

CHELTENHAM QUAKER

DECEMBER 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)

December

Sunday	2	12 noon	Local Meeting for Worship for Business
Sunday	9	1.00pm	Area Meeting for Worship for Business at Painswick QMH
Monday	17	2.30pm	Healing Meeting at Maureen Steffen's new house
Sunday	16	12 noon	Meeting for Learning

January 2013

Wednesday	9	2.00pm	Meeting of Elders
Wednesday	9	2.00pm	Meeting of Premises Committee
Thursday	24	6.00pm	Pastoral Friends Social Evening see below

Request from pastoral Care Group: A particular responsibility of Pastoral Friends is to support all those in Meeting who wish to be supported. To help us do this, if you expect to be away from Sunday Meeting for some weeks, please would you let a Pastoral Friend know, so that we are not unnecessarily concerned. Thank you.

GLOUCESTER MEETING are currently holding their Meetings for Worship at 2.15pm on Sundays at Park Street Mission, 17 Park Lane, Gloucester GL1 2DA. They hope to be back having Meetings for Worship in Gloucester Meeting House very soon, but will not be able to use the full Meeting House for at least two months.

DECEMBER COLLECTION is for SAFE!, an innovative project that offers tailored individual support to young people in Oxfordshire, from ages eight to 25, who are finding it difficult to recover and move on following a crime. They say "Although most referrals to *SAFE!* come via the Police or Victim Support and ask for support for young people harmed by crime, we know that many young people who offend are also victims themselves. We often find ourselves working with both parties, sometimes bringing them together in a restorative meeting. Our wonderful Project Coordinator, Martha Beale, is a Quaker who previously worked for LEAP Confronting Conflict, with a local family mediation service in Oxford and with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. We offer up to 6 sessions of individualised one-to-one support to a young person to help them recover their confidence and sense of safety. The crimes range from witnessing domestic violence to robbery and hate crime, although the large majority of referrals to the project are for sexual and violent offences. The young people typically feel unsafe in their key environments; their school, town and neighbourhood, and some have become virtual prisoners in their homes". More information can be found at www.safeproject.org.uk and donations can be sent to SAFE!, 4640 Kingsgate, Cascade Way, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford, OX4 2SU. Friends who are taxpayers are encouraged to send donations directly to the charity, using Gift Aid or a charity voucher (CAF, Charities Trust, etc), possibly adding a note to say that they belong to Cheltenham Quaker Meeting.

NOTE TO DOORKEEPERS

The basket (and label) for the charity collection is kept with the earphones in the store-room. Please put it out on the table by the door. If it is the first Sunday of the month please change the label. New labels are in an envelope in the same storage box and show the appropriate month for their display. Lydia or June will be able to help if necessary.

June Drummond

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

Monday 17 December at the latest

NOTES FROM NOVEMBER LOCAL MEETING

News of Friends: The testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Olive Betterton was, with two amendments, sent on to the Area Meeting. Here it was read out and it was agreed to forward it on to Friends House.

Appointments: It was agreed to appoint Jane Brighton to the Children's Committee.

How Does the Truth Prosper in Cheltenham Meeting? The report on this was sent to Area Meeting, and after it had been read out, was accepted as a thoughtful contribution. It will be published in part in the next Area Meeting Newsletter.

The report consists of two parts – contributions from committees and officers in the Meeting, and statements of individual spiritual journeys. We heard that Overseers are now renamed Pastoral Friends, and are working in pairs or trios to give support to Friends who need it; that the Supporting Friend in our Meeting had helped five applicants for Membership; that the Treasurer now oversees a more ethical and transparent system and that 95% of the positions in the Meeting have been filled by recommendations from Nominations Committee.

NOTES FROM NOVEMBER AREA MEETING

Nominations and Appointments: We released Ann Caro from her service as Elder with immediate effect.

Quaker Prison Chaplain: Judy Roles has now been officially accepted on the prison chaplain team at Gloucester prison. She hopes to be a distinctive Quaker voice and as far as possible, support staff as well as inmates. Judy holds a Meeting for Worship on Tuesdays at the prison and would welcome two or three more Friends to help support her work. It would mean attendance at the prison from 1.40pm to about 4.00pm once every six weeks.

Children and Young People's Work in Gloucestershire: Fiona Meadley reported on the activities of the young people connected to our Meeting. These included taking part in the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage in 1652 country, visiting the Quaker Tapestry exhibition at Kendal and climbing Pendle Hill; and a youthwork conference at Woodbrooke. There has also been a training day for the adults working with the children in our Meetings.

Does our Meeting House have a ministry? We were asked to consider whether the way we use our Meeting Houses made best use of what they have to offer to the outside community. For example, Nailsworth MH considers that it is able to provide the service of a peaceful space for outsiders. We own all the Meeting Houses in the Area Meeting and are therefore co-responsible for them. Gloucester Meeting is refurbishing its Meeting House after the damage which was done to it recently, and is considering if this could be an opportunity to rearrange the space for more, or a different, community use.

SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE DAY

Elders are planning a day at the ASHA Centre in the Forest of Dean on **April 20, 2013**. Details of the programme are still to be worked out and suggestions are invited. There is one Meeting room and several smaller rooms plus an eco-lodge in the garden which we can use and they will cater lunch in the dining-room for us and provide refreshments. The food is sourced from their biodynamic garden or other local sources. Cost £28 per person. Details of the Centre can be found at www.ashacentre.org.

DUTIES ROTA

Following Nan Dower's move to Dorset I've been asked to produce the Doorkeeping, Flowers and Tea rota. It occurs to me that now would be a good time to update it and if anyone would like to be included on the rota, please let me know your choice(s) and the best time for you. Don't be shy, I look forward to your call.

Bill Rowland

Please see last page for the duty rota from December – ed

PASTORAL FRIENDS SOCIAL EVENING

The month of January can be quite long and wintry for some, so I am thinking of having a sort of "encouragement" evening, where Friends and others are invited to come along and share food - both physical, in the form of soup, and spiritual, in the form of some short writing from which we may derive some hope and faith for the future. As this is a "taster", so to speak, the Pastoral Friends would like to invite anyone who feels they would like to share with them. This will be on **Thursday 24 January** from 6.00pm.

Jo Joy

WHY AM I A QUAKER?

The text of Richard Lacock's presentation at our Evening Public Meeting on 4 October 2012

People often describe themselves as being on a Spiritual Journey. Being a Quaker is part of my Spiritual Journey. Of course, our journeys are personal and different, and they are conditioned in part by the circumstances of our lives – the culture associated with the where and when. And the way we attempt to interpret our experiences is also affected by the circumstances.

I was brought up in a small village on the edge of Dartmoor. None of our cottages had water, let alone gas or electricity, but we had a small village church. From the age of fourteen to eighteen I attended the church twice every Sunday for Matins and Evensong, whatever the weather - not through religious fervour, but because I was paid. You see, I pumped the organ! However, I was beginning to question things. For example, in every service we sang part of the psalms – completing the book each year. And I remember even now how I would be there pumping away, singing things like 'Moab is my washpot,' and thinking 'What the heck is that all about?'

National Service and University followed with even more questions. At twenty five I married. My wife had a Baptist background, but we were of a similar mind. We were not wedded to any particular church. We began to attend the church where we felt at home. It might be the parish church. It might not. Move onto 1977 – we arrived in Cheltenham. Previously we had attended a small parish church, so we started at our new parish church, but we could not settle. We tried another and another. In the end we tried six parish churches, a Baptist Church, a Methodist and a United Reformed. After some ten to twelve years we were getting nowhere. All were kind and made us welcome, but something was missing.

We then tried this Quaker Meeting. It was certainly different – but interesting. We came again. Gradually we learned more about the nature of Quakerism. The rest is history and here I am - a Quaker.

We live in a time of enormous uncertainty. There is religious, political, social, economic and environmental uncertainty – one could go on. Many people are trying to make sense of it all and have left the traditional ways and are seeking other spiritual paths.

I am reminded that the seventeenth century was also a time of great uncertainty – an age of religious unrest, civil war, political, social and economic unrest, plague and fire. A world turned upside down. Many then were also trying to make sense of things and find a new path. They were called Seekers. One of them was a young man who travelled the country in his search. He tried the Church of England - No! He tried what were then called dissenting churches. He even tried army garrisons where new religious ideas circulated. All to no avail! After four years of searching he was in despair. In 1647 he wrote in his journal 'When all my hope in them and all men had gone, so that outwardly I had nothing to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, O then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.' And so, with others, who had experiences similar to George Fox, Quakerism was born. My slow awareness cannot be compared with the mystic experience of Fox – yet, in a way, there is something in common.

It is in the life and teaching of Jesus that I begin to see the spirit of Ultimate Truth in a human form. With that simple statement I may claim to be a Christian – but an agnostic Christian. While I respect those who believe in the Virgin Mary, the Trinity, the death of Jesus as a necessary sacrifice for our sins and so many other dogmatic teachings, I cannot subscribe to them. I just don't know. I am 'agnostic'. I can only speak from my own experience, which leads me to feel that in the uncertainty of the world and the uncertainty in my personal life I need something firm to hold on to. For me that rock is Jesus – and about everything else I strive to keep an open mind. In Quakerism, which is rooted in Christianity, I can do that. There is no creed, there is little ritual, there is no hierarchy – we are all pastors, and decisions are made not by vote but by seeking divine guidance.

The spiritual quest is an inward journey. Jesus often explained that his kingdom was not of this world but within each person – but we live in the real world, and our outward should be an expression of the inward, something which is always easier said than done. The importance of that inward is manifest in our silent worship, in which we open our hearts to God and await the guidance of the Spirit.

LIBRARY NEWS

The library offers for Christmas holiday reading a handful of new books.

- (a) 3 copies of Richard Rohr's '*Preparing for Christmas*', a little book of daily meditations for Advent.
- (b) '*Everything Belongs*'. (SP69). Richard Rohr offers a personal retreat for those who hunger for a deeper spiritual life but don't know what contemplation is.
- (c) '*The Lion's World, a journey into the heart of Narnia*' by Rowan Williams.(R58). Tom Wright (ex Bishop of Durham) comments: 'Reading Rowan Williams on C. S. Lewis is like watching two old friends in animated discussions of great, powerful themes.....Those who have loved Narnia since childhood will here discover fresh and sometimes disturbing depths of meaning and power.'
- (d) Daniel Dennett's '*Breaking the 'Spell'*' (R57). A 'clear-eyed but courteous', and comprehensive discussion of religion as a natural phenomenon; 'a constantly engaging and enjoyable new book'.
- (e) Very much shorter, '*Why we Believe in God(s)*' by J. Anderson Thompson . (R56)
- (f) And for those who love science with lots of pictures, '*The Magic of Reality*' (SI56) by the renowned evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. A superb introduction to up-to-date scientific knowledge for 9-90 year-olds, beautifully illustrated by Dave Mckean.

Alan and Nancy Sentance

QUAKER BOOK CLUB

The next meeting of the "Quaker Book Club" (suggested name for the future: "Quaker Book Review") will be **Wednesday January 30th** at 2.30pm at Margaret Cooper's. It will take the form of a discussion on the proposed format for the coming year.

The change of date is due to an endeavour to accommodate those who cannot make the present arrangement. We have had excellent discussions on our last book *Learning to Fall* by Philip Simmons. It was so enjoyed it was suggested it be recommended for the library. At the January meeting folk are invited to bring suggestions for future book reviews.

David Clayton

CHRISTMAS POEM

What the Donkey Saw

No room in the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host –
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love nor money.



Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

UA Fanthorpe (with permission)

Doorkeeping, Flowers and Teas December 9 to March 31

Date	Doorkeeping	Flowers	Teas
December 9	Elaine Boulter	Margot Roe	Tim Howarth
December 16	June Drummond	Janet Weyers	Philip Paull
December 23	Rowland Carson	Lydia Sutcliffe	Dorothy Carson
December 30	Jo Teakle	Julie Stubbs	Margaret Sheldrick
January 6	Jane Brighton	Mike Lang	Ian Brighton
January 13	Alison Crane	Richard Lacock	Pat Dannahy
January 20	Judith Roles	Elaine Boulter	Evelyn Shaw
January 27	Jack Danes	Elma Detheridge	Brenda Judge
February 3	Julie Stubbs	Sal Drummond	Maureen Steffen
February 10	Tim Howarth	Iris Terrell	Margot Roe
February 17	Ann Caro	Pat Dannahy	Jo Teakle
February 24	Sal Drummond	June Drummond	Nina Odescalchi
March 3	Philip Paull	Cathy Rollo	Bill Rowland
March 10	Richard Lacock	Jill Vyle	Chris Vyle
March 17	Dorothy Carson	Janet Weyers	Rowland Carson
March 24	Maureen Steffen	Lydia Sutcliffe	Mary Neville
March 31	Pat Dannahy	Jane Brighton	Margaret Sheldrick

If a date is not convenient to you please arrange to swap with someone else on the list or contact Bill Rowland.

Doorkeepers you will need to arrive just after 10 am. Please read the list of instructions which is in the wooden rack on the wall by the door into the garden.

Teamakers Please bring milk and biscuits, you will need 2 pints of milk. Lay out cups and saucers and preheat the water before Meeting. Please take your expenses from the dish for contributions. It might be a good idea to ask a friend to help you.

If, in doing the 'teas' you spot anything in need of repair or replacement in the kitchen please contact a member of the Premises Committee.