

Malvern Quaker Meeting



Newsletter May 2023

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

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

Mary Corfield newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.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

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting held in person and online from 28 April to 1 May 2023

We send loving greetings to Friends everywhere.

Cyflewyn gyfarchion cariadus i Gyfeillion ym mhob man.

Quakers of all ages gathered for Yearly Meeting at Friends House in London, Hemel Hempstead and online. Preparatory sessions took place online in the week before, and Junior Yearly Meeting met earlier in April. An All-together meeting for worship was held with many local meetings and individual Friends joining virtually across Britain and beyond.

We meet at a time when existential issues face us both within our aging and numerically diminishing Society and in the wider world. These require urgent responses. Quakers can show leadership and offer counsel that will help our nations in matters of the degradation of public truth, the climate and ecological crisis, and divisive public commentaries around people's identities and associated rights.

How best can we achieve this? We are a people of faith, always in transition on an exciting path of collective and personal exploration. We seek and follow the eternal Truth of the Spirit, which has many names, remaining open to new leadings and also to the possibility that we are mistaken. Our faith requires us to practise our testimony of truth and integrity in all that we say and do.

Kindness has a powerful impact, and we hope to offer caring support to all, including those with whom we may disagree. Speaking from a faith perspective can carry weight. We try to let our lives speak and have a ministry of presence, but can we speak out more as Quakers? We can be a listening presence, creating a "kinder ground", alongside speaking truth in public places and contexts. We are called to witness truth-telling, accountability, community-building, and to give messages of hope. Speaking truth to power with love is a ministry and is vital in a time when truth is often corrupted.

Our Quaker community has many voices, and we are upheld as one by the power of the Spirit. We all have a part to play, need to collaborate and trust those doing work on our behalf. Are we open to all voices, and how can we develop structures to engage all Friends through active listening? Ensuring true access for all in our community is a work of love. This may require us to move outside our own comfort and experience others' frustrations and discomforts.

Yearly Meeting is the all-encompassing body of which we are all a part and where we are most diverse. It takes on the big questions – Who are we as Quakers? Why are we here? What are we led to do? At times we have been mystified, even baffled. However, we discern a need to simplify our structures to make them more transparent, to release energy for practical ministry. We seek intentional change, led by the Spirit, to help our community to thrive as we move into the uncertain futures that dance before us.

Building on our tradition of radical spirituality, we need to be courageous, imaginative, careful, and joyful. We seek corporate structures that are agile, simpler, more inclusive and support equality. Big questions are being asked about how we take the Society forward, with ways of working that meet our practical needs and have spirit-led discernment flowing throughout.

This work will continue into 2024, and ways to involve Friends across Britain Yearly Meeting will be developed, arising from our discernment thus far. As a Society, we must go in whichever direction we are led, so that the Truth may prosper.

Signed in and on behalf of Yearly Meeting,
Adwoa Burnley
Clerk

Extract from the Junior Yearly Meeting Epistle

To all Friends everywhere,

Between the 1 and 4 of April 2023, 46 participants and 10 adult volunteers gathered to consider the theme: "Speaking Truth to Power: How can we release this energy to bring light to our worlds?"

Our weekend was filled with fascinating explorations of truth, power, and integrity. As young Quakers, we experienced the importance of building community and forming meaningful connections. Throughout the weekend, we participated in Base Groups, which provided a familial atmosphere that enabled us to quickly become comfortable with one another. This allowed us to let loose, laugh, and truly be ourselves.

We met daily in worship and felt enriched by the ministry shared, which was a vital part of our community. Through song, movement, and quiet reflection, we strengthened our spiritual connection. Together, we explored the subjectivity of definitions, the importance of discernment, and the balance between faith and practical action.

As we reflect on our time together, we are filled with gratitude for the connections we formed and the insights we gained. We depart with a renewed sense of purpose and a commitment to speak truth to power in our everyday lives.

We wish to share the final paragraph of our minute, as we leave this community ready to seek the balance between speaking truth and hearing it in our lives.

"To speak truth to power is as much about knowing when to use our voice as it is to use our silence. This balance is quintessential: if we only speak, we have no chance to listen inclusively, but if we only listen, we cannot bring about change. This balance is the answer."

Full Epistle available at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/young-quakers-balance-listening-with-speaking-truth-to-power>

Advices & queries No. 12

When you are preoccupied and distracted in meeting let wayward and disturbing thoughts give way quietly to your awareness of God's presence among us and in the world. Receive the vocal ministry of others in a tender and creative spirit. Reach for the meaning deep within it, recognising that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others. Remember that we all share responsibility for the meeting for worship whether our ministry is in silence or through the spoken word.

We need your help!

Elizabeth Rolph

A 'working session' at the Meeting House, for deeper cleaning and tidying, is long overdue. Historically, these have been Saturdays, but at our last Meeting for Business we agreed to try a week-day session, and to just schedule the afternoon. This will be on **Tuesday 23rd May**, from 2pm. It should be a good social time together - and there will be cake! So please come if you can, even for an hour.

Special Collection

The Special Collection for April was FOAG [Farmers Overseas Action Group]. Jill Etheridge reported that £115.00 was collected. There are no further Special Collections agreed. If you would like to sponsor one, contact the clerks.

The 'Big One'

Melanie Jameson

This refers to an initiative by Extinction Rebellion (XR) in which other groups, including Quakers, were encouraged to join for a long weekend in London. You might have heard XR's undertaking not to interrupt the London marathon; on the contrary, we would help steward it.

I am not sure if the 100,000 target for participation was reached but there certainly were a lot of folk around when I arrived on the Sunday afternoon. It was noticeable how the whole event was barely reported by the BBC and apparently better covered by Al Jazeera and other foreign news outlets.

A feature was the picketing of key government departments which are neglecting to fulfil their role in tackling climate change. Worcestershire and Devon XR chose DEFRA (banners renamed it as 'DEATHRA' in recognition of the dying off of wildlife in many rivers and the

failure to get to grips with emissions reduction). Quakers settled on the Ministry of Justice – I wish I had been able to join in with their daily worship at Westminster QMH, but I had walked far enough simply to reach the centre of activities round Parliament Square. There were opportunities to join in daily Citizens Assemblies, focusing on various issues and discussing future strategies.

On the final day I had been invited to an event inside Westminster and made the best of the opportunity in terms of carefully infiltrating some informative XR leaflets.



The whole of XR is run very much along Quaker principles with a great respect for equality and careful, respectful listening in all group sessions. Malvern XR is a friendly group that I regard as one of my families; people from all walks of life have come together because they believe that this is an issue which cannot be ignored. You may have seen us holding a weekly vigil on the Elgar steps in central Malvern and providing information. XR, nationally, has now started conversations on how to step up its campaign to bring the urgency of our global situation to the government's attention.

BOOKS

Mary Corfield

Two new books have arrived in the library:

'Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox 1624 – 1691', Second Edition, by Douglas Gwyn. A review of this book states that it is a highly informative and smoothly readable exposition of the message of George Fox, life and historical context. Douglas Gwyn shows that the radical message that came from the Light within through George Fox has the promise to be spiritually transforming to those who see and listen to him, even now. This work helps explain the urgency of the message that sparked early Friends. Ben Pink Dandelion, Professor of Quaker Studies, University of Birmingham, writes: "This book has proved a landmark in our understanding of the first Quakers and seminal in the way we now think about George Fox and his theology. Its careful exposition of Fox's use of the Book of Revelation is key to understanding the choices Friends felt led to make regarding how they lived and worshipped amongst the world's people and the routes Quaker theology has taken since."

'Conflict Resolution after the Pandemic: Building Peace, Pursuing Justice', Edited by Richard E. Rubenstein and Solon Simmons. In this edited volume, experts on conflict resolution examine the impact of the crises triggered by the coronavirus and official responses to it. The pandemic has clearly exacerbated existing social and political conflicts, but, as the book argues, its longer-term effects open the door to both further conflict escalation and dramatic new opportunities for building peace. In a series of short essays combining social analysis with informed speculation, the contributors examine the impact of the coronavirus crisis on a wide variety of issues, including nationality, social class, race, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

These books will be on the new books shelf in the library, and you are welcome to browse them.

MEETING FOR WORSHIP AT THE QUAKER SERVICE MEMORIAL on INTERNATIONAL CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR DAY MAY 15TH 2023

Monday 15 May is International Conscientious Objector Day. To mark this day the Quaker Service Memorial Trust will be holding a Meeting for Worship at 2.30 pm at the Quaker Service Memorial which is located at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

It is ten years since the inauguration of the Quaker Memorial. Over the years, many Friends have attended Meeting for Worship there, both on International Conscientious Objector Day and International Day of Peace. Due to the Covid Pandemic we have not been able to hold these Meetings since 2019.

The war in Ukraine has been a difficult time for some Friends regarding their beliefs. The same was true for Quakers in WW2, who followed a number of directions. Our Quaker Memorial commemorates the conscientious objectors who served in the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service. We can all unite there for this Meeting for Worship as a witness for peace.



QSMT Trustees will be at the Arboretum main reception from 1.45 pm to meet and greet Friends. We will depart at 2 pm to walk the ½ mile to the Memorial. There is limited seating at the Memorial so Friends may wish to bring a folding chair or stand for the Meeting for Worship lasting 30 minutes.

The NMA is open from 9.00-5.00 with no charge for admission. Parking is £4 if booked in advance on the NMA website www.thenma.org.uk or £6, payable on the day. The Arboretum has a good café with a wide selection of food and drink.

BYM from home

Melanie Jameson

This year I have been able to take advantage of the growing ability of BYM to include Friends remotely. This has enabled me to listen, live, to both the Salter Lecture (on climate change) and the Swarthmore Lecture (on disability access and inclusion).

I had also signed up to participate in some of the business session, and it was fascinating to watch this in action, with the clerks calling Friends to speak in the time-honoured way (“Microphone 4 to the Friend near the exit”, etc.) but also choosing people who had joined via zoom (“Would the technical team please unmute so-and-so”).

The sessions I attended on Sunday and Monday were on Truth & Integrity and ‘business as led’ respectively. The latter turned out to be a crucial issue that could change how we operate by adjusting the way that Meeting for Sufferings and Trustees work together. I do not know what difficulties have arisen, only that some dissatisfaction has been expressed. Our Friend Lesley Richardson is a member of a group that has been set up to gather views on the evolution of Meeting for Sufferings – you may have responded to their queries. The question before the meeting on Monday was simple: Do we want to change OR do we want to keep existing relationships? After many contributions it was determined that change was called for, and a careful Minute expressed this.

The next stage will be the preparation of options that will come before BYM 2024.

It is always fascinating to take part in these BYM sessions, and I am grateful to have been able to do so from my living room.

Discussion Meeting about Membership

- Why do we have membership?
- What is it for?
- Is it still necessary?
- If yes, what form(s) could it take?

These questions are being considered by Quakers across Britain. To be part of this, come to the **Dell House** on **Monday 15th May** at 4.00pm. Our thoughts will be sent to our Area Meeting Clerk, and feed into the discussion at the AM in July, and from then to Meeting for Sufferings

Here is an extract from the Area Meeting minute from January:

23.04 Report from Meeting for Sufferings, 3 December 2022

There is a call for prayerful discernment by Area Meetings on membership. A short list of questions has been prepared and we are asked to consider the issues with all who worship in our meetings, whether in membership or not, with minutes to reach Meeting for Sufferings by 31 August. We are conscious that it is important to include in our discussion those who do not normally join us at Area Meeting. We will encourage Local Meetings to have some preliminary discussions of Meeting for Sufferings' questions over the next few months, and then arrange an Area Meeting session on this topic in the summer.

Please come to this if you are able. It is a chance to feed into Quaker discernment nationally, and to find out more about Membership and what it means to others.

Lyttleton Well Update

The Bookshop has reopened upstairs. Do drop in to have a browse. The staffing problems have been resolved, with new managers appointed.

If you haven't tried the cafe yet, that's an excellent place to get a snack or lunch.