# Malvern Quaker Meeting





## Newsletter January 2024

*Items for the next issue of the Newsletter will need to reach me by 22nd March 2024.*
*Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website [www.malvernquakers.org.uk](http://www.malvernquakers.org.uk).*

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## Quiet Day on the Theme of the Spiritual Offerings of Thomas Merton

**Richard Bartholomew**

Thomas Merton was the subject of our recent Area Meeting Quiet Day.

By the way, if you are ever to plan a quiet day for Quakers, you might think it easy to keep them quiet! That was Learning Point No 1.

Why Thomas Merton? Who was Thomas Merton?

The latter question is perhaps the more challenging and in thinking about the various answers to it made, to me and the planners, the case for choosing him and his approach to spirituality as the subjects of the day.

In my callow youth I might have described TM as a mass of contradictions, but now I am in my callow older years I see that he was just faced with all the dilemmas that we are all faced with and came up with some interesting responses.

Some of these might be a) an American born in France (St Antonin Noble Val in Languedoc) and sent to an English public school; b) a Quaker mother and an Anglican/Episcopalian father who ends up a Roman Catholic; c) an applicant to various closed monastic orders where his identity would be reborn with a monastic name, who was simultaneously publishing his spiritual autobiography (Seven Storey Mountain) under his own name and becoming famous for it as Thomas Merton; d) finally accepted into the Trappist order, stricter Cistercians who kept their words for the Offices in church and the Divina Lectio readings while they ate in silence. They lived their life in silence, yet TM apparently found

the silence of other monks too distracting so he finally got permission to live as a hermit on the Abbey land where he could deal with his own silence; e) a member of a closed religious order who nevertheless came out publicly about the evil of the USA waging war in Vietnam; f) a member of a closed religious order actively involved in inter-faith work who latterly was attracted by Zen Buddhism and took photographs informed by Zen.

So that's why I was keen to find out some more about TM's spirituality.

What stood out for me? I think the display of the photographs of driftwood and nature that we received copyright permission to use. They showed to me that there is no real distinction between light and shadow as the darkest shadows are cast by the brightest light...and to me that's something to really think about.

**Further Reflections on Quiet Day** **Lynda Prescott**

*Thank you once again for the wonderful programme you devised and led for today's Quiet Day. I thought that using Thomas Merton for inspiration worked extremely well, and one Friend who spoke to me afterwards was enthusiastic about the possibility of further exploration -- that probably goes for a number of participants.*

*The Arctic weather made the warmth of your hospitality seem all the brighter. Please do pass on thanks to Liz and anyone else involved in providing us with bodily nourishment alongside the spiritual sort. The silent lunch was a most interesting experiment, and, although an unfamiliar discipline for most of us, I felt that listening to the readings brought us all closer together than we would have been in the usual conversational web of Quaker meals. Thank you again for an excellent and uplifting day.*

## Friends World News: January 2024

Dear Friends,



Loving greetings to all Friends for the year ahead. This is an exciting time for international Quakerism, and I am delighted to share that there are many opportunities to connect with the global family of Friends coming up in 2024.

Celebrations for the 400th anniversary of the birth of Quaker co-founder George Fox will take place throughout the year. Many of these courses and events can be joined online, from around the world.

These include reflections on the legacy of George Fox at Yearly Meetings; a range of online courses which include liberal, conservative and evangelical perspectives; a week of celebration of the lives of Margaret Fell & George Fox at Swarthmore Hall; and a special exhibition at the Quaker Tapestry Museum.

There are also still places available for the World Plenary Meeting, taking place in South Africa and online from 5-12 August 2024.

The registration deadline for in-person places is 31st January 2024. Registration for online places will close on 31st May 2024. Book your place here today.

I look forward to being part of these events with you, whether in-person or online.
In Friendship,



## Special Collections

£200 was donated for the Special Collection in December, which was for the *Community Peacemaker Teams*. This follows the talk given by Ian Cave about his experience as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Hebron, a Palestinian city with Jewish settlers living in the middle of it. This work has temporarily been paused, but there is a CP Team in Hebron, whose work is continuing. This is so important now, more than ever.

## Thanks from QCEA

**Dovile Bogusyte**

As the year draws to a close, we want to express our deepest appreciation for the instrumental role your support has played in the successes and milestones achieved by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) in 2023. Your generous financial contributions have made a significant impact on our journey, and we are truly grateful for your steadfast commitment to QCEA's mission.

In March, we introduced our publication, "Storytelling from the Frontlines", a compilation of narratives that resonates across diverse communities worldwide, shedding light on the interconnected challenges of militarism and the climate crisis. Your financial support made this impactful work possible and has furthered our mission to bring about positive change.

In April, we embarked on a significant journey by adopting and implementing QCEA's new strategy for 2023-2026, focusing on "Justice and Peace in a Time of Climate Crisis". Your support has been the driving force behind our ability to grow our team, welcoming a Climate Justice and Peace Coordinator in July. Their efforts have played a pivotal role in launching and advancing our program work.

In August and September, the Loving Earth Exhibition provided a creative space for individuals to engage with the environmental crisis. We have also been working hard with our partners to try to ensure that the EU Migration Pact does not make things worse for migrants to Europe. Additionally, we organised two closed-door events, bringing various audiences together to reflect on the notion of borders. Your support has also contributed to the success of these initiatives. We're thrilled to see Quaker House becoming a venue for diverse organizations to host their events.

Looking ahead to 2024, we have ambitious plans, including promoting integrity and compassion in upcoming European elections, working to ensure a just and peaceful green transition, launching the "QCEA Digest" online newsletter, and publishing two new publications. We encourage you to stay connected with us as we embark on these exciting endeavours!

Your support enables QCEA to bring the vital Quaker perspective of non-violence and human dignity to European policymaking. We take pride in our independence from EU or government funding, allowing us to speak truthfully with integrity.

## Advices & Queries No 14

Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.

## Take good care...! **Jill Etheridge**

When I started a new career in Natural Health, aged 40, it was becoming 'fashionable' to talk about people taking more personal responsibility for their health. In today's world, with the state of health service resources in our country under pretty severe strain, it would seem more urgent and prudent than ever for each of us to do whatever we can to keep ourselves as well as possible. That, of course, will vary from individual to individual.

Having taken the best care of my own health – and specifically my immune system -that I know how to do (for well over twenty years), I was rather perturbed recently to have a nasty cough that took weeks to shake off. When a GP told me it could last 4-6 weeks, I doubted that very much; but it lasted even longer. I had two weeks free of symptoms, then got a 'normal' cold, the first for about twenty years, which was followed by……. a cough again! All this was most discouraging; though I realise that new viruses and the impact of the various new vaccines that have been used in recent years have probably changed the health profile of countless people.

One day, a word literally flew into my head out of nowhere, it seemed: *Zinc!* I recollected that I had some somewhere, though it was not one of the supplements that I take regularly. The beneficial effect it had on me was almost instantaneous. As things began to smell and taste much more intensely, I realised these two senses had been below par for a long time. My immediate research showed that, sure enough, the mineral that is usually deficient in people with diminished taste and smell is indeed Zinc. This is on top of its role of enhancing immunity. You will no doubt recall that loss of taste and smell is / was a leading indicator of possible Covid. I never tested positive for that virus; but we must all have been in contact with it, I guess, as it was so prevalent.

A few years ago, I offered a day workshop at the Meeting House entitled '*Help Yourself to Better Health',* which was very well received by the few people who attended. In a nutshell: 'five-a-day' is a minimal essential; it's well-nigh impossible to get from food alone the vitamins, minerals and trace elements we need for optimum health; antioxidants and Selenium are absolutely vital, especially as the latter is protective against both Cancer and Heart Disease and is seriously depleted in most of the soil where crops are grown. *I have no shares in any supplement company!*

In this new year, I raise a cuppa and say, '*Your very good health!*'

## Re-Starting Children's Meeting **Liz Flanagan**

On the 25th of October 2023 a meeting was held to discuss re-starting children's meeting. We started by sharing our hopes for children's meeting at Malvern, and shared ideas about the kinds of things that might work well. These included:

- Godly play (exploring Bible stories through play), exploring ideas together, encouraging creativity, asking open questions.
- Parachute games/activities
- Cooperative games
- Creative/art activities
- Listening/sharing time/check-in - possibly with a candle like they do at little friends and including any adults present.
- Children's meeting is also a meeting for worship - how can we support children to explore and develop their spirituality?
- Children coming into the big meeting for worship for the last 15 minutes and being invited to share what they've been doing/thinking about.
- Can use the park/outdoor space, too.
- Don't make the sessions too complicated or involve too much preparation time - do what will work for everyone, including those organising and running the sessions.
- Need two DBS checked adults each time. Important that it is not the parents who are running the children's meeting.

Some of the questions that came up were how could you involve the children and young people in decision making around this and other aspects of the life of the meeting?

How could the meeting make sure that children and families always feel welcome, even on the Sundays when there isn't a children's meeting planned? Share a few ideas around this, including having activity bags, books, toys available for families to use, and let parents/carers know that the children's room is available to use.

## What Precisely is Adult Social Care? **Richard Bartholomew**

In the 'old days' you may remember talk in the press/news about Social Services, but due to changes in law in England there are no longer Social Services Departments of councils, rather they have been replaced by Children Services and Adult Social Care Departments.

Adult Social Care's job is to assist people from 18 years till death to maintain their independence to stay at home with care and support and in some situations to help people to move into residential or nursing home places. They do this by assessing the help that adults need and then by assessing their income and assets (savings & property) as there is a charge for Adult Social Care. So, most people getting this care & support will be having help of various sorts to stay in their own home, formerly provided by the Home Help Departments of councils which have now been privatised by Government into private care agencies. The biggest charges are levied, not surprisingly, for residential & nursing care places, and in 2002 the average weekly cost for residential care was £800, and more, of course, for nursing care, and always there are regional variations.

## How Not To Be Overcharged For Adult Social Care?

Many people needing residential or nursing care will be homeowners, often with a spouse, civil partner or just a friend, and there are, in fact, 2 different ways to jointly own a freehold home (for leasehold you would need to check with your solicitor whether the following applies): one costs you potentially twice as much in Adult Social Care charges as the other. Read on.

Many people will own their home jointly as **joint tenants** which means that they each own 100% of the value/equity of the property, so if one needs a care home they might be eventually charged for the full value of the property, whereas the other perfectly lawful way to own a property is as **tenants in common** which means that each person owns only 50% of the value of the property. If you are not sure which way you own your home, check with your solicitor or the Land Registry (for a fee). My strong recommendation is that if you are not already tenants in common that you get help to convert to that form of holding. There will be a cost, and you may well need to rewrite your wills to accommodate this change, but once done it is done.

Probably nobody looks forward to a future where they will be dependent on help from Adult Social Care, either at home or in a home, BUT future-proof yourselves so that if this comes about you are covered.

## Yemen Day 25-01-24 **Melanie Jameson**




For the fifth year in a row a few of us have gathered for a vigil outside QinetiQ. This is the initiative of Dick Stockford (who recently left our Meeting to move to Wales) who has long had a concern about the company. They are also in the sights of Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), in view of their military research & development and partnership agreement with the Saudi arms company, Dar Massader. During the recent civil war in Yemen, it is Saudi supplied arms that have caused such death and destruction.

There were 8 Quakers present on Thursday, Jan 25; we listened carefully as Dick read his text, describing the products of the defence and security business as neither defensive nor creating security. We heard of QinetiQ's deadly contracts to support the RAF to "transfer and enhance weapons capabilities across to the Typhoon F-35" (the plane used to bomb Houthi Yemen) and their involvement in developing the future combat system, 'The Tempest', a stealth fighter costing £120m per plane. QinetiQ's success greatly benefits its shareholders with massive dividends and a £100,000 share buy-back offer.

Dick queried whether this was the best use that can be made of these huge sums of money and whether arms firms should be held to account for the damage and destruction they create in the world. He went on to consider our UK licencing system for arms exports to countries on UN Human Rights Watch. CAAT has taken the Government to judicial review about these sales but even when they gained a pause, sales went ahead. So, exports are more important than lives.

In conclusion, Dick declared that our purpose was to say that this is wrong – all of it: QinetiQ should be asked to account for the human cost of their products and follow their own ethics governance guidelines. As he spoke, we noticed a couple of police cars driving in and out of the vast housing estate and past us along the main road. At the end, a friendly policeman came over to 'check we were ok' (Why wouldn't we be?). They knew of the witness because they are monitoring the CAAT website which posted the event. This was passed to local police who told QinetiQ, then kept an eye on us. Given that QinetiQ's offices are round the corner – we wanted to stand near their sign on the main road - they would not have known we were there if not for the police. This worked to our advantage and gives Dick a good opening when he writes to their Chief Ethics Officer. He urges us, too, to contact QinetiQ and can supply the necessary background information.dick.stockford@sli.org.uk

# A Gift to our MP

Clerks received this from Eion Mccarthy on 15th December.

This week's edition of "The Friend" includes the following letter:-

***A gift***

*Isn't it difficult to know if a rising of energy in a thought is good ministry, or not? Please can I share this one with readers, just in case it is good ministry?*

*Could each Meeting, or Area Meeting, consider sending a book about climate change to their MP, a present this Christmas? I would suggest David Attenborough's A Life on Our Planet because he is very well respected by most of the population, and he explains very clearly the problems and very thoughtfully some practical and achievable ideas to transform things.*

*The message inside could ask for more action on reducing our impact on our beautiful planet.*

*As COP28 rolls on focusing mostly on technological fixes, my feeling is cutting back is all humans can really do.*

*Barbara Mark*

I write to advise you that I have arranged for Harriett Baldwin MP to receive a copy of this book.

Update:

On 15th January Eion sent us his response from Harriet. Her letter stated that she shared the concern about climate change, and added a handwritten note that she looked forward to reading the book in her spare time.