

CHELTENHAM QUAKER

JUNE 2012

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Are on Sundays at 10.30 at Cheltenham Meeting House. There is usually a shared lunch on each fifth Sunday. Children are always welcome in our Sunday meetings for worship. If during the hour parents feel it is appropriate they can go with them to the children's room, where they will be joined by one of the children's meeting volunteers.

DIARY (All of these meetings are at the Meeting House unless otherwise stated)

June

Sunday	3	11.45am	Local Meeting for Worship for Business
Wednesday	6	2.30pm	Peace Group
Saturday	9	2pm	Area Meeting for Worship for Business at Cirencester QMH The speaker in the morning (11.30) will be Robert Maxwell
Thursday	14	2.30	Healing Group at Maureen Steffen's
Sunday	17	12 noon	Meeting for Learning see below for details
Saturday	23	10.00am-1.00pm	Area Meeting for Learning see below for details

MEETING FOR LEARNING on Sunday 17 will be a continuation of the consideration of the Britain Yearly Meeting theme "*What it means to be a Quaker today*". A preparation for this is on page 2.

AREA MEETING FOR LEARNING

The next Area Meeting for Learning is "Learning to Live with Dying". This will be held at Gloucester Meeting House on Saturday 23 June from 10am to 1.00pm, facilitated by Su Chard. The cost will be £5 per person. Contact Alison Crane for more details.

JUNE COLLECTION will be for the Rendezvous Society. This charity, now known as Global Footsteps, was founded by our Friend Dennis Mitchell and others in the 1980s, and has always had the support of local Quakers. The vision is "Grassroots action for a connected world". It encourages and facilitates connections between community groups around the world, mainly through visits and conferences. It has always had environmental issues and sustainability at its heart, and is currently undergoing an eco-refurbishment at its headquarters, 16 Portland St, just across the road from the Meeting House. This will showcase renewable technologies and the latest standards in insulation and low-energy lighting. The building is used as a fair trade shop and cafe, and as well as educating customers about the work of the charity, it acts as a resource centre and meeting place for other like-minded local groups and individuals. Donations in this expensive year will be particularly welcome.

The web address is: <http://global-footsteps.org/>

Money given to the charity through the Meeting does not attract Gift Aid, while money sent directly does.

Items for inclusion in the next newsletter should be sent to the editorial email address newsletter@cheltenhamquaker.org.uk or by post to the editor Janet Weyers by

Monday 18 June at the latest

PREPARATION FOR MEETING FOR LEARNING

What it means to be a Quaker today

From the BYM introduction

We are a faith without a creed: that is, there is no requirement to accept specific beliefs in becoming a Quaker. And yet there are those things which bind and unite us, both in belief (that we all have access to the Inward Teacher, for example) and in the practice of our faith (the meeting for Worship and our business method, to name but two). Within our religious community we recognize a wide range of seekers representing a considerable diversity of religious backgrounds and spiritual beliefs. Our willingness to embrace that diversity is part of what creates a strong spiritual community. Yet it also presents us with the challenge to discern what it means to be a Quaker today.

How do we nurture those things which bind us while at the same time celebrate our differences?

Three questions came out most strongly at the May meeting, but many other important things were said. We have set aside the June and July meetings for consideration of these issues, but we can extend it on into the autumn if Friends wish.

The questions we hope to consider first are:

- 1) "What do we consider future Quakerism will look like? What do we want it to be? How will we get there?"
- 2) "Is our respect for difference a weakness or a strength? Must we accept all Quaker testimonies and principles? Is Quakerism for our comfort or discomfort? How do we deal with militancy of belief in some Friends? Has our seeking for Truth been diluted?"
- 3) "What does it mean for me to be a Quaker today?" for which we will invite spoken contributions.

NOTES FROM MAY LOCAL MEETING

Nominations: We agreed there should be a new post for the Sunday Duties Compiler, not part of Overseers duties.

We also agreed that the post of Publicity Officer, which has been mainly to contact The Echo with weekly items for their Church News, should be enlarged to be a Press and Publicity Officer, responsible for posters and more general publicity. They would have to work closely with the Area Meeting Press & Publicity Officer.

Library: We approved a budget of up to £200 to be spent on the Library per year. This is in line with what we have spent over the last two years. We also agreed that borrowers should try to return books within four weeks, and that we make the Library available to other users of the Meeting House.

Outreach: We agreed to the Elders' proposal that we have two evening and/or one afternoon meeting to which people might invite friends, neighbours or other interested parties to explore what it means to be a Quaker. The proposed dates are Thursday 4th October and Wednesday 10th October. Refreshments would be offered. Elders invited suggestions for these events, how to include young people, publicity and so on.

Overseers: Tim Howarth, Convenor of Overseers, spoke to us of the priorities of the new group, which will be those in particular need and new attenders, expanding to include others as they can. We approved the change of name from Overseers to Pastoral Care Group.

NOTES FROM MAY AREA MEETING

Membership: We are glad to welcome the transfer to us of Vernon Gibberd from Cape Eastern Regional Meeting, South Africa. He will be attached to Nailsworth LM.

Appointments: We appointed Val Kirby (Nailsworth) as an Elder, Mike Davis (Nailsworth) as a Supporting Friend, and Marilyn Miles (Nailsworth) as a Trustee for Nailsworth LM.

Marriage: We appointed a Meeting for Worship for Marriage between Gail Bradbrook and John Fisher, both of Nailsworth Meeting, to be held at Nailsworth Meeting House on 30 June at 12 noon. All Friends are invited to attend.

Supporting Friends Review: Our friend Val Kirby introduced the review of policy and practice relating to Supporting Friends (in respect of new applications for Membership of the Religious Society of Friends). We are asked to consider the review and the two draft leaflets they have prepared at our next Local Meeting.

Reports: We heard reports from Friends who had attended Quaker Life Representative Council, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Conference and a Nontheist Friends Conference. Some of the presentations at these

conferences were taped and will be available on the AM website. We were glad to hear how valuable the experiences were from the Friends who attended, considering such topics as "How we seek and find unity in our Meetings", 'Deepening the life of the Spirit, to become fully whole, fully ourselves' and learning what it is like to be a part of the EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel).

We also heard from our Children and Young People's coordinator that in general children's activities are doing well. Currently teenagers are being targeted through Link weekends, mostly hosted by Gloucester Meeting, and are held twice a year. Following the most recent Link meeting the group has asked if meetings could also be held at other Friends Meeting Houses, so we may see them one weekend at Cheltenham. The young people sent us a heart warming Minute of their recent activities.

Next Area Meeting will be held on Saturday 9 June at 2pm at Cirencester QMH. We hope to have Robert Maxwell to speak on his recent experience of attending the World Conference of Friends in Kenya in the morning.

MEETING FOR WORSHIP AT GLOUCESTER PRISON

Since Christmas Elyn Mitchell and I have been helping to facilitate Meetings for Worship at Gloucester HMP. Mary Brown, the current Quaker chaplain, is now laying down this position following major surgery. I am hoping to continue her work if my teaching allows.

Each visit I have made has been different, thought-provoking and always worthwhile. We have a very positive response with around 12 attending and as many as half returning, in what is a local prison with a transient intake. Those attending value the silence and the discussion time afterwards over tea and biscuits; they also mention the opportunity to talk with others outside the prison regime and being respected for who they are.

Elyn and I currently have a depleted rota of Friends who come in on an occasional basis to support our meetings. We urgently need more Friends to join us, to ease the commitment of those currently helping out and to ensure this outreach is able to continue.

Currently we visit on Monday afternoons from 2- 3.30 but this is likely to move to Tuesday afternoons by September. If you feel you can support us in this work or would like more information, please email me.

Judith Roles

FROM THE LIBRARIANS

A Review of 'I Shall Not Hate' by Izzeldin Abuelaish (Shelf mark: B58)

The author, a Palestinian born in 1955, lived with his family in the Gaza Strip and experienced many of the effects of events in recent Israeli-Palestinian history. This moving and inspiring autobiography was written after the tragic death of three of his daughters and a niece when his house was deliberately shelled during the Israeli incursion into Gaza in 2009. He describes how normal daily life for Palestinians is a constant struggle, enduring hindrances, harassments and injustices arising from an Israeli administration. Yet Izzeldin Abuelaish possesses an unquenchable spirit of hope for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, which he says needs to be built on individual acts of forgiveness and kindness. He is truly a man of peace, and even after losing family members in such awful circumstances, he is determined that 'he will not hate' but will continue to work for peace and reconciliation.

Both of us have read this book and warmly recommend it.

Missing Books

The following books are missing from the Library. If anybody knows what has become of these would they please let us know. Thank you.

The Word of God by Keith Ward. Catalogue No: BS32

The Moneyless Man by Mark Boyle. Catalogue No: S143

More Daily Wisdom, 365 Buddhist Sayings Ed by Josh Bartok. Catalogue No: SP59

The Wisdom to Know the Difference by Eileen Flanagan. Catalogue No: SP62

Nancy and Alan Sentance