

# CHELTENHAM QUAKER

## September 2006

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### MEETINGS

**Cheltenham:** Sundays at 10.30. Children's Meeting: At present there is no regular Children's Meeting, but facilities for children can usually be made available on request. 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday shared lunch.

Thursdays, 12.30 to 1.00 Meeting For Worship followed by shared lunch on First and Third Thursdays 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Tewkesbury:** Fourth Sunday, please 'phone Diana Tovey or Joyce Martin to find out the time and place, as it varies.

**All welcome.**

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### DIARY

(All of these meetings at 7.30 at the FMH unless otherwise stated)  
Sun 10<sup>th</sup> Circle Dancing, 7.00 to 9.00

#### August

Th 24 12.30  
Sa 26 2.00  
Th 31 12.30

**Thursday Worship** for half an hour  
**Meeting for Worship** held at Main Gate of USAF Fairford  
**Thursday Worship** for half an hour

#### September

Su 3 11.30  
Mo 4 8.00

**Preparative Meeting**  
**Christians at Work** at the Cottages, Leckhampton Church. "The Story of Leonard Cheshire": Mary Peterson.

Th 7 12.30  
Su 10 10.30  
Th 14 12.30  
Th 21 12.30  
Su 17 12.00

**First Thursday Worship** for half an hour, followed by Shared Lunch  
**Monthly Meeting** at Cirencester. Packed lunch.  
**Thursday Worship** for half an hour  
**Third Thursday Worship** for half an hour, followed by Shared Lunch  
**Meeting for Learning.** 'Faith and Internet Practice' led by Rowland Carson

Sa 23 2.00  
Th 28 12.30

**Meeting for Worship** held at Main Gate of USAF, Fairford  
**Thursday Worship** for half an hour

#### October

Su 1 11.30  
Mo 2 8.00

**Preparative Meeting**  
**Christians at Work** at the Cottages, Leckhampton Church "From Leckhampton to Eden" Revd. Dowell Conning.

Th 5 12.30  
Th 5 7.00  
Th 12 12.30  
Su 15 12.00

**First Thursday Worship** for half an hour, followed by Shared Lunch  
**Monthly Meeting** at Nailsworth FMH. Tea at 6.00  
**Thursday Worship** for half an hour  
**Meeting for Learning:** Jane and Ian Brighton on 'Has love of material Goods blinded us to the important things in life?'

Th 19 12.30  
Sa 21 10.30

**Third Thursday Worship** for half an hour, followed by Shared Lunch  
**Sustaining the Spirit Day** in Gloucester Meeting House. Details below.

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## **Meetings for Learning**

We are starting Meetings for Learning again from September onwards, on the third Sunday of the month, following our tea after Meeting for Worship. These meetings will last for about an hour, finishing by one o'clock. They are open to everyone: newcomers, attenders and long-standing members.

These meetings will be led by a Friend on a given topic, involving an introduction and relevant readings from our book, 'Quaker Faith and Practice', followed by a time for reflection and sharing of views. We hope as many people as possible will be able to come to these meetings.

Judy Clinton

## **“Sustaining the Spirit Day”, Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at Gloucester Meeting House.**

Please put Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> in your diary for our next day for “sustaining the Spirit”, which will be held in Gloucester Meeting House from 10.30 to 4.30 p.m. Quaker Quest and Spiritual Hospitality will be our theme.

Rosemary Hoggett

## **Week of Prayer for World Peace**

The Week of Prayer for World Peace this year will be held between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October.

Although it was a Christian initiative that led to the founding of the Week of Prayer for World Peace in 1974, it soon became an inter faith activity. The first Chairman, the late Dr. Edward Carpenter, former Dean of Westminster, established the guiding principle of the Week in the words, “The peace of the world must be prayed for by the faiths of the world.”, and this is still the basis of the work today.

For those who want to persevere with the idea of praying with people of other faiths, three thoughts may be helpful. First, the different prayers that we say are said by neighbours in the same town and the same street every week. In worshipping together we simply bring under one roof what happens anyway under the same sky. Secondly, we are convinced that there is only one humanity that prays, and only one Divinity that we pray to, whatever different opinions we may have about that one Divinity. Thirdly, we recognise that inter faith partnership does not imply agreement. The things we agree on are many, and precious. The things we disagree on are precious too. When we stand with a follower of another faith

who is praying, whenever we can agree with the prayer we give it our interior assent. Where we cannot agree, we withhold our interior assent. It is still good to stand with that person as a friend and a partner for peace.

A leaflet has been prepared for those who might wish to be more fully involved in this Shared Faith Worship in October, a copy of which can be seen at the Meeting House.

John Cross

### **The Next Stage**

It may not be a favourite occupation, but it is wise to give some thought to the close of life, since we never know when this may happen.

A recent meeting of Monthly Meeting Overseers suggested that we all consider three practical things, if we have not already done so.

First, do you have a will? Intestacy not only means that your possessions may not be used as you would wish, but also that it seriously complicates matters for those who have to deal with the situation.

Have you considered granting a “power of attorney” so that a designated person could act on your behalf, if you become incapable?

Finally, death is a time of grief and stress. Recent deaths in our Meeting have illustrated how helpful it is to the family and others if your wishes have been made clear. Simple forms, with copies for next of kin, may be obtained from the friends responsible for funerals – Jack Danes, Rosemary Hoggett, Richard Lacock and Margaret Sheldrick. Please feel free to discuss any of the issues with one of these Friends or an Overseer.

Richard Lacock

### **Elders**

The following, by Clive Sansom, a Quaker by conviction, was published as an article in *The Friend* in 1962. It is as relevant today as it was and felt suitable to include in this Newsletter.

“Advices and Queries ask us to ask ourselves: ‘Do you come with heart and mind prepared?’ But we too often interpret this as ‘coming with a speech prepared’.

The essence of the Quaker form of worship is spontaneity. We have developed it because we believe that a set service is man-made and liable to become mechanical. But in rejecting the formal style of worship we are attempting something incredibly difficult.

What we are saying is nothing less than this: ‘We propose to meet in silence to meet God. And we will continue in silence until the spirit of God speaks to us through the spirit of one of our members.’ It is an extraordinary idea, which would be presumptuous if it were not that, for three hundred years, in Meeting Houses in all parts of the world, it has succeeded.

It can only succeed however if we are faithful to the intention. We must wait in silence until God prompts us to speak. How do we know when that time comes? Different people receive different promptings, but always the whole personality of the speaker is affected – not only his mind. It is not enough for him to think ‘Ah, that’s a good idea, I must share it with others.’ He must be moved to speak. That is, his spirit and feelings must also be touched. He must be totally involved.

This feeling is usually accompanied by a physical disturbance – a hand trembles or the heart knocks insistently. At least, something more happens other than cerebral excitement and is more than cerebral interest. It is compulsive, demanding action before the speaker can be calm again.

And how can we be sure that what we say is what God wants us to say? Only by being sure that what we say comes from a gathered meeting. We must come with heart and mind prepared to worship God, and when that spirit comes to each of us and links us to the rest. Then, perhaps, out of that spirit of communal worship, may come the prompting to communal expression, and one member speaks for all.

His words are then taken into the pool of thought and the experience deepens. Another may be led to speak, and another, but each seems to be expressing the feeling of the meeting as a whole. The feeling is continuous and organic.

How is it possible for such a process to occur if we take into the meeting a ‘message’ already prepared – a pleasant thought that occurred to us during the week, the idea of an anniversary, a snippet from a book, and so on? The determined expression of these personal anecdotes makes it certain that the meeting can never be a completely gathered one. We hug them to ourselves at the cost of unity. To speak more strongly still but nevertheless with the truth, we are making our individual titbit a retaining wall against the invading spirit of God. Until we surrender it the meeting cannot be gathered, and the spirit cannot take possession.

Many messages that are received would have been excellent at school assemblies, political meetings and mothers’ meetings, but either do not belong to a meeting for worship, or do not belong that that particular meeting for worship. They have been imported into it: they have not grown from it.

It is an instance of 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that built it'.

No talk, however worthy in intention or beautiful in language, is of the slightest value to a meeting for worship unless it comes from the gathered heart of the meeting. It must be spontaneous, or we might as well close our Meeting Houses and join one of the other denominations.

Now it may be argued that this makes it difficult for those Friends who are not fluent speakers. There is some truth in this, and perhaps it behoves those of us who start by being halting speakers to attend classes that will give us more confidence – on the principle of running the goods train over the lines to keep them open for the express when it comes along.

But this is not essential. There can be complete unity of worship without a single word being said. I have known a few such meetings and shall never forget them. It was their silence, not their words that was memorable. And even a short sentence spoken nervously at the spirit's prompting is better than a well phrased five-minute talk prepared beforehand. I remember one such sentence and its power is with me as I write.

It is time that we reminded ourselves that the uniqueness of Quakerism does not lie in its pacifism, or in its concerns with social reform, education, mental health and international affairs. It lies in its capacity for spontaneous worship, and for the spontaneous expression of that worship.

Heart and mind prepared? By all means. Let us nourish them both as far as possible, seven days a week. But let us also forget them sometimes. Let us surrender them in meeting to the greater Heart, the greater Mind, until He tell them to speak.” Judy Clinton

## **Walking in Gloucestershire**

The 'Cotswold Way' walking group have now finished the 104 miles from Chipping Camden to Bath. Most of the members have indicated that they would like to continue their 'ramblings'. The Gloucestershire Way which traverses the county in a roughly East/West direction seems to be a possible project.

The walks are held on Saturdays – usually fortnightly in April, May, June, July, September and October, and monthly in November, December, January, February and March. Each walk, of approximately six miles, is at a comfortable pace, although inevitably there are some hills – it is Gloucestershire!

If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Richard Lacock.

Richard Lacock

## **Video Collection**

We have a collection of videos illustrating the Spiritual Journeys of ten different people. These were shown several years ago at the Meeting House and are available still for Friends to borrow. They are in the cupboard under the TV in the Tea Room. I think many are unaware of their existence. They were made for HTV and given to us by Jonathan Stedall whose inspiration produced them. (They last 40 minutes each).

Rosemary Hoggett