

CHELTENHAM QUAKER

FEBRUARY 2019

<http://www.cheltenhamquaker.org.uk/home.php>

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/>

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A thought from Quaker poet Mary Birkett Card, Jo Teakle's great, great, great grandmother.

*[Most] dear the rapturous joy which awaits the soul
Attentive on its God! Not all the bliss
Which worlds could give to this are worth a name.
Then when full Harmony - . . .
. . . Such as man even here was born to taste,
Salutes the silent Spirit! All is concord
And all soft unison!*

From 'Response', written in the poetic language of her time, describing the joys found in silent waiting, c.1792-3, by Mary Birkett Card (1774-1817)

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

FEBRUARY			
Sunday	3	10.30 Noon	Meeting for Worship Local Meeting for Worship for Business
Thursday	7	6.30pm	Mid-Week Meeting - Virginia Palwyn: "Welcome" (see below)
Sunday	10	10.30 2pm	Meeting for Worship Area Meeting for Worship for Business at Cheltenham
Thursday	14	7-9 pm	Mid-Week Meeting - Action Group (see below)
Sunday	17	10.30 noon 7.30 pm	Meeting for Worship/Sale of Fair Trade Products Meeting for Learning: Prayer - Follow-up to Spiritual Adventure Day (see below) GARAS Fundraising Event: "From Sorrow to Hope" @ Nailsworth (see below)
Thursday	21	6.30 pm	Mid-Week Meeting - What happens after death? (see below)
Sunday	24	10.30 noon	Meeting for Worship Worship sharing
Thursday	28	7-9pm 7.30pm	Mid-Week Meeting - Action Group (see below) Journeyman Theatre: A Rock and a Hard Place (see below)

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.

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

Cal Anton-Smith by
Monday 18th FEBRUARY 2019 at the latest

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

WORHSIP SHARING:

Elders are reviewing worship sharing, which is currently scheduled to take place once a month.

- Do Friends find it valuable?
- Are many Friends attending it now?
- Do we want it to continue?

Feedback please to elders - Judy Roles, Joseph Fuller, Jo Teakle. Email or verbal feedback welcome.

NOTE ON 5th THURSDAYS by Jo Joy

It is a great joy that the midweek Meetings, which were set up last year as an Experiment, have proved to be so popular.

As many know, the format on the first and third Thursdays is: 6.30- 7.30 bring and share supper, 7.30-8.30 discussion, and 8.30-9.00pm Half hour Meeting for Worship.

The second and fourth Thursdays start at 7pm, are more active and encourage more outreach activities in the area.

However, there are five Thursdays in January, May and October.

It has been agreed to open the Meeting House on 5th Thursday evenings for "open worship". Very simple. Anyone who needs to gather for some silent waiting in company can turn up. I would hope that anyone who sees Cheltenham Meeting as a sanctuary would feel welcome, and allow the space and holding of the Meeting to refresh them.

There is deliberately no set agenda, except for 7pm gather for a cup of tea, 7.30pm sit down for Meeting for Worship. Finish 8.30pm.

The Sound of Silence by Mike Adcock (see below)

BYM Sustainability Report by Joseph Fuller (see below)

******* EVENTS *******

MID-WEEK MEETINGS 1st and 3rd Thursdays 6.30 - 9pm

7th Feb: "Welcome"

Our peripatetic Friend, Virginia Pawlyn, has kindly agreed to speak about her experience of visiting different Meetings and what has made her feel welcome (or not!) into the Meeting. This should hopefully provoke discussion and reflection for our own responsibility in Meeting, see A&Q no. 18

21st Feb: What happens after death?

As we know there are two certainties in life, death and taxes. For those of us who have returned our end of year tax return, this is an evening for us to consider what we think happens after death. Anyone with ideas or contributions are welcome.

MID-WEEK MEETING - ACTION GROUP 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7- 9pm

We hope to find practical ways to enact Good both locally and in a wider context and we aim to encourage (give courage to each other!) and support each other in our spirit-guided action. We hope to embark on lots of short and long-term projects and what we do will evolve with the leadings of the group.

We will have snacks and drinks through the evening and a 30 minute meeting for worship to bring our time together to a close.

Both regular attenders and those new to Quakers are all very welcome.

17th Feb: MEETING FOR LEARNING will be a workshop led by Elders taking forward themes from our Spiritual Adventure Day on Prayer (Sept 2018). More information to follow.

17th Feb: "From Sorrow to Hope" Nailsworth Friends Meeting House, 7.30 pm

Not to be missed - a passionate and moving sequence of music and poetry reflecting on the plight of dispossessed peoples, and raising funds for GARAS - Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

- Including Thomas Tallis' amazing *Lamentations*, and music by Monteverdi, Byrd, Vaughan Williams, Macmillan, Shepherd and De Vert, sung by the Cotswold Canal Singers under Hugh Barton.
- Poetry by (among others) Eliot, Levi, Zephaniah and Pink Floyd.

At Friends Meeting House, Quaker Close, Chestnut Lane, Nailsworth, GL6 0RA.
Free entrance. Retiring collection.

'ROCK AND A HARD PLACE': a new play from Journeymen Theatre launching 28th Feb 2019

When it comes to domestic abuse, it's more than blows that do the damage. So when it comes to leaving, it's a matter of a rock and a hard place. Based on research from true experience, this play vividly presents the full spectrum of violence in the home, from coercive control to women's murders at the hands of abusive partners. Whilst the topic is sombre, 'Rock and a hard place' is lively as well as challenging.

Shining a spotlight on the empowering support provided to survivors and their children by women's refuges, it is an appeal to all of us to recognise this human rights issue within our communities - and the devastating effects of cuts in refuge funding.

28th February 7.30 pm Subscription Rooms, Stroud
Tickets from subscription.room@stroud.gov.uk 01453 760900

4th March 4pm Chantry Centre Dursley www.chantrycentre.org
Tickets from Eventbrite.co.uk. "Inches" 01453 545644

8th March 7.30 pm Sundial Theatre Cirencester College

Tickets from. boxoffice@cirencester.ac.uk 01285 654228

Duration: 65 minutes (no interval), followed by Q and A session.
Age range: 17+

*Skilled writers on a range of current concerns, Quakers Lynn and Dave Morris of the widely acclaimed **Journeymen Theatre** company are long experienced professional actors.*

In each play they have produced in their 10 years of writing and performing together, the two of them keep their audience enthralled with a dozen or more characters – and always a key issue at its heart. The play is open for booking through Quaker meetings.

Contacts:

www.journeymentheatre.com

www.glosquakers.org.uk

www.stroudwomensrefuge.org

The Sound Of Silence by Mike Adcock

In November I gave a Meeting For Learning talk entitled *The Sound Of Silence*, coincidentally a week after Remembrance Sunday, commemorating 100 years since the guns of the First World War fell silent for the last time. This is one of the few times when, as a nation, we choose to institutionalize silence and my talk addressed cultural attitudes towards it as well as my own interest in the role of silence in music. Attending Meeting for the last few years has certainly made me more aware of the value of silent contemplation, but it has also fed into my musical ideas in a quite significant way.

I divided my talk into five sections - *Is silence a good thing?*, *What is silence?*, *Culture and silence*, *Silence and the spiritual* and *Silence and music*. Addressing the first question I suggested that silence may be thought of as synonymous with peace and tranquility, respite from the hustle and bustle, a view summed up in the phrase "silence is golden". But I went on to say that silence also has its negative side in that, for example, it can be an isolating experience for people who are lonely and for those living with hearing loss. In asking the question "what is silence?" I referred to the writing of American composer John Cage (1912-1992) for whom silence was important in that it is the complementary opposite of sound. Wishing to experience complete silence he went into an anechoic chamber, a soundproofed and acoustically 'dead' room, where he found he could still hear the sound of his own body's operating system, leading him to conclude that true silence does not exist. Instead, Cage proposed, there is intended and unintended sound. This idea was to inform his subsequent music and in 1962 he published a book of lectures and writings entitled *Silence*.

Generally as a culture we are uncomfortable with silence. Unless we are with complete strangers we prefer to make small talk rather than say nothing. Our urban environment is increasingly noisy and we have become conditioned to expect continuous demands on our attention from the media that surrounds us.

Through speakers or headsets we have the technology to provide a continuous soundtrack to our lives and while this may all be stimulating in the short term it allows us little time to pause for thought.

Silence is, however, central to various forms of spiritual or religious practice. In addition to the part it plays in Quaker meetings, silent worship and meditation is followed in various Hindu and Buddhist traditions and also of course within Roman Catholicism, in Benedictine, Cistercian and Trappist silent orders. Each of these traditions has its own relationship to silence, but they share a regard for its value in spiritual contemplation.

Attending Meeting has confirmed for me the intrinsic value of silence, particularly when shared with others, and has also shown me how silence can make the things we do hear more meaningful. It is suggested that in giving Ministry we should allow space between contributions and this has the effect of giving the words people say a greater significance. When somebody speaks and a period of silence follows it allows us to replay what we have heard in our mind and give it due consideration. Everyday discourse rarely permits this. And thinking about this process has suggested to me a new line of musical enquiry.

I have known for a long time that silence is important in music in the same way that the areas of white paper left in a drawing are as crucial as the actual marks. The composer Edgar Varèse described music as "an arrangement of objects in space" and I have always found myself drawn to music that generously allows space within it. But more recently I have been giving more consideration to the possible role of silence in music and how a silence can not only allow us to recall and consider a musical phrase we have heard but also to anticipate or prepare for notes yet to come.

Whether in the concert hall or in the street, a continuous barrage of sound can prevent us from hearing ourselves think. Sometimes, at least, silence is golden.

BYM Sustainability Gathering Report from Joseph Fuller

We often hear of the importance of acting from and through love. Whilst at times we are angry or afraid, we must ensure the bedrock of our action is love...

One particular idea from a speaker really stuck with me and informed a lot of my thinking over the weekend. Paul Hoggett, a psychoanalyst and activist, spoke about Exceptionalism - which is the *incomprehension that the rules we think should apply to others should also apply to us*. At the highest level, we (unthinkingly) think of our species as exceptional among other species, with our attitude that the planet and its resources are at the disposal of humans. We consider ourselves exceptional in all sorts of ways, in our moral opinions, our politics, our idea of right behaviour with regard to sustainability (concerns on what we eat, driving, flying, clothing etc.), and we often make excuses for ourselves when we fall short. Paul emphasised that everyone is susceptible to this and gave examples from his own life. He suggested that knowing this about ourselves and anticipating it in others, especially those with whom we disagree or need to negotiate with, might make room for a much deeper understanding of conflict and allow greater chances for change within ourselves and in society.

After this, I attended a wonderful workshop led by Cliodhna [*Klee-on-ah*] Mulhern. In our group we explored the spiritual basis for our concerns and weighed the power of acting through love against acting for any other reason - a sense of being morally right (exceptionalism again perhaps?), unresolved personal issues, politics etc. Cliodhna has been an activist for many years and shared stories of her experiences, describing a number of occasions when she noticed the gains made by a Quaker or religious group had come directly from their loving and respectful approach (for example, enabling a dialogue with a fracking company when before there was next to no communication) when other groups, whose stance might be characterised by being more oppositional, combative or antagonistic, could not make the same ground. We talked about the simple contrast of being *for* something rather than merely *against* something. When you are *for* something, in this case a right relationship with the planet, that loving belief will sustain and nourish you even through knock-backs and years of no apparent progress, simply because you love it and you believe in it. It will not be eroded by rhetoric. Many activists lose their energy after some years unless their actions are grounded in love. True love for something is the most reliable spiritual resource. (I have heard the marvellous Alastair McIntosh say very similar things.)

There was some beautiful ministry which echoed these sentiments and aligned them with a need to overcome our sense of self-importance as a species and find a right relationship with our planet and all its inhabitants. Cliodhna again spoke very movingly about her concern that to put things right will require a monumental cultural and social change and that it would need to go much deeper than a surface idea of 'how we live our lives'. It would require nothing less than us to fall completely back in love with our planet. She argued that the damage that is being done to our planet on a daily basis would be impossible if we were truly in love with all of life.