

CHELTENHAM QUAKER

MAY 2013

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)

April			
Wednesday	24	2.30pm	Quaker Book Club at Margaret Cooper's see below for details
Wednesday	24	3.15	Funeral of Bill Madams at Cheltenham Crematorium
Monday	29	7.30pm	Meeting of Liaison Group
May			
Sunday	5	12 noon	Local Meeting for Worship for Business
Wednesday	8	2.30pm	Premises Committee
Sunday	12	1.30pm	Area Meeting for Worship for Business see below for details
Thursday	16	7.30	Pastoral Friends meet at Nina Odescalchi's
Sunday	19	12 noon	Meeting for Learning see below for details
Friday	24	Until Monday 27 May	Yearly Meeting at Friends House, London see below
Wednesday	29	2.30	Quaker Book Club at Margaret Cooper's

Area Meeting for Worship for Business will be held at Newnham WI Hut at 1.30pm following Meeting for Worship at 11am (hosted by Forest of Dean Meeting)

Meeting for Learning: Elders are discontinuing the Meetings for Learning on "Why I am a Quaker" for the time being, but they would like to have the names of Friends who have not already spoken but would be willing to do so, or names of other Friends who you would like to hear, for a future date. Meeting for Learning in May will be a follow on from the Spiritual Adventure Day held at the ASHA Centre on 20 April.

MAY COLLECTION is for Quaker Voluntary Action - QVA. This charity was set up in 1999 to promote and support Quaker volunteering. Quakers have a long history of organising workcamps, and other ways of putting faith into action. QVA offers support to Meetings or groups within Meetings who wish to act out their concerns. It also organises weekend, midweek and week long retreats in Britain and abroad which offer a balance of practical work with time for spiritual reflection.

You can help QVA in different ways: by volunteering on a project; volunteering for the organisation in the office; by offering your computing, fundraising or other skills; or by making a donation to QVA, 1 Holt Lane, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, HD9 3BW. Website: www.qva.org

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.

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.

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 21 May at the latest

Web address: http://www.cheltenhamquaker.org.uk/current_cq.pdf

BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING will be held from 24-27 May at Friends House, London. We can look at the *Documents in Advance* in the Clerk's folder in the library or by following the link at www.quaker.org.uk/ym. No booking is required for YM sessions. If you are a member you can just come along and if you are an attender you should ask for an elder to send a letter of recommendation (See *Quaker faith & practice* 6.15).

What's on the agenda: The two main themes this year are feeding in to our wider consideration of 'What it means to be a Quaker today':

1. 'Trust in the Spirit'

This session will explore some of the tensions of being part of a community with a shared discipline, how we draw the strength to trust decisions which we might personally not be comfortable with and how we help others who feel challenged by this discipline.

2. 'Trust in trusteeship'

We hope in this session to explore what it means to be a Quaker trustee and how it may differ from service as a trustee in the broader community. How do we maintain our Quaker values and keep a clear sense of the spiritual basis underpinning our work? Fuller explanations are in *Documents in Advance*.

We can see how others are responding to the questions asked as spiritual preparation and add our own contributions by visiting <http://quaker.boards.net/boards/8/truth-prosper> website.

NOTES FROM APRIL LOCAL MEETING

Change of name for Clerks: Our Clerks are at present designated as "Clerk" and "Assistant Clerk". We have decided that both should henceforth be designated as "Co-clerks". This will remove the idea of hierarchy from the name of their relationship, and allow both of them to bring items, to guide the discernment, to read the sense of the Meeting, to make notes, and to draft minutes. Our Nominations Committee Clerk will make the change to the records.

Trustees' Report: Bill Rowland recently attended a Trustees' Conference at Woodbrooke, and each representative was invited to bring a copy of their Area Report; Gloucestershire Area Meeting was congratulated on theirs: the clarity and ease with which it could be read; he encourages Friends to read the most recent Trustees' report, which is available with April Area Meeting Draft Agenda. Meeting wishes to thank and acknowledge the work Trustees do on our behalf, and in particular the contribution of our Convenor.

Payment to BYM: We agreed that our Treasurer should make a payment of £6,000 to BYM on our behalf.

NOTES FROM APRIL AREA MEETING

News of Friends: We are sad to record the deaths of Bill Madams (Cheltenham) and Mary Perkins (Nailsworth)

Membership: We welcome Sal Drummond (Cheltenham) and Debbie Hewitt (Painswick) into membership. We agreed the transfer in of membership of Rebecca Stapleford (now warden of Nailsworth Meeting) from North East Thames Area Meeting.

Exhibition of the work of the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service in World War 1 and 2. Gloucester Cathedral will be having this exhibition for about a week in the spring of 2014 to coincide with other events round the WW1 centenary. It is hoped it will also be staged in other parts of the county, maybe in Cheltenham Meeting House.

Reports: Pat Dannahy reported on her recent visit to Israel and Palestine and her attendance at the "Working Through Difference" Conference. The text of these reports can be found in the Clerk's folder in the library, and throw an important light on the work of one Friend in our Meeting.

The report on Strengthening Area Meeting is also available and we are all encouraged to read it.

REQUEST FOR A POTENTIAL NEW GROUP

"Know one another in that which is eternal" George Fox (QF&P 2.35)

Dear Friends

Would anyone be interested in forming a very unstructured and loosely knit group to help support those on the spiritual journey? It would be helpful if we could share our insights and what readings we find helpful. Do we set aside a short period each day to "centre down"? Do we find readings or dreams trigger "openings"? Do we keep a record of our understandings?

I think not only would the group be mutually supportive but it could provide direction for those who wish to develop an internal relationship with God.

"The task of the disciple is to be silent and listen"

"Meditation is our work, contemplation is God's work"

If you are interested, please ring me on 703166.

Margaret Johnson

THE QUAKER BOOK CLUB

The Quaker Book Club is looking at the book by Joan Chittister, "Happiness", and as usual we shall be meeting at Margaret Cooper's at 2.30pm on Wednesday April 24th. A very warm welcome to all.

David Clayton

WHY AM I A QUAKER?

The text of Judy Roles' presentation at our Quaker Week Public Meeting in October 2012

I remember being curious in my teens about who Quakers were. The first real-life Quakers I met were impressive elderly ladies, striding out on the fells above Grasmere. What impressed me was their energy for life and their openness to others. Their example intrigued me further. So when I moved to London in my 20s, I sought out my local meeting in Muswell Hill and was welcomed by the lively community there and experienced Quaker worship for the first time. I learned much from these Friends, who were actively living out their faith in the Leavers Performing Arts group, supporting Quaker Housing projects in East London, and teaching at the Quaker School in Ramallah, Palestine.

Settling back in Cheltenham where I grew up, I attended this Meeting while my sons were young, helping to run a programme for the active children's meeting we had then. We also experienced four or five of the annual Quaker summer camps (what a wonderful way to create a community & live out the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, truth, equality and peace, at least for a week!) But it was difficult to get to Meeting regularly during those years, living as we do a distance from Cheltenham, and with pressures on weekend family time and teenagers' activities. I also added to life's busy-ness by training as a teacher and working in my first post. When these pressures gradually began easing, I finally felt able to make the commitment I would have liked to make years ago – to apply for membership. In taking this step I felt a strong sense of finally 'coming home.'

I first heard this Quaker phrase used by the BBC Religious Affairs correspondent, Gerald Priestland. He spoke of our spiritual journeys through life being like climbing a mountain, with fleeting glimpses of the peak through the mist and clouds. And importantly for me, he spoke of choosing and changing paths as we journey up that mountain. So when I reflect on why it has taken me such a long time to arrive where I am now, I have to gently remind myself of the scenic route I have taken. Along the way I have experienced God in Catholic cathedrals, large evangelical Greenbelt gatherings, small house groups, the daily office of a Franciscan monastery, in synagogues and the cycle of the Anglican church year. I feel enriched by these experiences and by their community of worshippers. Yet I find the simplicity of Quaker worship is where I am able to draw closest to God. Meeting God in the stillness, listening, seeking, submitting, without words, without prescribed structures. Quaker worship refreshes me in a powerful and sustaining way.

The simplicity of Quaker worship invites all to participate and seeks to be open and respectful of all contributions. I have found this to be true whether worship is among a close community of Friends or whether it includes visitors from other religious traditions or faiths. I once took a Buddhist friend to Meeting at Nailsworth at a particularly difficult time of bereavement for the meeting and her ministry of poetry was powerful and consoling. It can also be true of worship including those of no faith at all. As recently as yesterday I shared a Meeting for Worship with inmates at Gloucester Prison, where I and other local Quakers go weekly to give an opportunity for silence and stillness in a noisy and dehumanising environment. Along to our 30 minute meeting came seven men including three for whom it was their first experience of a Quaker meeting. After lots of initial questions and explanations, we began to settle down and find our way to that place of peace and calm, where we can all be open to those around us and open to the prompting of the light, the living spirit, 'that of God in everyone'. The spoken ministry which followed included insights by two inmates on passages from the gospels of Matthew and John about the worship of money and Jesus as the light of the world, and discussion afterwards about whether creation was as a divine plan. It was a privilege to be there.

So what I experience in the simplicity of Quaker worship is always unique, always authentic because it is rooted in the worshippers' own experiences, and it brings joy and spiritual nourishment from the revelation of God's spirit at work and living among us. Simplicity is something all Quakers value, past and present. It is one of the testimonies that Quakers share and try to live out in their lives as faith in action. George Fox writing in 1656 reminds us today to 'be patterns and examples in all places wherever you go, that you and the way you live may speak to others. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, responding to that of God in everyone you meet.' These words speak to me as I journey along the path heading further up that mountain, joyful to be here and excited about what lies ahead.

Judy Roles October 2012