

**MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING
NEWSLETTER NO 32 JUNE 2024**



DOLOBRAN FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

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THE GENERAL ELECTION

WHAT QUAKERS MIGHT SAY AND DO

The Four Area Meeting Witness Groups established a joint General Election Working Group. This was working on a General Election Briefing when the news came that the election would be much sooner than expected.

In the short time available we have reset the timetable:

WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE:
PRESENTATION TO AREA MEETING

WEDNESDAY 12TH JUNE 12 TO 1PM
VIGIL FOR PEACE, MOUNT STREET All Friends

WEDNESDAY 19TH JUNE 12 TO 1PM
VIGIL FOR EQUALITY, MOUNT STREET

WEDNESDAY 26TH JUNE 12 TO 1PM
VIGIL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE, MOUNT STREET

All Friends are welcome to one or more of these Vigils. As are your friends and neighbours and colleagues and members of other faith and voluntary groups. Please put the dates in your diaries

And please use the briefing papers to be circulated to ask questions at Hustings, of canvassers, or in social media or letters to the press etc.

If you need any further information you can contact Jonathan Dale, preferably by email:
jonathandale@phoncoop.coop

ANOTHER EXTRACT FROM “THE STORY OF MY SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CYCLING” BY ALAN PINCH

One day, Mum and I were waiting for a bus outside Hounslow West tube station. We intended to go to the Bell, the beginning of Hounslow’s main shopping street. But a motorist stopped and offered us a lift. This was a patriotic gesture. If you had a car and a petrol ration you were urged to use it in the most efficient and socially useful way. It was a whole mile to the Bell. The speedometer, as solemnly I informed Mum later touched 40 m.p.h. at one point. This was much faster than the bus, which in those days was majestic rather than hasty. On those first rides of mine I encountered very few motor vehicles. Most private motorists had put their cars in store for the duration of the war, since their petrol allowance was zero. Bikes were still used for a lot of practical purposes.

From my early childhood, before the war, I can just remember a very intriguing cyclist, the lamplighter. There he comes, in a faint image of my early memory, on an autumn evening just after Children’s Hour has finished on the “wireless”. He comes bowling gently along, somehow balancing a long pole in his hand. At each lamp-post he raises it to the lantern at the top of the pole, and the light comes on, not in a rude flash, but as a gently spreading glow. So he progresses down the street, a quiet fairy-story figure, leaving a trail of light behind him. That is an image of a city now quite lost, as evoked in the drawings of the illustrator Edward Ardizzone. Now, in wartime the street lamps were not lit at all; we had blackout. After the war, the old gas-lamps were replaced by efficient, harsh electricity, and the lamplighter was redundant.

Errand boys employed by shops still delivered goods on bikes. Ice cream, when available, was not sold in big chiming vans, but by a man on a bike equipped with a big metal box on the front. It bore the

message “Stop me and buy one”. Ours was a respectable family. It was only long after that I learned that a condom used to be called a “a buy me and stop one”. That just left a few army lorries, (Hounslow barracks being nearby), post office vans and a few delivery vans like Jonesy’s in Dad’s Army. Horse- drawn carts were still regular visitors to our street. They came from the greengrocer, the coal merchant or the rag-and-bone man. These presented no danger at all, plodding along at a walking pace. The cart-horses knew where to stop to make a delivery, or else they stopped to deliver a dollop of steaming manure, much prized by gardeners. When we were playing cricket they barely even caused us to draw stumps (i.e. pick up the oil-can which served us as wicket.) It was just as well for me that the world was so slow, for my knowledge of the Highway Code was very patchy, and my hand signals often showed what I just had done rather than what I was about to do.

Perhaps you will raise your eyebrows, when you hear more about my first rides, and wonder how it was that my parents were so negligent, letting me run such risks. The answer is that, by the standards of those days, they were not negligent at all. In the 1930s and 40s children – even quite young children – were given a right to roam which seems hair-raising to parents today. I think of that nowadays when I am stopped by a lollipop lady and find myself observing what is called the school run. This, I think, is what a younger generation thinks reasonable and inevitable – a confused jumble of manoeuvring cars, parents and children passing in front of them, polluted air and frustration. My first school was a good half mile from home. Part of the route lay through a park; the rest along a maze of streets. For the first week, since I was only four, Mum took me. Then I was confided to the care of a little girl aged about seven – “Hold Jenny’s hand and do what she says.” – But soon after that I was thought experienced enough to come and go by myself, as an independent little commuter. Only a despicable cissy needed an escort after the first few weeks!

By 1940 the war had brought frequent bombing raids to our area, but that made no difference. Grown-ups told us that if the siren sounded on our way to school, we were to go to the underground air raid shelter in the park. This advice we often disregarded. The shelter was dark and boring and controlled by bossy wardens. It was more fun to stay outside and hope to see the aircraft doing something interesting.

We also had a lot of liberty outside school hours. A little boy of, say, ten years old was allowed to roam about the neighbourhood for hours at a time. Few rules were imposed on me, except being back in time for tea with untorn trousers. So we could paddle across the little local river, knock off the leeches which had attached themselves to our legs, and go to play in the local gravel pit, so much more interesting than the level grass of the park. So my new freedom, to roam on wheels, was nothing extraordinary, just an expression of the spirit of the times.

Nineteen forty-five, brought, of course, the end of the hostilities, with a general feeling of relief and of a new world beginning. In the short run it did not bring any marked increase in the number of cars on the road.

Nor did it bring my brother back. Our forlorn hopes that he had somehow survived were dashed. He had been killed, and was buried in central France. Now throughout my short life my brother Frank, nearly ten years older than me, had been my hero and my role model. For me, to grow up meant to do all the things that he had done. When Christmas or my birthday came round my parents found little in the shops. So bit by bit I inherited Frank's worn but revered castoffs: a Hornby train set, Meccano, a stamp collection. One day mum decided that I was big enough to wear his leather windcheater which he had bought in Canada! In that leather jacket, I set out to do, as far as possible, everything that he had done, to be what he had been. Very slowly, over the decades, I realised that it was in my destiny to be a rather different sort of chap.

If you would like to receive the whole document, email Alan's son Martin on martinmcpake87@gmail.com

ECCLES CHILDREN'S MEETING

Eccles children stopped coming to meeting as they got older, and the children's meeting dwindled and eventually stopped altogether. However, the children's meeting has now been revived, but with a younger age group, the youngest being a baby and the oldest (so far) 3 years old. It takes place once a month on the last Sunday of the month.



CHILDREN'S MEETINGS

Central Manchester has children's meetings every Sunday. Sale has them on 1st Sunday of month, South Manchester on 3rd Sunday and Eccles on last Sunday. Warrington does not currently have children's meetings.

NEW ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTED

To support the Area Meeting admin, Mary Atkinson (Central Manchester Friend) has been appointed and hopes to start in June. Mary's working days are planned to be Tues/Weds/Thurs.

After a period of induction and handover, Clare McCann will be focusing solely on Operations/Facilities work.



Northern Friends Peace Board Regional event in Stockport by Philip Austin



Friends from four different area meetings met in Stockport on 11 May, for a small regional gathering for NFPB members and other interested Friends. The meeting took place towards the end of the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, for which NFPB is an active member of the UK steering group. Following a preparatory discussion some weeks earlier, the arms trade and related issue of military spending were chosen as twin themes for the event. The group worked together to share ideas and information about different aspects of these concerns – which can feel overwhelming. As a follow-up activity, we identified who was doing what – individuals, networks and groups. It was noted that collaboration between groups is an important feature of the wider peace movement, and this includes Quakers.

Other activities during the event included sharing lunch together, watching and responding to a number of short videos relating to the issues, worship, and reflection and discussion on some priorities for the future. These ranged from supporting vigils at local arms-related sites, to leafleting and public engagement, promoting alternatives to arms production, and building links to groups outside the mainstream peace movement.

<https://nfpb.org.uk/>

CENTRAL DECISION MAKING

by Elizabeth Coleman

The decision not to allow Quaker Socialist Society to invite Jeremy Corbyn to speak at their meeting at Friends House during BYM has led me and others to question whether our central decision making is working as it should. We are very grateful to those who serve on committees on our behalf, but this gratitude should not stop us from saying where we think things might be improved.

Some weaknesses in our decision making were shown. Quaker Socialist Society produced a Summary of the situation, which they asked to be circulated to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, but were told that was inappropriate. My understanding is that Agenda Committee made the final decision, but were not allowed to receive all relevant information. I wanted to contact Agenda Committee, but could not find out who the members were. I later learned that the names are in the Minutes of Britain Yearly Meeting, but I think they should be freely and easily available, as for example names of charity trustees are available on the Charity Commission website. If Agenda Committee could not hear from Quaker Socialist Society or from ordinary Friends, how could they make a right decision?

Some decisions have been made in the past that I think do not chime with ordinary Friends. One is naming the main meeting room in Friends House “The Light”, which is the metaphor most commonly used by Friends for the Divine. Having someone in Friends House with the job title “Head of Witness and Worship” does not fit in with many Quakers’ view of how worship happens, as we see worship as a place where we are all equal, not in need of a “head”.

We are now thinking of abolishing Meeting for Sufferings, which will be a major change. I hope this decision will not be rushed through without plenty of time for proper discernment at the local level.

There are no plans to hold a residential Yearly Meeting at present. We used to have them every 3 years, and I don't know where the decision was made not to hold one as soon as possible after the inevitable delays of Covid, and why the decision was made. Residential Yearly Meetings are wonderful – a joyful opportunity to meet old Friends and make new Friends from all over the country, and to participate in main sessions and small group discussions, outings, and lots of informal conversation. Many Friends come back from them inspired and renewed in their Quakerism. It might be refreshing to have a face-to-face Yearly Meeting free of Zoom. I think we need a residential meeting now more than ever, and it needs to be as big as possible so people who want to attend won't be disappointed. Let's have the biggest ever Quaker gathering that will be remembered for generations, after these years of not having the opportunity to “see each other's faces and open our hearts to one another”!

It used to be possible for me as an individual to offer Bible study meetings at Britain Yearly Meeting, but this option was closed when some central committee decided that only formal Quaker groups who register four months in advance could offer such things. Do they really need to be fixed so far in advance? And do you really need to exclude individuals, such as someone who wants to meet with others sharing a particular concern or life experience, or (say) someone who has done a PhD on some aspect of Quakerism and wants to share their findings?

There has been a very major change in our worship and meetings in the last few years, with the use of Zoom. This needs full discussion and reflection locally and nationally. I find at Meeting for Worship that I feel supported and helped by the presence of others. There are some basic

unwritten rules – in general and if possible arrive on time, stay till the end, and focus as completely as possible on the worship for the hour. When meetings are “blended”, I can find the presence of people online distracting rather than supportive. Do the same unwritten rules apply, or is it OK to answer the phone, deal with a delivery, make a cup of coffee, while attending Meeting for Worship (or business meetings) online? Is it OK to have Meeting for Worship in the background while you go about your everyday tasks? I am not aware of discussion of these things. I think we need to consider these issues as Quakers corporately. At Eccles, our Sunday morning Meeting for Worship is face-to-face only, but we have had worship online on Monday evenings to accommodate those unable to come on Sunday, including myself when I was unwell.

I personally do not like blended meetings. We have almost all attended a lot of Zoom meetings, which save travel, and are good for getting business done, but I find that the worship and community element do not work well. We cannot have the informal one-to-one conversations that happen when we meet face to face. Blended meetings are more difficult. Does Quaker discernment really work in a very large meeting which is part face-to-face and part online? We have not gone through the process of agreeing this, before imposing it on ourselves, so that we cannot have a Yearly Meeting without it.

While we are grateful that others are willing to represent us and make decisions on our behalf, I think we need to take an interest in what decisions are being made and how, and to give our input when appropriate.

MESSAGE FROM QUAKER PASTOR LEVI IN GOMA, NORTH KIVU, DRC

(Goma is virtually under siege from M23 militants supported by Rwanda, who are forcing people to flee the surrounding villages and come to Goma as refugees)

Life is becoming more and more difficult with famine, diseases and other problems. Our churches are currently housing displaced people who have missed out on a place in the displaced persons camps. We are not sure how to help them because our resources are also insufficient. People die every day, killings and violations are increasing in the city. The bombings hit the camps in the vicinity of my church where some Quaker displaced people live, killing more than 40 people and injuring many. Keep praying for us.

May the Lord continue to bless you. Our greetings to the Quaker friends.

NEWS FROM GEORGE BANI, A QUAKER IN UVIRA, SOUTH KIVU, DRC

Lake Tanganika has flooded, and the road between Abeka (where the hospital supported by Quaker Congo Partnership is) and Uvira (the nearest town) is not passable by car, so people travel by motorbike, or by boat on the lake. A number of houses have been flooded, so people had to leave their homes, and some are staying with host families. George estimates that about 15 Quakers have been displaced in this way.

PEER SUPPORT SESSIONS



NW Role Holder Peer Support Sessions 2024 - 2025

Interactive, 1 hour Zoom sessions to share experience and find solutions across the North West of England.

Please email wendyh@quaker.org.uk for more information

TRUSTEES: May 1st 7pm & 2nd 2pm
Sept' 5th 7pm & 6th 2pm January 6th 7pm & 7th 2pm

AM CLERKS: March 4th 7pm & March 5th 2pm
July 1st 7pm & 8th 2pm November 4th 7pm & 5th 2pm

LM CLERKS: March 25th 7pm & March 26th 2pm
June 3rd 7pm and 4th 2pm October 14th 7pm & 15th 2pm

TREASURERS: May 8th 7pm & 9th 2pm
Sept' 19th 7pm & 20th 2pm January 20th 7pm & 21st 2pm

ELDERS: April 9th 7pm & 10th 2pm
July 8th 7pm & 9th 2pm November 18th 7pm & 19th 2pm

PASTORAL CARE: April 2nd 7pm & 3rd 2pm
July 22nd 7pm & 23rd 2pm November 25th 7pm & 26th 2pm

These sessions are for possible future role holders, not just role holders, so do contact our regional development worker Wendy Hampton (wendyh@quaker.org.uk) if you would like to attend, even if you are not a role holder but are just interested.

SALE BREAKFAST MEETINGS

Once a month, Sale LM has breakfast meetings before Meeting for Worship, starting at 9.45am, where people eat breakfast together. About 15 to 20 people come, including children.

PRISON CHAPLAINCY

Kay Bohm of Warrington Meeting was Chaplain to Risley prison, and did some wonderful work there that we hoped to continue by finding a replacement for her after her death. However, this did not happen. We have not appointed Quaker chaplains to any prisons. It may make more sense to have a chaplain to Manchester prison, as it is more accessible to most of us. If anyone is interested in considering providing this service, (for Manchester prison or any other local prison,) or would like to suggest any other person to do this, please would they contact their representative on Area Meeting Nominations Committee. If you would like more information about this role, John Booth of Sale Meeting can help. If anyone is found for the role, there is likely to be quite a long delay before they can actually visit, as we would need to contact the prison and go through their procedures.

Elizabeth Coleman

Clerk to Area Meeting Nominations Committee

REMAINING AREA MEETING DATES IN 2024

Wednesday June 5th - 6:30 for 7pm at Sale and online (hybrid)

Sunday July 21st - 1:00 pm at Eccles; (bring-and-share lunch 12:00. (in person only)

Thursday October 3rd - 6:30 for 7pm Central Manchester and online (hybrid)

Tuesday December 3rd - 6:30 for 7pm start by zoom only

A VISIT TO DOLOBRAN FMH, WALES
by Sharon Powell and Robert Wilson (Eccles LM)

The only access is by a 15 minute walk across the fields.



Friends gathered for worship



After worship, refreshments are taken in the Meeting House garden



Then back across the fields. A wonderful day with special Friends –
what a blessing

WORLD PLENARY

The Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary Meeting is taking place in South Africa and online from 5th to 12th August 2024. You can register to attend online using the link below:

<https://fwcc.world/wpm/>

IN PERSON AND BLENDED MEETINGS

Clive Ashwin writes in “The Friend” 16 May when reflecting on in person and blended meetings,

“One possible solution, with a degree of equality between the two modes of worship, would be to alternate them each Sunday, with one Sunday offering combined in-person and online participation simultaneously in the Meeting house. The alternate Sunday would offer in-person only in the Meeting house, with a concurrent act of worship on Zoom. This is the arrangement already adopted, for example, by Westminster Meeting. It goes some way to serve the needs of those reliant on Zoom, at the same time preserving the historic cornerstone of Quaker worship.

This would not be a perfect solution, but it would give us time to reflect and seek a better one. It would enable those who might feel alienated by the growing dependence upon electronic systems to feel they are being listened to in the quest for a long-term solution which welcomes all and makes all feel at ease and valued.”

Extract from Pete Duckworth letter to The Friend 30 May

“My vocal ministry is often intimate and highly personal. I do not want it broadcast on the internet, where it can be recorded, edited and republished without any participant knowing. I suspect it’s only a matter of time until this does happen. With no discernment we cannot know the limits. Zoom is a dynamic product which changes constantly and without the consent of its users. It already has an AI component. Friends, what powers are we willing to hand over to an anonymous multinational? As the technology moves on, what limits (if any) will there be? I already fear for the spiritual integrity of the practice that makes our form of Quakerism special.”

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS’ DAY EVENT IN PEACE GARDEN, LINCOLN SQUARE



Poem by Meredith Hopwood published by Hearing Eye/Peace News
2015 - A visual celebration of the people and movements that opposed
the First World War.

www.theworldismycountry.info

I CANNOT, MY FRIEND, KILL MY BROTHER

When your conscience speaks in your mother tongue
And tribunals speak in another,
How can you find the words to explain
That you cannot kill your brother?

How do you say that he's German, you're Welsh,
That you don't share a father and mother,
You don't know his name nor even his face,
Yet still, you know he's your brother?

Why does language make foreign and foe
two words that join up together?
What is the verb that it uses to spell:
I just cannot kill my brother?

And what does it mean when words turn to spit
as you're offered a shabby white feather?
If only you knew you could use it to write:
I cannot, my friend, kill my brother

(This was read at the Conscientious Objectors' Day event.)

IN-PERSON SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Sun 23rd June, 2-4.30pm, Central Manchester FMH

Bring a packed lunch if you like, to eat and chat from about 1pm.

Tea and coffee provided.

The Area Meeting Safeguarding Policy, adopted in Dec 2022, states that those who work with Children and Young People, members of the Pastoral Care Team and Trustees must have Safeguarding training, which can be done online or by attending a face-to-face session.

But that doesn't mean you have to be in one of those roles to come. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and anyone who's interested is welcome.

Come and meet your Safeguarding Team:

Val Clark (Lead Trustee for Safeguarding)

Ben Wickens and Kath Haworth (Safeguarding Coordinators)

There will be a slide presentation followed by small-group discussion of scenarios, feed-back and questions.

Please e-mail Kath by Sun 16th June if you'll have need of childcare during the session:

KRHGrinter@aol.com

SKILLS EXCHANGE

SATURDAY JUNE 22ND

IN GEORGE FOX'S FOOTSTEPS, NOT QUITE 400 YEARS
AFTER FOX

**CLIMB PENDLE HILL AN WALK DOWN TO
COCKHILL FOR TEA**

FULL DAY. PUBLIC TRANSPORT. 10 MILES WALK

**Donation for Quaker Congo Partnership and our Quaker
Work Fund**

If interested, find out more from jonathandale@phoncoop.coop

SKILLS EXCHANGE – A REQUEST

by Eizabeth Coleman

At the time of the Summer Garden Gathering, we organised skill sharing, whereby individuals offered to bake a loaf of bread, cook a meal etc and others paid for this, with the proceeds going to Quaker Congo Partnership and other good causes.

Skill sharing continues in a low key way, raising some money and bringing Friends into contact with each other. There was a Bluebell Walk, and there will be a walk up Pendle Hill. However, these were/are both for relatively fit Friends. It would be great if someone would organise walks that can include everyone, maybe starting and ending at a café or pub, so less mobile Friends can join for refreshments and a short walk, while others go on longer walks. It would be good if it could be within easy reach of Piccadilly Gardens by public transport. Fletcher Moss might be a place to start. It would be best in summer, as we're more likely to get fine weather. Is anyone up for this? (If so, contact Jonathan Dale.)

THOUGHTS ON HOW TO RESPOND TO OTHERS' GRIEF

by **Bonnie Meekums**

It occurred to me...to share some insights about grief, drawing on both my personal and professional experience as a psychotherapist. With that in mind, I would like to offer a few tentative pointers about how to respond to others' grief.

First, offer condolences, using your own language. Some people find it very hard to know how to do this, but I was touched, after my brother's death, by simple Facebook messages saying 'I was so sorry to hear about your brother / so sorry for your loss, Bonnie,' followed by something caring like 'I do hope you are able to take care of yourself at this difficult time.' Unless you know the person shares a particular spiritual or religious belief with you, resist reassurances like 'He is now up in heaven with the angels.' The grieving person might experience your attempts to reassure as alienating rather than helpful. Remember, it's not about you. If you want to help, you need to meet people in their world, not yours.

Next, when you meet the person – and this is the really difficult one, I know – don't run away / cross the road / hurry off with some lame excuse. You might feel really awkward and wonder what to say, but after my brother died, I appreciated it when my husband (who is a complete star) asked me how I was feeling, without expecting me to be OK, and then listened rather than feeling he needed to offer solutions. You could ask if the person wants to be alone, or with people. You might ask whether they need silence or want to talk. Would the person appreciate a short walk with you? If they want to talk, what do they want the conversation to be about? Would they prefer to avoid the topic of the person they have lost? Or maybe to talk about her or him? You can reassure the bereaved person that they don't have to be a particular way -

some of us laugh, somewhat hysterically, when grieving. Others seek diversionary activities to take a break from active grieving. Tell them they can ramble on, or be silent, talk about something very specific that is bothering them, or watch a romcom (or anything else, for that matter). But don't, whatever you do, try to fix anything. That is not your job. If they regret that row they had in the morning, just listen, show you care about how they are feeling, but don't give false reassurances. Oh, and don't use this as an excuse to tell the bereaved person all about your third cousin twice removed, who also lost their brother / sister / parent / lover.

Be honest about your availability. When someone suffers a bereavement, typically the family swarms round them, not wanting them to be alone for a minute. But families can't usually keep that up. By all means, stay the first night if your loved one isn't ready to be alone. But make it clear that you are offering this for the first night. Oh, and do ask. They might not want it. Don't tire yourself out so that you feel resentful and then get snappy. That simply is not worth it to anyone. But when you can, offer practical help. Is there anything that feels too much right now that you can reasonably take off the bereaved person's 'to do' list?

**LETTER SENT TO JEREMY CORBYN
FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP**



Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting

Social Justice Group

Jeremy Corbyn MP
House of Commons
London
SW1 0AA

Dear Jeremy Corbyn,

We were very concerned to hear that the decision was made not to allow Quaker Socialist Society to hold a meeting at Friends House during Britain Yearly Meeting at which you were to be one of the speakers. We are pleased that the meeting has been rearranged to take place at another venue, but the issue of principle remains.

Quaker decision making processes generally serve us quite well, but unity discerned by smallish central Quaker bodies may not seem right to all Quakers. It

can even be difficult to find out who is on the relevant committee, as is the case with Britain Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, which made the final decision. The decision may be the result of a weakness in our decision-making processes.

Quakers, like everyone else, can be misled by the media to have a false view of reality. Over years, your depiction in the media was extremely negative, and some may have believed what they read and heard.

We manage the Ecumenical Accompaniment programme (EAPPI) in Israel/Palestine, and it has been suggested that this would be damaged by having you as a speaker, as a strong Jewish lobby, which does not represent all Jewish people, would make things difficult. EAPPI is dependent on having a good relationship with the Israeli government, as its volunteers, need permission to work in Israel/Palestine. We want to continue to do that good work; but should we be too influenced by prudence and risk and so turn away from truth?

It is our impression that many Friends were unhappy with the decision, both from our contact with Friends locally in the Manchester area and more widely by email etc. There has also been correspondence in *The Friend*, most of which has been critical of the decision. We cannot say whether this applies to most Friends, but certainly there is a substantial number

We would like to pass these comments on to you, so that you do not form the view that all of us Quakers wanted the invitation to speak cancelled.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Dale, on behalf of

Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting Social Justice Group
Central Manchester Friends Meeting House
6 Mount
Manchester M2 5NS

(years ago I shared a platform with you when PollyToynbee had to withdraw from one of a series of debates organised by Alec Davison! Good memory!)

HUDDERSFIELD PEACE VIGIL

Sharon and Robert join Huddersfield Quaker Friends for a silent vigil in Huddersfield Market Place on Saturday 25 May.



PETITIONS ON GAZA

Keith Archer of Eccles LM drew attention to these petitions.

“We’ve all seen the images from the war in Gaza; wounded patients being treated on hallway floors, bleeding children in tears, and so much heartache. With these conditions, functioning hospitals and doctors are the only chance to treat the wounded and save lives.

When bombing intensified over Northern Gaza, people fled to the South. But, Doctor Muhanna and his team stayed behind to keep the last hospital running and continue to treat people who had nowhere to go.

While these brave doctors and nurses were caring for their patients, they were abducted by Israeli forces. Even wars have limits: health-care workers can’t be targeted and must be protected.

Join me and help demand the freedom of health care workers in Gaza.

https://action.wemove.eu/sign/2024-2-free-doctor-ahmed-muhanna-and-the-awda-medical-staff-EN?referring_akid=5361.93856.rxaiXa&source=mailto

I just signed the petition "UK gov to call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza" and wanted to see if you could help by adding your name.

Our goal is to reach 500,000 signatures and we need more support. You can read more and sign the petition here:

<https://chnq.it/dm2542pCGr>

New Quaker ways - cultivating and nurturing growth

by Robert Wilson

I was asked a while back how I saw simpler meetings being applied to our AM and I spoke about being open to new ways of working, questioning our processes and structures so that we can be more diverse but inclusive, of the changing lives of the people we reach out to today.

Quakers have survived over nearly 400 years because we evolved with the changing times and accepted new knowledge and understanding as it grew into the structure of our society and culture. We weren't afraid to challenge the established order and live adventurously, being more appealing to people of a similar ilk on the way. Although we challenged and evolved, we remained a people of peace, never threatening or pressuring our ways on others but listening to changing perspectives and gently and compassionately explaining another vision of how we may live together in peace, justice and equality, respecting other faiths and cultures into a greater society for all.

We didn't always get it immediately right but were open to learning from our progress as long as we sort the light within us and were open to New Light without, seeing and acting on those revelations.

We are going through a time of serious change at present, brought on through our accelerating technology and the first pandemic of our modern age. Friends have new questions of faith and seek reassurance in the threat of international conflicts and wars and are fearful and mentally disturbed without explanation and comfort from an established order which is often confusing and threatening. Many people today 'live in the day' because they are fearful of any future and so they live in the moment for immediate gratification. Into this world Quakers must bring

comfort and reassurance, a community where we can come together in all our diverse cultures, educations and experiences and build a Religious Society of Friends where we are just that - an inclusive and diverse society of peace, love, justice and equality.

We started that vision before the lockdown of the pandemic. Jonathan Carmichael visited area and local Quaker Meetings throughout the country and found that although Friends had certain practices and understandings of our Religious Society, we didn't necessarily do things in the same way, although we thought our ways were all the same - the only way, as it were. Once we started talking and sharing our ways and practices, we found some Quaker meetings had evolved differently, their practices although different were more practical for their communities, sometimes easier and fairer amongst a smaller but more inclusive group.

Talking and sharing best practices can help us all evolve to this New Light. Here are some ways that Jonathan Carmichael's project found how Meetings varied in their approach to their particular environments and communities that are different but nevertheless helped them achieve their spiritual development and goals in a less conventional structure.

"Always meeting in the same place, or at the same time – that's not essential. Could we try experimenting with meeting at a different time or place? It might help people to come and grow the meeting.

For example, someone from Swanage meeting explained:

"A meeting not at 10.30 on a Sunday has brought in some other worshippers who cannot make normal 'Quaker time' "

Some meetings don't meet weekly. As someone from Grimsby put it:

“Perhaps not meeting every week helps to get a few more together on the weeks you do meet.”

What about meetings at someone's home once a month or once every 2 months? You could combine these with eating, discussion, a business meeting. Eating together before or after worship seems a common way for smaller meetings to build their togetherness.

*People sometimes say there should be a **treasurer** in that list of essentials. But some small meetings don't use money themselves at all. Their Friends make financial contributions direct to the area meeting. Then the area meeting pays their rent. A few meetings meet somewhere for free. Their few transactions are recorded in the area meeting accounts. This avoids them needing their own accounts, or a treasurer.*

Can we be more flexible? Can we spread the tasks to better match the people available? Instead of having fixed stacks of tasks for a role, can we put them out on the table and see who could do which?

We can still have a discernment and nomination process for those combinations, but maybe we'll find the combinations in a different way.

A few small meetings have a team of 3 that cover the main functions between them. They could be a clerk, elder and treasurer, working as a team. Burnham-on-Sea meeting has a correspondent, they share the pastoral care and spiritual nurture, and one Friend is the treasurer.

Having elders, or people appointed as pastoral care friends aren't essential - I was surprised to learn that about 1 in 3 meetings in Britain have some form of corporate or shared approach to pastoral care or spiritual nurture.

Many meetings share the clerking role between more than one person. Doncaster meeting has a four person clerking team they find is working well.

Someone from Ely meeting put it like this:

“Consider not feeling obliged to fill every role. Get the AM to consider what it can do to help your smaller meeting - and release the joy having reduced the burden!”

Can an element of the tasks be done by someone who is paid? Such as bookkeeping, or maintaining the property or handling lettings.

Now decisions: *small meetings can find decision making works differently. Someone from Ayrshire meeting said “Our meetings for worship for church affairs are short and simple. We are able to be flexible and responsive if required.”*

From Bethnal Green:

“It's quite informal, with infrequent and also relatively informal Business Meetings. The process by which we make decisions still feels in the Quaker tradition.”

In Great Yarmouth, they have two planned meetings per year, saying: “Where a formal decision is needed in the interim we arrange a 'Meeting Moment' immediately after MfW and deal with just the one item.”

You may find that you just can't go on as a separate local meeting. *Some small meetings may discern that the time is right to lay themselves down and join with others in another meeting. It needs careful thought, discussion and discernment with other meetings around. There can often be lots of support from other local meetings in this phase. And plenty of use of good Quaker processes.*

Someone put it to me like this:

“Amalgamation can permit survival, and also promote new stimulus”.

*You might **continue meeting as a satellite meeting**, joining with a neighbour to become one local meeting with two venues, as I explained earlier. Brecon meeting recently decided to become a satellite of their larger neighbour.*

*You might stay as a local meeting, but arrange to **do some things with other local meetings**, like learning, discussions, socials, sharing some roles, or having buddies for some roles. Some meetings undertake witness together – Wimbourne meeting and Poole meeting share a Sanctuary group working with refugees and asylum seekers. So do Doncaster and Balby meetings.*

Someone told me:

“Some Friends from other meetings come along to our meeting now and then, which is great!”

Would it be good for a small meeting to pair with a larger one? Or two small ones to pair? Being nearby may be most important. For example someone from Shoreham-by-Sea says: “We can link up with the larger Worthing Meeting for fellowship and taking part in any other activities. We share a regular newsletter.”

*Some areas **cluster several meetings together** and deliberately do more things together.*

*Another way to simplify is to **meet without a meeting house**. It's probably the biggest way I've found in the simpler meetings project that a meeting can simplify how it runs. Some meetings find having a meeting house brings lots of benefits, and is really worth all the effort involved, and others have concluded they don't. They find they can meet and*

thrive without a meeting house. 30% of local meetings in Britain don't have to look after a meeting house – about 1 in 3.

Wendy Hampton has already started the process of sharing our different ways throughout our region and supporting each other through the Northwest Role Holder Peer Support Sessions which will run through 2024 and 2025. Trustees, Clerks, Treasurers, Elders & Pastoral Carers are coming together, online, to talk about their processes and experiences in an informal manner that enables team building - allaying any awkwardness and encouraging new thinking and practices.

On Saturday June 1st, Wendy has arranged an in person Elders Day at Lancaster Meeting House for our Northwest Region. Again, an opportunity for Elders - past, present and prospective - to come together and share. But aren't we all Elders - well we're all invited in whatever capacity you see your 'eldership'.

We're only limited by our own imaginations. An openness to New Light, spirit led discernment and living adventurously has ensured our survival until now. Let us not be afraid to take on the challenges of the future and live as joyous inspirational radicals - in love - for the next 400 years.

TRAVEL DIARIES SUMMER 2024

by Sandra Dutson. smdutson@btinternet.com

As you all know the Environment group are trying to follow through the Mapping exercise conducted a few months ago.

This is because the continuing engagement of everyone is vital, as individuals, Local and Area Meetings if we are to address climate and ecological emergencies.

The thinking behind this exercise is to encourage everyone to reflect on their own travel patterns by keeping some kind of travel diary during June or early July .

We ask you to record perhaps over a week where you travelled to each day, the purpose of your journey(s), how you travelled and any issues, positive or negative about your experience, and any wider reflections.

You might like to reflect on why you were taking the journey, and whether you had a choice of how to do so, Decisions not to make a journey are significant too and may still have transport implications eg if you order groceries on line. You might like to consider the role transport/ travel plays in your life. For most of us, most of the time transport is a means to an end and we are probably more concerned about issues such as efficiency and cost. However we might find causes of interest in the views or the company we share on our travel. One of the purposes of the diary is to encourage such reflections.

If when you have completed your diary you wish to send it to me please do so or maybe some short final reflection. Maybe you would like to organise a discussion around the concerns raised in your LM. We hope then to produce another newsletter article

containing further reflections and hopefully an item on an AM in the early Autumn.

Our own individual travel patterns are only part of the overall impacts of transport on greenhouse gas emissions and land use for roads and car parks. Freight, planning issues esp re hospitals, schools and shopping centres all may be significant. Your reflections might include your thoughts on these.

UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY

Rachel Little of Central Manchester LM is our chaplain to University of Manchester. East Cheshire AM has appointed Gillian Smith to be Quaker chaplain to MMU. Sandra Dutson of Eccles LM is Quaker chaplain to University of Salford.

St Peter's House, which had previously provided chaplaincy services to the higher education institutions on Oxford Road, has been wound up by its parent charity, and had its closing ceremony in April 2024. However, Rachel does report some activity among the chaplaincy team, as follows:

“I recorded an official video, as commissioned by the university's EDI Directorate (equality, diversity & inclusion), who are now co-ordinating multifaith chaplaincy for the UoM. Each of the chaplains has recorded a talk about how the Uni's published Values resonate with their particular faith. (I spoke about our Testimonies and the Uni's 'academic freedom' and 'pioneering spirit'.) Once published let's see if it generates any interest in the student body.

For staff, I have successfully garnered enough support to create a new 'staff network group', which I've called Quakers & Seekers - a group for staff wishing to explore alternatives to mainstream Christianity. It seems my contacts on the staff were prepared to vote in support of this, even though they haven't supported the Third Thursday meeting in person since 2019! We shall see if some kind of hybrid group will be a better way of offering support to staff.

I'm curious for future developments!”

QUAKER MENTAL HEALTH FORUM – email received

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you as a representative of the Quaker Mental Health Forum organising committee to ask you for support in relation to this year's day conference.

It will take place on Saturday 12th October at Central Manchester Meeting House on Mount St, in Central Manchester from 10:00 - 16:00.

The title is:

'Honouring Dark & Light discovering balance and possibilities'

In addition, we would be looking for a few Friends (up to 3-4) to act as Welcomers on the day - ideally from Central Manchester Meeting - to help delegates orientate themselves within the building and local area.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Please send me any names of Friends who would be willing to take this role on, with their permission to be able to contact them directly.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

In friendship and gratitude
Nicholas Paton Philip

Without fear, we are able to see more clearly our connections to others. Without fear, we have more room for understanding and compassion. Without fear, we are truly free.

Thich Nhat Hanh

WHIT WALK

On Friday 24th May, Ellie Byram took part in the Whit Walk from Dobcross to Upper Mill, an annual event since 1821. This is a photo of her enjoying an ice cream before returning. Ellie and Ben spent the afternoon and evening assisting at the Dobcross Brass Band Contest, cheered on by several Friends from Area Meeting. The Brighthouse & Rastrick Brass Band won for the 6th year in a row.



AREA MEETING BURIAL GROUND AT SALE
by Janet Roberts

Volunteers continue to work in the grounds.... both AM Friends (4) and a very small number of wonderful non Quaker friends who come and mow the grass regularly, strim, collect leaves, and keep the paths clear, and keep the Columbarium hedge clipped. They will hopefully continue with the work they have done over the past 4 years, until a decision is made regarding employing gardening services. This is a matter being discussed.

We desperately need more AM Friends to come and help weed the borders, and keep them in good condition. If you are able, please give some of your time. Check with Janet and Allan Roberts for arrangements. We are currently meeting once a fortnight on Saturdays from around 10.00 am. The next few weeks are a bit interrupted, but currently we are expecting to meet next on 15th June.



We have plenty of grass to mow.



The columbarium hedge is kept trim



The Old Burial Ground is still maintained.



Newer planting is doing well.



Lots of weeding and maintenance needs to be done.



It's rewarding work, and much appreciated by all who visit.



The two white roses are growing well



Iris are growing well

VEGANISM

by Kath Redmond

I have been asked to contribute regularly on the subject of veganism so thought I would start by defining it properly. I think this is worth doing since I am often reminded that others tend to think of veganism mainly in terms of it being a dietary preference. For example those who describe themselves as 'nearly vegan' or talk about being vegan for a few days a week. Plant-based eating is a large part of veganism of course but is not the main point of it.

The Vegan Society defines veganism as 'a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude - as far as is possible and practicable - all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals. Veganism excludes ALL animal use, not just in food but also in clothing, industry, entertainment (zoos, circuses, horse racing) or services (hunting dogs, animal testing) and includes medical experimentation. Sadly, this last one is almost

impossible to avoid which is where the 'as far as is possible and practicable' comes in.

I am now a life member of The Vegan Society which is a registered charity and the oldest vegan organisation in the world. It was founded in the UK in November 1944 by Donald Watson, Elsie Shrigley, George and Fay Henderson

The term 'vegan' was coined by Donald Watson with the aim of differentiating it from vegetarianism which rejects the consumption of meat but accepts the consumption of products of animal origin such as milk, dairy products and eggs. According to Wikipedia interest in veganism increased significantly in the 2010s and it might be interesting to speculate why this may be.

In some countries, vegans have some rights to meals and legal protections against discrimination. In the United Kingdom for example, an employment tribunal ruled in 2020 that the Equality Act 2010 protects 'ethical veganism' a belief it defined as 'veganism that extends beyond diet to all areas of life and is motivated by concern for animals.' Also in the UK, prisoners who are vegan must be given a vegan meal with enough nutrients to sustain a healthy life. Vegan prisoners should also be given clothing which is made from non-animal materials. This also applies to toiletries, medication and also means that they should not have to work on prison farms including animals. So good news for me if I am ever incarcerated!

My partner was in hospital recently for a few days with pneumonia and found the vegan meals to be excellent but a nurse commented to him that they don't get many requests for them. Why is that you may wonder?

“FOREVER” CHEMICALS
We are all polluted now
by Jonathan Dale

Did you know that you have been invaded by more than one of the 17,000 variants of Per and Polyfluoroalkyl chemicals the first of which was accidentally discovered in 1938?

Now they are everywhere: in the water we drink, in the soil we grow our fruit and vegetables in, the air we breathe; in the arctic and the antarctic; in the Himalayas and the ocean deeps.

They are used in water repellent clothing, non-stick frying pans, (teflon) cosmetics, packaging, toilet paper, shampoos and fire fighting foam.

No-one knows how dangerous most of them are. But the documentary film, “Dark Waters” paints an agonising picture of a US community devastated by the damage done to humans and their livestock in the neighbourhood of a producing factory. In the end huge compensation was paid. For some of the variants, there is evidence of them being carcinogenic, endocrine disrupters, and increasing the chances of acquiring diabetes amongst much else. The US has now ordered water companies to get rid of them from water supplies.

This is not easily done. And when it is done, at some expense, you still have to get rid of the residue. Bury it and it leaks back into the water supply; it can only be burned at temperatures that are uneconomic to use.

What can we do?

Try to avoid it in purchases and use – non-stick pans etc
Press the government start the process of control

It doesn't seem sensible to me to shower the world in invented stuff when we have no idea what impacts it will have. Hubris was never a good thing

ALWAYS EVEN-HANDED??

by Jonathan Dale

It wasn't appropriate at Central Manchester's Meeting for Worship for Business recently to raise this issue:

We had been wrestling with the question of how to deal with Palestinian bookings of the Meeting House and flags. If we accepted Palestinian flags, we would have to accept all other flags, Israeli for example, so it was suggested. But is that really the case? What really does "even-handed" mean?

Clearly Quakers accept that there is that of God in everyone. That and the Peace Testimony may encourage us to listen to different views in conflict and look for the possible ways positions may be moved towards some form of agreement. It may be helpful for those negotiating not to be seen to be too closely aligned to one side.

However, not all flag-waving is equally close to Quaker principles. I would be happy to be associated with the Palestinian flag but not the flag of the Nazi regime or Apartheid South Africa or the Sudan today.

Friends need to recognise that even-handedness in situations of gross power imbalances puts you on the side of the powerful rather than the oppressed. It was the same story in the nineteenth century when the freedom of the employer was seen as the same as that of the individual, unorganised worker. But "freedom for the pike is death for the minnow".

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 newsletters is 5pm on the last day of the month. The deadline for the July newsletter is 5pm on 30 June. It can take time for an email to arrive, so I suggest that you aim for 29 June. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best. Letters in response to articles in this newsletter are welcome. 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..

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