

CHELTENHAM QUAKER

DECEMBER 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.)

November			
Sunday	22	morning	Sale of Fair Trade Products
Sunday	22	morning	Food Bank Collection
Sunday	22	noon	Fourth Sunday Worship Sharing
Friday	27	10.30am	Coffee Morning at Footsteps Café see below
Sunday	29	10.30am	Fifth Sunday semi programmed Meeting followed by talk see below
December			
Thursday	3	7.30pm	Meeting of Pastoral Friends at Maureen Steffen's house
Sunday	6	11.50am	Local Meeting for Worship for Business
Friday	11	10.30am	Coffee Morning at Footsteps Café see below
Sunday	13	morning	Food Bank collection
Sunday	13	1.00pm	Area Meeting for Worship for Business see below for information
Monday	14	7.30pm	Cheltenham Interfaith Meeting - <i>The Diversity Game</i> see page two
Thursday	17	7.00pm	Carols by Candlelight please see page two
Sunday	20	noon	Local Meeting for Learning — <i>History of Quakers, Slavery</i>
Friday	25		No information yet about a Christmas Meeting for Worship – please contact elders
Sunday	27	noon	Fourth Sunday Worship Sharing

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. This month we will only meet on 11 December.

Fifth Sunday in November will be a semi programmed Meeting on the theme *Objections to War* followed by a presentation by Jane Mace on the same theme. **please see page three for details.**

Food Bank Collection on 13 December. **please note date.** Friends who are only coming to Area Meeting can still bring their contributions in the afternoon.

Meeting for Learning Sunday 20 December led by Jo Teakle on the theme of *Quakers and Slavery*

DECEMBER COLLECTION is for Friends of Hlekweni. Although it has been decided to close down the Friends Rural Training Centre near Bulawayo in Zimbabwe which was founded in 1967 and has been run by Friends since then, support for education and peace-building will continue. This will include continuing support for school-based feeding schemes, helping with school fees, training teachers in peace-building skills and helping schools improve the quality of their education through better provision of books, equipment and buildings. More information is on the website: friendsofhlekweni.org.uk. Donations can be sent to The Treasurer, Friends of Hlekweni UK, The Quaker Centre, 1 Oakley Gardens, Downhead Park, Milton Keynes, MK15 9BH. 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 14 December at the latest

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

NOTES ON NOVEMBER LOCAL MEETING

The main points are below. Full minutes for this and for AM can now be found in the pigeonholes in the lobby.

Area Meeting in December will be at Cheltenham MH. Please sign up early for contributions to tea. There will be NO shared lunch, please bring your own packed lunch.

Charity collections: We received the report on Charity and Meeting Fund Collections – details are available. Friends are reminded that we can contribute to Meeting's expenses through the schedule or by contributing each Sunday through the door.

Why I am a Quaker: We agreed Nigel Smith's suggestion that these talks, originally given at Meetings for Learning, should be brought together as a booklet.

Fifth Sundays: The four fifth Sundays in 2016 are in January, May, July and October. We agreed to show the film "Beyond Forgiveness" in January and to invite Janie Hope to talk on gender/transgender issues and Judy Roles to invite an Imam for two other Sundays.

Peace activities: The Gloucestershire Restorative Justice Team won an award recently in the South West region for police support volunteers. This is great recognition for Quaker work in the world.

NOTES ON NOVEMBER AREA MEETING

Appointments: Janie Thomas (Nailsworth) is released as Pastoral Friend as she is moving to Cambridge.

How doth the truth prosper? We note that the idea of local meetings undertaking to provide AM with responses to this question began in 2005 with a wish to improve communication between local meetings and Area Meeting – providing a sense of mutual accountability, grounded in reporting and reflecting. Following our minute in March (15/16), we agreed it is time to 'reflect on the value of this practice and consider ideas, if any, for improving on our current approach'.

We gave some initial consideration to two questions:

- what has been the value of Friends finding and sharing answers to the query 'how doth the truth prosper among you'? and
- what are the various ways that meetings can answer it?

We seemed to find benefit in the process of producing responses. We note that the current cycle of reporting ends with Cheltenham's response at our December meeting. We ask the clerks to prepare a draft calendar for the next three-year cycle in time for February meeting.

At the same time, we ask Local Meetings to give time for Friends to consider these two questions too and to bring their thoughts from these responses to the February AM.

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

This will take place on Thursday 17 December at 7.00 pm at the Meeting House. Contributions of music and poems and short prose readings are very welcome. For more details please speak to Jo Joy or Maureen Steffen. Mince pies and mulled wine will be served afterwards. It should be a very enjoyable evening.

Maureen Steffen

CHELTENHAM INTERFAITH MEETING

Monday 14 December at 7.30pm at Cheltenham Meeting House. *The Diversity Game* will be an evening with a board game when those present test and challenge each other on the basic knowledge of the world's main religions. Created by Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource.

FIFTH SUNDAY MEETING ON 29 NOVEMBER

Objections to war: a Quaker approach

To mark the centenary of a right to conscientiously object to military service in Britain (coming up early in 2016), Quaker Peace and Social Witness have asked me among a small group of others to offer a session on this topic around AMs from September 2015.

The plan for the opening session will be:

- opening worship (5 mins)
- presentation (30 mins)
- activity (20 mins)
- closing worship (5 mins)

The presentation will cover opposition to warfare, past and present, by Quakers and others, with these headings:

1. war, peace and Quakers;
2. conscience and conscription;
3. objections today: and
4. an invitation to personal reflection.

The discussion will include:

1. Changes to our peace witness over time and context;
2. The dilemmas of taking a stand against military force employed in the name of duty and defence;
3. And the present –day situation for conscientious objectors.

The activity is likely to engage us in thinking about the dilemmas of claiming exemption, and the spectrum of responses to testing questions. For early Friends, war of any kind was to be opposed. We will also consider: how are present-day Quakers living this commitment? and how effective is our peace education work in the face of what some are calling the ‘military creep’ into our schools currently being promoted?

Jane Mace

NEW ATTENDERS’ MEETING / DISCUSSION

Elders hope to arrange a meeting for new attenders to our Meeting for Worship. It is anticipated that this would provide an opportunity for those who wish to find out a little more about Quakers & Quakerism to do so, in an informal setting. Topics you might like to explore could include:

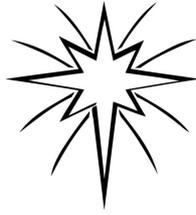
- How a Quaker Meeting works
- Quaker history
- Quaker business meetings
- Quaker terminology or jargon
- What goes on behind the scenes

The meeting would involve newer attenders and more experienced Quakers and could take the form of: Informal Q&A; short (informal) presentations; discussions or a mixture of these.

The time(s), date(s) and location(s) of the meeting(s) would be arranged to suit those wishing to come.

Please feel free to talk to any of the Elders about this meeting (See Elders' board near Meeting room) or sign the sheet on the noticeboard to indicate your interest.

We are pleased that you want to explore more about us.



**Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.**

**Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.**

Christina Rossetti

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath different names; it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.

Quaker faith and practice 26.61. John Woolman

Whenever we are driven into the depths of our own being, or seek them of our own will, we are faced by a tremendous contrast. On the one side we recognise the pathetic littleness of our ephemeral existence, with no point or meaning in itself. On the other, in the depth, there is something eternal and infinite in which our existence, and indeed all existence, is grounded. This experience in the depths of existence fills us with a sense both of reverence and responsibility, which gives even to our finite lives a meaning and a power which they do not possess in themselves. This, I am assured, is our human experience of God.

Quaker faith and practice 26.11 John Macmurray

The Tree

**In the wood I am one of many.
I am felled, sold, chosen
To be sole tree of a house.
I am throned in a gold bucket.
Light is sewn through my branches,
Precious gifts wrapped in silver
Depend on my twigs. Star-crowned,
I am adored by children, cordially hated
By Hoovering housewives, distrusted
by Health and Safety Officers, who name me
Fire Hazard. I reign for twelve days,
Then I am sacrificed among rubbish,
Where I wither, age decay.**

**But every year I rise again indoors,
Hazardous fire of love.**

UA Fanthorpe, with permission