some very small steps with little acts of kindnesses; a smile, charitable donations, voluntary work. Crowd funding can be effective and “The People” CAN effect major changes like the collapse of communism. Northern Ireland sets an example of ecumenical cooperation through non-sectarian schools.

We need to accept that life is a roller coaster with times of joy and despair. Improvements are more cyclical rather than incremental. On our life journey we should hold onto these joyful things even if it is only the sight of spring flowers. Too much gloom is bad for our souls. Sellars and Yeatman put it succinctly, if satirically: “Roundheads-right but repulsive; cavaliers- wrong but romantic” Whose side are you on?!

Climate Justice Gathering at The Hayes Centre,
Swanwick in November.
by Kate Hughes

Prior to attending this follow-up weekend, I had participated in the academic year-long online course ‘Exploring Faith and Climate Justice’ commencing during the time that I was a member of Chichester local meeting, West Sussex area.

The theme of the long weekend was ‘Ubuntu’ - an African word meaning the unity of creation or humanity towards all living things. We met on Friday evening and were welcomed by and introduced to our facilitators and then listened to a song, which developed into a singalong, orchestrated by Apollo Wopicho of the Quaker Conservation Educational school in Uganda and watched a video alongside it of his native land. Then in small groups with those we didn't know well, we discussed our hopes and fears, ideas and concerns, joys and areas of energy regarding the subject of the weekend.

After a lovely dinner, (Hayes food recommendation!), we were introduced to the 'Spirit of Ubuntu' by Anna Lewis who facilitated some discussion of the concepts, then we listened to some curlews and heard some powerful ministry about their vulnerability in our 1st Epilogue.

On Saturday morning the first session of the day of which the subject was 'Critical dialogue: What is climate justice?' - led by Ruth Kettle and Ben Mango from the Justice Dialogues Project who introduced their endeavour and then gave us statements about the climate crisis and 4 questions to reflect on and then discuss in small groups:

- What is my perspective? - What other alternative perspectives might there be?
- Where does the statement come from? - What might be the speaker's story? What are the assumptions within it?
- Where does the statement lead? - Positive and negative implications?
- What can you imagine beyond the statement?



We then returned to the large group to share our statements and thoughts regarding them. This was most informative and much discussion followed, on local ways of having/arranging conversations and of engaging in climate-related activities, such as youth club activities, community libraries, community gardening, cycling promotion, market stalls, clean rivers/ seas/ air/ skies, Transition Town movements, repair cafe's and other initiatives around the country.

Then Kim told us about her upcoming short Woodbrooke online course: 'Resilient Communities: Why we need radical imagination' on Monday 26th February from 19:00 - 21:00 on Zoom and also of Nim Njuguna's series on Racial Justice Dialogues course (which someone from that AM Group might be interested in attending: Tuesday 6th February - Tuesday 12th March live Zoom sessions 18:00-20:00 each Tuesday

In the afternoon, we had a choice of sessions on the theme of 'Art and truth-telling' - I chose a collage-making session on the theme of 'A difficult terrain: the emotional landscape: what's important to you' and we all helped each other to find images, then shared our final pieces of work with the group and our truths and feelings that arose.

My second choice was 'Kintsukuroi, care and connectedness' with Sue Curd where we looked at images and poetry referencing the climate situation and responded to them in small groups, then came back as a whole group with a poem of our own and then went into worship-sharing on the theme.

Poems used:

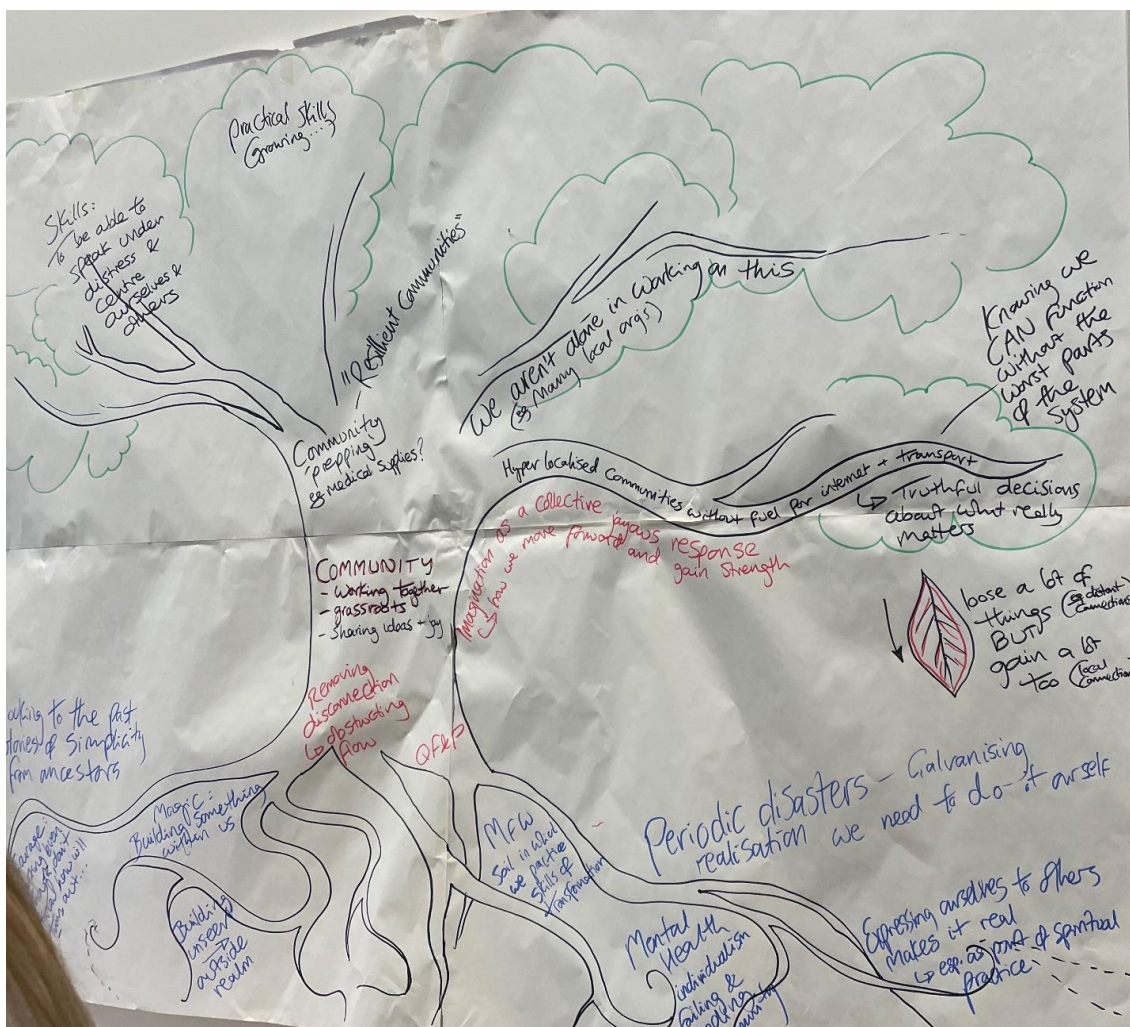
- Going Going by Philip Larkin
- Talking to Grief by Denise Levertov
- Kindness by Naomi Shihab Nye
- The Cure at Troy by Seamus Heaney

After dinner, there were participant-led break-out groups, on the following subjects:

- Should we develop a testimony against capitalism
- Quaker engagement in the Polycrisis
- What can we learn from indigenous ways of life
- A meditative relational practice for focus, presence, discernment, exploration, feeling and meaning.

Then people signed up afterwards to receive further information on the focus of their choice (I signed-up for Indigenous learning), followed by another lovely Epilogue, this time with music.

On Sunday, we went into a morning of visioning with Kim Harrison; the theme being: Space to imagine what world we want to work towards building. as a community.

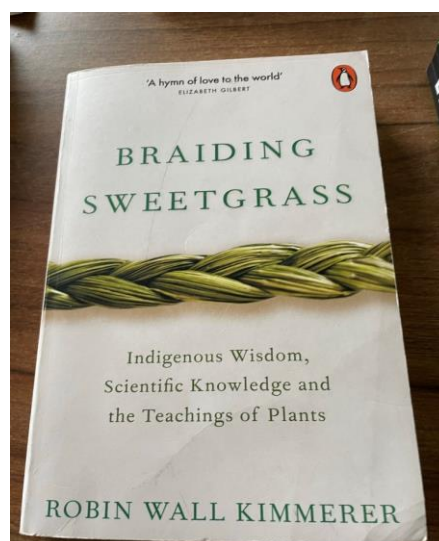


Kim drew a large tree on an A1 sheet of paper and we worked upwards. From roots (Meeting for Worship as the soil in which we practise and develop our skills of transformation, Quaker Faith and Practice as nutrients), to trunk (community - working together, grassroots projects, resilience strengthening), to branches (localised focussed groups, collective imagination responses, reaching out to other organisations or groups), to leaves and fruits (development of practical/ emotional/ community/ verbal/ technical/ communicative skills we'll need to move forward)

After a short break we moved into our final session: Tying the threads together through worship-sharing, in which these themes were embraced and we looked at the positives we'd found together over the 3 days which we could take forward both together and to our local groups.

Book recommendations:

- Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- Less is More by Jason Hickel
- Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown
- The Spirit Level by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett
- Doughnut Economics by Kate Raworth
- Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice by Graham Ward



AN INTERFAITH MUSIC PROJECT AND REFLECTIONS ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE

The congregation of the local mosque in Eccles were shocked to hear of the murder in 2014 of Eccles taxi driver by Islamic State in Syria, where he was doing humanitarian work. Local Muslim taxi drivers knew him. The mosque responded by opening up to the local community by holding meetings on the theme “Meet your Muslim neighbour.” Some Eccles Quakers attended the meetings, and we now have an ongoing relationship with the mosque. Sharon Powell received the following paper through her contacts with the mosque, and suggested that it be published in the newsletter.

“THE IDEA THAT SOME LIVES MATTER LESS IS THE ROOT OF ALL OF THE WORLD’S PROBLEMS.”

— DR. PAUL FARMER

[Abraham Jam](#) is an interfaith musical project. We are three singer/songwriters who each have our own careers as solo artists, but when we gather to sing together, something happens that none of us can quite explain. [Dawud](#) is Muslim, [Billy](#) is Jewish, and [David](#) is a Quaker Christian. Somehow, the act of singing in harmony lends a depth to the words we sing, and opens hearts in a way that has been moving for us to witness. We like to say that harmony can be even more powerful than unity; we don’t have to sing the same notes.

The current events in Israel and Palestine have been heartbreaking and horrifying for us. We mourn and condemn the violence against hostages held by Hamas, and children bombed in Gaza City, for those raped and killed in Israeli kibbutzim, and for those starved and denied medical care in Khan Yunis. Naming the violence on both sides does not mean equating it, but disregarding any of the violence would devalue the lives shattered and taken, and we refuse to

dehumanize any of the people involved by failing to mourn their abuse and demand that it stop. If our feelings about victims are influenced by our feelings about their governments, then we are swayed by propaganda. We consciously try not to be.

Over time, we have witnessed both the ongoing, degrading treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and the incessant rocket attacks on Israelis, as well as the pernicious and lethal anti-Semitism and Islamophobia that are again on the rise worldwide. The histories of both peoples include profound mistreatment. We acknowledge that context matters, but if we begin to outline all of the context here, we will never finish.

In 2018, two days after the murders at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Billy and David flew to Toronto and joined Dawud to perform at the Parliament of the World's Religions. That Friday, we got word that people were gathering at a synagogue in Toronto because there was a threat that it might be attacked as well. The three of us went there for Shabbat services, and Dawud and David stood arm in arm in the protective circle that had formed around the synagogue while Billy went in to pray. So the three of us responded in two ways—we put our bodies between whatever danger might arise and our siblings inside, and we prayed. Had the threat been to one of the others, we would have changed roles. Abraham Jam was originally formed as a response to attacks on Muslims in 2010 near the capitol of North Carolina. We have stood, and continue to stand, firmly against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all bigotry.

The extremists on either side of this conflict believe that all people on the other side fundamentally hate them, and want nothing but their destruction. But we personally count as friends many Palestinians and Israelis of goodwill, of our three faiths and other perspectives. They care about people on the 'other side' of this conflict, as well as their own, but they are not adequately represented by their governments

or the media. Those voices are often drowned out by louder ones calling for violence and retribution, but they are worthy of our attention (to begin exploring those initiatives, we suggest this link: [Wikipedia – Arab Israeli peace projects](#)). We shouldn't reduce the multiple agendas and desires within diverse communities to over-simplified, homogenous viewpoints. Humanity is never that simple; there is light in the darkest places.

When we collectively consider Israel and Palestine, "What should happen instead?" is the obvious next question. Regardless of strategic challenges, we believe that first, the incursion, bombing, and collective punishment of Gaza should stop immediately, the hostages and political prisoners should be immediately released, the missiles being fired at Israel should stop immediately, the settler violence in the West Bank should stop immediately, and water, food, fuel, and medical care should be restored to the people of Gaza, where hunger and malnutrition are almost universal. Only then will we be able to consider next steps, and begin working toward a just and equitable resolution. Peacemaking has always required creativity, because the best ways forward are almost never the obvious ones. It will be a long journey, but right now we are walking in the wrong direction down that road. The answer to war crimes is not more war crimes.

In the ongoing discourse regarding what must be done now, many statements have been issued calling upon various parties to take various actions. For us, the phrase "call upon" does not feel adequate. Rather, we say this: in the interest of everything we hold dear and sacred, we implore you, we are pleading from the deepest part of our hearts, please, please, please stop this senseless destruction and killing, and find another way. It is long past time to put the resources we have committed to violence toward finding a just peace instead.

The scriptural prophets of all three of our traditions spoke words of challenge to their own people, asking them to remember their deepest values when they seemed to have forgotten them. All three of our traditions have been twisted to justify all manner of violence throughout their histories, but at their hearts, all three teach reverence for human life, and exhort us to work for peace.

In our outrage and injury, in our condemnation of the brutal disregard for the humanity of those we love, let us not become that which we despise. If the 'other side' has dehumanized and devalued the lives of people we hold dear, let us not do the same thing in response. The life of every human being involved is sacred. Let us commit to stopping the staggering violence immediately, and moving toward a better way.

~ Abraham Jam: David LaMotte, Billy Jonas & Dawud Wharnsby

SOCIAL MEDIA

According to a research shared by Yale psychology professor Laurie Santos, staying off social media could have “a bigger effect on your happiness than earning \$100,000 a year or marrying the love of your life” . However, it is important to note that this is just one study and there are many other factors that contribute to happiness.

Let's be careful to keep the face-to-face aspect of our Quaker meetings, so that they do not become part of the problem.

WAST LOOKING FOR TRUSTEES

Many Friends will know that Chantal Franco and Mary Atkinson from Central Manchester are Trustees for WAST (Women Asylum Seekers Together). WAST was first formed in 2005 and became a charity in 2014. They serve women seeking asylum throughout the Greater Manchester area. They are a women's led Charity where the aim is to build each woman's capacity and skills so that they can cope with the hostile community that currently exists, and, so that they are better able to live their lives. WAST offers a safe space, a place where voices can be heard and the opportunity to build skills.

They are now recruiting for 4 new women Trustees to join the Board and take forward new work programmes.

Friends will know that asylum seekers and refugees are a cause for concern within our Meetings so you are asked to give this request special consideration and also to pass it on to women you know who may have some interest in helping.

<https://www.wastmanchester.com>

DAY OF HEALING AT STOCKPORT FMH

East Cheshire AM Fellowship of Healing (FFH) group invites M/c and Warrington Friends to the annual National Day of Healing to be held in Stockport Meeting House on Saturday 2nd March 2024 between 11am and 3pm. This is an occasion on which other FFH groups throughout BYM take part simultaneously. It is a continuous MfW for Healing with participants staying for as long or short a time as they wish. Drinks are provided but bring own lunches if needed.

It gives the opportunity for quiet holding in the Light of people/places/situations of concern bringing them into the healing circle, either in our hearts or speaking them into the silence. We have discovered that meeting as a group the spiritual energy somehow seems far greater than just the sum of the individuals present.

We would warmly welcome Friends from your AM.

Healing means

To cure sometimes

To relieve often

To comfort always

A QUESTION

What is it that leads Quakers and Muslims to care so much about the Palestinians, and so little about the Uyghurs?

Elizabeth Coleman

WOODBROOKE WHERE YOU ARE

Deepening and Strengthening our Community

Saturday 24 February 10.30 – 16.00
Central Manchester Meeting House

During this day we will spend some time getting to know each other better and share our beliefs and practices. We will use exercises in small groups to explore our needs and hopes for our community going forward. This day is designed to be a gentle exploration together and an opportunity to strengthen our relationships with each other.

The event is free.

To book visit www.woodbrooke.org.uk
Or contact Woodbrooke via email learning@woodbrooke.org.uk
Phone 0121 728 2360

VEGANUARY – A VEGAN PERSPECTIVE by Kath Redmond (Warrington Meeting)

So another Veganuary is nearly over and will be finished by the time this article appears. For 10 years now January has been the month when the event known as Veganuary takes place. Participants sign up free of charge online and undertake to eat only plant-based food with no animal products for the entire month. In return they receive help and encouragement and often get access to discounts of various kinds. I took part in the second one in 2015 and have been vegan ever since.

I remember Animal Agriculture kicking back with ‘Februdairy’ one year but I haven’t heard much about that recently. Perhaps they have backed off for the time being or - more likely diversified into plant-based foodstuffs

themselves to hedge their bets! So during February I am always waiting to see which of my friends who have tried Veganuary have actually made that transition to plant based eating and veganism.

There is an assumption that you need to be vegetarian before going vegan but I'm not sure how true this is. Certainly the brain needs to lose its 'predator mindset' before anything like compassion can be felt during meals. The very word 'meat' means food to those who eat it but 'dead flesh' to those who don't. So there is a very strong psychological barrier for meat eaters who are often deeply attached to the taste of animal flesh and (quite understandably) don't want to entertain thoughts or feelings about the individuals they are consuming. Indeed, it is considered bad manners to even hint at such things! I have known of several people who have transitioned straight from daily meat eating to veganism but in every case it was after a strong level of disgust was experienced, perhaps as a result of seeing graphic footage of slaughter online or a temporary job in places where animals or chickens are killed. The individual has got to the point where they can't un-know what they know. They lose their appetite overnight. But this is unusual and, in general, a gradual transition takes place.

So the emphasis of Veganuary is really more focused on moving away from the typical vegetarian diet with its strong reliance on milk, butter, cheese and eggs - all still considered to be essential and unavoidable by the majority of people in our present society. Except that eggs and milk are potential allergens and the vast majority of humans in the world are lactose-intolerant, especially in the Far East! Judging by how much better I felt once I'd ditched it, I was one of those! My skin is clear and untroubled now as are my intestines!

So, if people I know tell me they are doing Veganuary, I am always interested to know why they are doing it and how they are finding it. Afterwards I am interested to hear if they feel any differently about animal agriculture than they did before. Also, are they having any difficulty integrating their previous ideas of 'normal' and 'normal eating' with the new habits they are tentatively forming? Is eating out a problem? Are their families and friends being supportive?

In my own case I sailed through Veganuary, enjoying the challenge of

finding something new and different to eat every day. I did have the advantage of being mostly vegetarian since the early 80s so many of my meals (vegetable curry, lentil and bean dishes etc) were already plant-based. I adjusted to giving up cow's milk by dropping it altogether for a few weeks to allow my body to 'forget' that taste before settling on Oat Milk as the best substitute. Cheese I dealt with by crowding it out of my meals, where I put as many nice tastes, colours and textures on the plate as I could so that the cheese wasn't missed. Now, I would recommend a good vegan plant-based cheese like Applewood or Cathedral City but I would never eat it in the quantities I used to when vegetarian. I must have been very addicted to it. So greasy! So the food wasn't and still isn't a big deal for me. I accept that I am lucky as I never relished animal products (with the exception of cheese) the way that I witness it in many other people. I can see that the prospect of 'giving up' something experienced as so desirable must be almost unthinkable for many of them.

I do think that there is a massive psychological component involved in 'going out on a limb' and becoming vegan. If you have just completed Veganuary, quite enjoyed all your plant-based meals but are not quite sure where you are going with it, it's probably safer to just say that you are eating plant-based at the moment and leave it at that. Save all the vegan conversations until you have sorted out how you think and feel about veganism as a lifestyle choice. I love being vegan but there are challenges for some. Luckily, we are protected as an ethical belief by the 2010 Equality Act. (See Vegan Society UK for details)

Needless to say, I am here as a 'vegan resource' for anyone in Area Meeting who can make good use of me.

CHAGOS ISLANDERS – BAD NEWS

Britain's foreign secretary, David Cameron, has recently ruled out the return of former inhabitants to the Chagos Islands, months after his predecessor revealed that the UK was discussing their potential return.

(Info from The Guardian)

Background

Between 1968 and 1974, the UK forcibly removed thousands of Chagossians from their homelands and sent them more than 1,000 miles away to Mauritius.

From AM Newsletter No 5 – March 2022

Jonathan Dale commented:

“If the Chagos Islanders had been white, they never would have been driven from their homeland by Britain. This return journey sounds positive. But the UK is still refusing to budge. Another shameful episode in our imperialist mode. Please write to the Government and tell them how this flagrant abuse of human rights is a moral stain on our country.”

BEING A VEGAN

from AM Newsletter 1 – November 2021

My partner says that, for him, the worst thing about being vegan is knowing how cruel the world is for those animals designated for food, clothing or entertainment and realising that most people just don't care. I think that it's more a case of people not letting themselves care. When we look back to before we were vegan ourselves we remember that we didn't talk or think about the animals very much, particularly those used for food. Now it seems as though those beings were always there, hidden in plain sight. Why didn't we notice them before?

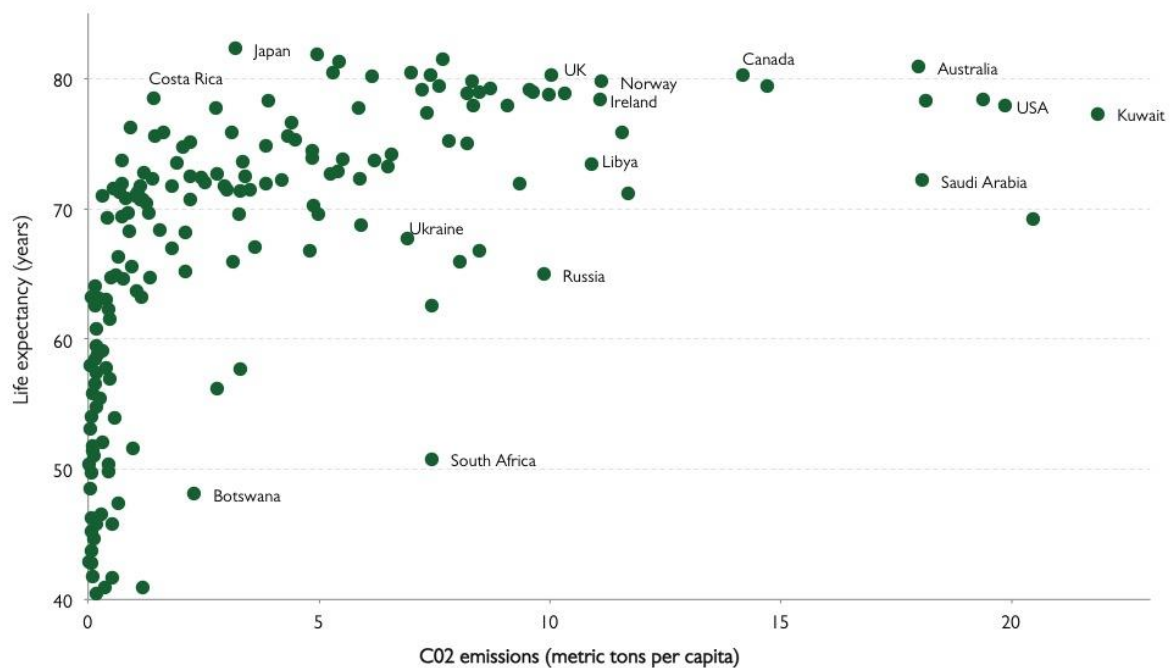
Kath Redmond

HIGH LIFE EXPECTANCY CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH LOW CO2 EMISSIONS

A graph from the Equality Trust website. See

<https://equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/SpiritLevel%20slides.ppt>

Overdeveloped countries? High life expectancy can be achieved with low CO₂ emissions



Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

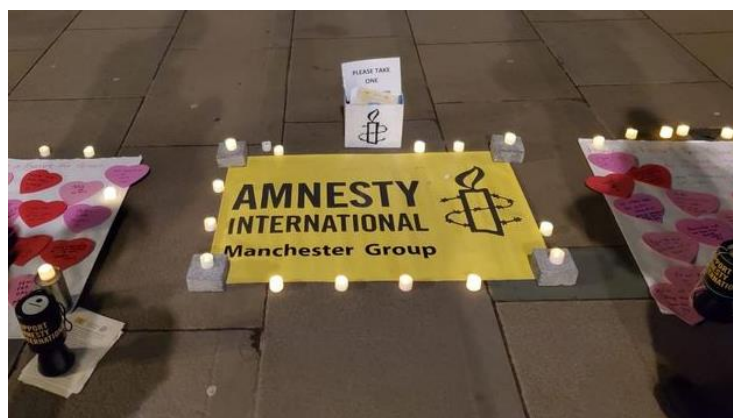
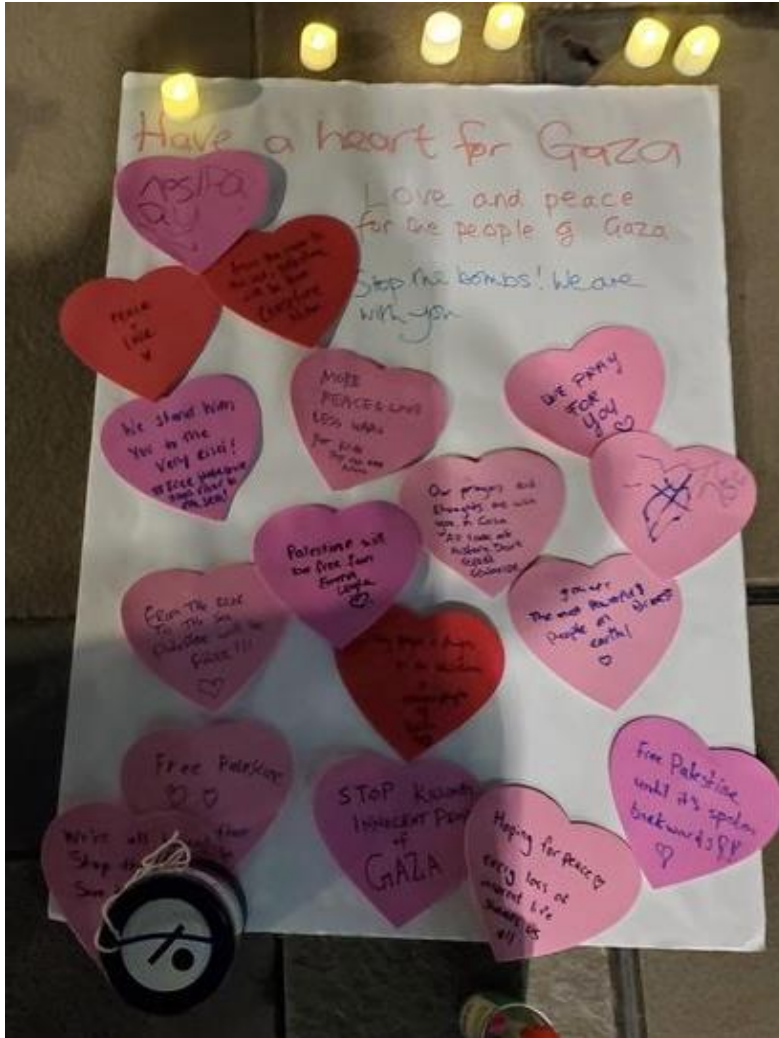
THE EQUALITY TRUST

X

See Phoebe's article on "The Spirit Level" on page 3 of this newsletter. Poor countries have very low carbon emissions and very low life expectancy. (See left-hand side of graph.) However, as countries become a little richer, their carbon footprint increases a bit, but life expectancy increases a lot. (See for example Costa Rica at the top left.) After that, countries may continue to become richer and their carbon emissions increase dramatically, but life expectancy hardly increases. (See Kuwait and USA on top right.) Other graphs show that for richer countries, human wellbeing increases with greater equality, and greater wealth (which generally means higher CO₂ emissions) has almost no effect on wellbeing. Elizabeth Coleman

VIGIL FOR GAZA

Quakers have been taking part in the Amnesty International vigils for Gaza. Margaret Calvert sent these photos.



My experience of veganism by Phoebe Spence (Stockport LM)

This is a brief reflection on veganism, with Veganuary in mind. My granddaughter is trying it, so I wanted to learn from her experience. Items need to be clearly labelled suitable for vegans. She is concerned at the origin of some of the additives, even in tins of beans. Young people may not have control of where their food comes from, busy parents use supermarkets and delivery services.

Of course there's concern about nutrition – protein, calcium, B12 etc. so it's important to check these out here's a simple diagram https://www.vegansociety.com/sites/default/files/uploads/downloads/The%20Vegan%20Eatwell%20Guide_2.pdf and more detail: <https://www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-and-health/nutrition-overview> Also <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-eat-a-balanced-diet/the-vegan-diet/>

I grew up mainly vegetarian, exceptions were school dinners and visiting Grandma. My younger son developed eczema, made worse by dairy products (he probably had cows milk too early, as I went out in the evenings to save the world – guilt!). So some of the family were using Plamil milk and desserts. We also became interested in the Movement for Compassionate Living, and the new Vegan Organic Network see <https://veganorganic.net/> moving on from organic gardening - veganism is a way of life for the planet, not just diet for humans.

I've not been strict, cheese can be hard to give up, and it is quite ubiquitous. Not good for phelgm and catarrh, so I find definite benefits to a reduction, if not eliminating. In baking, eggs can be substituted by soaking flax seeds to bind ingredients. Substituting milks is straightforward, and there is now far more choice and plenty of food substitutes (but some seem ultra processed). I want to try making vegan yogurt myself, kefir grains work better with soya milk than other plant milks.

But read the labels, check the sources/origins, balance your diet. I am sure we can share recommendations to help us transition.

ONLINE MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP, SHARING CONCERNS FOR THE WHOLE EARTH COMMUNITY

After a weekend at Woodbrooke about the environment a year ago, which some Manchester & Warrington Friends attended, Living Witness set up Meetings for Worship as follows:

Mondays at 7am UK time. This is an unprogrammed half-hour Meeting for Worship, with some time for Afterwords at the end.

Epilogue on Wednesdays at 8.30pm UK time. This is an unprogrammed half-hour Meeting for Worship. It's a quiet winding-down time for many of us so we don't usually have Afterwords or conversation at the end.

Meeting for Worship for the Earth on Fridays at 7am UK time for about half an hour. We normally have some prepared ministry as we settle into worship, and then any ministry as led, and time for Afterwords at the end of our worship.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81291577565?pwd=SHNxNUlmeFFoYmJSUy9ySHkzRm9zUT09>

Meeting ID: 812 9157 7565

Passcode: 1895

Sandra Dutson comments:

I mostly attend the Friday morning sessions and they have become for me a very sustaining practice and there is a growing sense of being a community supportive of one another and providing a space for deeper sharing of concerns for the whole earth community. Newcomers are welcome.

My experience of Veganuary

by Kate Hughes

I tried to go vegetarian – we didn't have vegans then! - when I was a teenager (incensed by the export of live food animals and the Draize test on rabbits), but my parents and the school wouldn't put up with it and when my grandfather died and my parents went up to St. Helens for the funeral etc, my sisters and I went to stay with my mother's sister and I was told to 'stop all that nonsense' whilst there, so I lost heart in the project.

Then I managed it for a year or 2 when I was at college, but wasn't really eating very healthily and then when I began working for the NHS the limited choices in hospital canteens dissuaded me, subsequently my (now-ex) husband and I did it for awhile when we were too broke for much else, but the endless soaking of beans drove him crazy.. though he made lovely bread!

Then when I had cancer whilst in America my Oncologist recommended it, but American supermarkets and restaurants didn't play ball, resulting in migraines (cheese) and constipation (eggs) and also my husband insisted I make my own food at home (& I have never been much of a cook – ask my Occupational Therapy patients!!), though I have other strengths, so again it wasn't a goer really..

Since being on my own again, with no-one else to consider, I have been gradually giving up food choices for the past few years; first red meat, then chicken and pork, then becoming pescatarian and most recently I have, for a while, been considering veganism, all this being due to the ongoing appalling treatment of animals and in recent years to our increasing knowledge of the negative effects on the climate situation of Big Agri business and also health issues/ cancer prevention recommendations etc.

So.. finally (after almost 50 years of aborted attempts), I decided that this year I would do Veganuary and see if I could move the last little bit forward and actually stick at it after the month is over! However, as I said already, I'm really no great cook and also I do like to eat out a bit, so with the help of a friend I met at our Real Food Real Health course, (which I was referred to by my GP) who taught me a few Vegan curry dishes and some Linda McCartney

items and some lovely home-prepared (though not by me) meals from the wonderful Unicorn Deli I loaded up my freezer and launched in.

I've been using oatmilk for my coffees and Alpro yoghurts with oats nuts seeds and fruit for breakfast since the Real Health course last autumn and learning to make my own soups for lunches wasn't too difficult (though some have ended-up more like stews or tagines, but never mind!) and I have been trying out vegan cheeses, my favourite being Unicorn's various types of Happy Mouse, which you can substitute for egg when making Shakshuka and also put on top of Kirsty's Lentil Shepherds Pie and I also got some nice recipes from Baltimore Meeting, USA, which I signed up for thinking it was Britain Yearly meeting, but fortunately I lived in America in the 1990s so understand their measurements.

Overall, it's been a good experience and I think I will continue – after all it's been nearly my life's work getting here - & I'd recommend others also give it a try.

Notice from the Racial Justice Steering Group

Here is notice of a course starting in early February that we are hoping you will pass on to anyone you think might be interested.

It grew out of *Faith in Black Lives Matter*, a Faith Network for Manchester series from 2021/22.

This is the 8th time of being available online and has moved on from awareness raising to addressing issues such as Reparations.

<https://www.interfaithfoundation.org/courses/sacred-work-of-facing-and-addressing-racism/>

INVITE TO BOOK GROUP ON 'DOUGHNUT ECONOMICS'

BY KATE RAWORTH

from Sandra Dutson

Talk of the 'Economy' always seems to include an assumption about the necessity of 'growth'.

This is even though there has been an increasing awareness that 'growth' is not an unmitigated good and indeed can be held responsible for many of the most serious problems we face. Environmental damage has been considered 'an externality' and GDP has no way of measuring the distribution of wealth despite growing appalling inequalities both in UK and globally. There have been books, a series of Quaker leaflets and a whole group of students studying 'Economics' challenging this kind of thinking yet this valuing of 'growth' is rarely challenged by politicians nor the press and public.

So how do we change this mindset in ourselves, in the wider population and in governments and press?

My own resistance to what I have come to regard as a kind of idolatry of the economy has been much helped by reading 'Doughnut Economics' by Kate Raworth.

The 'doughnut' image emerged from her belief visualising concepts is important and developed particularly through her work for Oxfam for many years. Instead of the growth graph with no starting or finishing point the doughnut helps by showing something whole, the outer edge represents planetary boundaries which we must not exceed but are doing eg with climate change, water depletion and loss of biodiversity. The inner edge before the hole shows the significance of failure when for instance so many people lack food, water or shelter.

She argues keeping within the planetary boundaries and distributing wealth fairly should be the clear goals of the economy and we need to see the 'Big picture'.

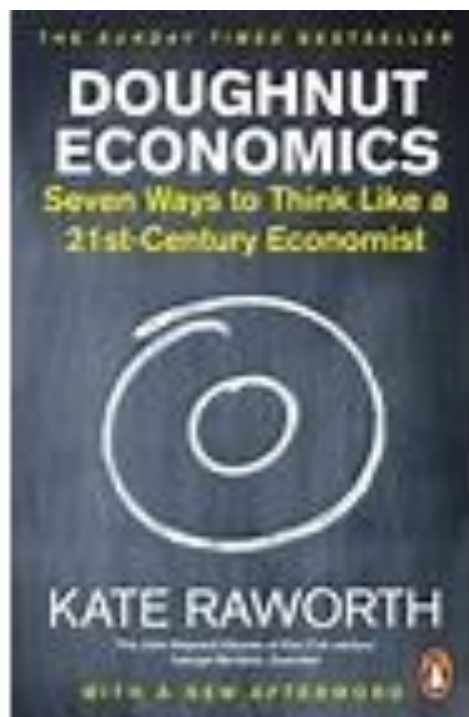
The proposal is to hold a first meeting in the first week of March to introduce the book. Then if there is sufficient interest to hold 3 or 4 more meet-

ings to study the book in more depth. I hope this then might lead to exploring ways we might change the mindset of ourselves and particularly the politicians in this election year. Meetings would be held via zoom.

If you are interested please will you contact Sandra Dutson

smdutson@btinternet.com

Please will you indicate your availability any day between Monday March 4th - Wednesday March 6th, and whether you prefer morning, afternoon or evening. Sessions would last a little over an hour though the first might be a little longer. The book is available at Waterstones and costs around £12. Even if you do not join the group the book is well worth reading. She has presented her ideas to the General Assembly of the UN and the Occupy movement amongst others.





Exploring Quaker work with Children, Young people and Families

Join us for a day of inspiration,
workshops, and community-building
centered around working with
children, young people, and families.

10 am - 4pm
17 February 2024
Friends Meeting House,
50 Silverwell St, Bolton, BL1 1PP

Bring a packed lunch.
Tea, coffee and biscuits
provided.

To book : <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/exploring-quaker-work-with-children-and-young-people-bolton/>

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, email Clare on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk with your request.

Please send articles and photos for the Newsletter to elizcol@dialstart.net The deadline for the March newsletter is 29 February. It can take time for an email to arrive, so I suggest that you aim for 28 February. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best.

When submitting items for publication, please be aware that the newsletter is a public document, posted on our website, and we do not control who sees it. Think before submitting personal information, email addresses and photos. Try to avoid sending text and photos that are under copyright, and get consent from people in photos if needed.

Look at the website <https://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk> under “Newsletters and Events” if you’d like to see back-issues of the newsletter.

If you want to make contact with anyone who writes in the newsletter, and no contact details are given, email me elizcol@dialstart.net and I’ll forward your email to them

Elizabeth Coleman, Editor 07969 385080