



# Malvern Quaker Meeting Newsletter

## April / May 2021



Compiled by **Elizabeth Rolph**. Please send contributions for future Newsletters to  
[Newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk](mailto:Newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk)

### Meetings for Worship on Sundays

Meeting for Worship is currently being held simultaneously inside and outside the Meeting House and by Zoom, from 10.30 to 11.30.

This will be kept under review. When restrictions are fully lifted (hopefully on June 21<sup>st</sup>) the current thinking by Elders is that in addition to weekly MfW in the Meeting House there will be a monthly MfW by zoom, or possibly a blended meeting.

### Dates

Local Meeting for Worship for Business: Thursday 6th May at 7.30 on Zoom.

Area Meeting: May 8<sup>th</sup>. For details, other Area Meeting dates and news see  
<https://wsq.org.uk/calendar/> and <https://wsq.org.uk/news/>

**Advices & Queries No 39** Consider which of the ways to happiness offered by society are truly fulfilling and which are potentially corrupting and destructive. Be discriminating when choosing means of entertainment and information. Resist the desire to acquire possessions or income through unethical investment, speculation or games of chance.

## **Treasurers Update. 01.01- 31.03.2021.**

Dear Friends as I outlined at our Meeting for Business 06.04.2021 this pandemic has certainly tested our financial resources.

At present we have no income from hirers which we have historically relied upon to fund our Meeting. It is likely we will not be in a position to offer our Meeting House to hirers until the electrical refurbishments are completed probably by September.

We are currently in a position of relying on a small decreasing number of Friends and Attenders who regularly donate to Malvern Local Meeting.

The income from this small group of donators is not enough to meet our expenses. Each month we are increasing our reliance on our capitol to meet our increasing expenses and commitments.

An income stream we need to regularly claim is via Gift Aid on donations. If you are one of the few that regularly donate and pay income tax or have paid income tax and donated in the past three years, please contact me so that we can claim 25% of those donations.

If you feel able to start donating via standing order please e-mail me at [Treasurer@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk](mailto:Treasurer@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk). or telephone 0800 011 32 19.

Paul Wyatt.  
Malvern Local Quaker Meeting Treasurer.

## **Thoughts on the Future of our Meeting for Worship**

**Annette de la Cour**

I have been reflecting whilst MfW has gone on line during the past year of lockdown about how this change, originally brought about by necessity, will affect Malvern Meeting in the future once we can safely worship again in our Meeting House. The subject has come up from time to time, as it did last Sunday, and there clearly exists amongst us a wish to continue with online meeting, possibly in some blended form once this becomes possible. While I realise I risk appearing to be failing to embrace modernity and the technology of online communication with its many benefits, I am concerned about the consequences, immediate and longer term, of our Meeting being

divided in this way. As was said last week, in another but related context, just because we can does not mean we should.

Clearly, many of us feel that holding Meeting online satisfies their spiritual needs. While places of worship were built in times when there was no alternative other than to gather together in order to do so, the function of the communities so created goes far beyond that purpose alone. Communities of any kind, religious or not, develop and flourish through the many ways they offer of sustained formal and informal contact. For most communities of any kind, the sharing of food and drink, for example, is an important part of drawing participants together, as is coming together in various social and other activities. Hence, places of worship generally also have halls, community spaces, and catering facilities – as indeed do we. Through these forms of contact a web of connections and friendships is able to develop to form the basis of a vibrant and, ideally, a supportive community, the existence of which also has many benefits which extend into the wider society. Once formed, such communities need to be nurtured if they are to survive even as they are, and strong enough for newcomers to be able to develop a sense of welcome and belonging. When differences and difficulties arise among us, as they inevitably do, I am not alone in having wondered how much harder it is, and longer it takes, to deal with them if we do not meet face to face and have the opportunity to interact informally as well? Are they more, or less, likely to happen in the first place?

Before the lockdowns of the past year we were not a large group of regular attenders - I estimate around 18 -25 most Sundays, and some of our number met before the 10.30 Meeting. During lockdown there was MfW online and out of doors. As we begin to emerge out of the pandemic it now appears that there are those who generally will prefer to continue to worship online and those who will generally go to our Meeting House. Aside from the loss of no longer continuing to meet for worship all together, I am concerned that divided in this way there is likely to be an insufficient number (critical mass) coming to the Meeting House for it to continue to be a vibrant, living heart of a spiritual community. As a consequence there is a danger that people will start to drift away - online probably. Local MfB will I guess take place online too.

If things do go this way then eventually the question will arise of the sustainability of maintaining a Meeting House which is barely used for its original purposes. If we are not careful and stay closeted in our homes and behind our screens, so may come the demise of yet another, in our case historic, place of worship, which also has its place as part of the fabric of public life in our town. Might we then unwittingly also end up contributing to furthering the shrinking of social and public life at a time when their

diminishment is frequently seen, often by religious leaders, as a significant cause of many of the current issues of concern in our society?

Perhaps I am wrong about these future scenarios, and maybe I am going too far in thinking that these greater social and public concerns are our responsibility to consider. However, as we all face a choice we barely imagined having a year ago, nor most of us I suspect felt we needed, I personally believe that we each do need to have regard to matters which go beyond our personal preferences, circumstances and convenience.



**Quaker Peace & Social Witness** are holding online workshop sessions to find out more about the work of Quakers in Britain. You can book for individual sessions. Here are some examples

*Justice is love in action* - Tuesday 4 May 12:30–2pm

*Difficult conversations in difficult times* Tuesday 27th April 5:30 – 7PM

See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/events/qpsw-spring-sessions-what-love-can-do>

## Local News

**Jill Etheridge**

Friends may not be aware of the proposed closure of Malvern College, which will be a sad loss to the community. To sign a petition against this go to

<https://www.savemalvernhillscollge.org/>



We have received the following:

*Thank you very much for this generous grant which will a great help in reaching our target of £15,000 needed to support a new family, while we provide ongoing support for the 5 families already with us in Malvern.*

*As previously agreed, we would return the grant in the event that our application to the Home Office failed or for some other reason a new family did not come.*

*We are so grateful for all the Quakers' continued support, financial contributions and prayers for us and the families over the last four years.*

See <https://www.malvernwelcomes.org/>



Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs



Quaker Peace &  
Social Witness



The Quaker Council for European Affairs and Quaker Peace and Social Witness are holding a conference "**The Possibilities of Peace Education: Evidence and Opportunities**" which will take place online in the afternoons of 20-21-22 May 2021.

Further information is available on the [provisional programme](#).

You need to let them know **by April 30<sup>th</sup>** if you are interested. [RSVP here](#)

## Goodbyes

Elaine Hugh-Jones was a long standing member of our Meeting (and composer). Her funeral went well – with the coffin arriving in a horse-drawn carriage, which she had arranged herself.

To read more about her on <https://www.caradocpress.co.uk/elaine-hugh-jones-biography>.



Averil Stedeford was an attender at our Meeting for several years when she first moved to Albion Lodge, before worshipping at Hanley Swan parish church. She had also arranged her burial, to be at Westmill woodland burial ground, and left us details of what she would like at her service. We held a period of Quaker worship in the middle, and had lovely contributions about her hospice work, eco house, poetry and the support she gave others. It was a wonderful occasion.

Below is the poem she had written in 2013. We also sung a hymn written by her, I'll keep that for the next Newsletter.

## **NOT HERE**

My body,  
host to mind and soul for eighty years  
became unserviceable.  
It clung to me through frailty and pain,  
till it could let me go.

Now it is buried in a high field  
where wild flowers bloom and rabbits run. .  
Around it and within, microbes divide and thrive.  
In my bones, tree rootlets worm their way  
into the foramina, anchor themselves.  
Above, the saplings take their time  
to grow and mesh into a wood  
which will offer peaceful shade  
when those who sang at my burial have gone.

In nearby fields, turbines turn.  
panels soak up sunlight,  
This is a farm where  
Nature lets her power be harvested.  
This is earth life in all its vigour.  
My body offers itself to this place.  
but I am not here.

Foramen: a hole in bone through which blood vessels or nerves pass.

Jill Etheridge recently attended the funeral of Aaron Young, 33, a friend of hers as his parents have been for thirty years. A poem he had written was read, which is an all-encompassing message on equality,

## **My life**

I live in a xenophobic situation,  
Where the salient fact is the nation,  
You and your family have come from

You can't be like that, they say,  
You hold nothing in common with they,  
That come from a place different to me.

I was low, my birthday was coming,  
Party was on, but who would come then,  
But rather than one, people abundant

Yet I'm the only Anglo Saxon Brit,  
If you read the Sun it just doesn't fit,  
But for that night it went like this.

An Angolan, Pakistani, a Romanian too,  
An Italian, me and Filipinos two,  
On my special day they all came thru.

Then look back at my best of friends,  
From way back when back in ends,  
And then we see the same pattern again.

Lithuanians, Poles, Jamaicans, Bangladesh,  
My family has Nigerians, nevertheless,  
All my people from a culture, next

I guess all I'm trying to convey, you see,  
Is, people from a different nation to me,  
Have more in common than my gentry.

## **The Working of the Nominations Committee**

**Peter Bevan, on behalf of our Local Meeting Committee**

Nominations processes, along with pastoral care, are the Quaker equivalent of human relations departments in other organisations. Unlike other organisations these processes are not solely guided by skills, experiences, expertise, interests. We develop expertise by doing - even if it is for the first time. We begin attending Quaker worship because we want to grow. To grow with the Society of Friends not only means exploring spiritual awareness but also exploring what it means to be part of a religious organisation and

taking on new roles. It is useful for Nominations Committees to consider from time to time their role and how it is being implemented.

Traditionally, if someone was asked to be in a role then s/he was expected to agree - on the basis of the greater insight of the Nominations Committee (NC). These days members and attendees feel freer to consider the matter and refuse a request to serve. At its best the nominations process places the right people in the right roles so that the S of F can move forward prophetically but most of the time NC struggles to fill the roles - there are more roles to fill than people to fill them. One of the most difficult aspects of agreeing to fulfil a role is balancing one's spiritual commitments and psychological profile with the demands made by the organisation i.e. Local Meeting, Area Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting.

Members of Nominations and Pastoral Care (PC) team have to feel brave enough to offer a name hearing the advice that 'I feel a tender freedom to mention a name, not stamping it high but leaving it to make its own way'. Usually any names to be considered will be on the agenda of Local or Area Meeting. At this point of the agenda the names to be considered leave the room. Reservations about a particular name are usually expressed using the phrase "this is not a name that would have occurred to me". If more than one name is being considered then skills of 'holy listening' by the membership are required and support afterwards of the name that is not accepted is necessary.

Members and attenders accepting roles with which they are unfamiliar may well feel isolated and vulnerable to criticism and can rapidly feel unsupported. To meet these problems training for roles is essential as well as personal support from the PC team in conjunction with the nominations process. In so far as the nominations process has a role in developing a sense of community this should be on the basis that service is ministry rather than just filling the roles of the organisation. There are many ways of understanding ministry. It is the responsibility of the whole community (not just PC and Noms.) to manage this.

## **Vocal Ministry**

**Dick Stockford**

*Last month Dick explored the issue of worship and prayer in what he called the Quaker Miracle, this month he looks at vocal ministry.*

*This is what 25 years of Quaker experience have taught me about the Quaker miracle of silent prayer, how I regularly feel excluded from the refreshment and spiritual vigour the movement has given to me and what I think we should do about it.*

In my 25 years as a Quaker, I would claim to have given *true* vocal ministry once: I was not ready to give it and found myself on my feet and speaking!

As we are told “Prayer springing from a deep place in the heart, may bring healing and unity as nothing else can. Let meeting for worship nourish your whole life”. A&Q 10. That is good advice and it sticks firmly to the view that spoken ministry should come from deep within our emotional centre, it’s an emotional response not an instruction from the brain! “. . . . ministry is not the place for intellectual exercise. It comes through us not from us” F&P 2.60

In short, true vocal ministry is God speaking through you. It follows that such ministry does not require embellishment or comment, it is from God. I do not wish to judge, but I’m not sure that my relatively low strike rate on true vocal ministry is off the mark, (in our meeting, a similar rate would be 1 or 2 episodes of vocal ministry a year...for the whole meeting!), so if that’s the sort of level of true vocal ministry we might expect, why are there so many words at our meetings?

Can this really come through us from God or does it rise directly from our current day concerns? Does it matter? And if it does, in what way is it consistent with what we know of Quaker prayer, or more importantly to me, listening to God.

It matters! Let’s finish off how we should approach vocal ministry. First where-ever it comes from, there is a decision to be made about its origin: “Ministry. . . . is rooted in the eternity, divinity, and selflessness of the Inner Light; not in the worldly, egotistic functions of the conscious mind” F&P 2.66. That would seem to rule out most current day concerns! But assuming it doesn’t, another decision will be, should you speak your concern at all? “If you have to decide whether it is right to speak, consider that it isn’t” says F&P 2.60 rather directly. But that seems to speak to my own experience, if it’s right, you will be on your feet and speaking before you have a chance to consider it!

I find this very compelling, but it doesn’t mean that spoken ministry should only rarely happen. . . . should it? Especially as we are advised comprehensively in A&Q 13 about just how we should approach it based on one’s “deep experience” and trusting in the fact, as in my experience, “that the words will be given to you”.

So I’m there wanting to bathe in the reflective deliciousness of silence that meeting gives me and in spite of A&Q 12 (recognising that it may not be God’s word for me), my precious silence will have been broken and I’m back in the room with spoken ministry from somewhere else.

*I think there is an answer, but it will wait till next month, when some opportunities to make the circle square will be offered!*

## Thomas Merton Quote

This was read by Kevin Rolph after Meeting of Worship on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April. One difference of Meeting by Zoom is that it is easier to look up quotes which come to mind. Is this an advantage?

*The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of contemporary violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activity neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.*

## Why You Really, Really Should Make a Will (and it's not to do with Money!)

**Richard Bartholomew**

1. If you have children, are going to have children or are thinking about having children you **MUST** make a will so that you can choose a guardian for them should the unthinkable happen and you and your partner should die and leave them as orphans. You are safest with a solicitor writing your will as they are regulated.

If you don't do this then there is no alternative to them coming into the care of the local authority where they live and you will have lost that final chance to guide their lives in the direction that you know would suit them best by going to a loved and trusted family member or friend.

2. Obviously if you do the above you can then also make decisions about how any savings or property are disposed of as well.

3. If your life partner is not your spouse by marriage or your civil partner then your will can ensure some financial security for them as their non-spouse status will not grant them automatic inheritance rights to your estate.

4. If you are 55 years or older then you can get a will written free by a solicitor through Free Wills Month (March & October every year) at Free Wills Month - Your Will Helping Great Charities as the charities behind this venture will be paying for the costs of writing these wills then you will be asked to make a legacy towards your preferred charity.

5. At any age, the following charities signed up and offering free simple wills prepared by a solicitor are: Alzheimer's Research UK, Amnesty International, British Academy, Children with Cancer, Dignity in Dying, Guide Dogs, Independent Age, Liberty, Macmillan Cancer Support, Oxfam, Shelter and the Soil Association.

6. Whether or not you get a free will you might still want to make a legacy to a body that supports your values such as the Society of Friends and/or the Malvern Hills Trust that care for our Hills & Commons, where you can restrict the use of your legacy to certain tasks like pollarding a tree or repair the archaeology at British Camp or the Shire Ditch or leave it unrestricted for the Trust to use as it thinks best.

7. Then you can breathe a sigh of relief at work well done.