Malvern Quaker Meeting





Newsletter January 2026

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (in Word format please) will need to reach me by ***27th February 2026****. 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*

Three Carol Services

Melanie Jameson

It seems a long time ago now, but this is the first chance to write for the newsletter about the three very different carol services I attended in the lead up to Christmas.

The first took place at St Jospeh's Catholic Church which my son attends. It was enhanced by the participation of children from St Jospeh's School who acted out nativity scenes, did the readings and provided some of the carols.

The second was at the high security prison I visit monthly to support the Quaker Prison Chaplain at the 'Silence Inside' weekly worship sessions she established nearly eleven years ago. Their annual carol service/concert is a complicated affair: first the various guests have to be cleared through the Gate – like extreme airport security – then ushered into one half of the chapel. This large building is divided into two by the Chaplaincy Office to make two separate religious spaces, one of which is used mainly by the many Muslim prisoners. Here a table was prepared with refreshments for we had a long wait – almost two hours, while men from the various wings who were attending were checked and eventually escorted up.

I said I would not have a satsuma because I thought the men could do with more fresh fruit but was astonished to be told that the oranges would be removed before the men came up because there was a risk they would take a satsuma back to their cells to distil alcohol. How much alcohol can you possibly get out of one small orange! How ridiculous.

At last we moved through to the other half of the chapel and settled onto chairs as the Salvation Army played a carol medley. The men started to arrive. Most of them were very excited and moved round shaking the hand of anyone they knew. I noticed that most of the members of our Silence Inside group were there. Finally, we were able to start, and the opening prayer was read by K from our group. Unusually, it was greeted with applause, and this enthusiastic reaction greeted each and every

prisoner contribution. The vicar leading the service explained that some men wished to sing in their own language, and five men came to the front. We had the piano introduction to Silent Night then two men sang a verse in Welsh, followed by two in Spanish leaving one man (again from our Quaker group) who is Rumanian. In a beautiful, controlled soaring voice he sang his verse and for a moment silence indeed fell before we were ready to stand and complete the carol. Another highlight was P whom I know well and is an artist, but it turned out he is also a musician who had composed a new carol. We were treated to a world premier with P's guitar accompaniment to the choir. Massive applause followed.

I thought the Bishop's sermon was somewhat ill-conceived with the theme of Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell. Is that what these men really needed, confined far from family and friends at this particularly sensitive time of year?

Then it was all over so we swarmed back to the original room for mince pies and tea (no satsumas in sight). I always try and get round everyone in our Silence Inside group, so set off tracking them down and congratulating those who had participated. D, who has now become a member of the RSoF, asked me if he should request the Friend or Friends Quarterly; I replied 'the latter' since the Friend was about to start being delivered to the Chaplaincy, as agreed and funded by our Meeting. Realising the Salvation Army were heading along the corridor back to the Gate I sprinted off after them and left that hidden world behind.

The final chance to sing carols was, of course, halfway through our Dec 21 Meeting, but my head was still full of the prison event, which provided a much anticipated highlight for a few hours for men with chaplaincy connections in the grim, seemingly endless experience of serving a long prison sentence.

Advices & queries No 34

Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.

Remembering Gren Gaskell

Jill Etheridge

On Saturday February 28th we shall gather at 6 p.m. at the Meeting House to share in our usual winter supper. This time the focus of the entertainment will be on some of Gren's wonderful poems, with perhaps a few musical items too. We're delighted that Arline will be able to be with us. Please liaise with Liz Flanagan (flanaganelizabeth63@gmail.com) about what food or drink you are willing to contribute.

Midlands Children and Families Worker

Kate Macdonald

In January, Area Meeting heard a presentation from Kirsty Philbrick, the Quaker Life team leader managing regional youth work, about the new Midlands Children and Families Worker. Quakers in Britain will be funding this post for three days a week and have asked whether Central England AM and our own AM, who will be benefiting from this work, would consider co-funding additional half or whole days per week. Quaker Life estimate that a joint contribution of £6000 in 2026/2027 (shared between all the Meetings in the two AMs) would fund a half day a week, and £13,000 would fund an additional day a week. The post is designed to run for three years, and the costs are likely to increase for the two successive years.

At the People Group Meeting for Business on 1st February, it was discerned that Malvern Friends are keen to support this initiative, and the Meeting could afford to offer an annual contribution of £1000 a year. There was concern that given the late addition of this item in the agenda, not enough Friends may have considered this matter fully. We would like to hear from the rest of the Meeting before committing to this. We were reminded that our own APE project is funded separately.

If any Friends have comments to make on this please send them to me, as convenor of People Group, by the end of February.

Special Collections

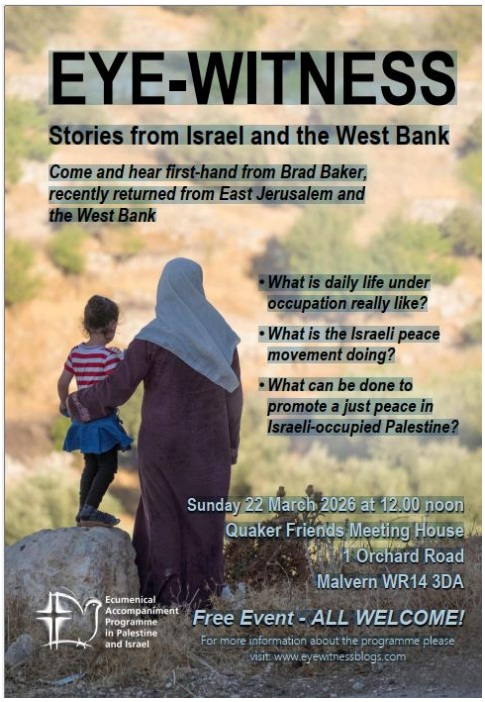
The Special Collection for December was for the BookTrust, and a total of £147 was collected. A letter of thanks was received. The collection in January was in aid of the Quaker Housing Trust and raised a total of £220.

The Special Collection for February is Malvern Special Families - a local charity for children with disabilities and additional needs, offering Saturday and Wednesday clubs in Malvern as well as short breaks for carers. See https://www.malvernspecialfamilies.org.uk/

Eye-Witness

Ian Cave

We have received information about a talk to be held at our Meeting House on 22nd March. The speaker is Brad Baker who has recently returned from Palestine and has much to tell us about the conditions there.



Active Peace Education Update — Liz Flanagan

You may recall that back in June we hosted six Year 3 children at Malvern Primary school being given Peacemakers awards. A report on this is now on the Peaceful Schools Website, https://www.peacefulschools.org.uk/school-awards/peacemakers-schools

Anna Lubelska, the Founder and Coordinator of Peaceful Schools, was unable to be there to give the awards as she usually does. Liz received the following from her:

I'm very impressed by all the work that you do in schools and by the support that you get from your Meeting House. This seems quite unique. I'm getting a bit ancient now and I'm not sure that I can keep going with the Awards scheme for much longer - though I love doing it! I need to find others to take up this enterprise!

Active Peace in Bosbury — Rosemary Webb

As part of our Rights for Kids course, we sent keyrings to our MP to remind them to work towards Quality Education for all by 2030, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ellie Chowns - Bosbury's MP - sent back a letter with thanks for the keyrings, which now hang in her office. She offered to come into school to talk to the children, and the request by headteacher Mrs Ruth MacManus for the children also to go on a trip to Westminster to meet their MP and possibly also the Bishop of Hereford met with a positive response from Ellie Chowns. Andrew and I may be going too depending on the date.

Little Friends — Rosemary Webb

January's Little Friends was attended by four families, including two Quaker families. The theme was Epiphany, and we explored Epiphany traditions around Europe, including Stern singer (the children dressed up as the three kings as they do in Germany) and the Galette des Rois from France. We're looking forward to the next Little Friends this when the theme will be horses (a nod to the lunar new year).

Quaker Prayer — Andy Boldero

I saw this on the back of a book by David Johnson and am sharing it as I feel it is the most succinct explanation of Quaker Prayer:

A Quaker prayer life arises from a life of continuing daily attentiveness. The first generation of Quakers followed a covenant with God, based on assiduous obedience to the promptings of the Inward Light. This process did not require the established churches, priests or liturgies. Quaker prayer then became a practice of patient waiting in silence.

Prayer is a conscious choice to seek God, in whatever form that Divine Presence speaks to each of us, moment to moment. The difficulties we experience in inward prayer are preparation for our outward lives. Each time we return to the centre in prayer we are modelling how to live our lives; each time we dismiss the internal intrusions we are strengthening that of God within us and denying the role of the Self; every time we turn to prayer and to God we are seeking an increase in the measure of Light in our lives.

Broadband & Mobile Social Tariffs

These are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Some providers call them 'essential' or 'basic' broadband. Ofcom oversee them and reckon that you may save up to £200 per year see Social tariffs: Cheaper broadband and phone packages for more details and a list of which providers do them and how to apply.

Water Companies Social Tariffs

All water companies have these schemes to bring bills down; they are just not very open about their existence! Always ask to go on the water company's Priority Service Register - see below for details.

a) Severn Trent Big Difference Scheme

Severn Trent's Priority Service Register is available on this link Severn Trent calls on customers to sign up for extra support if they need it | News Releases | News | Severn Trent Water
The Big Difference is a scheme that could reduce your water bill by up to 70% see Big Difference Scheme | Login or Register all water companies were 'persuaded' by Government to share their vast profits in this way. NB you have to apply online!

b) Welsh Water WaterSure Wales Social Tariff

Welsh Water's Priority Services Register is available here Priority services | Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
This is similar to Severn Trent's scheme and is accessible via WaterSure Wales | Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Council Tax Disabled Band Reduction Scheme

As well as being able to claim a reduction in your Council Tax on grounds of income, your council tax bill may be reduced if your home has features that are essential for the well-being of a person with a disability who lives there. These may include an additional bathroom or specially adapted kitchen, or extra space inside the property for using a wheelchair see How to get a council tax reduction or discount - Which?

Increasing Difficulty in Getting Round and Doing Things at Home?

£110.40 a week to help with personal support if both of the following apply:

- you have a physical disability, a mental disability, or a health condition
- you're State Pension age or older

NB you don't have to be a wheelchair user or registered as disabled with any official body AND you do not necessarily have to have anyone helping you out now.
How to claim?

1) Ring the Attendance Allowance helpline Telephone: 0800 731 0122
2) Then I strongly urge you to go somewhere like Citizens Advice or Age UK to help you fill in the form; this is because the failure rate of people doing it for themselves is high because people claiming the benefit are asked to list their difficulties and challenges but almost always inadvertently switch to saying how well they cope. Clearly, you have to be truthful, but the issue is that you have to tell the right truth to power (your difficulties) and not the wrong one (your skill at managing painful conditions).

Blue Badge

If you, like me having had knee and hip operations, find you need to be able to fully open a car door to get in or out of it, then you sound as if you would be eligible for a Disabled Blue Parking Badge. You can then usually find a larger parking space for a disabled person, and you are exempt from parking charges for parking up to 3 hours. See Apply for or renew a Blue Badge - GOV.UK

Energy Bills

Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis recommends that if we are on variable energy tariff then we snap up one of the fixed deals available as they are almost certain to save us money. He recommends going for Octopus Energy's Fixed Tariff Octopus 12 M November 2025 v2 as it has no exit fees. It is also worth bearing in mind that a few energy companies have also put money into schemes for those who are still having difficulty in keeping warm and paying their bills. Octopus, for example, also have their Octo Assist Scheme which has a range of response from standing charge holidays to providing free electric blankets to customers. Also worth noting that these energy companies also have similar schemes British Gas, EDF, Scottish Power, Utilita, Utility Warehouse and EON Next see Social Energy Tariffs | MoneySuperMarket

I hope something here will help you to have a good New Year.

"I shall pass this way but once..." **Jill Etheridge**

At this start of the new year, a quote my father often used came into my mind this morning. It begins, ' I shall pass this way but once...'. Imagine my surprise when Google informed me that it came from a French - American Quaker!

"Stephen Grellet (1773-1855), the Quaker minister and missionary, was a native of France. Grellet came to America in 1795 and joined Friends the following year. He traveled extensively in the ministry, visiting the southern U.S. in 1800 and Haiti in 1816. Grellet made four trips to Europe during the years 1807-1834."