

CHELTHENHAM QUAKER

OCTOBER 2015

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. On second and fourth Sundays children can go to the children's room where they will be joined by two of the Children's Meeting volunteers.

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

September			
Friday	25	10.30am	Coffee Morning at Footsteps Café see below
Sunday	27	morning	Sale of Fair Trade Products
Sunday	27	morning	Food Bank Collection
Sunday	27	noon	Fourth Sunday Worship Sharing
October			
Friday	2	10.00am	Meeting of Elders
Sunday	4	11.50am	Local Meeting for Worship for Business
Friday	9	10.30am	Coffee Morning at Footsteps Café see below
Sunday	11	1.30pm	Area Meeting for Worship for Business at Nailsworth FMH
Monday	12	7.30pm	Cheltenham Interfaith Meeting – Christians and Muslims in Dialogue
Saturday	17	11.00am	Global Walk for Freedom see page 3
Sunday	18	noon	Local Meeting for Learning – History of Quakers, Aspects of Slavery
Monday	19	One week	Quaker Week - exhibition of panels see page 2
Wednesday	21	tba	Quaker Week film see page 2
Sunday	25	morning	Food Bank collection
Sunday	25	morning	Sale of Fair Trade Products
Sunday	25	noon	Fourth Sunday Worship Sharing
Friday	30	10.30am	Coffee Morning at Footsteps Café see below

Footsteps Café: (just down from the Meeting House) We meet on second and last Fridays of the month from 10.30am for a sociable get together. Everyone welcome.

Meeting for Learning Sunday 18 October led by Jo Teakle on *Aspects of Slavery*

Cheltenham Interfaith Meeting on Monday 12 October – Christians and Muslims in Dialogue – talk given by Canon Christopher Lamb who is Canon Theologian of Coventry Cathedral and author of several books including *Reconciling People* – the story of Coventry Cathedral.

OCTOBER COLLECTION is for the Quaker Tapestry. This inspired project detailing something of the Quaker story and beliefs was started in 1981 and declared finished after 77 tapestries were made. However, its popularity means that Quaker Meetings all round the world, as well as the UK, have gone on to make their own. The original tapestries are housed in an exhibition centre in Kendal, open to the public, and also lent to Meetings and others. This is an excellent form of outreach, interesting embroiderers, historians, schools as well as Quakers and those of other religious traditions. Half their funding comes from admission fees, the gift shop and the café, but they rely on donations to keep the project going. Donations can be made via the website www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk or by post to Quaker Tapestry Ltd, Friends Meeting House, Stramongate, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4BH. 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.

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 19 October at the latest

Web address: <http://www.cheltenhamquaker.org.uk/newsletters.php>

NOTES ON SEPTEMBER LOCAL MEETING

The main points are below. Full minutes for this and for AM can now be found in the pigeonholes in the lobby
New Attenders Meeting Elders hope to arrange a meeting for new attenders to our Meeting for Worship – see the sign-up sheet or speak to an Elder.

Fifth Sunday 29 November 2015 The semi-programmed Meeting for Worship will be on the theme *Objections to War*, which Jane Mace has agreed to speak on after the Meeting for Worship. Alison Crane will invite Alex Chalk, MP for Cheltenham to attend MfW and the talk.

Spiritual Adventure Day 2016 Our preferred tutor for this day is Ginny Wall, a Woodbrooke-on-the Road tutor. She is unable to come on 11 June, our provisional date, so we agreed to invite her for **Saturday 23 April 2016**. Her focus will be *Deepening the Life of the Spirit, Exploring Spiritual Practice*, adapted to include spiritual practices from other religious traditions. Cost is expected to be £35 per person including lunch.

Peace Messengers Report: please see Dorothy's and Judy's articles below.

Quaker Week this was discussed - please see below for an update

Thanks go to David Clayton for looking after the garden this summer, although he no longer attends MfW. We agreed to send him a garden token for £25.

NOTES ON SEPTEMBER AREA MEETING

News of Friends: We recorded the death of Winifred Page of Nailsworth Meeting on 12 July 2015 at the age of 94, and of Olive Ethel Patterson of Cirencester Meeting 2013, whose ashes were scattered in the garden of Cirencester Meeting on 6 September.

We agreed to appoint a Meeting for Marriage between Janet Goldie Laurie Daisley and Anne Wills both of Nailsworth Meeting on 26 September at 3pm in Nailsworth Friends Meeting House.

Appointments: We agreed to appoint Nick Peters of Gloucester Meeting to serve as Overseer/Pastoral Friend and to appoint Joy Heaven of Cheltenham as Elder, both for the rest of the Triennium.

We agreed to Eliot Walker's request to be released from his role as AM website co-ordinator, with appreciation for his service. We ask AM Nominations to clarify the role of website coordinator and bring to AM the names of one, or possibly two Friends to undertake this from January 2016.

Peace Group now have a Facebook account <https://www.facebook.com/gloucestershirequakers> and encourage Friends to use it and send contributions or news to its manager, Alison Crane.

DONATIONS AND COLLECTIONS

At **October LM** we will be choosing three or four Quaker Charities to receive donations of about £300 each from Meeting Funds. Last year our donations went to Brummana High School, Lebanon; Friends House Bursary Trust; Circles of Support UK; and Leap (conflict management).

At **November LM** we will be considering the charities to be included in our 4-year cycle of 'basket' collections. These are usually smaller charities of either local and/or of special interest to one or more of our members. They do not have to be Quaker charities but they must have charitable status.

Please let Lydia Sutcliffe or me have your suggestions for any charities you would like to see included in either type of contribution.

June Drummond

QUAKER WEEK

Following the LM decisions, I have booked the exhibition of panels on the theme of *Beyond Forgiveness* for the week beginning Monday 19 October. I have confirmed the showing of the film *Post Apartheid - Being Forgiving* for Wednesday 21 October in the evening. Howard Grace executive producer of the film, is coming to introduce it and to facilitate discussion. After the film there will be refreshments.

Ann Caro has booked the Meeting House for the afternoon and evening of both Wednesday 21st and Thursday 22nd. The idea is that the exhibition can be open to the public during the Wednesday afternoon before the showing of the film. If we can arrange stewards, it can be open on Thursday afternoon and evening as well. During the rest of the week, we can encourage room hirers to take a look.

We hope to invite other churches and faith groups.

Alison Crane

From Quaker Faith & Practice 2.66

Ministry is what is on one's soul, and it can be in direct contradiction to what is on one's mind. It's what the Inner Light gently pushes you toward or suddenly dumps in your lap.

Marriane McMullen, 1987

PEACE EXHIBITION AND PROGRAMMED MEETING FOR WORSHIP AT HMP LONG LARTIN

August 2015

The exhibition about African Peace-builders, *This light that pushes me* has been showing in the prison chapel throughout August. A Notice to Staff went out and we publicised it on all the corridor and wing notice-boards. Up to 100 men daily as well as staff, have had the opportunity to view the 20 photographic panels during the coffee and tea breaks held in the chapel for those attending education, plus those attending Christian study groups and worship. We also made the exhibition the focus for Sunday Worship on 23 August when we held a programmed Meeting for Worship which incorporated the testimonies of two of the peace-builders, four songs, a Bible reading and about 15 minutes of quiet with short reflections from some of the others featured in the exhibition.

It all began because there was a Sunday slot that none of the regular chaplains could cover and so they asked the Quakers. For Sarah and I it was an opportunity to create a special event as we didn't feel comfortable trying to provide a free-church style service. I was inspired by Mike Langford, Chaplain at Peterborough prisons who had experimented with a semi-programmed MfW using the exhibition.

We were anxious that the regulars might stay away but in fact 20 men came to each of the two Meetings, a higher number than usual. It was heartening to begin by enlarging the circle to make room for more chairs. This was also an opportunity for outreach, since apart from the regulars from our Friday Quaker group, most of those who attended did not have a clear understanding of where Quakers came from and what we stand for. As well as fulsome participation in the songs – they love to sing – I asked five men to read in each service which they all did with a lot of respect and care. Some identified closely with the reflections that I asked them to read and many who attended took away a postcard and a copy of words that spoke to them. The postcards with their messages to the peace-builders are gradually being returned to me for forwarding to Laura Shipler Chico at Friends House, who will mail the messages on to Africa and we have been promised responses!

The quiet time at the centre of our worship was rich from the testimonies and deeply communal. Several commented afterwards how much they had taken from this. Sarah and I were out on the wings the same afternoon and there was a real buzz from those who had attended. We had a lot of positive comment and a few days later a 'petition' from one wing to the Managing Chaplain asking for the Quakers to lead worship again soon.

We have another special event taking place during Prisons Week in November and then perhaps we'll look at holding another exhibition early next year.

Judy Roles

A21 GLOBAL WALK FOR FREEDOM

We have been invited by Gill Sage, PA to the Rector, Cheltenham Minster, to join the Global Walk for Freedom on **Saturday 17 October**. The Senior Minister – Alison Bates – writes:-

"Last year members of my congregation took part in the first ever A21 Global Walk for Freedom to raise awareness of the plight of those caught up in the misery of human trafficking. Since then of course we have seen the problem increase as the unscrupulous take advantage of those distressed by poverty and conflict in their own countries.

The walk was well received especially by the younger section of our community and we intend to repeat the walk this year on Saturday 17 October along with thousands of other people around the world who will be walking for freedom on that day.

This year we would like to invite all the churches of Cheltenham and any interested groups to join us for this walk. It will begin from The Minster at 11am on that day with a time of prayer before walking around the town centre and back to The Minster. We have the support of the Town Centre Manager and Police Officers in this. The walk will be marshalled for everyone's safety, and we will be handing out A21's leaflets to explain the reason for the walk to passers-by.

The walk is visually dramatic as we walk in single file, dressed in black and some had their mouths taped to draw attention to the inability of the oppressed to have their voice heard. It doesn't take a lot of people to make an impact.

If you would like to know more please go to www.A21.org"

At Local Meeting on 6 September we agreed to support this. If you are able to go please sign your name on the A21 sheet on the notice board. I will then contact Gill Sage and let her know approximately how many from Cheltenham Quaker Meeting will be attending.

Dorothy Carson

VJ DAY – A DIALOGUE WITH TUDOR GRIFFITHS, RECTOR OF CHELTENHAM

In mid-July we were notified through ‘Churches in Cheltenham’ of a Civic Service on 15 August at the Minster (St Mary’s) **marking Victory over Japan, which would begin with a celebratory peal rung from the Minster bells.** I struggled with this, and how to respond, for some time. I raised my concern at our Worship Sharing the following 4th Sunday, and, receiving much encouragement, responded:

‘We were dismayed to read your e-mail 16 July in which you talk about ‘celebrating’ VJ day. We appreciate that many soldiers had suffered cruelly at the hands of the Japanese during the war, and that the end of WW2 was at the time a cause of celebration for many. However, with hindsight, should we not also consider the cost to the Japanese people of dropping two atomic bombs? Is it really appropriate to ‘celebrate’ such loss of life and destruction by a peal of bells? Surely instead we should be praying for peace and nuclear disarmament? I hope you may reconsider your plans for commemorating VJ Day.’

Tudor Griffiths responded:

‘.....I am grateful for your reminder that there is always tension in remembering, and I trust that this will be reflected in the service. You are right to draw our attention to the cost of the two atomic bombs that goes alongside the horrendous cost to civilians from so-called conventional weapons.....I do appreciate the witness of the Friends to a pacifist tradition.....’

Rowland and I attended the service and found it a very thoughtful remembrance, particularly of those soldiers who returned from Burma months after the War was over, to no victory celebrations and very little recognition. We heard from the Mayor how Cheltenham had been affected at the time of the war. There was no peal of bells! There was a hymn, ‘Make me a channel of your peace’, a significant period of silence after the Last Post, and in his sermon he mentioned:

‘I have been reminded recently of the suffering of the Japanese people after the dropping the two atomic bombs.’

To my surprise on Monday 17 August Tudor Griffiths had an article in the Gloucestershire Echo, headed ‘Anniversary of war’s end raises as many questions as answers amid memories’ In his article, he says:

‘.....it is important to note that holding a service to commemorate this occasion says nothing about the means by which the war with Japan was brought to a swift end through the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Friends of Cheltenham (Quakers) have written to question whether it is appropriate to have a peal of bells to ‘celebrate’ this occasion. We do well to hear this question and ponder about what we are doing and the implications of our thinking and actions today.’

I responded to Tudor, telling him that his article had been read out at the end of our Meeting for Worship, how we really appreciated how thoughtfully and sincerely he had responded to our concerns, and the hope that we may continue to have a positive dialogue on issues of mutual concern. Tudor responded:

‘Thank you for a most encouraging and heartening message. I was very moved to read this. Most wholeheartedly I would welcome on-going dialogue on issues of mutual concern. There are so many!’

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank Cheltenham Quaker Meeting for spiritually upholding me in doing the two-year Equipping for Ministry course at Woodbrooke and Gloucestershire Area Meeting for financial support. I cannot explain how, but doing this course has somehow given me the ‘courage’ and confidence to gently push at my personal boundaries – this is the first time I have ever written a protest letter!

‘Drop a small stone in a pond and the ripples will spread far and wide’

Dorothy Carson

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES IN CHELTENHAM

We have had a request from Lucie Eden, Project Manager for the Independence Trust, a mental health, drug and alcohol support charity. She is running a project called the Cheltenham Community Mentoring Project which aims to reduce social isolation and provide mentoring for people over 50. They will provide full training. For more information please see the posters in the tearoom, or contact Lucie

NOMINATIONS

On 16 August we held a Meeting for Learning on the topic of Nominations. We looked at how the nominations process for appointment to posts in the Meeting works, the issues facing us at present with fewer people to fill posts, and possible ways forward. About 15 people attended and there was a very positive discussion. This article aims to afford those people unable to attend on 16 August an opportunity to feed in their views too (see form attached below).

Background

Quakers do not have any paid officials or ministers - we rely on our members to serve the meeting. The Nominations Committee is one of several committees appointed by, and answerable to, our Meeting. It nominates individuals for approval and appointment to posts.

We are guided by *Quaker Faith and Practice* 3.22-25. 3.24 l. advises that 'Nominations committees should be required to report from time to time on their thinking and their way of working'. Our Meeting for Learning on 16 August and this article form part of that process. Nominations Committee also met with Elders recently.

There is no secrecy involved in the nominations process and we try to exercise discernment in our deliberations.

We would be upset if it was felt that anyone's name brought before Nominations was not carefully considered.

Quaker Faith and Practice 3.24 reminds us that, *ideally*, the person appointed should be in membership for some posts such as elder, clerk, treasurer. A trustee must be in membership. But most posts can be filled by members or attenders.

If a name being considered is not put forward for nomination, it could be because we felt this person's strengths could be more suitably applied in another post or perhaps they were not sufficiently grounded in Quaker ways for a particular position.

Details about individuals, for example a person's health, home situation or work load which could impact on their ability to undertake a role, are treated in strictest confidence. It is not in a person's best interest, or the Meeting's, to appoint someone to a post if their circumstances would prevent their meeting its requirements.

Like many Meetings, in Cheltenham we have an aging and changing membership. There are fewer family members, for example husband and wife, and more single members, many having to carefully balance time involving Quaker activities and their family life. Whereas formerly we would have about 6/8 members as elders, pastoral friends, and on committees such as Premises, we are now reduced to about half that number, or even less. This increases the workload on a reduced number of people.

Nominations Committee would like to stress that:

- We need the full support of the Meeting to fulfil our function. For example, we need to know immediately when people give up posts.
- Every request for an appointment should come through Nominations. We respond to the Meeting's requests for names to go forward. If Elders, Pastoral Friends or Premises Committee need additional or replacement members they should come to the Nominations Committee which then responds to the request.
- Quakers are not like other organisations where general requests are made for volunteers for certain jobs, or where people put themselves forward for a particular role. It is a religious society not a social group or club. Expressions of willingness to serve are welcome but people should not nominate themselves for a particular role.
- Everything should be done in a spirit of openness – both on the part of Nominations Committee to be open to thinking outside the box regarding people's individual gifts when considering people for particular roles and on the part of Members/Attenders to be open when receiving and considering requests. Discernment needs to be exercised on both sides.
- Posts are opportunities to serve the Meeting and people ideally should give due consideration to a request before accepting or declining. They need to remember too that the final decision is the Meeting's which approves and appoints. Nominations Committee just asks if people are willing to serve.

Current Vacancies

We have around 15 vacancies at present. The following are just some of the posts that need to be filled currently: Gardener, Funeral Friends, Elders, Nominations Committee. We invite people to offer to serve the meeting – please contact a member of the Nominations Committee or an Elder.

NOMINATIONS - POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD

These are suggestions considered at the Meeting for Learning on 16 August 2015. We would welcome your comments and views by the end of September as ways forward are to be on the agenda for Local Meeting in October.

- Normally Friends are asked to serve for the Triennium (3 years). Perhaps we should consider Friends serving for only one or two years. (See *Quaker Faith and Practice* 3.23.)
- Staggering trienniums to give an overlap between those withdrawing and those taking over, so not all changeovers happen at the same time.
- Drawing together/amalgamating some jobs, e.g. all types of correspondent into one post. Some other meetings have a team of Elders/Pastoral Friends. We currently have a Clerk, Co-Clerk and a Clerk for Notices.
- Cutting out non-essential posts – e.g. Woodbrooke correspondent. We must have a Clerk, Elders, Pastoral Friends and a Treasurer, but perhaps some other posts could be dispensed with, or subsumed into the more major roles.
- Job sharing larger or more demanding roles, e.g. Treasurer.
- Calling on the Meeting for help with routine tasks. For example, Premises Committee should feel able to seek help when necessary for jobs like opening the meeting house for the meter to be read etc. We all need to be flexible, willing to step in if able.
- Rely on other meetings – but we are one of the biggest in the area. How would we justify this? We would have to go to Area Meeting to request this. (Currently, for example, if a death in Meeting occurred while Rowland and Dorothy Carson were away, we would need to approach Area Meeting to provide a Funeral Friend.)
- Paying external professionals to undertake certain roles, e.g. Treasurer.

Please let us have your thoughts on these suggestions, preferably by the end of September, by returning the slip below, or by email, to Bill Rowland or Jo Teakle (postal and email addresses in the List of Members and Attenders - green book).

.....

YOUR VIEWS