

Malvern Quaker Meeting



Newsletter June/July 2022

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter will need to reach me by 26th August.

Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website www.malvernquakers.org.uk.

If you are not on the Meeting's email list and would like to be, or have changed your email, please contact clerks@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk

Yearly Meeting 2022

Elizabeth Rolph

Quakers in Britain gather together annually for an event called *British Yearly Meeting*. Last year it was all online, and this year it was a mixture of people coming together in Friends House, and others joining via Zoom. It took place between 27–30 May and around 2,000 people were involved in some form. On the Sunday morning more than eighty Local Meetings joined in groups via Zoom for a mass Meeting for Worship.

The theme was 'faith, community and action' and addressed three big questions:

Faith: How do we experience worship, community and witness?

Community: How can we build Quaker communities that respond to challenges and put faith into action?

Action: How can we transform thinking and action in Quaker communities and wider society?

On the Saturday evening the Swarthmore Lecture is given. This is available on YouTube, and I hope to arrange a viewing at the Dell House to watch it (we have a large screen TV). In the last session an Epistle is agreed which is read at Meetings for Worship the following Sunday.

To find out more about what went on go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym> and read *The Friend* from 3 and 10 June. There should be a copy at the Meeting House, and if you subscribe, please consider passing your copy on. The next Area Meeting on 9 July will include some reflections on Yearly Meeting.

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting held in person and online from 27–30 May 2022

We send loving greetings to Friends everywhere.

Friends gathered for Yearly Meeting at Friends House in London, Hemel Hempstead and online. Faith in action meetings took place online in the previous week.

Amid the challenges of the climate emergency, wars in Europe and elsewhere in the world, a global pandemic, and a cost of living crisis, it has been important to address the interwoven strands of faith, community and action. All three are necessary – we are challenged to explore how our faith connects us with one another and how we act in the world.

Ministry is rooted in our worship and faith. We have tried to listen in a generous and a hopeful way, open to new learning and trusting in the Spirit amongst us.

The sheer size of this Yearly Meeting was an indication of the possibilities of blended worship. The ‘All Together Worship’ on Sunday brought the face-to-face presence of over 200 Friends into one community with 78 meetings and 290 individuals online, and other Friends joining in spirit. We heard gratitude from those who were only able to be with us because of the online facility. Children 11 and under had programmes in Friends House whilst young people 11 and over met in Hemel Hempstead. Junior Yearly Meeting met earlier in the year.

We are all on a faith journey, sometimes lit up by transformational experiences, but we depend on quiet waiting on God for the nudges and shoves that lead us in new and urgent directions. We heard passionate calls to ‘let go’ and trust the Spirit to make clear where we will be led. We need to be ready to listen deeply and to live in the discomfort of not knowing but moving forward in faith.

In a healthy community there is always someone to help us up with a tender hand. Young adult Friends called for cross-generational conversations and accompaniment. We heard heart-warming accounts of community togetherness, including support for those with difficulties due to neurodivergence or mental health problems. However, although we pride ourselves on being good at building peace for others, we sometimes find it hard to do this within our own communities.

Some have welcomed returning to meeting face to face. Others embrace online communication as enabling and inclusive; we are discovering new ways to build Quaker communities. We recognise that the life of our Meetings depends on reaching out into the world and searching for new insights. Are our Quaker communities models for what we want to see – places of openness, active listening, deep communication and connection? We cannot offer this vision to others without healing ourselves.

Many of us were saddened and ashamed to hear personal experiences of racism: descriptions of an event where none of the bystanders on the street supported the Friend, and another within the context of service on a Quaker central committee. A necessary first step against oppression is to believe one another’s accounts and experiences.

We were given powerful evidence of Quaker engagement in the transatlantic slave trade. It is important to understand and tell the truth about the past – it is even more important to recognise its enduring consequences: the trauma and impact on lives in the present.

We must start making changes now and for the future: “planting flowers as well as pulling up weeds.” Britain Yearly Meeting resolves to build on our decision last year to be an anti-racist church, working with partners, including churches and faith groups, to look at ways to make meaningful reparations for our failings. We need to take urgent action as individuals, in our local, area and yearly meetings. “What do love and justice require of us?”

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting
Siobhán Haire, Clerk



Churches Together Malvern

Elizabeth Rolph

Our Meeting is a Member of this fellowship of churches. While not being wholly comfortable with some of the Christ centred language and forms of worship, I believe it is important for us to be an active part of this group. For a few years I was our representative, and attended a number of their meetings, and found them a useful form of networking and hearing about what other churches are involved in. I ensured that our meeting was responsible for one of the daily Zoom prayer meetings held in May 2021.

The current chair is the Methodist Minister Nigel Coke-Wood. He would like to see Malvern Churches Together less formal and structured than it was, recognising and supporting what we do together. Events they support include of Chernobyl Children Life Line, Lyttelton Well, Malvern Welcomes and Lifepath. This takes place in June and volunteers from local churches welcome more than 700 local primary school children to the Priory for lively worship and a wide variety of activities. Anne Burge is a Member of the Justice and Peace Group, which organises peace vigils.

Currently communications from CTM are being received by Clerks, and I will include anything relevant in my regular emails. However, it would be good if we could have a named representative. If this would interest you please get in touch.

Advices and Queries No 6

Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life of witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship.

Message from the Quaker Mental Health Fund



I am writing on behalf of the Quaker Mental Health Fund to thank you all at Malvern Meeting for your generous and welcome donation.

The grants we make each year are totally dependent on our income, and donations such as yours make a real difference. They enable us to make grants to individuals for counselling, as well as funding Quaker led projects, which are aimed to support as many people as possible.

Your donation will help us carry on this vital work at a time when the mental health of so many is particularly fragile.

Please pass on the thanks of our trustees to all members and attenders of Malvern.

Thank you all very much once again.

Martin Edis
Treasurer

Our Meeting gives an annual donation of £250 to this charity and it was agreed at the Meeting for Business in May 2021 that we would ask for additional contributions from friends via the newsletter

Beat the Cost of Living Crisis (in a Small Way) by Helping Peace in the Middle East (in a Small Way).

Confused? Let me explain.

One of the everyday items that is going up in price is cooking oil (Ukraine it seems produces much of the sunflowers that go into sunflower oil), BUT you can still get Palestinian olive oil at the price set last winter.

This oil produced by the Zaytoun Coop (zaytoun is Arabic for olive) by Christian and Muslim farmers on the occupied West Bank, and every item we buy helps to build stability and peace there little by little.

So, if you are interested Colin Archer of the Worcester-Palestine Friendship Group can let us have Olive Oil at the following quantities and prices:

250ml £6.50
500ml £12.25 and
750ml £17.75.

You can either let me know what you want (and give me a cheque payable to Colin Archer) and I will collect and deliver to your door and/or the Meeting House as you wish, or you can order direct through Colin at lornaandcolina@gmail.com

So, cook for peace!

Richard Bartholomew

01684 574399

An extract from the newsletter received from Glenthorne, the Quaker guest house in the Lake District

We are still here and things feel pretty much back to normal. We have a strong programme of special interest holidays and courses. For things with a Quaker flavour you can join: Ben Pink Dandelion for a **Concise history of the Quaker Way**, Janet Scott explores the **Kingdom of God and the Quaker Way**, Jan Arriens with **Living in the Mystery** or Rex Ambler with **The Truth of our Life: the Quaker Vision**.

There are many others: you can see all the courses and download the brochure on our website www.glenthorne.org

Of course, you can just come and be looked after on bed and breakfast or full board and enjoy making new friends and the outstanding walking and scenery.

While you are here you could join us at 9.15 am for 20 minutes of Meeting for Worship, surrounded by the beautiful outlook from the garden room (conservatory).

Special Collections

Our Special Collection this time, Quaker Social Action, is running during June and July. We will therefore be able to report on this in the next issue.

£150 was raised for Chernobyl Children in May.

ACTIVE PEACE EDUCATION MALVERN

Mary Corfield

The Active Peace Education team has reached the end of a successful year. We delivered 19 courses to seven different schools in the area where we were very warmly welcomed. Staff and pupils responded very positively to our presence and to the themes we put forward in our weekly sessions.

This year we have focused on similarities and differences and valuing them, using music, places where we live in the world, food, languages, disability and appearance. Through activities and discussion in whole and small groups, the children have found ways to make choices and develop actions, behaviours and relationships and to develop skills needed to build and maintain healthy and meaningful relationships. An older group of children that we worked with during the summer term worked on developing their understanding of the concept of empathy with others, which was not easy for everyone.

In addition, we delivered courses on other aspects of peace – *Rights for Kids* (an activity-based course exploring the Convention on the Rights of the Child); *Six Hours to Change the World* (a look at why the world is sad and how working on the SDGs can fix it); and *All Are Welcome* (a look at where refugees come from, their journey and how they are treated when they arrive). Particularly this year we have had to make a number of

adjustments to the courses in the light of the changing in world politics, recent developments in sustainability, conflict, and refugees in the classroom. Feedback from the schools has been extremely positive and more schools are booking more courses for 2022-2023.

As a Peace Education team, we feel we have made a difference to the lives of children we have worked with in the schools we visited. To illustrate this, below is some feedback we have received from pupils, which we think helps to demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach.

In response to questions about the course, pupils replied:

‘I realised that to be friends you don’t have to agree on everything.’

‘I will remember that when my friend has been through a lot we respect that person.’

‘I now think differently about my worries and how people think about me.’

‘In the Activity Book, I enjoyed the first activity because I got to express a lot of my feelings.’

Please support us in this venture. Quakers are getting known!

Our Ukrainian Visitors to the Meeting House

Liz Flanagan

I am moved by the Meeting's response to my suggestion that we open up 3 days a week to provide a place of friendship and nourishment, (and, incidentally, our actions are raising the profile of Quakers in the area.)

I appreciate that it feels like a heavy commitment but already Friends are finding ways of sharing the challenges to our time and energy.

We have an art therapist and language teachers keen to work with us, and the Starting Well Partnership, based at the Sunshine Family Hub, are delighted with what we are offering to mothers and children. They ask that we share any concerns, or needs, with them on 01684 577442. Equally YMCA are very positive about our work and I have had a heart-warming response from Reverend Nigel Coke-Wood, Chair of Malvern's Churches Together, saying "I am sure there are people who would love to come and be befrienders".

So I sent him the times of our sessions to be circulated around local churches.

Perhaps this message I received today from my potential Ukrainian family puts everything into perspective:

Good evening ElizavetaI am very upset, because of the war and explosions. My stress has affected the hormonal system and the nervous system also. Now I am undergoing treatment. I still need two weeksI hope you are ready to wait..

For those with a couple of hours to spare each week here are your guidelines.

Notes for Helpers

- Thank you for being here to welcome our visitors
- Make sure the register is filled in each afternoon
- Remind yourself where the fire exits, the first aid box and the accident book are. Please complete if an accident happens
- Although any children are the responsibility of their mother or host please keep an eye open, especially outside
- Make sure the barrier is in place before any children play outside the children's room
- We have a duty of care, so we try to make the building safe for everyone
- If you have any significant concerns about a vulnerable person, whatever age, please report details of your concern to Richard B or Liz F
- Keys to rear space in the yellow box in the kitchen
- Aim to keep messy play outside or in the children's room
- Encourage everyone to tidy up at 5:00 PM [using your discretion]
- Remember it is our Meeting House and place of worship
- Be proud that we are fulfilling A&Q 18: how can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured and strangers are welcome.

Home for a Malvern Returner?

Richard Bartholomew

Some Friends may remember 1996? This was the year that Jill Etheridge and I restarted the Children's Group that had gone into abeyance some years before. One of the children attending was my daughter Amy who, being 11 years old and older than many of the children attending, decided that she was also one of the helpers!

Well, Amy went onto High School and then university in Sussex, where she has lived since then, just picking up a husband (Nik) on the way and now a magnificent 3-year-old called Rosie. They have now decided that their work will allow them to be based in the Malvern area.

Their ultimate plan is to hopefully buy somewhere in or around Malvern but in the meantime, they hope to move to a house or flat that they can lease for 6-12 months so that they can complete the move, get Rosie settled into pre-school (and maybe Little Friends too?) and apply for a mortgage once they have found the house that they want to buy.

My request is whether any Friends have, or know of, such a house or flat that they might lease for 6-12 months? If so, please contact me on 01684 574399 or at richard.bartholomew@btinternet.com and I can put you in touch with these Malvern Returners.

With thanks

Death and Dying

Hugh McMichael

I have 2 great passions in my life – prisons, and death and dying. Both arise through personal experiences – hence the passion!

My serious interest in death started at age 17 when, out of the blue, I developed Rheumatic Fever which led to ‘heart failure’ and 6 months in hospital. My family (and I) thought I was dying. The doctors concerned told me to leave the worrying to them and declined to talk about what was happening to me in any way at all. The only support they gave me was 5 ‘phenobarbitone’ tablets – the ‘valium’ of its day. So I decided to become a doctor to do better than they had done!

I was qualified when there began a slow transition to telling the patient rather than the relative about incurable disease. After nearly 3 decades in the acute hospital sector I moved into hospice work for 10 years. Sometimes I hear comments such as ‘what a marvellous thing to do’ but, other than bringing up children, it was the most rewarding period of my life. Pretences stop when people are facing death and real people are a joy and wonder. They focus on the important things in life.

I was lucky enough to be working in a university department so my next joy was being able to work with medical students (and later with doctors) exploring responses to people fearing death. The most important and powerful part of that process was to offer them an exploration of what it might be like to be facing death themselves. In many ways this exercise was about life-planning, recognising who or what really mattered in their own lives and ‘living each day as if it were your last’. So they got pretty deep!

The courses initially lasted 2 days but I later offered 5 day residentials and one group, after 5 days, asked for another 5 days so we really explored values in life! And I can honestly say that I have no fear of dying or of being dead!

It was a joy to share some of this experience with a small group in our Meeting House earlier this month. I know that at least some of the people who attended found it useful.