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DISCOVER THE CONTEMPORARY QUAKER WAY



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Cover image: The remains of the 100-years old Madyan hospital, Pakistan, that has now been washed away. Photo: Abaseen Foundation. See page 6. **Images on this page:** Pakistanis affected by flooding (top and middle) and destroyed buildings (bottom). Photos: Abaseen Foundation.

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Climate campers take on bank



Climate campers in action. Photo: Amelia Gregory.

VISITORS TO THE EDINBURGH Festival Fringe were taken by surprise on Monday, when environmental campaigners staged protests at sites connected to the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). There were at least three arrests at an RBS branch in the city centre after activists superglued themselves to walls and furniture.

Around 600 campaigners had formed a Camp for Climate Action outside RBS's international headquarters over the weekend. Most of the building's staff are reported to have stayed at home on Monday.

The campers pointed out that taxpayers own eighty-four per cent of RBS, which they accuse of using public money to finance 'climate destruction'. They were backed by performers angry at RBS's sponsorship of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The bank has attracted strong criticism for its investments in tar sands exploration, a form of obtaining oil thought to be around three times more carbon intensive than conventional methods. RBS has loaned £117 million to Cairn Energy, which recently began drilling for oil off the coast of Greenland.

Natalie Swift of the Camp's media team told *the Friend* that the Camp enabled participants to 'work sustainably, take direct action against climate change, get educated and really create a network'.

Sara Walcott of Lewes Meeting said that her Quakerism had motivated her to attend. 'Quakers know that the pure accumulation of wealth unattached from a deeper reflection on its purpose is inherently

not in right relationship,' she explained.

'We experience God through struggle,' said Sara, 'Through personal struggle, through showing up and coming even when we don't want to come, through practising and living.'

Sara explained that conversations and events at the camp had challenged her outlook and she had learned a lot from both internal and external experiences.

Campaigners report that the policing of the protests was less harsh than they had experienced in the past.

One group of activists who spread fake oil on a road in imitation of an oil spill were accused of a 'reckless and dangerous act' by a police spokesperson.

'We don't set out to take action that will harm members of the public,' insisted Natalie Swift. Asked if the camp had a commitment to nonviolence, she said that they never promote violence against people, but that 'nonviolence is not a word that we usually use' because some interpret the term as ruling out damage to property.

But Chris Wood of Westminster Meeting, who has attended the Camp on previous occasions, expressed his surprise. 'I would think that Climate Camp is an example of nonviolence in action,' he said. 'I think they should use the word.'

A spokesperson for RBS said, 'While we understand the protesters' intent and publicity tactics, we clearly cannot agree with their decision to target RBS'.

Symon Hill

Circles of Support

TWO QUAKERS have been honoured for their work by the Circles UK charity.

Helen Drewery and Tim Newell have been appointed the very first honorary fellows of Circles UK in recognition of their contribution to the establishment of circles of support and accountability in Britain.

Helen Drewery, as assistant general secretary of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), was one of several British activists who visited Canada in the late 1990s to see, at first hand, how the circles idea worked. She was impressed with the positive effect on all involved – offenders, community volunteers, affiliated professionals and the wider community. She then approached the Home Office and won support for a pilot project in the Thames Valley area. It proved to be the seed of a hugely successful venture in Britain.

Tim Newell worked within the prison service for thirty-eight years and was governor of Grendon and Spring Hill prisons. He delivered the 2000 Swarthmore Lecture *Forgiving Justice – A Quaker vision for criminal justice*.

‘We started in 1999 when we brought some Canadians over to explain the work they were doing with sex offenders,’ said Helen Drewery. ‘The idea of circles of support and accountability was something new and we had no idea how it would work.’

‘My feeling at the time was that it was the right thing for Quakers to be doing. All of the Quakers who became involved, I feel, had a sense of looking at a group of people, who were being vilified, and seeing them as human beings. This was important. It was a lot of hard work but it has been remarkably successful. And it is satisfying to know that this has meant there have been less victims than there would have been,’ said Helen.

Throughout Britain there are now over a dozen

independent circles of support and accountability projects. Circles UK was founded to oversee and monitor the work of the projects. It works to support the development and effective operation of Circles of Support and Accountability (Circles). It is funded by the Ministry of Justice to ensure that Circles projects across England and Wales are of a high standard.

The aim of each project is to address the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of sex offenders, to consider their social isolation and emotional loneliness and to prevent the risk of recidivism. Identifying suitable members of the public to monitor and support a ‘core member’ in the community has proved to be an extremely effective way of reducing this risk.

The first circles project in Britain was set up by QPSW in Hampshire and Thames Valley. It was recently given a Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service 2010. Members of that project will receive the award at a ceremony in October in Oxford.

Ron Macrae, co-ordinator of HTV Circles said: ‘The importance of the Quakers in bringing circles to Britain cannot be overstated. It was something that was missing in how we manage sexual offenders in the community. We can thank the Quakers for recognising there was a real need here. It has been proven beyond doubt that the idea, initiated by QPSW, proved to be filling a need.’

‘Before circles any offender who was risk assessed as high risk, you would be looking at four out of ten being reconvicted over a ten year period. In our area, thanks to circles, in the last eight and a half years only one out of seventy “core members” has been reconvicted for a sexual offence. It has had a dramatic impact on reducing recidivism, which takes you to our mission statement, “No more victims.”’

Ian Kirk-Smith

Pakistan debt repayments equal to new loans

AID TO PAKISTAN is falling well below the sum the country spends every year to pay back its international debt.

The Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC) has called on governments and international institutions to accept an immediate freeze on the country’s repayments.

The United Nations hopes to raise \$460 million to help Pakistan cope with the consequences of the recent flooding disaster. The World Bank has promised nearly \$3 billion in new loans, but this is roughly equal to the country’s annual debt repayments.

JDC called on the international community to ‘accept responsibility’ for its role in the poverty of Pakistan and end the ‘debt trap’.

‘It is nothing short of criminal that a country as poor as Pakistan is bled of resources every year to repay borrowers who extended unjust loans to that country over decades’ said JDC director Nick Dearden. ‘It is vital that desperately needed emergency aid is not effectively swallowed up in debt repayments.’

Symon Hill

100 days

How has the new coalition government measured up to our Quaker testimonies? Simon Beard offers a personal report after the first 100 days

Simplicity (A: good start to the new term)

More than anything else the new government has become associated with cutting the public deficit. This chimes with our conviction that nobody, not even governments, should live beyond their means for too long and perhaps more importantly will free the UK from the ethical and economic vagaries of the international market in sovereign debt. It has also been a long standing belief among Friends, going back to George Fox, that the law of the land should be simple and understandable to all, so the government's move to repeal bureaucratic and pernicious legislation, hold a bonfire of regulations and simplify the tax code are also welcome. Finally, the personal commitment of many government ministers to living more simply in office, with reductions to both their direct salary and ancillary costs, shows admirable leadership.

Peace (C: shows a distinct lack of commitment)

The government's decision to remain in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future and to fully replace the Trident nuclear weapons system are both clearly disappointing, as is their belief that growth in the arms trade should form part of our economic recovery. However, they are at least doing something to help prevent future conflicts. Safeguarding civil liberties and supporting Turkey's admission to the EU both help in healing some of the deep cultural rifts that have opened up in the last ten years. Meanwhile, continuing to increase international aid and resisting environmentally damaging development projects, such as the third runway at Heathrow, will reduce some of the environmental and economic strains that fuel conflicts around the world.

Integrity (B: lots of initiative, but poor follow through)

The government has clearly reacted to the popular demand for more honesty and accountability and has launched several initiatives that will place them under greater external scrutiny. Unfortunately the decision of all major parties to be economical with the truth during the election campaign means that they are now working hard to slip out of some of their less achievable promises. The promise of reform, however, both to the electoral system and that of party funding, may well reduce the perceived need for such dishonesty in campaigning in the future.

Equality (B: tries hard, but easily distracted)

The major problem associated with state simplification is that it usually means doing less to help the worst off. Raising VAT to twenty per cent is both easy to understand and hard to avoid but as an indirect tax it will also hurt the poor more than the rich. On the other hand raising the income tax threshold should do most to help those who work part-time or are on low wages, while increasing the level of capital gains tax will see those who have accumulated a great deal of wealth paying a fairer proportion of the cost of helping the poor. Away from financial equality, we should welcome the government's commitment to doing more to reduce the gender pay gap and to make the United Kingdom a safe sanctuary for people who face persecution because of their sexuality.

However, the government has been accused of moving too slowly in introducing the necessary secondary legislation to implement the law allowing for religious witness of civil partnerships by Quakers and other faith groups.



Quakers aid flood relief in Pakistan

Adrian Rose explains a current Quaker connection to Pakistan

Lancaster Quakers remember the day, a decade ago, when Mukhtair Zaman came to Meeting for Worship – his warm presence, his ready smile and the twinkle in his eye. He said he felt called to step out from his career as pulmonologist at Blackpool Victoria hospital, to return to his native Peshawar to improve the lives of thousands of Afghan and Pakistani people in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

A net was cast out and supporters of Mukhtair's vision were drawn in. Mukhtair founded the Abaseen Foundation Pakistan, and in 2001 took over responsibility for Nahaqi Hospital on the edge of Peshawar. The following year, Abaseen Foundation UK was formed by people in the north-west of England to support the growth of a dynamic community hospital service at Nahaqi.

When Abaseen took over, the 22-bed hospital was in such a derelict state that virtually the only healthcare offered to its catchment of 200,000 people (including 60,000 Afghan refugees) was tooth extractions, and advice, if a doctor was available. It had no water supply, no telephone, and intermittent supply of electricity.

Today, through partnership between the provincial government and the Abaseen Foundations of UK and Pakistan, the hospital provides healthcare that makes a real difference to local people, with 70,000 patients per year, compared with 13,000 before the foundation took over. Additional services and staff have been added, and the government has agreed to increase the bed numbers to fifty.

With Mukhtair as chief executive, the foundation has extended to education, medical research, and humanitarian relief. In 2005, Abaseen responded to the Pakistan earthquake emergency. And today, Abaseen is providing direct and effective relief to victims of the flood disaster. Some key elements of this response are:

- Supporting three defined communities in Swat, Kohat and Charsadda (around Nahaqi), moving them from rescue to rehabilitation.
- Working in partnership with the UN and UNICEF.
- Embarking at the request of the UN on a rescue mission to Kohistan to provide emergency medical treatment and aid to 10,000 people who are cut off from the outside world.

Quakers have supported the foundation from its early days, with funds and other aid. In 2002 Mukhtair spoke at a Glenthorne Quaker Centre conference, extending the network of support and awareness among Friends. In response to Abaseen's flood disaster appeal, Meetings and individual Friends from all over Britain and beyond have donated an estimated £30,000 in the last two weeks. Abaseen Foundation UK trustee Helen Bingley says: 'Quakers helped to set up and sustain Nahaqi and they are now providing essential funds for relief work – I think they should know that it is down to their faith in us for the last ten years that we can now help so many people.'

Visit www.abaseenfoundation.org.uk for more information.

The photo is courtesy of the Abaseen Foundation.

Your burden is my burden

Over sixty years after he undertook relief work in Pakistan, Ken Aldous reflects on the suffering of the people there

A few weeks ago I attended a church evening service and felt moved by the hymn, 'The day thou gavest Lord is ended' and the lines:

*The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.*

Since hearing those words I have been trying to come to terms with the sun that is waking brethren 'neath the eastern sky.

For them that same sun relentlessly beats down on them as they squat by the roadside or, if lucky, in rows of tents. At the same time the heat is hastening on the spread of disease, alarmingly including cholera.

The monsoon rains continue to pour down onto the mountains, causing the flood to spread over an area the size of England. Some twenty million people are affected, many of whom have lost everything. To those that had so little, even that has been taken away.

How can we come to terms with such suffering and unfairness? Over sixty years ago I worked with the Friends Relief Service in parts of Pakistan now affected, but then the suffering was caused by human bigotry and anger. Today, although aggravated by human activities, the causes are natural – which are oblivious to human and other creatures' sufferings.

There is the real danger that because there is no full answer to our search for understanding and the disaster is so great, then it is just too much for us to cope with so we just carry on as best we can.

There is, however, something mysterious about nature in the way that out of violence order ensues; at the deepest level, out of chaos patterns emerge and interact leading to new forms of life.

Jesus talked about going the extra mile in carrying a Roman soldier's burden. With the dramatic increase in natural disasters we must begin to be more ready to bear one another's burdens, not out of compulsion but compassion. This means our being prepared as an individual, as a nation and in the developed world, to go the extra mile, perhaps even to the point that it begins to hurt.

Compassion if put into practice has the potential to bridge the gaps between races, cultures, creeds and history and could form the basis for a new pattern in international relationships which accepts that we are all in this together.

So let's think again when the next appeal comes through the letter box.

Ken Aldous is a member of South London Area Meeting.

Recording clerk

I imagine that many Friends will be concerned that Britain Yearly Meeting's two most senior executive officers have both left the Society's employment at short notice, and within a very short time of each other.

Your 13 August issue carries a news item that the recording clerk has resigned and will leave in early September, and that BYM's general secretary of finance and human resources has recently left her post. The item suggests that the assistant recording clerk is standing in for the time being. The same issue contains an advertisement for an 'interim general secretary, finance' to serve from September 2010 until April 2011.

The extract of the statement released to the media, as quoted by you, is bland and seems designed to withhold more information than it reveals. As lady Bracknell might have said, 'To lose one of the two officers may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks suspiciously like something else.'

Are Friends going to be given a more detailed account of what is happening?

*Paul Honigmann,
3, Edmund Court, Beaconsfield HP9 1YT*

I find it curious but also deeply saddening that we have almost wordlessly 'lost' our recording clerk and carry on as if nothing had happened. I expect a higher quality of integrity, truthfulness and ability to handle differences amongst Friends House/Britain Yearly Meeting staff. How is it that we can be such good listeners and peacemakers with others but seem not to be able to run our own affairs with the same qualities of care and concern so that the necessary changes in organisational structure or strategies can occur without brutality and major dissent. I think we could and should do better! Isaac Penington in *Quaker faith & practice* 10.01 expressed it better: 'Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.'

*Edith Jayne
edith.jayne@blueyonder.co.uk*

A part of a journey

I thank Gerald Drewett and Ernest Hall for their responses (*letters*, 13 and 20 August) to my article ('Vipassana – a personal journey', 30 July).

However, I do feel that I need to reassure Gerald

and Ernest that my ten day experience at Dhamma Dipa retreat centre was 'a part of' my long journey of personal and spiritual discovery, a never ending journey already spanning many years. I did not have to discover the Quaker way by going to a Buddhist meditation centre. The silence of Meetings for Worship that I have come to learn and appreciate has equipped me to appreciate a silent retreat like Vipassana. We are encouraged to live adventurously.

*David G Manclark
davidmanclark@hotmail.com*

Othona

In response to Adrian Smith's article about 'Quakers in a seventh century steeplehouse' (20 August), I'd like to add that St Peter's on the Wall is also the spiritual home of the Othona Community (www.othona.org), which was founded in 1946 by an ex-army chaplain to promote peace and post-war reconciliation. The community is Christian in the same broad and ecumenical sense that Quakers are. The community has another centre in Burton Bradstock, Dorset, which I have visited many times, and which I would recommend to Friends as being like Quakers but with added singing!

*Robbie Spence
Colchester Meeting*

Confidential financial records

As a former treasurer of the Quaker Peace Studies Trust, perhaps I can explain about the decision to keep some financial records confidential. Paul Honigmann (*letters*, 20 August) is correct in saying that QPST's annual report and Accounts are public documents available on the Charity Commission's website and on paper. The financial documents that are confidential are those relating to individual contributors, with their names, addresses and the sums contributed, and those relating to fundraising campaigns, with the names and addresses of individuals and organisations approached and their response. These are not, and should not be, public documents.

*Tim Brown
33 Windsor Road, Cambridge CB4 3JJ*

Testimonies

In July Devon Area Meeting started to address the question of testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of deceased Friends. We agreed to return to the subject

but one unexpected aspect came to light during our deliberations.

We discovered that very often we do not know very much about the lives of Friends prior to them joining the Area Meeting of which they are in membership at the time of their death. Further, it is often difficult to obtain quality information from the Meetings that the Friend was previously a member of.

The idea was mooted, but not minuted, that when a 'transfer out' is being processed, an Area Meeting could invite Friends there to prepare notes and recollections about the departing Friend. These would *not* be public records but would be placed in an archive (possibly maintained by the Area Meeting custodian of records?) so that they can be released to any Area Meeting that later notifies the death of the Friend and requests information (definitely *not* as a reference for the living!).

During our ministry we heard of one Friend who lived into her nineties, having been active in four or more Monthly Meetings. There was little record of her contribution thirty or even fifty years previously. Inevitably this sort of scenario means that records of the lives of Friends concentrate on the more recent periods – and research for testimonies becomes more difficult when a Friend has served in several Meetings.

Is it appropriate that when a member moves on to a new chapter in her or his life that Friends should spend a little time acknowledging the Friendship that has occurred – in a spirit analogous to ministry at a Memorial Meeting for Worship?

To save the embarrassment of eulogising the living, it could be recognised that such recollections should be sealed unopened (whether audiotapes, written documents or in other forms).

Friends often remark that they discover much more about a member after she or he has died than they knew previously. It is up to the individual Friend how much she or he wishes to reveal while alive but at least an archive could ensure that the manifestation of Grace in the life is not lost completely for the benefit of posterity where appropriate.

Alan Rayner

Devon Area Meeting

The Leavers

'For many years The Leavers was my only contact with the Society of Friends and, despite being a birthright Friend, I would probably have drifted away from Quakers completely without the influence of the Quaker Youth Theatre,' wrote Nick Putz.

Quaker faith & practice 16.10 testifies to the influence, value and importance of The Leavers

(www.leavers.org), which is a unique charity entirely dependent on Friends' Meetings and individuals for funding.

The Leavers work with young people aged 12 to 18 and for many of them remains their link to Quaker life in teenage years when there are many other demands for their time and attention.

They run 35 to 40 creative arts projects a year; in 2009 alone they worked intensively with over 400 people and with over thirty volunteers. The Leavers is the only Quaker performing arts organisation in Britain. They aim to build young Friends' confidence, skills and Quaker identity and to create opportunities for spiritual experience for all ages through music, drama and dance.

Due to the current economic climate, drastic cuts to arts funding in 2009 and donations from individuals and Meetings dropping dramatically in the past two years, they are left facing an uncertain future.

With the support of friends, the Leavers can continue to deliver Quaker arts work to young people and adults to raise the creative Spirit, ensuring that their work is affordable and accessible to all.

Ken Russell

Leicester Meeting

Ministry

The piece of spoken ministry I have heard most often in Quaker Meetings for Worship is when someone stands up and gives thanks for the ministry of a baby in Meeting. I often feel uncomfortable about this because I'm not convinced it's true. I don't believe that a baby is compelled by God to utter every laugh, cry, burp or gurgle that comes out of its mouth in Meeting. So what am I missing? Is my understanding of spoken ministry too narrow?

And Friends, I would value considered responses. I am looking to understand, not start another argument on *the Friend's* letters pages.

Oliver Robertson

North London AM

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Meetings

Faith not charity

Bob Johnson says that the Quaker way is vulnerable at the hands of charity legislation

‘Startlingly powerful’ and ‘gloriously vibrant’ are not terms you normally expect to hear applied to a Quaker Business Meeting but they understate what happened the other month in our Area Meeting. I have lived through Preparative Meetings and Monthly Meetings where watching paint dry would have been a welcome diversion – but that day banished the lot. It was a privilege to attend



The fruits of our Quaker way need to be handled carefully.

Hampshire & Islands Area Meeting on 10 July 2010, a privilege I shall not soon forget.

It started normally enough – members being administratively moved to and fro, genuine gratitude for the grace of God as shown in the life of two of our recently deceased Friends and delight at nominations filling crucial posts at last – all fairly routine, cheerful and business-like. I was even a little disappointed not to have been able to share my grief at the recent tragedy of Raoul Moat’s killing himself, twelve hours earlier. But then – wow – in what had already been described as the ‘graveyard slot’ – the last item on a long agenda, the whole *raison-d’être* of the Quaker Business Method came gloriously to life. Significantly it related to the government’s heavy handed and ill-disguised attempt, via the crushing Charities Act, to hamstring precisely this Quaker way of working.

Suddenly, from all quarters of the room, we found ourselves in a remarkable area, rarely visited. Genuine concerns and robust courage under harrowing circumstances emerged and blossomed. And there we were – a glorious flowering of the spirit, voices raised to describe inner turmoil, strivings to make the best of a bad job and a deep faith that there was a better way. It was marvellous to behold.

One of the unique blessings of Quakerism, and one whose value I firmly believe will become ever clearer, is that our ultimate authority is not some dry text, nor even a select body of men or women – it is ‘Yearly Meeting in session’. Think about it. This is a fluid, changeable, unpredictable ‘authority’. It is not fixed; it is the opposite of being carved in stone, which is precisely why the government doesn’t like it. And yet it is vitally important. It is a living practical embodiment

of our view that all of life is sacramental, not text, not you nor me. It is all of us meeting together to 'discern' what we really should be doing, what really matters to all of us. A difficult concept to describe, even harder to maintain in an ever controlling world – but the core of our enlightened view of this curious world, and its inhabitants with their 'spark of the divine'.

Many will be well aware of the background to this problem – the application of the new charity law. In a nutshell, this law tries to tie the responsibility in Quakers, for money matters especially, to a few named individuals. It is a ham-fisted approach to prevent money laundering and the like. This type of approach has already been tried (and failed) in my branch of the medical profession, psychiatry, where someone called the responsible medical officer is held responsible for all mishaps. It doesn't work there and it makes matters worse here. Already too much Quaker energy and wisdom is being siphoned off into 'trustee matters', where decisions risk being taken that cut across our unique heritage. There is an intrinsic, logical contradiction between an authority as fluid and magnificent as 'Yearly Meeting in session', and the mundane and conventional notion that an individual or group of individuals, selected as 'trustees' hold all the power, authority and responsibility.

This logical contradiction now has legal force. It was so heart-warming to hear that our trustees were battling against this tide – but it is worrying

to appreciate that this particular tide carries the full weight of the legislature behind it.

It seems to me that this is an arrow pointed straight at the heart of Quaker governance. We need all the energies and spiritual resources we can lay our hands on, to maintain the vitality of our Quaker way – I dread the prospect that this steady erosion may have dire long-term consequences. Currently, as I see it, our valiant trustees are contending with something that should never have been sent in our direction in the first place. I have already attended one Yearly Meeting where a direct question of finance was ducked by one of our trustees – could this be the thin end of the wedge? Is this type of financial code of silence being slipped into our Quaker ways because of some half-baked 'legislative' ideology? Could a legal defence of our Quaker way be launched at some stage?

Meeting for Sufferings used to meet monthly to continue this unique spirit between Yearly Meetings, until our 'ultimate authority' could meet again. Now, however, the structure of our trustees poses a deliberate and explicit legal threat to this subtle, fragile but oh-so-important process. What a joy to hear powerful voices raised in my own Area Meeting in defence of our glorious ideal. What a delight to be present to experience this process first hand and in action. What a privilege. My fear is that if it should die, Quakerism will too. But if we work hard enough and together enough, surely we can preserve it?

Quakers and the Charities Act 2006

The Charities Act 2006 included the ending of excepted status for religious charities. They were required to register with the charity commission at dates to be specified.

Before this, Quakers and other Christian religious groups were defined as charities but were excepted from registration. They did not have a registered charity number or have to submit their annual accounts to the charity commission. They were enjoying the benefits of being a charity, such as tax exemption through Gift Aid, but without the regular monitoring to which most charities are subject.

The process of registering excepted charities began late in 2008 with charities with an income

of over £100,000. Quakers decided that for this purpose, as with membership, the Area Meeting should be the unit of responsibility.

In the Religious Society of Friends, as in all charities, there have always been trustees. Until a group of trustees has been appointed, all members are the trustees, even if they do not realise this. Area Meetings have tended to appoint between 6 and 12 trustees to free other Friends from carrying the legal responsibilities of the Meeting.

For further information, see the *Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings* (March 2009), Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. See www.quaker.org.uk for more information.

The good ego

When Jesus says 'I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me', he is, perhaps, inviting each and every one of us to say that for ourselves. Wm le Fever

For many years now I have been striving to become 'a better person' but I'm left with this feeling that my desultory, half-hearted and half-baked efforts (though occasionally met with some sort of semi-success) are, in truth, just manifestations of my ego becoming more subtle in winning approval from others and from itself.

This is not to say that my efforts have been worthless for I think I have become more constructive in my relationships, less domineering, and having less necessity to be the centre of all attention, the fount of all beneficence and so forth. But I'm left with this feeling that, in some real sense, I am still just conning myself and others.

'It is a great deceit to hide behind the truth.' And that's what I feel right now: that even my attempts to face a harsh reality and be nakedly truthful and transparent are, in themselves, tainted by an ever deepening and increasingly subtle self-interest. Every time I get behind myself I find myself lurking behind myself – that came out quite spontaneously but I think I know what it means.

For most of my adult life I have been acquainted with, and indeed lived on the fringes of, the world of spiritual endeavour and in this world the ego is almost universally regarded as the fount of all awfulness – I paraphrase Christopher Isherwood. 'When shall I get it through my head, once and for all, that the ego,



Striving to become a better person. Photo: DraconianRain/flickr CC.



Something to cherish? Photo: Duchamp/flickr CC.

the Christopher in me, never will and never can be anything but a vain little monkey? I ought to have learned by this time – to live with this monkey and refuse resolutely to be impressed or shocked by its postures and greed and rages – I know perfectly well that I ought to be continually dissociating myself from it, calmly and firmly and with complete good humour – that’s what self-discipline means. The monkey must be made to face its ugliness again and again.’

Fighting talk! But for me, and I believe the mass of humanity, this subduing of personal essence is a task rarely seriously considered and even more rarely seriously undertaken. And when I think about it I become significantly irked. Were all the world withdrawn to monasteries and nunneries – who then would be left to perform the quotidian tasks of life and produce the next generation? It’s all very fine to contemplate your navel but someone else is still going to have to fill your belly with food. Those of us who live and work in the world and suffer the rough and tumble of everyday existence have no reason to be ashamed of what we are and what we do. And it seems most of us have no option but to utilise the one bit of kit we most certainly have, this essential me-ness, when we attempt to be of use to ourselves, others and the world we live in. Me-ness does not necessarily imply meaningless or meanness.

For the mass of people the ego is not soil on the hands that can be washed away, or hair on the head

that can be shaved, but our very lifeblood without which nothing is. So let us agree, you and I (those of us of the uncouth and incorrigible majority) that we will just have to cope with our respective egos as best we can. We might venture to go further than this. Even as that vain little monkey is the source of all cruelty, greed, hatred and so forth – is it not also productive of playfulness, curiosity, creative energy, and all manner of childish and not so childish good things? Being fully myself (not quite the same thing as being full of myself) can enable me to enter imaginatively into how others are themselves. And such awareness leads on to the virtues of compassion, forgiveness and gratitude.

The world has a full quota of juniper bushes aspiring to become Scots pines. But we don’t get to be the best person we can by trying to be Francis of Assisi or mother Teresa. Surely we do better to attempt, with all our putative strengths and all our indubitable weaknesses, just to be the best person we are capable of being. So let us encourage each other to abandon, once and for all, any attempt to destroy what is essential to us. Let us consider instead how we can best learn to live with, control, utilise and indeed cherish the little monkey. For being kind and forgiving to ourselves will surely lead us on to be kinder and more forgiving to others.

**John Anderson
Taunton Meeting**

Did you find God in the garden?

I am the spider and the fly
I am the dancing dragonfly
I am the small blue butterfly – suddenly gone
I am the huge horsefly sitting in the sun
I am the pollen on the lake
I am the dew on the spider's web
I am the reflection in the water
I am the darkness
I am the boatman
I am the dewdrop on the leaf
I am the seed
I am bees feasting from flowers
I am raindrops falling through leaves
I am the Green Man of this good garden
I am a plaything of the universe
I am good enough for now
I am the place where the words cannot reach
I am your hands creating
I am your journeying feet
I am the awe and I am the wonder
I am the mystery and the splendour
I am of the earth and return back to the earth
I am the present moment
I am what I am

If Wordsworth had stood up in a Meeting for Worship and ministered about 'a host of dancing daffodils', would he have been accused of 'daffodil ministry'? When we use this term in a negative way, do we mean that the ministry is predictable? Words about the natural world, as with any other subject, can move us profoundly or seem banal. I certainly hope the phrase won't deter anyone from ever sharing their response to nature when it comes from a deep place.

Those of us who attended the recent Woodbrooke course 'Body Earth and Spirit' discovered this. We were challenged by a question we discovered written on the flipchart one morning, 'Did you find God in the garden?' Gradually, one by one as we felt moved, we wrote up our responses to the question. The result, after a slight rearranging of the order, was the poem above.

Diana Lampen

In Tokyo with love

Beryl and Roger Lankester report on their stopover in Japan's capital

Silence

is a natural demand
born of a need for God
felt by young and old
in all world's religions.

In silence we may worship together
sharing our search for life,
sharing our quest for peace
sharing God's gift of love.

Attending a Meeting for Worship in a country with a different culture to our own can raise some profound questions. After worshipping with Tokyo Friends we asked ourselves: how is that of God in all of us manifested as a global consciousness? Certainly the desire for peace is a unifying force that clearly unites us all.

The Meeting was held in silence with ministry from Japanese-speaking Quakers. Although we don't speak Japanese, the spoken testaments resonated with us. Meeting for Worship finished with a hymn, not handshakes.

The Meeting house, although different outside, had an interior reminiscent of Maldon Meeting House in Essex. The benches and notice boards were familiar and indeed some of the posters were the same as ours! One poster had 'Silence', the Friends General Conference poem on it (above). Afterwards we gave Tokyo Friends our letter of introduction from our

Area Meeting, together with a copy of Britain Yearly Meeting's *Advices & Queries*, a Quaker shopping bag and picture. There followed a Japanese-style bring-and-share lunch.

Staying at the International Centre next door proved to be quite an experience. For example, changing into slippers at the entrance door takes some skill, especially if your feet are too big for the largest size available!

The centre was designed by an American architect, practising in Japan, and is in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright.

We were in Japan thanks to our friends Yoshi and Taeko Takamura who have exchanged candles for peace with Essex Christian CND for the past twenty-five years. Following our visit to Tokyo we caught the bullet train to Hiroshima to attend the World Conference against A and H Bombs and the lantern ceremony on the evening of Hiroshima Day.



Tokyo Friends Meeting House (left) and the Friends International Centre (right). Photos: Beryl and Roger Lankester.



Clerking

I'm a lonely little Quaker
And I'm feeling very small.
I'm the clerk of Monthly Meeting
and there's no-one here at all.
I've got all the minutes drafted
and I'm ready with my pen
but the sense of Monthly Meeting
is they've stayed at home again.
It's a 1660 Meeting house
that's hidden in the dark
down a rustic public footpath
in a Yorkshire national park,
and I looked it up on Multimap
and drove my four-by-four
over mountains where James Nayler preached
in 1654.
If it wasn't for the Quakers
in the Quaker burial ground
then I'd be the only Quaker
for a hundred miles around,
for the buses stop at seven
and there's something on TV
and this month it's nominations
and there's no-one here but me.
I could minute they're prevented
but they never said what by.
I'm a lonely little Quaker
and I think I want to cry ...

This was written by Simon Heywood of Sheffield Meeting and appears on the Sheffield Quakers' blog: <http://bit.ly/99Yw7O>.

The poem was forwarded to *Eye* by a Friend who had been on a clerking course. Perhaps it is a part of the syllabus.

Oral history

The Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex is offering a three-year funded research studentship to complete a doctoral dissertation on the topic 'Seldom have so few helped so many' (Alfred Bader) 'Quakers as Rescuers during the Nazi Period'. It begins in October.

From 1933 to 1945 Quakers were involved in efforts to rescue people at risk from persecution on political, religious or racial grounds in Germany, Austria and other parts of occupied Europe. Their representatives were active in many European cities, supported by refugee committees at home.

See <http://bit.ly/cznrIE> for more information.

Joy Schwabe

Wells-next-the-Sea Meeting is organising an exhibition of the paintings and pottery of the late Joy Schwabe for Quaker Week in October. They would like to hear from anyone willing to loan pictures, drawings or pottery by Joy.

She was a member of Wells Meeting and by all accounts a talented artist. Among other things she left Wells Friends were seven watercolours she made as a record of the refurbishment of the Meeting House, marking the building's bicentenary in 1983.

Please contact David Saunders on 01328 711085 or email dls@inthelight.uk.com.

Choosing a religion

Helen Porter was reading *Rose Macaulay: a biography* by Sarah Lefanu (Virago, 2003) and came across a section about her essay 'How to Choose a Religion'. Helen kindly arranged permission from the publisher for *Eye* to use the excerpt:

'How to Choose a Religion' provides fertile ground for Rose Macaulay's comic gift. She runs through the various branches of Christianity, weighing up their attractions or otherwise. The Roman Catholic branch knows the truth and tells it to you, which, she points out, many people like, but 'a good deal of attendance at services is expected'. The Orthodox has, like the Catholic branch, tradition and dignity but 'its clergy do not always look what our novelists call well-groomed'; they keep Easter 'with great enthusiasm but at the wrong time'. As Calvinists believe in 'severe, prolonged, and inevitable punishment after death for nearly everyone', then if you are unlucky enough to be one you should try hard to believe you're one of the few exceptions to this rule. 'Many Christians,' Rose concludes, 'succeed in believing this.' Her own prejudices are for the Anglican Church, and for Quakers. The drawback of the latter is having to busy yourself with good causes: 'you start funds for the distressed and food centres for the hungry (particularly in Central Europe and specially for those with whom your country has recently had differences), and try to get laws altered'. But, 'Quakers make the best chocolate.'

Eye-lights

Send your queries, questions and thoughts for *Eye* and your fellow readers to eye@thefriend.org or write to *Eye at the Friend*, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BY.

Deaths

Violet Dorothy (Vicky) CARTER 7 August. Peacefully after a long illness. Widow of Peter. Funeral Service at Stricklandgate Methodist Church, Kendal 10.45am Tuesday 31 August followed by cremation at Lancaster & Morecambe Crematorium at 12.30pm. No flowers, donations to Circuit Funds (Methodist) and Kendal Quaker Meeting. Enquiries: Co-op Funeralcare, tel. 01539 739099.

Doney DORO 18 August. Peacefully. Widow of Steve, mother and grandmother. Private cremation followed by Thanksgiving Service at Leicester FMH 2pm Thursday 26 August. No flowers. Donations: Kibworth Health Centre c/o E C Gilbert Ltd, Funeral Directors, tel: 0116 259 2267.

Amelia FYSH 14 August at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Member of Aylesbury Meeting. Former Head of Beech Green Nursery School. Aged 87. Funeral 11am Friday 3 September at the Church of St James the Great, Birtton.

Roger GILLETT 9 August, at home. Husband of Patricia (Midgley), father of Martin, Patrick, Donald and Godfrey. Member of Sale Meeting. Aged 88. Memorial Meeting: Manchester Mount Street FMH, 6 November, 1.30 for 2.00pm. Enquiries: martinbgillett@aol.com

Philippa O'NEILL 18 August. Peacefully after a long illness. Member of Walthamstow Meeting. Aged 48. Funeral 10 September: Burial at Wanstead FMH, followed by MfW at Walthamstow. Details: Beryl Bell 020 8926 7853, colinberyl@ntlworld.com

Brian PAINTER 30 July, peacefully at home in France. Father of Helen and Robert, grandfather of Matthew, Jay and Hester. Formerly of Muswell Hill Meeting. Memorial meeting at Muswell Hill FMH, 77 Church Crescent, London, N10 3NE 2pm Saturday 28 August. Enquiries Helen Highmoor, hell2highmoor@gmail.com, 0208 337 5084.

Notices

Heather BEALE Gloucestershire Area Meeting wishes to prepare a testimony to the grace of God as shown Heather's life. If you would like to share memories and reflections, please contact Wendy Gerard on 01453 833879.

Changes of clerk

HARTSHILL LM From August 2010, clerk: Clare Barnett, CORRECTED EMAIL: clare@barnettfamily.me.uk

Diary

DOLOBRAN LATE SUMMER GATHERING Sunday 5 September. Bring picnic lunch to eat outdoors. MfW at 2.30pm followed by tea provided by local Friends. Access details: John and Felicity 01938 500147 or Simon and Sophie 01938 500746. All welcome.

NEW QUAKER PLAY 'MARGARET OF SWARTHMOOR' All are welcome to rehearsed reading (free admission) of Kirsten Ebsen's new play about Margaret Fell at Oxford Meeting House, St Giles, Oxford, 2.30pm Sunday 12 Sept. Details: ianflintoff@aol.com 01865 715870.

RAF FYLINGDALES MEETING FOR WORSHIP Saturday 4 September 2010, 12 noon - 1pm under the care of Pickering and Hull AM. Followed by picnic at Pickering FMH. Contact 01751 432416 or 01751 472827. All welcome.

Meeting up

MALE, 70s, WEST COUNTRY. Poet with Quaker-humanist values, trying to live/write not exceeding gifts, would like to hear from woman (anywhere) trying to live/write not exceeding hers. Replies please Box 929 c/o The Friend Advertisement Dept.

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Classified advertisements

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jobs

AIRTON MEETING Yorkshire Dales National Park

Voluntary resident Friend(s) sought to care for our recently restored 17th century meeting house. Expected starting date 1 January 2011.

Rent free accommodation in adjoining two-bedroom cottage, which is currently being refurbished.

Application details from:
airtonfriends@googlemail.com
Tel. 01729 830121.

Closing date for applications 1 October.

BOGNOR REGIS LM seeks voluntary resident Friend or attender as Warden. One bedroom unfurnished flat free for 10 hours/week. Further information from barbarabranscombe@btinternet.com

CARETAKER REQUIRED FOR 6 MONTHS from 27 September whilst development work progresses at Aylesbury Meeting House and garden. Furnished studio flat provided with access to kitchen. Contact: ednarossiter@aol.com by 30 August.

STREET MEETING, SOMERSET requires Voluntary Resident Friend(s) from October. Average 11 hours per week. Three bedroom accommodation provided. Applications invited by 10 September. Interviews on 20 September. Further details: Bernard Cremieu-Alcan, Huckham House, Berhill, Ashcott TA7 9QN. 01458 210231. huckham@webjoy.co.uk

THINKING OF RECRUITING A WARDEN or Resident Friend? Contact Quaker Life for friendly, helpful advice. Richard Summers 020 7663 1096. richards@quaker.org.uk

jobs wanted

LOOKING FOR A LIVE-IN JOB IN THE UK. Please contact Christine: c_diessner10@live.de

Notices on page 17. Friends & Meetings notices should preferably be prepaid. Personal entries (births, marriages, deaths, anniversaries, changes of address, etc.) £16.85 incl. vat. Meeting and charity notices (changes of clerk, new wardens, alterations to meeting, diary, etc.) £14.34 zero rated for vat. Max. 35 words. 3 Diary or Meeting up entries £39 (£33.18); 6 entries £66 (£56.16). Add £1.70 for a copy of the issue with your notice. Cheques payable The Friend.

Entries are accepted at the editor's discretion in a standard house style. A gentle discipline will be exerted to maintain a simplicity of style and wording which excludes terms of endearment and words of tribute. Deadline usually Monday am.

Tel. 01535 630230. Email ads@thefriend.org

where to stay

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GODMANCHESTER, CAMBS. Refurbished self-contained cottage for rent adjoining Meeting House. Unfurnished. Approx 20 miles Cambridge. Rent circa £650pcm. Initial enquiries to stella.howard306@btinternet.com telephone 01480 458730.

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FALMOUTH, CORNWALL. Unfurnished property sought. Long let from 1 October. Minimum 2 bedrooms. Mature, single woman (50's) doing MA in Fine Art. Tel. 00 353 276 1157.
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personal

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miscellaneous

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We are pleased to offer a special outreach issue of our 1 October edition to all Meetings and Quaker groups, to give away at their events and Open Days during Quaker Week, 2-10 October, and right through 2011. After much positive feedback on our previous outreach issues, it is again **24 pages and full-colour throughout.**

The issue will be timeless and will again include a range of articles of particular interest to newcomers and non-Friends alike. Available in multiples of 10 copies. Please return the coupon below to arrive by Wednesday 22 September. Copies will be dispatched first class from our printers, Headley Brothers, on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 September. After publication, copies will be available at a cost of £10 for 10 copies post included.

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Resources for Quaker Week



Is your Meeting ready?

The Quaker Centre Bookshop is able to supply a wide range of leaflets, posters and Book Boxes to Meetings and Quaker groups for use during (and after) Quaker Week, 2 – 11 October.

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Make sure your Meeting is prepared. Order materials now. Call 020 7663 1030/1031; email quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

Visit us at Quaker Centre, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-centre

**Last orders for delivery in time for Quaker Week:
Book Boxes 20 September; Leaflets and Posters 27 September.**

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Go to www.manchesterquakers.org.uk or ring the Area Meeting office on 0161 834 5797 for an information pack. The closing date for applications is 1st October. Interviews will be held on 28th October.