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Cover image: The Bradford Women for Peace holding their web of ribbons in a demonstration for peace against the English Defence League visit to Bradford. Photo courtesy Eithne Dodwell. See page 5.



Quaker Theatre Company

A scene from the play 'Ordet' (The Word), by the Danish writer Kaj Munk, which is the forthcoming production by The Quaker Theatre Company. 'Ordet' will tour various venues throughout Britain during October.

Kaj Munk was a Lutheran Pastor and playwright in Denmark in the 1930s. When the Germans invaded Denmark in 1940 he denounced them from his pulpit and was found shot by the roadside the next day.

Meetings wishing to book a play should contact the Quaker Theatre Company for full details and a booking form.

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Pope faces challenges during his visit



A sculpture of Cardinal Newman at the Brompton Oratory, South Kensington, London. Photo: Nikoretro/flickr CC:BY.

In the seventeenth century women played a leading role in the development of Quakerism. Their position within other denominations has been a focus of controversy and change in recent times. Now the Roman Catholic church is confronting a call for reform and inclusion.

Grassroots Catholics are planning to challenge the pope on a range of issues, including women's ordination, during his trip to Britain next week. Benedict XVI will speak in Glasgow, London and Birmingham on a state visit from 16 to 19 September. Andrew Summersgill, appointed by the Roman Catholic Church to coordinate the trip, has encouraged prayers 'for pope Benedict and also for the success of the visit'. A project called Catholic Voices has recruited 'a collection of ordinary people' to speak about their faith in the media.

But other Catholic groups have formed Catholic Voices for Reform (CV4R) to call for change on issues such as sexuality and church structures. They include Catholic Women's Ordination, whose posters reading 'Ordain Women Now' will appear on buses passing Westminster Cathedral, where the pope will celebrate mass.

'We're not trying to split things,' said Myra Poole of CV4R, 'We're trying to move things on'. She

told *the Friend* that disagreement 'doesn't mean you're not a good Catholic'.

In contrast, all spokespeople recruited by Catholic Voices accept the Church's official position. Coordinator Eileen Cole said, 'people who had issues [with official teaching], whatever they might be, were not selected'. Asked by *the Friend* if this made Catholic Voices unrepresentative of Catholics, she said the project is 'not a debate' but is intended to communicate the Church's teaching.

The pope's supporters emphasise his commitment to tackling poverty and climate change. Catholic journalist Catherine Pepinster described Benedict as 'the green pope', insisting that, 'his concern for the planet, and humanity's place in it' is central to his teaching.

The trip is a state visit because the pope is head of the Vatican State. This has angered the Protest the Pope coalition, who believe that, while the pope should be free to visit Britain, taxpayers should not foot the bill. They will hold a demonstration on 18 September.

Paul Blanchard of Protest the Pope told *the Friend* that they also want to take 'a stand morally against his teachings' on issues

including abortion and education. He said the coalition is open to 'anyone who wants to protest [against] the pope's visit'. Asked why no religious groups had joined, he said 'that's a matter for them and not for us'.

But despite the coalition's insistence that they are 'not anti-Catholic', several Christian groups seem to regard it as a secularist project. A spokesperson for the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) said they did not wish to be part of 'militant protest'.

He said that LGCM had been misrepresented as uncritical of the pope and emphasised that 'any idea that we're condoning the pope's views' was 'simply not true'. Members will wear LGCM T-shirts at masses given by the pope.

A central feature of the trip will be the beatification of John Henry Newman, a former Anglican who converted to Rome in 1846. Amongst many other endeavours, he persuaded the Quaker owners of Cadbury's to set aside a prayer room for Catholic workers.

Symon Hill

Recording clerk: interim plans

FOLLOWING THE RESIGNATION of Gillian Ashmore, notified in early August, trustees are pleased to announce that Michael Hutchinson has accepted appointment as acting recording clerk. Trustees have also appointed a group to carry out the recruitment of a new recording clerk. The group will begin work very soon and trustees hope that the Friend appointed will be in post by the spring of 2011. The group of five consists of the clerk to the trustees, the clerk to Meeting for Sufferings, the clerk (or first assistant clerk) to Yearly Meeting and two trustees.

Trustees are working with the acting recording clerk and senior management to ensure that momentum is not lost and interim arrangements are in place. Trustees value greatly the commitment of staff and committees to ensuring that the work of the Yearly Meeting continues unhindered. Awareness of the prayerful support of Friends throughout the country has been of great encouragement to those affected by these changes.

Jonathan Fox
clerk to BYM trustees

Christ in the lives of Quakers

A GROUP OF FRIENDS have explored the place of Christ in the lives of Quakers at a gathering in the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

Friends looked at the role of Christ in early Quaker writings and the Bible before asking how this understanding related to their own relationship with God and the community. Twenty-five people attended the event, organised by the New Foundation Fellowship and entitled 'Christ in you – Christ among us'.

Allistair Lomax gave a talk in

which he spoke of the need for a corporate response to Christ in order to rediscover and experience the same spiritual foundation that George Fox built on.

Other activities included a discussion on new media and a session on Christ and Community. Participants later split into groups to consider questions including, 'What is your experience of being guided by Christ?' and 'Is it necessary to suffer if you are a Christian?'

Ursula Windsor said the exploration of Quaker writings

led to 'an understanding which is quite distinct from that of other Christian groups'.

Mary Meeks added, 'My lasting memory will be the theme of joy and glory which came very powerfully to us'. She said there was 'a great surge of joy which carried us along and sent us home rejoicing'.

The New Foundation Fellowship exists to 'reacquaint people with the Christian Message that was proclaimed by George Fox and the Early Friends'.

Symon Hill

Prayers for the Naga people

ON SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER Quakers across Britain have been invited to participate in a day of prayer for the Naga people.

The Nagas are a group of predominantly Christian tribes in the North-Eastern area, which from before the time of independence has disputed its incorporation into the Republic of India. This unresolved conflict also changed into a violent internal dispute between different armed groups of Nagas. It is being addressed by all parties and is reaching a critical stage, such that the Naga Churches and Forum for Reconciliation (FNR) have asked that Quakers support them in a day of prayer to find the will and the way forward.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness's Naga Conciliation Group has been working closely with the FNR, and in June 2009 the leaders of the three main armed factions signed a Covenant of Reconciliation. Since then there has been a virtual absence of violence in Nagaland, but much remains to be done to create peace and achieve face to face dialogue between the leaders. Thus our prayers have been requested by the Nagas.

Jan Arriens, co-clerk of the Naga Conciliation Group, hopes that Friends will take part in the day of prayer. He said: 'Please join with us individually and in your Meetings, to hold the Naga reconciliation journey in the Light on Sunday 12 September 2010.'

A tide of light flows in Bradford



Part of the web formed by lime green balls of ribbon thrown by Bradford Women for Peace.

FOX'S OCEAN OF LIFE and Light swept over the Ocean of Death and Darkness recently in Bradford.

After staying at home during the 2001 Bradford Riots, many Bradfordians, including myself, vowed to do whatever they could to ensure that the recent visit by the English Defence League (EDL) went off peacefully. All it takes for evil to triumph is for people of good will to do nothing. Countless community and faith groups came together to influence public opinion and to provide diversionary events for young and old throughout the district. An unlikely force in all this was 3km of vibrant lime green ribbon – symbolic of hope and new life – donated to Bradford Women for Peace by a religious charity. We are a small, multi-racial, multi-faith group of women – students, retirees and every age in between – who came together to find positive ways of building peace in the often difficult weeks leading up to the EDL's visit. We built on each other's skills and networks, understanding that we did not have the luxury of time to build up relationships and trust before acting. Two outside groups that we rapidly learned to trust, and who supported us throughout, were the council and the police.

The Thursday before was spent cutting ribbon while learning our newly composed Peace Song (Thanks, Annie). On Friday morning some women began tying ribbons to lamp-posts and such street furniture throughout the city while the rest gave out Peace Ribbons to passing shoppers. Many received them eagerly. A few marched past stony-faced. Many felt that nothing could be done. My cheeks began to ache from smilingly saying, 'Yes there is, you can wear this ribbon to show that we want peace and that we're better than

all that'. I was enormously encouraged by how many people, young and old, black, brown or white, seemed to believe me, and to go away slightly hopeful and sporting their green ribbon. My husband at the other end of town mid-morning reported a fair sprinkling of ribbons visible. Every half an hour or so, as quickly as the ball of ribbon could be wound up again, we formed a circle and sang and threw big balls of ribbon across the circle to build a peace web. Soon, not only shoppers but also police officers and taxi-drivers were sporting green ribbons. In addition, green banners and drapes were hanging from buildings near the proposed EDL site. I was as high as a kite and took several days to come down to earth.

Saturday's events were well publicised. I went from prayers at the cathedral to the peace carnival at the top of the town, where there were several Quakers, to the 'We are Bradford' event at the bottom, where Bradford Women for Peace's banner was received with grins from the police and cheers from the demonstrators. My husband listened to the EDL speeches: much the same as any speeches at any demo with the usual minority looking for trouble. A lesson there too.

By nightfall Asian families were bringing the police *Iftari*: food from the meal breaking their Ramadan fast – quite unimaginable even a few years ago. Many ghosts have been laid to rest, and Bradfordians can look to the future to work together to resolve our many problems.

Eithne Dodwell

Eithne Dodwell is a member of Bradford Meeting. Bradford Women for Peace met in the Joseph Rowntree rooms at the Carlisle Road Business Centre in Bradford.



Hard choices

I have deep sympathy for the people of Claudy learning that one of the IRA unit that devastated their village and their lives in 1972 was probably a Roman Catholic priest, James Chesney. Bereaved people know how, long after they have come to some terms with their loss, there is a sudden stab of pain when the memory is touched. What must they feel after this revelation?

And how should the rest of us react to the news that our government conferred secretly with the Catholic authorities and agreed to him being moved, immune, across the Irish border? Friends might point to our testimonies to integrity and truth and agree that it was 'a shady deal'. But it is very easy to indulge in moral indignation about a choice that was not ours. 'Lucky Quakers', one of Hitler's opponents once said, 'to have the luxury of keeping their hands clean!'

In 1971 the Ulster government had introduced internment without trial for suspected terrorists. It was a massive failure as many innocent people were arrested, while most of the IRA escaped and armed loyalists were not even on the police list. 1972 was the year of the Bloody Sunday killings by the British army in Derry, recently described by David Cameron as 'unjustified... unjustifiable and wrong'. The Catholic

community was seething with resentment, and the possibility of sectarian war closer than at any other time. The Protestants were angry too because Edward Heath's government had just decided to suspend the government they dominated, which had existed since 1921. William Whitelaw became Secretary of State to run the Province.

It seems there was not enough evidence to convict James Chesney. He could have been interned, but that would be neither proof of guilt nor judicial punishment. It is hardly surprising if Whitelaw recognised that this would increase Catholic resentment while possibly inciting loyalist gunmen to attack other Catholic priests who in general were trying to reduce the violence. In the circumstances a deal with Cardinal Conway may have seemed the most responsible choice.

I cannot condemn these two men, though I don't condone them either. When people are drawn (however reluctantly) into situations where evil is at work, there may come a point where all the options are bad. This has happened to me, so (without excusing wrongdoing) I hope I can find a deep compassion for everyone involved.

John Lampen

On the edge of the inside

David Saunders considers the Franciscan priest Richard Rohr's message and its links with Quakerism

At a recent conference at Swanwick, Richard Rohr described his position within the Roman Catholic church as 'On the edge of the inside'. The conference theme was: 'The Emerging Church' – a church of people who go beyond dualistic, mind-centred thinking.

Something is stirring among the Roman Catholic faithful. Richard Rohr strikes a chord with those in his church who yearn for a less rigid, less top-down, less dogmatic faith, and who are seeking ways to respond to this moving of the Spirit.

The conference, under the theme of 'Emerging Church', offered a rediscovery of what it means to go beyond dualist, literalist, mind centred thinking and back into experience and a Spirit-based, living in the present, moment. It was quite an experience being in a minority of four Quakers among such a large group of predominantly Roman Catholic 'lay' people.

Rohr does not see this as the start of a new denomination, rather as a movement of the Spirit in many denominations witnessing to the true meaning of Jesus' teaching. 'How could the church have got Jesus so wrong?' he asks. But his critique of church orthodoxy is

generous: he asserts: 'the best critique of the bad is the practice of the good' – just get on and do it, be it, live it!

So what were four Quakers doing there? For some of us it was the inspiration of Richard Rohr's pioneering work; but his affirmation that Jesus was teaching nonviolence, simplicity of life style, peacemaking and love of creation also chimes well with our testimonies.

Friends are rightly enthusiastic about the treasure we hold and should share with others. Are we also big enough to acknowledge that we may have something to learn from, and hopefully something to contribute to, this emerging church? Right at the heart (and he told us how as a novice Franciscan he was taught to bow low enough so his head was lower than his heart!) of Rohr's teaching is the person of Jesus, a Jesus who was inclusive, who ministered to the poor, the social outcasts, the sick and for whom justice and love were central. We just need to listen: 'with the ear of the heart'.

The key that unlocks all this for Richard Rohr is the recovery of the contemplative dimension to our

spiritual lives. A dimension lost for centuries. And for him that means an acceptance of the power of metaphor, myth and paradox (all anathema to the dualistic mind!) in our spiritual understandings. But this is no mooning escape to the cloister. It is, as the mystics of all religions discovered, to see the Divine all around us, to rise above mental, intellectual critiques, to see the glory of God shining in others, and to respond to the cries of our brothers and sisters for justice; so reminiscent of the twentieth-century Quaker mystic Thomas Kelly, who believed we could carry a continuing awareness of the presence of God into our busy, daily, socially active lives.

Describing the training work undertaken at the centre he founded in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the 'Centre for Action and Contemplation', he mentioned the importance of: 'speaking Truth to Power, as the Quakers say'. He clearly has our measure.

As Friends we are exhorted to be 'Open to new light, from whatever source it may come'. So keep a look out, Friends, for signs of the emerging church, it may be somewhere near you, and possibly even in your local Roman Catholic congregation. And it may offer new light for us, too!

Ministry

I've been known to joke that if all our tummy-gurgling ministry in all our Meetings was laid end to end, it would reach right back to 1652. Babies, however, should be taken seriously. They may not, Oliver Robertson (*27 August*) suggests, discern a message from God or a spiritual insight that they feel they must express, though I don't think we should underestimate a baby's capacity for a spiritual life – it just wouldn't be like ours. But when a Friend refers to baby-noises as ministry, they're likely to be reminding us that children are welcome in our Meetings for Worship and that we should accept them as they are. Making baby-noises is what babies do, and must if they are to develop as they should. The reference to ministry may also support parents who are feeling self-conscious and maybe even (I hope not!) guilty about their baby's contribution to the silence. There's also the opportunity for the presence of a baby to draw into the silence of the Meeting influences and thoughts provoking what we would all be happy to describe as ministry.

Gwen Jones

Harlow Local Meeting

You will no doubt receive many replies to Oliver Robertson on ministry. Like him, I don't believe that a baby is compelled by God to utter, so why do I find acceptable the ministry he doesn't understand? For me it is a) an acknowledgement that the baby is as much a member (small m, admittedly!) of the Meeting, and as welcome, as the rest of us and b) maybe not in 'right ordering', but an offering of loving Friendship to the parent who may be embarrassed by the baby's 'contribution'.

Jean Daintree

7 Burlington Court, Burlington Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 1JT

I think that Friends may simply be rejoicing in the presence of new young people in the Meeting. After all, they are our future.

Marie Hay

Swarthmoor Meeting

First 100 days

Simon Beard has rather a rose coloured view of how government actions measure up against our testimonies (*27 August*).

Simon gives the government an 'A' for simplicity, mainly on the basis of the moves to cut government debt. While it is right that debt should be reduced, the rate and indiscriminate way this is being done is likely to be very damaging. Many of the areas being cut provide vital services to the most vulnerable in society. While the aim of reducing the number of people on

benefits is good, this is only acceptable if there are adequately paid, meaningful and on-going jobs in all areas of the country. The major spending cuts are likely to lead in practice to fewer jobs. Simon implies that a 'bonfire of regulations' is a wholly beneficial move to simplicity. Most regulations have some justification, and a bonfire of regulations is likely to scrap useful ones as well as outdated ones. Previous efforts led to some disasters – for example, abolishing regulations on the treatment of cattle food was probably the final step that led to BSE.

On equality, where Simon gives the government a 'B', the recent report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (previously always referred to by the Conservative press as 'the respected think tank, the IFS') shows that the overall effect of the government measures will impact on the poor much more than the better off in society.

Before we could give the government a better report, it would need to really tackle inequalities and drive for real sustainability, as well as following policies that promote peace.

Martin Quick

Stroud Meeting

Like Martina Weitsch (*letters, 3 September*), I was very surprised at the high marks given to the coalition government in relation to Quaker testimony.

On simplicity, I would add to Martina's well-taken points that 'holding a bonfire of regulations' is hardly to be commended on grounds of simplification, given that it was deregulation that allowed bankers and other financial dealers to get us into our current very complicated fiscal mess in the first place. A free-for-all for the very rich to avoid their fair share of taxes and to weave obfuscatory accounting webs around their lucrative deals is a strange version of simplicity.

But the real surprise was the 'B' awarded for equality, given the introduction of a set of policies that all objective assessments agree are set to penalise the poorest very heavily while leaving the wealthy almost untouched. Not only that, but widespread closure of public services will create higher unemployment and more poor families, with less entitlement to benefits in future.

Not only does the government get a fail grade on equality from me – I'm afraid Simon Beard himself gets a 'could do better'!

Stevie Krayer

South Wales Area Meeting

Faith not charity

I was heartened to read the two letters published this week under the heading 'faith not charity' (Roger Wilson, Ian Watson, *3 September*): they demonstrated how Area Meetings are working out the implications

for their governance of the appointment of Area Meeting trustees. This is an on-going process for all of us, and we all have much to learn.

I never felt that the Charity Commission wished to impose a system of governance upon the Society. Rather, their representatives emphasised that members of the Society should be clear – and the public should also be able to be clear – just where responsibility for various aspects of our governance lies.

They never suggested that we should adopt a model that is common in secular charities in which policy making is the role of an executive committee (acting as its trustees), which is then held to account by the membership in an annual general meeting. I prefer to hold fast to the idea that our decision making lies within the gathered Meeting for Worship for Business: the appointed trustees try to ensure that the Meeting receives appropriate legal and financial guidance, and they take a role in ensuring that, when carrying out its various functions, the Meeting fulfils its various legal obligations.

John Phillips

South East Scotland Area Meeting

Faith and practice revisions

On 24 August Sidmouth Meeting spent over an hour, after Meeting for Worship, discussing the suggested revised wordings for 16.26 in *Quaker faith & practice*. We reached a great deal of agreement, and are sending some ideas to our Area Meeting. But we did not discuss the use of the word ‘marriage’ for same-sex partnerships, as it was not in the remit. Nevertheless, our oldest (and revered) member pointed out that ‘marriage’ refers to the partnership of a man and a woman within which children are expected to be raised, in other words that marriage is not just a word for a partnership but for a potential family. I am sure that many Friends will, like me, have heard and honoured the conviction which came to Yearly Meeting 2009 that equality demands the use of the word ‘marriage’. So I found myself asking, if YM was truly led, as I think it was, whether the word was a temporary necessity rather than the right word for all time.

I thought of the many couples I have known who have been saddened, sometimes anguished, because they have failed the expectations of their own parents in their desire for grandchildren. Maybe we need to find a word that applies to all couples, whatever their sexuality that does not presuppose children. But I also thought that the decision of 2009 had jolted many Friends into giving more serious consideration to the matter of equal treatment of the commitment of partners, whether of the same or opposite sex, and that, I believe, is for our good as a community. Perhaps when we have lived with the word marriage for a few years,

we might be able to coin or find a word that applies to all committed couples, and leaves them entirely free to decide their own calling, whether to have children (by natural means or by adoption) or not.

Janet Webber

Sidmouth Meeting

Quaker Business Method

I am afraid that Roger Hill and the person he referred to in his letter (13 August) laboured under a sad and dangerous misapprehension. There never was a ‘Quaker tradition’ of one voice of dissent causing a Quaker action to be stopped. Were it to have been so Quakers would have never decided anything!

The Quaker Business Method is much subtler than this. To do it justice really demands an essay rather than a brief letter, but let me try.

Once the facts of the matter under consideration have been presented and questions of fact have been dealt with the Meeting moves to a weighing of those facts, with Friends contributing their insights in love and having them received in love. Gradually a ‘feeling of the Meeting’ will emerge that the clerk will attempt to catch in a minute offered to the Meeting. It is during this stage of the exercise that some Friends will begin to sense that their own insight is at lesser or greater variance with that developing ‘feeling’; experienced Friends may well be moved to assist the Meeting, and especially the clerk, by openly acknowledging this.

Unity, not *uniformity*, then comes in the acceptance of the minute finally agreed. It may not be the *right* minute for each individual Friend; it may not be the minute the clerk wished or expected to write; but it is acknowledged to be the *right* minute for *this* particular meeting at *this* particular time. If *unity* on the minute covers a lack of unanimity among Friends, that lack of *unanimity* should, rightly used, be a growing point for the Meeting.

The over-arching purpose is that all is done that the will of God may prevail rather than the desires of humans.

Roy Payne

Mary Grove Villa, St Julian’s Avenue, Ludlow SY8

1ET

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 Please include your full postal address and telephone number and a reference (issue, title) to articles.
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Faith or charity?

Charity legislation: undermining or spotlighting?

Bob Johnson argues that charity legislation undermines Quaker ways (27 August), but I believe that charity legislation merely shines a spotlight on a deeper threat, one alluded to in an earlier letter by Roger Hill that Quakers have already largely abandoned and forgotten Quaker ways.

In explaining why I disagree with Bob's analysis let me start with a point of agreement, Bob's description of 'Yearly Meeting in session' as a fluid, changeable, unpredictable 'authority'.

A wonderful description of an event, which I agree is vitally important and a living practical embodiment of a view that life is sacramental, not text. However, Yearly Meeting in session was a stage in a process:

- ⇒ A small community of Friends met weekly in preparation for a Meeting with a wider community of Friends (Preparative Meeting). Communally they made decisions in matters solely relating to their own activities.
- ⇒ The wider community of Friends, where all were members, met monthly (Monthly Meetings) to share their joys, problems, decisions and so on and to make decisions on matters affecting their wider community. Individual members' concerns were rigorously tested and either rejected at the membership level or, if supported and felt sufficiently important, forwarded to...
- ⇒ An even wider group of Friends who met quarterly (Quarterly Meetings). This meeting further tested the concern and if they supported it then it went to Yearly Meeting.

This system of progressive mutual decision making (governance) required discipline, hence *Quaker faith* &

practice, a book of discipline. It also required Friends to trust that decisions taken in session at any level were in right ordering and binding on the membership. This inherited system has largely been abandoned.

The various charity acts, contrary to Bob's article, do not require the appointment of named individuals, nor indeed do they try to tie responsibility to named individuals. The acts allow all the members to be the responsible trustees. The recommendation to appoint named trustees came from Friends House and was a pragmatic response to identifying those disciplined enough to accept responsibility for decisions taken. In putting forward this suggestion they recognised the twin dangers of either a trustee dictatorship or ineffective trustees trying to get consensus on who should change the light bulb. They did trust (mistakenly?) that even Quakers could avoid these.

There are alternatives to the suggestion, for example:

- insist on all members attending business sessions and cancelling the membership of the undisciplined or
- naming the members in attendance at a Business Meeting. The legal responsibility may still rest with the entire membership but at least the members would know who had taken the decision on their behalf. We would of course have to relearn trust, rather than the current situation where members often don't accept the validity of a decision unless they were personally involved. How many attend and get involved?

The charity acts do require the production of a set of accounts showing a true and fair view of the organisation, the body of which there are members



Photo: Fran Lane, 2007.

(Monthly Meeting, now Area Meeting – AM).

I have been monitoring Area Meeting accounts for a number of years now and prior to the 2006 Act around eighty per cent were not fit for purpose. Contrast this with the meticulous record keeping of early Friends, for example, the accounts kept by Elizabeth Fry.

In many cases accounts were not produced for the entire Area Meeting. They were usually produced at Preparative Meeting (now Local Meeting – LM) level, reflecting the drift to congregationalism. Finance was a taboo subject, with members in one LM concealing their finances from fellow members in other LMs. On one occasion when helping a new treasurer, we were puzzled by the fact that a large sum of money held on deposit did not appear in the accounts presented by the outgoing treasurer. When we queried this we were told that this was the LM's reserves and the members should not be told about it as they would spend it. Thanks to the act most AMs now produce proper accounts but it is still a delicate issue. Ask any treasurer about presenting accounts. It is like bringing steak tartare to a vegan bring and share meal.

Bob goes on to cite Meeting for Sufferings (Yearly Meeting between sessions) as under threat from a structure of trustees. Yes, I agree, there is a danger but look at the recent history of Meeting for Sufferings.

Prior to the 1993 Act, Meeting for Sufferings primarily acted as Yearly Meeting between sessions. The trustee role for the centrally managed work was largely exercised by Quaker Finance and Property Central Committee (QFaP).

With the definition in the 1993 Act that 'those persons having the general control and management

of the administration of the charity are the trustees', Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) decided that they and not QFaP were the trustees of the centrally managed work. This dual role was confusing and MfS ended up spending the majority of its time attempting to be trustees, a role for which a body of around two trustees for each employee is singularly ill equipped to do.

At the same time members' concerns were often being received by MfS without being tested. Local Friends were too often unaware of the testing process, or too averse to plain speaking, to tell a concerned Friend they could be mistaken.

These concerns were often sent by MfS directly into the Friends House pinball machine where they would bounce around between staff and committees before being either tagged on to existing work, thus further diluting its rationale, or falling into the dead ball zone for recycling at regular intervals.

The segregation of Friends House from Yearly Meeting (all of us) should in theory make things clearer, but many Friends regard Friends House as:

- them up there at head office from whence comes our tablets of stone and/or
- a mysterious black hole sucking in finance and energy.

Friends House works on behalf of Yearly Meeting and we should trust the trustees and staff to decide what work they can and cannot do and to take responsibility for their decisions. They should not dictate Quaker ways. *That is our responsibility.*

David Holmes
Fritchley Meeting

One Meeting's decision

Bob Johnson has raised (27 August) important questions about our relation to charity law. The working group in my own Area Meeting, of which I was co-clerk, struggled with this in the preparation of the necessary proposals and documentation for registration under the 2006 Charity Act.

Registration did not change our being subject to charity law. It is my view that whether the 'explicit and legal threat' to which Bob refers is a real danger to Quaker discernment or not depends to a large extent on how each responsible body (whether Area Meeting or Yearly Meeting) relates to its trustees. When Meeting for Sufferings acquired the role of trustees for the central work twenty-four years ago, it remained accountable to Yearly Meeting. It is for trustees to act for and on behalf of their responsible body. They may have legal powers to act independently but the terms of reference we drew up in Bristol Area Meeting make it clear that: 'the primary duties of [the Trustees] are to be the custodian of the object of the Area Meeting, and to ensure that the priorities and work discerned by Area Meeting in session from time to time are carried out'. Significantly, we placed that before '... to ensure that the governance and management of the work are being properly carried out and that property and money are managed in an efficient and prudent manner consistent with the object of the Area Meeting'. The emphasis is on the object of the Area Meeting and we have taken the view that, subject to trustees' advice, it is for the Area Meeting to discern the working out in practice of its object.

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Our charitable status gives Friends considerable benefit from the state, notably in the exemption from income tax, both on our own activities and on the donations we receive from those members who are taxpayers. It also allows us to receive money from other charities. In return it is reasonable that we should accept the operation of charity law although there may be occasions when we are led

to challenge or test the law; we have an honourable history of doing so. Some have suggested we should give ourselves more freedom of action by renouncing our charitable status. Maybe we could do so, but we would then have to give all our present property and financial resources to another charity since they were given to us as a charity in the past.

So, how do we see to it that our reliance on our Quaker processes of discernment is not suborned by the 'dead hand of the law'? We should keep the issue and the dangers in our minds and concentrate on maintaining a proper relationship between our trustees and the Quaker Meeting to which they are accountable. To operate effectively trustees must have a considerable degree of delegation but their decisions should always be made in the light of their understanding of the discernment of the parent body. They and the parent body must exercise constant vigilance. If they reach different conclusions, Friends' tradition and experience is that the discernment process is not complete.

Roger Sturge
Bristol Area Meeting

Trustees: continuity or change?

In his article 'Faith not Charity' (27 August) Bob Johnson comments upon how our structure with trustees poses a threat to our important process of wide consultation to find unity before action.

Reading the Interim Report of the Review Group (for Sufferings and the Trustees) it is hard to find a coherent pattern of organisation in the structure of the Yearly Meeting. The heart of the problem seems to be what to do with Meeting for Sufferings now that, with the appointment of trustees, its role of governance (*Quaker faith & practice* 7.02) has been taken over and its role as the principal channel of communication from Local Meetings to Yearly Meeting, is questioned (report section 5.2).

In the YM Epistle for 2006 there is a clear distinction between the roles of Sufferings and of the Trustees. Sufferings 'had been freed' from the role of Trusteeship 'to take a visionary and prophetic role for the life of the YM...'

In response Sufferings minuted that it should 'become a vehicle for transformation of ourselves and of the Society as a whole. There should be exciting change. Sufferings should offer spiritual leadings'. Now whether the membership is qualified to do that is questioned (4.2).

There seems to have been little hard thought as to how a body of 180 Friends (or even the ninety now proposed), meeting for a day six to eight times a year, was to be structured to achieve that and paragraph 3.5 implies that it has not happened. It is hard to see how it could have happened unless Sufferings had set up a sub-committee, meeting more frequently, to examine issues and make recommendations for it to consider. Such a body could replace the Quaker Life Central Committee, the need for which is questioned (paragraph 3.7).

As things stand it would seem to me that, contrary to Quaker practice, the trustees have become both a 'Board' and an 'Executive', occasionally consulting Sufferings before approving operational plans (report section 3.6). In accordance with the spirit of the mandate, apart from overseeing the resources available, trustees should not, as a body, be directly involved in the life of the 'church', which, coming under the mandate of Sufferings, could continue to find unity in the traditional way. The spiritual life of the 'church' is the priority activity in the 'Framework for Action' and should have dedicated attention.

**Edward Hoare
Mid-Somerset AM**

Relevant extracts from The Interim Report (see www.quaker.org.uk/Trusteesandsufferingsreview)

- 3.5 We see room for further development of the dialogue between MfS and Yearly Meeting Trustees. We welcome the considerations by Trustees, which led to their minute 17 of March 2010 (see *Agenda Supplement 2 to Documents in Advance for Yearly Meeting 2010*) which demonstrate the ongoing need to connect vision with strategy and with operations. However, this minute may indicate that Trustees have felt the need to develop long term vision for the centrally managed work in the absence of an adequate vision from Yearly Meeting and MfS.
- 4.2 A great many friends are involved in the central work and structures. Far more turn down offers of service, and even more are never approached to serve. If central structures are slimmed down, then fewer Friends will be involved in this work. However, while committees and trustees are the vehicles for ensuring that Friends take the key decisions, the idea of participation is far wider. The 'Mode of Working' section of the Framework for Action is very clear about the emphasis desired: instead of strait jacketing Friends into governance roles we need to find ways of channelling their enthusiasm and skills. The Quaker Life Network and the Quaker Life Representative Council are examples of ways of developing participation.
- 5.2 Although one of the functions of MfS is "to foster communication throughout the Yearly Meeting" and, indeed, one of the reasons for not reducing the size in 2005 was that an expanded communication role was envisaged, we question whether MfS should be seen as having a major role in communication between "Friends House" and the area/local meetings or individual Friends.

Comment



Is religion good for your health?

You may think this a ridiculous question – either because the answer is obvious, or because of the assumptions it makes about religion. You may wonder how religion turned into a medicine. However, this subject has been studied extensively in the United States, and is receiving increasing attention in the UK.

When Christopher Jamieson explored *Finding Happiness*, he claimed that it came from cultivation of the virtues, those spiritual qualities ‘from which all our actions spring’. Nowadays the search for virtue has been largely overtaken by the concept of wellbeing, of which health is a significant component. The research findings show pretty consistently that people who go to church have a clearer sense of identity, more social contacts and greater optimism than those who don’t. Koenig’s book, *The healing power of faith*, goes further, listing benefits such as greater longevity and less depression, heart disease and stress. In some ways this isn’t surprising. Church-goers get out more, engage with more people and have a supportive network. They have – as we now say – more social capital.

There’s some similarity here with the British Quakers I’ve interviewed. They talked of the value of ‘being with people I can trust’; being supported when sick; of ‘belonging to a family’. Being part of a Quaker Meeting gives opportunities for service, causes to support, a sense of community. All these factors contribute to personal wellbeing, but we have to admit that many might also be found in a secular group.

Health and wellbeing are, of course, important contributions to overall happiness, but in equating wellbeing and religion aren’t we missing the point? Isn’t religion basically about relationships; relationships with God and with one another? Quakerism has never been strong on doctrine, emphasising, instead, experience, especially the possibility of direct experience of God. There is a mystery at its heart. It isn’t a medicine or an insurance system. Wellbeing may be an outcome of religion, but it’s not its purpose.

Peggy Heeks
Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting



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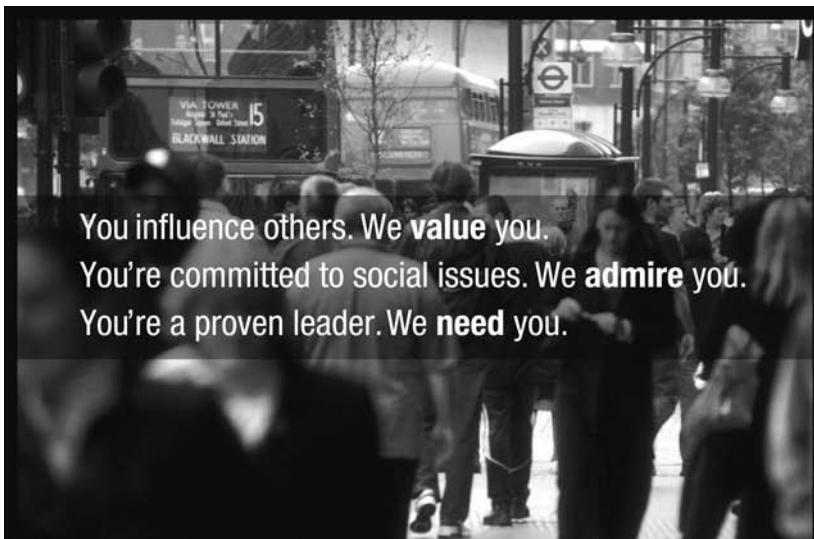
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The Othona Community and Quakers



Photo: Chelmsfordblue/flickr CC:BY

St Peter's Chapel, Bradwell on Sea, Essex, was built in 654 by St Cedd, Bishop of the East Saxons. The oldest stone church still in use in England; it stands by the sea on the Essex marshes.

St Peter's on the Wall, the spiritual home of the Othona Community, is at Bradwell on Sea in Essex. It has been the subject of an article, about Meeting for Worship at St Peter's on the Wall (20 August), and a subsequent letter, concerning the Othona Community (27 August). It is interesting to reflect that Quakers have been involved with the Othona community from the start.

Anglican priest Norman Motley had the idea for an ecumenical community while serving as an RAF chaplain in the second world war. He started a discussion group for all ranks and called it the Answer Back Meeting at which servicemen and women could ask questions, such as 'Why does a loving God allow suffering and evil? Another of the frequently asked questions concerned the fragmented nature of the church: 'Where is the evidence for one unifying spirit?' At that time, for example, Roman Catholics were forbidden to say the Lord's prayer with other believers. At the end of the war, after Hiroshima and with millions of refugees homeless, Motley was also challenged by issues of peace and reconciliation.

Appointed vicar at Stisted, near Braintree, Essex, he began looking for a suitable site to start a community and eventually settled on Bradwell, and Othona opened its doors for the first time in July 1946. The first visitors included German PoWs and Russian and French refugee children.

Among those recruited to help was John Hoyland (above right), Quaker and pioneer of the International Voluntary Service for Peace. In his history of Othona, *Much Ado About Something*, Motley called Hoyland, 'A spiritual giant'. 'He had spent years in India and knew such people as CF Andrews and Mahatma Gandhi. Hoyland... was involved in many progressive

movements... He could be described as granite on fire... He worked hard physically and led parties in most of the projects which required muscle power. At the same time his lectures were within reach of every person present and the children especially loved him... He was a person of infinite moral and physical courage and among the gentlest men I have ever met. His impression on the early days of the community was incalculable.'



Courtesy the Friends House Library.

When Motley moved to the parish of Manor Park, near Ilford, he met 'an old Quaker, Bert Shipley, who had been a champion boxer in the Navy. He lived with his mother in the top flat of the rectory. In spite of his age he was youth leader and at the tougher end of the parish cut much ice'. Bert and other members of the church staff were keen supporters of the community at Bradwell.

In 1965 Motley opened Othona's sister community at Burton Bradstock, Dorset, and in 1982 'a path giving wheelchair access around the extension was completed by a Quaker work group'.

Norman Motley died in 1980 but the book is brought up to date with three new chapters in which it is noted that 'in 2006 our Friend Ruth Bull, of Maldon Local Meeting, became chair of the Bradwell development committee and part-time development manager.'

**Laurie Andrews
Mid-Essex Area Meeting**

Births

Delilah Norah PRAGER 28 July to Fynn Prager and Lauren Movius, in Los Angeles. Granddaughter for Juliet Prager and Andi Noble; great-granddaughter for Norah Noble and Madeleine Prager.

Deaths

Marjory STEVENS 31 August, after a short illness. Member of Peterborough Meeting, formerly of Aberdeen and Westminster Meetings. Aged 90. Funeral at Peterborough Crematorium, 3pm Tuesday 14 September. Enquiries Alison Langford: 01733 262137, mickandalison@ntlworld.com

Memorial meetings

Pamela WILLIAMS A Memorial Meeting for Pamela will be held at Bull Street Meeting House, Birmingham (B4 6AF) at 3pm Sunday 19 September. Further details from Robert Morris: 0121 444 6767 or robcemorris@blueyonder.co.uk

Diary

17TH CENTURY ADDERBURY MEETING HOUSE Hardly changed since 1675. Meeting for Worship 2.30pm, third Sunday each month. Banbury Friends warmly welcome visitors. Details/directions: (OX17 3EU) Jane Burn 01869 277770. Email: janebburn@gmail.com Judith Mason (clerk) 01295 720900.

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INTRODUCTION TO EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT

New Jordans Programme Day Retreat with Catherine King Ambler and Hilary Pinder at Jordans Meeting House, 10am-4pm, Friday 8 October. Enquiries to Cáit Gould: office@newjordans.org Tel. 01494 876594.

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.

QUAKER WOMENS GROUP.

Residential weekend 24-26 September, Glasgow FMH. £20 women; £10 child. Sewing the Quaker Tapestry Way. Kits available from Quaker Tapestry, Kendal (www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk). More info/bookings by 17 September: Kate Arnot, tel 01324 635582, k.arnot@btinternet.com

QUAKER WOMEN SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE (QWSCSA).

Meeting at Friends House on Saturday 11 September. Room 17. 10.30 for 11 until 4. Shared lunch. Details 01480 413413.

Notices on this page

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 morning.

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20.10.2010

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