

Dear Friends,

Our son's school is in the middle of a big transformation. Over seven years we are doubling in size – growing from a single-form entry school to two-form entry. The cosiness and intimacy that have distinguished the school for many years will change, and we are all pulling together to try to keep this special sense of closeness as we grow into a bigger and more diverse community.

As a governor at the school, I am helping to review our Core Values, which underly all that we do in class, in sports and at play. To kick-start this review, we are bringing together families and friends of the school to share what the Core Values mean to them and how they manifest at school and beyond. We will start next week at the 'Big Draw', where we hope conversations will flow naturally when we are drawing and making things together. After half-term, our dance teacher will lead a workshop to help us widen and deepen these explorations through dancing and moving with one another.

Last week I visited Rotterdam for the first time. Significant parts of the city were rebuilt after the Second World War, resulting in a wide variety of architectural styles in every corner. Despite the diversity, there is a sense of underlying unity in the city. Our guide showed us how the designers of different buildings and spaces sought to relate their forms and uses to one another in each context.

These spatial and visual connections were not obvious: were it not for the guide's narrative, I would not have noticed them consciously or been able to articulate them. The gift of this urban literacy enabled us to talk about the creation and the use of these spaces, and how we can create more of them in future.



As a relatively new and modern religious society, one that's growing and evolving, how do we nourish our closeness to one another and to God? How do we strengthen our underlying unity in ways that free us all to embody that of God on Earth?

In Friendship,
Jennifer Mui, editor

The Getting of Wisdom

Heather Mary NicMillan



Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not;
neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee:
love her and
she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom and
with all thy getting, get understanding.

Exalt her and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee one
to honour when thou dost embrace her.

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory
shall she deliver to thee.

Proverbs 4:5-9.

My favourite short definition of a Quaker is that we believe whoever asks the guidance of God, and is prepared to accept it, will receive it. The crux of the matter, of course, comes with the proviso '*and is prepared to accept it.*'

'Preparedness', in some form or other, would seem to be integral to the Quaker Way. We prepare for worship through 'patience', 'waiting', and 'stillness'. Until relatively recently, Local Meetings were known as 'Preparative', a preparation for the 'Monthly' (now Area) Meeting. The most quoted of the *Advices and Queries* is probably the encouragement to '*come (to meeting for worship) with hearts and minds prepared.*'

Humankind being, as Pascal reminds us, 'a thinking reed', the preparation of our minds may not be too taxing an endeavour, but what of the heart? May not our very status as 'a thinking reed' prejudice us in favour of the development of the mind at the expense of the heart?

The narrator(s) of the First Book of Kings chart(s) the growth of

Solomon's renown for his wisdom. This wisdom, we learn, was a gift from God, because, on assuming the kingship and being assured of having anything he wanted, Solomon opted for 'an understanding heart' to discern between good and evil. Knowledge alone, he realised, was not going to be enough; something more would be needed, even if he wasn't quite sure what. Knowledge might well advise that, in a case of doubtful ownership, for example, equal shares would constitute a fair solution: only heart (understanding) could discern that a mother would renounce all claim to possession rather than that her child be harmed. Hence God's 'amendment' of the request to a 'wise and understanding heart'.

How then do we keep these two – heart and mind – in balance? Perhaps the key rests with the concept of openness – open-heartedness, open-mindedness – herein is equality. Openness, in worship and in meeting for worship, to the silence, to the spoken word, to the companionship of others, to the flowers and the texts on the table, to the curiosity of our children, the sunlight filtering through the windows, the tiles on the floor or the pattern of the carpet, to the myriad of ways that our Gracious Creator seeks unendingly to minister to us.

Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many.

Proverbs 4:10

*Heather Mary NicMillan is a free Quaker and lives
just outside Warrington, in North Cheshire.*

Together... for worship

Roger Ferguson

Meeting for worship is based on silence, a silent waiting, and spoken ministry comes out of the silence. There is no place for prepared ministry: what needs to be prepared is heart and mind, as was said in meeting recently with reference to *Advices and Queries* no.9.

There is a heavy responsibility on those who minister, as they must not only test whether what they say is impelled upon them, but also whether it will be helpful to others. This requires great sensitivity and a deep awareness of those who are silently gathered. Meeting for worship has what I like to describe as a golden thread which links together the silence and the ministry. It is not helpful when spoken contributions cover a variety of subjects or when there is lengthy ministry which monopolises the whole meeting. This does harm to the gathered silence.

At our meeting it seems we have entered a period of infrequent spoken ministry, and when there is ministry it is often given by the same Friends. Each of us, however, is advised not to assume that vocal ministry is never to be our part but to pray that our ministry will be from deep experience trusting that words will be given to us. Spoken ministry is part of the process of being gathered and listening to the inner voice. We have at Bromley the 'Afterword', which immediately follows meeting for worship and allows spoken contributions to be made that are not thought appropriate for the period of worship.

Recently there were several spontaneous, joyous and meaningful contributions in the Afterword and I wondered why they had not been considered appropriate as ministry. When we leave meeting we will have experienced a gathering together, but might that also be a meeting with the spirit of God where 'the true message will win its way by love'?

Roger Ferguson is a member South East London Area Meeting.

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Becoming ghosts

for David

When we walk the well-known street
and are unremarked, as often,
and hand in hand, as often,
we'll pause – first at the baker's,
then where the gleam of cherries
glows invitation
– we will not go in.
Instead we will watch the swans
manage the crossing of cygnets
from pond to island grass.
We'll stop, look up at the flat,
recall those languorous mornings,
those skin-close nights
in the heat –
and I hope we'll wish good luck
to the strangers within.
We'll hear the babble of drinkers;
among them we'll buy nothing
but drift, still hand in hand,
to the river and stroll
printless on mud
where the tide will remind us
the cormorant's scribble is lost
and even the laden water
swept out to sea and back
is never the same –
and I'll turn, you'll turn
so we're facing each other.
We'll smile, with our hands still clasped.
We will walk on together.

Kathleen Bell is a member of Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Area Meeting.

Yearly Meeting Gathering, University of Warwick 2017

Jenny Kay

The Gathering has been well-reported in *The Friend*, and the talks are available on Quaker websites along with the minutes and the epistle. The Salter Lecture given by Molly Scott Cato, 'Brexit, Chilcot and the Role of Conscience in the Political Life', is one I warmed to especially as I am still coming to terms with the future loss of my European citizenship.

There was even a drop-in session, led by Oxford Local Meeting for those of us who wanted to express hopes and fears. I listened for a while but as I didn't stay to the end I don't know if there was an outcome. Later in the week I learned that Sarah Dodgson has received an Eva Koch scholarship to explore how and why Quakers voted the way they did in the referendum. We filled in her survey form, which can be done online.

There was a good selection of films to watch in the evenings: we took in *Searching for Sugarman* about US singer songwriter Rodriguez, *Hidden Figures*, the story of African American women mathematicians at NASA, and *Moana*, a Disney musical adventure animation.

Making connections with others might just be a brief experience but these occasions all make the event memorable. This year connections were made with Friends from outside our Yearly Meeting. The Friend from Sweden Yearly Meeting staying in our flat was an American who came from Brandywine Country, home of painter Andrew Wyeth, and one of John's favourite artists. We visited the Museum there during our time at Pendle Hill. One afternoon we found ourselves wandering in the craft area with nothing much in mind, when we found a Friend from the American Friends Service Committee putting up an exhibition commemorating its work. We had time to help her hang the large long

posters.

There is always plenty of opportunity to take in new experiences at Gatherings. For us it was the programmed meeting for worship organised by Helen Gretchen of Friends World Committee for Consultation led by Friends from Yearly Meetings in Bolivia, Rwanda, South Africa and India, offering readings from Corinthians and 'prepared ministry'. We sang 'How Great thou art' and 'In Christ there is no East nor west' at the start. The open worship, although relatively short, held some deep silence and ministry. The meeting closed with singing 'A song of Peace', a benediction and closing prayer.

I took the opportunity to try and develop my singing voice at one of the varied sessions held through the week. Following Mig Kerr's relaxing and warming up the voice techniques, using the Natural Voice method we sang harmony songs and rounds concerned with social justice issues. I was then prepared for the musical closing celebrations, where we joined in singing and then listening to the 'scratch orchestra'. The word 'scratch' might have been appropriate at the beginning of the week but the final concert was of a very high standard, helped by Anne Watkinson and her clarinets.

Jenny Kay is a member of South East Anglia Area Meeting.

This article was first published in the newsletter of South East Anglia Area Meeting.

Heart of Oneness, a little book of connection

review by Lynden Easterbrook

My first impression of *Heart of Oneness* was that it was the right book to have come into my hands at this point in my life. It touches on so many of my concerns: the refugee crisis, global warming and the depletion of the Earth's resources, the rise in prejudice in relatively wealthy western countries, the erosion of human rights, the arms trade and the challenge of finding any semblance of inner peace or a way forward in such a world.

I looked forward to reading it; it is a little book, only sixty-six pages, but it was obvious that it was not going to be light-weight, and I took it with me on a week's holiday in a cottage in a remote Scottish glen. I expected spiritual solace, that it would reaffirm and strengthen a sense of my place in the scheme of things, and give me fresh resolve for action in the world. What I hadn't expected was that it would fully address so many interlinked issues, nor that the remote Scottish glen would so beautifully illustrate some of Jennifer Kavanagh's points.

The book describes our divided world, giving well-researched quotes and figures to illustrate the inequality both between and within countries, and to demonstrate how the actions of wealthy countries have a direct impact on the lives of people in developing countries. Jennifer outlines different forms of modern slavery and speaks about countries where child labour is commonplace, and homosexuality is punishable by death. Meanwhile here and in the US, the popular press demonises the homeless, the unemployed, asylum seekers and refugees, people of other nationalities and other faith groups.

Jennifer speaks not just from a wide analysis of the available literature,

but from personal experience. She has volunteered and worked with homeless people, prisoners, asylum seekers and women in rural Africa. She encourages us to see that disadvantaged people are not 'them'; they could be us. And before long I found myself thinking of examples from my own experience to add to the list. Her book was stimulating my mind and setting off trains of thought. I slowed down my reading, and did more thinking.

The book goes on to look at the positive ways in which we are all connected; the groundswell of public support in some cities for refugees, people offering support, donating and volunteering. The thousands who marched in the UK, the US and European cities to say 'we welcome refugees'. The many acts of compassion that occur every day, people, of all faiths and none, making a difference; the way the internet connects us, and the ways we have always been connected, through family, community, spirituality and faith. She reminded me about the people in my life with whom I felt an instant sense of belonging when we first met, and she talked about the deep spiritual connection that can happen in a gathered Quaker meeting for worship, or through distant healing and prayer. Soon after I read her description of synchronicity, the novel I was reading covered the plundering and pollution of the earth due to coal mining in America, and the tag on my herbal teabag read: 'when ego is lost, then universality exists'. Synchronicity in action?

Moving on to other ways we are connected, Jennifer focusses on our relationship with animals and other living things, showing her profound respect for the natural world. She describes how sensitively balanced the ecosystems of our planet are, and how dangerously we meddle with them, risking the lives of future generations through global warming and depletion of the earth's resources. We frequently treat animals as inferior to us when in fact they can learn, they can live in harmony with other life, and they do not despoil the planet. I was reading this section of the book when I watched a chaffinch outside my window trying to peck from a fat-filled half-coconut that as yet had no foothold inside it. It is common to believe that birds cannot reason. How long did it take the chaffinch to work out that it had to stand on top of the coconut and lean forwards to reach the contents? About three minutes.

Jennifer quotes from William Penn writing in 1693 on the unity at the

heart of all faiths: 'The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion'. She encourages us to act from the place of deep connection that we can experience in Meeting for Worship, and to take that way of being out into the world. She speaks of God as the life-force, the spark of the divine that permeates everything, and she points out that we are all different, just as every snowflake is different, and no one of us has to do everything, we are each part of the whole. The problem is huge, but every single thing we do to change makes a difference. There is no such thing as a small piece of work. Listen, she says... listen for your own particular call to action.

So, how did the Scottish glen illustrate Jennifer's points? Glen Affric is home to what remains of the ancient Caledonian Forest; the same trees and plants have grown there since the end of the last Ice Age, ten thousand years ago. Much of it was felled, and the demise of the wolf further upset the ecosystem; herds of deer stripped saplings and destroyed new growth, and the remaining forest started to die. In the 1980s, one man had the vision that we could regenerate the forest using only seeds taken from indigenous trees. He started a charity, Trees for Life, and now teams of volunteers plant, grow, protect and nurture the trees, and the forest is slowly growing again. When I walked in Glen Affric this week I was impacted by the sense of peace and light. Sunshine sparkles through birch, Scots pine and rowan, creating a wealth of undergrowth, of ferns, grasses, blueberry bushes and bog myrtle. Young saplings grow among mature trees. It felt like being in heaven, or rather, being on Earth as it is naturally meant to be, a beautiful, flourishing interconnected place. This forest shows us what is possible when we follow our calling.

I finished the book with a sense of hope. Reading it had strengthened my awareness of all manner of connections: between me and other people, with the natural world and with the Divine. I was reminded that no one of us has to save our planet single-handedly. Through spiritual discernment we can each see the part we have to play, and together we can make a difference. And yes, I felt I received both solace and inspiration from this little book.

Heart of Oneness, a Little Book of Connection by Jennifer Kavanagh is published by John Hunt Publishing, ISBN 978-1785356858, £6.99.

Lynden Easterbrook is a member of North Scotland Area Meeting.

Toddler lessons

Abigail Maxwell



As toddlers, we begin to learn what it means to be human in community. Dissatisfied with the main lesson I took from toddlerhood – that I was worthless, only of value for what I could achieve – I decided to revisit it.

I approach Meeting for Worship in wary humility, as it can be difficult, though worthwhile and sometimes intensely valuable: it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. One Sunday there I found a better Toddler lesson: "I am Human. I am Love, Will, Playfulness, Curiosity, Need, Courage."

My friend objected to the word "need" – it sounds needy. As adults, we satisfy our wants, desires, needs by exchange, generally – even a beggar gives the donor the feeling of being generous. But I have needs: I cannot thrive without company, and challenge. I am Love as God is Love, but I have a strong will to create what seems good to me.

Still in my return to toddlerhood, I thought, 'I want to run across the playground in exhilarated delight.' A child might do that, fall and graze their knee, but if kissed better without too much fuss the pain would be forgotten. Some children are quiet, learning about the world by watching, but the biddable child who plays quietly without bothering the adults displays a debased kind of "good". Perhaps in my excitement I might knock over another child, who would be hurt – if an adult came to deal with that, I would want them to see my good will, my lack of evil intent to the other child, and my own distress. Any attempt to control me would be resented, and defied overtly or covertly. Yet I hope in quiet reflection I could be guided to compunction for the other child. One does not get there immediately, even now.

As you grow up you learn various moral statements about how a

human should be, and most people learn they fall short. Most people can make such statements with firm belief, however little their evidence – this has an evolutionary advantage, as our belief may convince others. “I would never hit anyone,” perhaps qualified by what you would see as morally admirable – “except to defend someone when it was necessary.” Confronted with friends’ fear of my potential violence, I found myself unable to believe such a statement, and so considered those times when I had been assaulted, or sexually assaulted. I had not hit anyone. This does not seem to arise from virtue – pacifism, restraint, whatever – but rather from confusion. The rules weren’t working any more, and I felt lost.

What I had learned about who I am and what I like did not fit me.

“What is your favourite possession?” asked a Friend in a discussion group at Yearly Meeting Gathering. We had various answers, and mine was that I do not have one. I would rather leave people with memories of me than objects. I wondered if that made me Really Really Spiritual. Later, lying in my sleeping bag I thought how much I like my tent. I love all its toggles, zips, pockets and flaps. It is beautifully designed. I looked up at the roof, softly glowing in the dawn, a fine shelter against the rain, and appreciated it.

Someone else asked, “Do you like camping?” Well, I do not like wriggling out of a thirty-year-old sleeping bag, standing up from the ground, and walking a hundred yards to a portalo, but I loved the sight of Venus, which I rarely see. And I love what camping can do for me, letting me stay cheaply where I want to be. Partly it is transactional – what can I achieve – and partly incidentals I could never expect. Walking several hundred yards to the showers in the morning, I felt people in the self-catering groping blearily out of bed would not be thinking, “How beautiful this place is!”

The moral lessons I had picked up did not fit me. I had to get to know myself, as I might another person who never talked about themselves but showed character traits through their actions. I am a process: I take in ideas and impressions, digest them and discard some as I take in food. I am mostly unconscious, and most of my decisions are unconscious.

Paul’s words fit those moral lessons – “I keep my word. I am reliable. I have a sense of my own honour and dignity.” He wrote, I do the very thing I hate. I agree that the law is good. I will what is right, but I cannot

do it. When I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. Who will rescue me from this body of death? That is because the moral lesson is how one should be, an external law, rather than who one is, the internal guidance.

However, there is only me. “I would defend myself if attacked” sounds good – we can debate later what “pacifist” means – but if it is not true of me, that does not make me Bad or Weak, it just means I am myself. This is the route to radical self-acceptance: that I do not have a particular quality does not make me wrong. Instead, I should learn to value the qualities I actually have, and use them to achieve my goals. There is no weakness, only is-ness or me-ness.

We can develop skills. I saw a woman behave with dignity, and thought ruefully it might be nice to have dignity. Yet when I disliked having my bag searched at the museum, my irritation and resistance might come from a sense of self-worth or dignity. Sometimes responses work well, sometimes not. It would be nice not always to be confused and perplexed, but it may not be possible. Georgia O’Keefe wrote, “I’ve been absolutely terrified every moment of my life – and I’ve never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do.” Other people look like swans gliding over the water. I rarely see the frantic work of the webbed feet.

The moral statements I absorbed included ones on manliness, and I rebelled against these by transitioning to female. My friend the poet observed that we in minorities bear the burden of keeping the normal people comfortable, by explaining ourselves or behaving in prescribed ways. My queerness is not weakness or wrongness, just the full glorious diversity of God’s creation. I am who I am.

Abigail Maxwell is a member of Northamptonshire Area Meeting.

My spiritual journey

Ray Green



I am so aware of the contradiction of writing about my spiritual journey. How can I write about a *spiritual* journey?! Using words when the essence is a, mostly, dimly discerned reality, a still, small voice. Then, with fear and trembling, taking actions to follow the leadings, when I cannot be sure, never could, that my actions are 'right actions', not my ego screaming. I have followed my screaming ego down some very dark night of the soul sea passages.

Lucky to survive or Light always walking with me if only I turn to face it? Hear it? If only I could have Damascus Road type meetings with The Light!! Words of flame on my kitchen wall. I have raged and ranted to God, Light, Spirit: "at least be just a little... no... a lot more clear!" But no! Only the sensings and intuitions, the moments of stillness after the storms, or the no-way-out despair which gets transmuted into a sense of rightness; nothing changed but everything seems different. I am also aware that in writing and sharing my own spiritual journey I am not trying to sell a template, or imply "Didn't I do well!?" I am a normal, deeply flawed human being with my shadow side. I shall mix my description of my journey with some of my writings that I hope will illustrate more of the subtle dynamics of the spiritual way.

When did it start? I feel it is wrong to fix the pivotal moments; it has always been, for me, much more fluid and amorphous. My birth was traumatic; forceps and forced. Then my abusive parents and their conditional love, based in Christian dogmatics and on the basis that "we will withdraw our love of you if you do not think, feel and act in the way

we ask of you". Sex and sexuality were taboo. So shame haunted me.

I found solace in the wild places and in connecting with them. *I remember fear always lurking in me. And outside me. I remember escaping from it in my trapping-toxic family home, running across the road, crossing the threshold to a different place, to the welcoming arms of the wild river with soft willows soothing my fear... the wild places nurturing me. In my earliest memories they, my parents, were never there for me. But these my earliest memories have consistently impelled me into crossing thresholds to other wild places: to the welcoming arms of wild rivers with willows, to savage mountain wildernesses, to hear and meet the damaged depths of other souls. In all these wild places I feel truly alive, there is vulnerability but there is no fear, there is no separateness, my soul is singing.*

Another way of connecting with wild places was gifted to me at Junior School. *The sun, pulsing hot that epiphany day, and the white noise chaotic-beating in my mind; no seeming escape from either. I was eleven-years-old and very alone. Sitting in the shade of the solitary oak, he asked us to sketch the scene across the reedy river. Sketch the wild place there. Starting drawing, I slowly crossed a threshold... and entered... a different place. Looking, hearing, in this strange but strangely familiar world, waves of connecting joy and meaning broke into my being. That hot, hot day, the white noise subsided... my fearful, eleven-year-old aloneness was soothed. He opened a portal and meaning-peace flooded in. He said, "Sometimes in life a bell of meaning sounds; listen to it because it is telling you something vital". I heard what he said. The bell sounded, resonating through my being. And that meaning portal has stayed in place. And yes, I have found other bridges, vehicles to open the portal, take me across the threshold, into the wild places.*

So I have gone on feeling moved in sketching and painting and writing about these meaning portals, both allowing their creation and being open then to the sacred in the everyday. And I know that though the portal is not always in place or open, it is re-discoverable. And, if I do not cease from searching, the threshold becomes visible amongst the cloying weeds and undergrowth. Again and again I can cross through still into the waiting wild places and find the meaning-peace that floods my being. And I know if I am open to the openings and leadings, scared and vulnerable though I am, meaning-purpose comes in.

Did my yearning search for connection with Christ, Spirit, God, stem from a core lack of connection from my birth with my parents? Was it, is it, compulsive, addictive, or have I always been open to the spirit realm as a result of the damage, like the Shamans of old, how they are called by near-death experiences?

So, like many before and since, I suppressed my feelings which created anxiety, and ultimately, depression and a severe breakdown at University. And I was later thrown out. An ultimate sense of abandonment. But I was nudged on, and a few years later, with more synchronous meetings, went back to college and then qualified as an architect.

On moving up from Southampton to Kendal and as a practising Methodist, I found the lack of real guidance about what being a Christian in the modern world meant. Lectures on morals and 'faith', but no real leadings. With people from various denominations we set up an ecumenical group to explore what 'being a Christian' meant. This felt like a real opening and leading. I slowly looked at how being a Christian worked out in my work as a public service architect, trying to value and respect all, the growthful process being as important as the end result. My spiritual journey took another direction when one of those strange synchronous meetings led me into becoming a mountain leader and involvement in Scout Mountaineering. I always felt drawn to accept the risky, scary challenge of growing, changing, discerning the call.

Following this call led me to enter the wildernesses of our country, Scotland and France by foot and by canoe, which I feel are a spiritual exploration, finding God, Light, Christ in these wild places. Regularly I had moments of 'meeting'. *On the highest point of the island Eilean Fhiannain in Loch Shiel is the roofless St Finnan's Chapel, its stone gables skywards-beseeking, four-square with a low-lintelled doorway. I stoop under the humbling entrance and step across the threshold. There occurs a shift. I am shocked at what I sense. The space is warm and wind-protected, but these are absences, of cold and wind. The one room is about two metres by three metres, with three crosses at the end. I am surrounded by something that is more, much more than benign. This has warmth, energy, presence, and I shake myself to understand what is happening, what I am feeling, telling myself, 'This is imagination.'* I allow the experience to be, and find myself welling up with a joy of homecoming – belonging. I fight again

to check this delusion; I need to be able to authenticate what is happening, to trust it or dismiss it. I call Andy, solid no-nonsense Lancastrian who will tell it how it really is. But he, too, experiences it. We stand relating to each other while relating to this 'other'.

These 'moments of meeting' I now experience, or can experience, in all places, including shopping in Asda.

I felt the opening and leading to move again, to resign from fourteen years of Scouting and join Kendal Mountain Rescue Team. I feel it was a call to a different kind of service. After a few years, a group of like-minded people came together, a great gift. We introduced a more holistic approach to caring for casualties, what I call 'soft skills'. This was carried over to the extension and re-design of the team base where we incorporated people nurturing design, as well as very practical design; as though our values were being built into all areas of the Team.

I was offered voluntary redundancy from public service architecture; I felt the opening and leading and took the challenge. But shortly after, I experienced a traumatic divorce which was compounded by my sense of rejection by the church. I had felt called to train to be a counsellor and then a supervisor of counsellors. Major shifts. But always I felt the reality of the calling:

The Voice... Soft, soft, calling... down the years...

Sometimes it disguised its sound by joining with the voice of a person.

Or... River-rapid softly chuntering ... the sighing waters urging him along.

High-circling, mewing falcon journeying with him down a deep gorge.

Dark surging sea loch or cathedral-pine-wood whispering.

All calling, calling.

The man had deep-welling courage rising through old alchemy into his being. And then he saw that some either did not hear the still, small voice, or the sound was lost in the noise. The damaging loud noise. Disturbed, he wondered at this. And his soul ached with hearing their deaf lost-ness. Others had come to him, whispering, "I can't hear, I've lost voice." And he said, "I am flawed and vulnerable and have only myself to offer." With fear and trembling he walked their narrow edges, hand in hand limped across their frail bridges above their gut-wrenching drops. And parting, they looked full into his eyes and smiling strongly said, "The noise has gone.

Voice is back.” The call drew him and he chose to follow, grew, and had huge adventures. He knew he had deeply lived, with much fun, with much risk walking his narrow edge.

But in this time I realised I needed to work out a working philosophy/theology. I started going to Tabor, the Carmelite Retreat House in Preston, for regular workshops on spirituality. Then I started attending Yealand Meeting. From these places, over about seven years, my experiential spirituality has been fleshed out so that a unique ‘way of being’ has emerged – past, present and, hopefully, future – that I feel is very Quakerly. I have been a member for about two years.

Eighteen months ago, after my partner, Jan, and I had moved into a new house together, joining our lives, I felt the opening and leading to retire after twenty years as a Counsellor and supervisor. Ouch! The fertile void is my place now of waiting, waiting to discern where next.

Ray Green is a member of Lancashire Central & North Area Meeting.



Photo credit: Low Force by Bob Ward

Wordless Dementia

A valueless valuation
they have hung on you, my friend.
You have been labelled like an empty box
– a plush hole
for an invisible diamond.

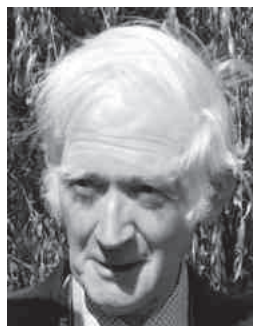
They say you have ceased to be an active person.
Well, persons end in the ground.
What though you cannot be found
and there is no way to weigh
the being that you are.

Dignity is your worth even though –
or perhaps because – you have let go
of living. Still alive
that greying silver.
That stubborn silence.

Dudley Warman attends Bedford Local Meeting.

A brief look at CG Jung's concept of 'The Shadow'

Martyn Tozer



We start life with a full and working set of emotions, but how our lives are led depends to a large extent on childhood factors which stimulate one emotion and inhibit another. Perfectly legitimate desires that cannot be realised can get suppressed, e.g. a love of and talent for music in a society where any music is regarded as 'sinful'.

Having suppressed 'unacceptable emotions' which would be dangerous for the smooth running of our society, we are able to carry on as if they didn't exist. However the energy of all these drives does not go away; it is removed to what Jung called 'The Shadow,' which is below conscious awareness. In rejecting parts of our selves we develop a 'persona', a mask, which shows the world how we would like to be seen.

The more energy any emotion has, the more firmly it has to be suppressed. Problems arise when something acts as a trigger for a hidden emotion. If, for example, as a child we were constantly drilled to be scrupulously honest at all times, and find our partner acting in a marginally dishonest fashion, our suppressed emotion can burst past the persona and produce a reaction which is frightening and unexpected to us both. In the above example, it does not mean that we are dishonest but that we are afraid of being so. Similarly if the action of a person annoys or pleases us more than we would reasonably expect this inevitably means that we have put energy into firmly suppressing the associated emotion within ourselves.

When emotions are rejected we cannot see them and project them

onto other 'suitable' people, imagining that they belong to the other person rather than ourselves. When we receive a shadow projection, if we don't realise this is happening and our own shadow contains similar energies a strong emotional response is inevitable. 'Falling in love' is the very powerful projection of the positive energy of our 'ideal' partner on to a real person. While the state of being in love lasts, everything in the world has a 'rosy glow'. When this fades, as it is unsustainable, we begin to see our partner as they actually are and may blame them, unfairly, for not being the person we saw them as. Ideally, if we are mature and fortunate enough, we can form a lasting and loving relationship where each acknowledges the other's strengths and weaknesses without the existence of any projections. Hero-worship is a projection of our own finest qualities; when we are emotionally strong enough we reclaim them. Projection of any sort burdens the other with the responsibility for our integration; our task is to reclaim our own shadow.

Projection is 'the norm' in all societies. If I have had to 'bite my tongue' for some time in a difficult situation, when it is over I need to find a symbolic way to harmlessly release the shadow energy generated. If I don't, I will 'take it out' on a convenient person or bury it within myself causing me problems in the future.

Societies, like individuals, must find symbolic or ceremonial ways to live the parts that have been rejected. A society which worships the light side and refuses to acknowledge the dark veers towards intolerance, scapegoating, chaos and war. The last world war was a clear example of this: the German people, rather than accept their national shadow, projected it, thanks to the extraordinary skill of Hitler, onto the Jewish people (we are 'all good', you are 'all bad'). Films, novels and the daily horror-filled press headlines allow our shadow to be seen as 'out there'; we need to incorporate it within ourselves.

The story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is based on the premise that all the good Doctor's unacceptable characteristics were projected onto Mr Hyde so that the Doctor could remain an entirely good person. Unfortunately, as the story relates, this was not possible. Suppressing energy in the shadow can allow it to degenerate to a more primitive state that becomes potentially hostile. Towards the end of a person's life unconscious control may slip allowing a life time of suppressed emotions free rein.

If a person reacts in a predictable way, there will inevitably be a shadow content in this reaction. For example, if I know that I am always impatient and criticise myself for my 'failing,' I am not accepting and loving of my impatience. When I learn to come to a loving relationship with this facet of personality I can see that this is the converse of lethargy and can honour it as such. By accepting the trait, I am then in control rather than a servant of that energy. The object of psychotherapy is to allow us to see the content of the shadow, to learn to love, accept, and work with it. When we do that we find that energies which were regarded as destructive are transformed into a great treasure, allowing us to return to being 'the complete person' we were as a young child. The child was 'unconscious'; we can be fully aware. Persona and projections are then no longer required. We can recover the light and playful ways of a child and be authentic at all times with greatly enhanced awareness, ability and joy. Unfortunately, society's values and beliefs discourage introspection, resulting in people in general being unwilling to change or even knowing that they can change.

Except ye change, and become as little children,
ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18: 3

The duality of society teaches that 'this' is good and 'that' is bad and that we should always be good. We tend to work on the simple dualistic premise that what we have decided is the right course of action and that anyone who disagrees or opposes us is wrong. This is a dangerous and unsustainable position to be in.

We are taught to 'love our enemies' .

Matthew 5: 44

This is only possible when we have learnt to love our 'inner enemy', the shadow. In coming to love our shadow, we see that it becomes softer, more pliable and gentle. We see that it holds great wisdom and should be honoured as a great paradox, a 'lost part of ourselves', waiting to be reintegrated. If we fail in this we are condemned to the destructive embrace of irreconcilable contradiction of opposites.

The recorded teachings of Jesus clearly show a reconciliation of

opposites.

He who is without sin may cast the first stone.

John 8:7.

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,
and to God the things that are God's.

Mark 12:17

The word religion stems from re – again, and ligare – to bind, bond or bridge. Robert Johnson understands this to mean that the opposites are both necessary to create a whole. In India the dichotomy is made clear with the god of creation, Brahma, balanced with Shiva, the god of destruction – with Vishnu sitting in the middle keeping the opposites together.

When we are in a situation with strong arguments for opposing courses of action we can compromise and not satisfy either, or in true Quakerly fashion, sit with the problem until resolution comes. The solution must grow from the dynamics of the opposing energies. Paradox is the 'miracle ingredient' which avoids the destructiveness of opposing or warring views. We need to grow to understand that there can be no absolute good or evil. The Chinese Yin-Yang symbol shows that good and evil make up the whole and at the heart of each is its opposite.

Resist not evil.

Matthew 5:39

Fanaticism is always a sign that one has adopted one of a pair of opposites at the expense of the other. The energy of fanaticism is a frantic effort to keep one half of the truth at bay while allowing the other free rein. To make light is to make shadow; one cannot exist without the other. To become whole, i.e. holy, one must accept and integrate one's shadow, not live at either extreme but be guided towards the 'middle way', gladly accepting the challenge of change.

If you bring forth what is within you,
what you bring forth will save you.

If you do not bring forth what is within you,

what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

Jesus quoted in the Gospel of Thomas

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,

it abideth alone: but if it die,

it bringeth forth much fruit.

John 12: 24

Due to our natural inertia, coming to terms with one's shadow is a task that requires determination, love, understanding and grace. While it is easy to see that our position is not ideal, any potential change is disturbing; the larger the shadow the more disturbing it will be.

As a young child Audrey Hepburn adored her father. Sadly he abandoned the family when she was six and refused to have anything more to do with her even when he was dying. Yet at his end he wanted to speak to her husband and told him how proud he was of his daughter and how much he loved her.

While we may see that a person's actions appear reprehensible we cannot see the internal forces which drive them.

Judge not that you be not judged.

Matthew 7:13

Martyn Tozer is a member of Devon Area Meeting.

Rededication of Peace Garden, 21st May 2017

Celia Feane and Judith Hammond

The Peace Garden at Bradford-on-Avon Meeting House was designed by Ann Warren in 2005, and built on a former bonfire site. The message on the peace pole then, was written in English, French, German and Japanese, reflecting the world situation at the end of WW2.

Our warden, Klaus Huber, reported the German and English writing had faded and the Local Business Meeting chose to replace the English writing (now placed where the Japanese version was) and add Arabic and Hebrew, reflecting the current dire conflicts in the Middle East. All sides read: 'MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH'.

The rededication took place on Sunday 21st May. Six guests from the local community were invited to share with Quakers in a small ceremony after Meeting for Worship.

Alex Kay, the Deputy Mayor, represented Bradford on Avon Town Council; Shazuli Iqbel represented the Wiltshire Islamic Cultural Centre; Farzana & David Saker the Trowbridge Mosque; Vivienne Kynaston the French Twinning Association; and Iris Segal and Sulia Rose represented the Progressive Reformed Synagogue in Bristol as they live locally. Some of the guests shared in Meeting for Worship and others came to join us for tea and coffee afterwards.

At midday everyone gathered in the garden. Fortunately it was a



Photo credit: Klaus Huber

pleasant sunny day. Alan Pleydell welcomed the visitors and spoke about the importance of the peace movement and the symbolism of the pole in a multi-cultural society and invited the guests to say a few words for the occasion. This was Alex Kay's first public appearance in her role and she thought it a truly meaningful event with which to start her term of office. 'Community cohesion is so important; many more similar small gatherings have the potential to become a transforming force,' she said. Shazuli said that he had not been to the Quaker Meeting before and he very much appreciated the invitation to take part in such an event. Iris said that years ago Judith introduced her to Farzana, which had increased her cultural and faith understanding. They worked together giving faith talks in schools and to organisations, through the West Wiltshire Multi-Faith Forum. Finally Vivienne spoke of the link with Town Twinning, which, like the peace pole movement, was started after the war, and of the importance of such symbols in today's political climate. Judith, a Bradford-on-Avon Churches Together (BACT) committee member, closed by mentioning George Fox's vision of an ocean of darkness and death ... covered by an infinite ocean of light and love.

Quakers and guests all enjoyed being able to celebrate this occasion and the chance to chat over a vegetarian shared lunch which followed in the Meeting House.

*Celia Feane and Judith Hammond are members of
West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting.*



This and the
following article
first appeared in
the newsletter of
Bradford on Avon
Friends.

Photo credit:
Judith Hammond

The Peace Garden

Ann Warren

At the turn of the Millenium the Meeting House was getting into a sorry state of disrepair, Friends being unwilling to spend money on themselves! Trowbridge College was renting the premise for teaching purposes, but when an inspector called it was discerned to be unsuitable for further use (no collusion on my part!) and finally we had to face the fact that something had to be done.



The necessary finance was eventually raised and we reconfigured the flats, the library and the Meeting room and replaced the toilet block.

At the end of the process in 2003-4 the garden was a mess, overgrown, full of old

masonry and a bonfire site. At about this time I was travelling in Bhutan, a country that had a motto that gross national happiness is more important than gross national product, and came across a peace pole in a park where we found ourselves playing



with local children. I had been aspiring for some time for the Meeting house to have a Garden of Peace and the idea re-ignited at the thought that here was the perfect pole site. At that time, they were produced in Scotland, so we bought one.

Then the ground was cleared, rubbish removed and the railings fitted. I drew an idea for seats which would not need much maintenance and were unlikely to be stolen, and commissioned a West Indian family to make and fit them. Then we bought some simple stone planters and some shrubs.

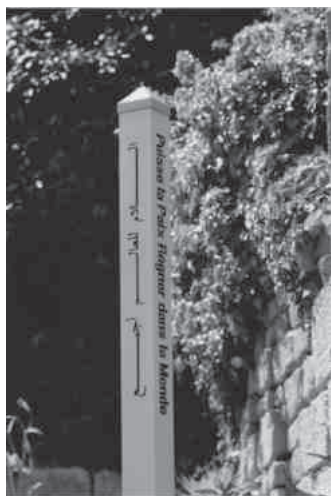
A small water feature was central to my vision, symbolising the water of life force, and a calming influence when sitting in the garden. Sadly, despite a careful investigation into health and safety matters, some Friends have deemed it unsafe, so it no longer functions.

Eventually in 2005 we dedicated the garden and it has since given much pleasure to our wardens, our residents and all of us who choose to spend a little quiet time there. Our studio flat residents help to look after it and we are grateful to them.

It is fitting that we have now replaced the faded the lettering and rededicated it. Since I spotted my first Peace Pole I have seen many others, including in the botanical gardens in Bath. How many more will you see, and how will they inspire you?

*Ann Warren is a member of West Wiltshire
& East Somerset Area Meeting.*

Photo credits: Ann Warren.



Exploring Limits to Growth

Tim Baynes



Whenever economists are interviewed they talk about the need for growth. In contrast, when the book *Limits to Growth* came out in 1972, it appeared to present a strong case that there would be inevitable collapse within the next hundred years or so.

At the time it was dismissed as scare-mongering. Thirty years later, in 2004, an update of the original *Limits to Growth* was published, confirming the analysis with more up-to-date figures and indicating that the situation is now more urgent. It made a distinction between 'overshoot,' which showed up as shortages and rising prices, and 'collapse' when a runaway series of problems lead to major loss of life.

The book listed eight crucial interconnected factors: Probably the most important is population growth. United Nations figures suggest: 7.2 billion now, 8.5 billion in 2030, rising to 9.7 billion in 2050.

If worldwide programmes to limit family size are not successful then there could be 11 billion by 2100.

The second driver of growth is a widespread demand for a rising standard of living, seen most glaringly in the consumerism of the Western world, but naturally desired in the developing world. The combination of these two factors will lead to the third: increased industrialisation, fourth: rising energy demand, and fifth: scarcity of basic materials. The sixth factor is how to feed the growing population. This danger will be aggravated by loss of land as cities grow, more roads are built and factories take up more land. Number seven is mounting pollution. Everyone knows about climate change (well, nearly everyone) which is serious enough in itself, but we face much wider threats than that. Loss

of topsoil and soil degradation. There is the sheer volume of waste which has to be disposed of, for example plastic fouling the oceans. The eighth and final sadness is loss of biodiversity. Quite apart from animals and plants becoming extinct, we are losing the value to medicine and other products that rely in the richness of the biosphere.

In this scramble for growth one could include policies in the developed world as we selfishly resist any change, in order to preserve (in the short term) our standard of living, and indeed using force to ensure our supply of resources.

What *Limits to Growth* cannot include are: damage to developing countries, wars, ethnic conflict, strikes, epidemics, corruption, floods, earthquakes, or nuclear accidents.

Signs of Hope

All of this could easily lead to despair, but there are a number of hopeful signs. In 2011 Britain Yearly Meeting agreed these two Minutes (23 and 36) which were called ‘The Canterbury Commitment’:

The global economic system is posited on continued expansion and growth, and in its pursuit of growth it is often unjust, violent and destructive we need to ask the question whether this system is so broken that we must urgently work with others of faith and good will to put in place a different system in which our Testimonies can flourish.

Sustainability is an urgent matter for our Quaker witness. It is rooted in Quaker Testimonies and must be integral to all we do corporately and individually.

We also have in our *Advices and Queries* No 42:

We do not own the world, and its riches are not for ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life.

Rufus Jones in a Swarthmore Lecture produced this wise maxim:

Quakerism is both mystical and prophetic. Mystical in the sense of

being rooted in worship, and prophetic in bringing its Testimonies to bear on the political process.

Paul Hawken, an environmentalist, speaks to many groups in the USA on the future of the planet. He has discovered that there are thousands of small-scale campaigning groups. Here's a sample: trying to stop oil pipe lines, extending cycling, objecting to fracking, encouraging women to take leadership roles in the developing world, helping with family planning, developing a green agenda, researching how to store electricity, pressing for conservation of fish stocks, experimenting with ways to conserve the soil, objecting to the cutting down of trees, developing Fair Trade networks; and many many more. He calls it the 'Largest Social Movement in history', dedicated to 'restoring Grace, Justice and Beauty in the world'. See *Blessed Unrest* published in 2008.

Books and papers include: Prof Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth* (2009), exploring ways to run the economy without growth; *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore; *The New Scientist* dedicated one of its issues in 2008 to 'The Folly of Growth'; *People and the Planet*, sponsored by The Royal Society, produced a major study in 2012 drawing attention to the dangers that lie ahead. The New Economics Foundation works on this issue amongst other aspects of their research.

Kendal Quaker Meeting organised four sessions last autumn under the title 'Exploring Limits to Growth': 1) A summary of the *Limits to Growth* book; 2) Population: Growth Inequality and Choice; 3) Can the World feed itself Sustainably? 4) Loss of Biodiversity.

The Meeting now has another series of four meetings this Autumn 2017 on the way our economy, as currently organised, drives growth.

Friends House has, of course, several departments concerned with this whole issue and runs conferences which provide opportunities for members to grapple with the future.

Tim Baynes attends Kendal Local Meeting.

Limits to Growth by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III was published by Potomac Associates (Signet) in 1972 and a recent updated version was published in 2004 by Chelsea Green Publishing Company and Earthscan under the name *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*.

Living our beliefs: An exploration of the faith and practice of Quakers



review by Mary Woodward

Many individuals and groups contributed to the making of this excellent book: the young Quakers in the editorial group; the Young People's Participation Days alongside Meeting for Sufferings in 2014 and 15; 2015 Junior Yearly Meeting [JYM]; 2015 Britain Yearly Meeting Young People's Programme [YPP]; and those attending regional summer events in 2015, with invaluable help and support from Quakers in Britain staff.

The introduction starts "Young Quakers have for many years wanted a book that would tackle similar topics to *Quaker Faith and Practice* [*Qf&p*] but would be shorter, more accessible and more concise." It quotes from *Qf&p*: "... words have limitations... Yet words are our tools and we must not be afraid to express the truth we know in the best words we can" and adds, "We hope that the words in this book will be tools for questioning and understanding." It is, and they are!

Most of the short chapters begin with a list of words relating to the topic it covers – an excellent starting point for contemplation or conversation – while also giving a flavour of the chapter's contents. A brief introduction to the topic leads into a selection of quotes from a wide variety of sources: Advices and Queries, *Qf&p*, Quaker authors both living and dead, notable figures including Aristotle, John Donne and

César Chávez, and participants in 2015 young Quaker gatherings.

Many of the quotes I know and love: many were new to me. Two from the chapter on Truth and Integrity spoke loudly to me: there are many others.

Integrity is a bugger, it really is. Lying can get you into difficulties, but to really wind up in the crappers try telling nothing but the truth. (David Mitchell, Ghostwritten)

Everyone's truth is different. It's how you use the truth which counts. (Participant, Friends Summer School 2015)

There are links to web-based material that was produced at JYM and YPP – both video clips and music tracks. To access the music tracks you need an account with either Spotify or Deezer – I have neither, so can't comment. The video clips are easy to access on www.yqspace.org.uk/ passages and are brilliant: watch them and learn!

Living our beliefs comes at a time when Quakers in Britain are beginning to realise that it's not enough simply to wait for seekers to find us and, when they do, leave them severely alone for fear of proselytising – we must be equipped to invite and answer their questions and even go out into the marketplace and make ourselves known to the people who don't know we exist. Some of us are happy to speak out, and know what we want to say: others of us feel ill-prepared, uncomfortably trying to articulate deeply-held beliefs for which we've never had to find words or which we have never shared with anyone. This book provides an excellent resource for both inreach and outreach for Quakers of all ages – every meeting should have at least one copy, and, ideally, further copies to give away.

Living our beliefs: An exploration of the faith and practice of Quakers, designed and edited by Young Quakers and Graham Ralph, is published by Quaker Books, ISBN 9781907123917, £6.

Mary Woodward is a member of South East Scotland Area Meeting.

My friend

Mr friend did not lay down his life for me.
There was no need.
Nothing happened.
But, if it did, I think he might.

Would I do the same?
It's hard to tell.
You only know
When it happens.

In that dread moment
You act or you don't.
He lives and you die
Or you live and he dies.
What an awful dilemma.

How fortunate it is
You only know
When it happens.

Ambition

A girl on a bicycle
 wobbling wildy
Looks rather farcical
The way that she rides.
But do not scorn;
It's the way she was born.
An adult spectator
 scathing sneerily
Should know better
Than to deride
This girl with a handicap
So hard has she tried.
Five times she fell
 hurting horribly
She did very well
To climb on again.
But now at last
As she comes past
With pride she can't hide
Just hear her shout
I can ride, I can ride.

Michael Bayley is a member of Devon Area Meeting.

The Quaker peace-building in art calendar

review by Peter Rivers

This calendar celebrates many kinds of peace-building and a variety of art works by Quakers from around the world. Short inspirational texts accompany the pictures and a brief commentary introduces both the art and the peace-building work. These texts are printed in Spanish, French and English.

If you are looking for an inspirational gift for friends or Friends then this could be it. It is a beautiful calendar with pictures of a huge diversity of art work. It might also be an effective educational outreach tool or a framework for a local meeting's study programme.

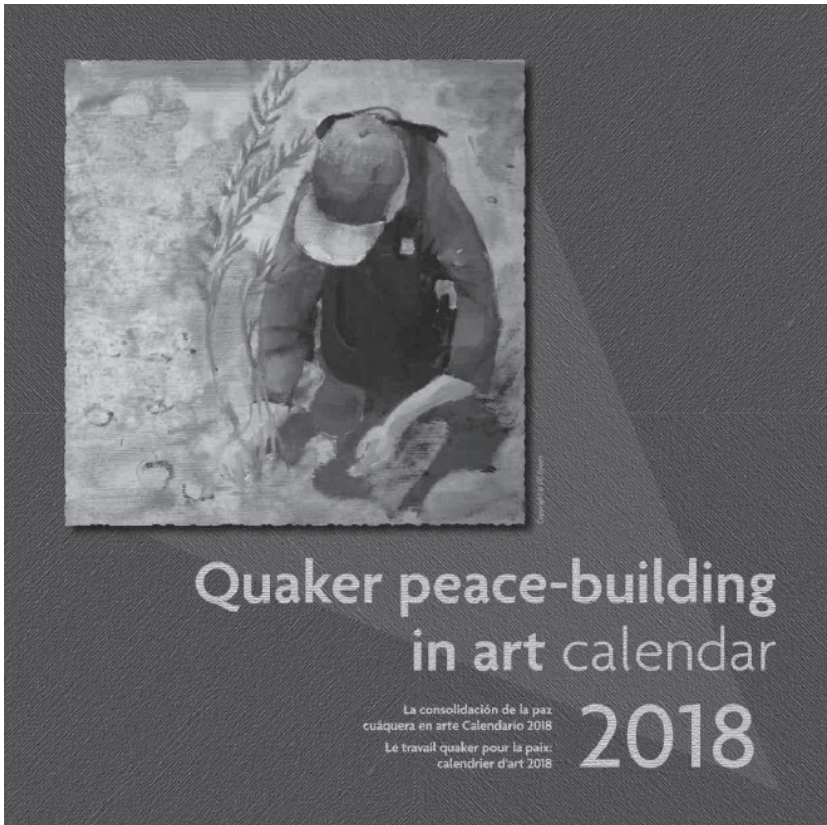
The introduction gives a good summary of Quaker witness to peace and peace-building work and this is accompanied by a brief commentary on the art works for each month. Alongside these are some memorable small prints: 'Olive Tree Series 28', 'Prayer for Peace', 'Women's Peace Camp', 'Workshop in Bulindiguru, Uganda', 'The Two Mules' and 'Living Peace'.

The Calendar for each month has a powerful piece of art and the normal grid of days accompanied with pithy quotations from a variety of sources including *Quaker faith & practice*, the Bible and other Yearly Meetings. What strikes me is the variety of art forms used: oil, acrylic, wood burning, a mural, embroidery, ink, quilting, computer drawing, collage, knitting and crochet, and stone carving.

This is a wonderful collection which is beautifully reproduced and worthy to hang in anyone's home. The only thing that strikes me as being odd is that it is written in three languages, which uses up a lot of space, but of course it does make the point that peace-building is an international and not just an English concern.

The calendar is a joint project of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and the Quaker Arts Network (QAN), based in Britain, and is available direct from Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and from the Quaker Bookshop both at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Peter Rivers is a member of Southern Marches Area Meeting.



Front cover image: Jill Green

The *Quaker peace-building in art* calendar is available at <<http://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/Quaker-peace-building-in-art-calendar-2018_9781999741006>>, £10 + p&p.

Quaker Campers 2017

Nancy Thompson

Quaker Campers stayed this year at White Mark Farm just next to The Ridgeway in Oxfordshire. There were about fifty Friends of varying ages who camped together over the week. Children and adults enjoyed, among other activities, a central campfire, beautiful walks, trips to the 'white horse', daily worship, singing, kite-flying and being in nature.

One of the highlights for me and my family was the local hedgehog sanctuary nearby. Not only were there numerous very cute hedgehogs being cared for, there was also an eclectic and eccentric museum of all things hedgehoggy, including a collection of Victorian 'magic lantern' slides about a mischievous hedgehog's exploits.

Pudding night was of course another very popular and delectable event! The children showed remarkable decorum and self control during 'Quaker grace', as did the adults but not surprisingly the pudding table was completely empty afterwards. It always amazes me, the variety of puddings a group of camping Quakers seem able to conjure up every year!



We were joined for much of the camp by quite a number of red kites, which after being reintroduced in the local area, have become quite a success story. They were incredibly tame, and sometimes alarmingly so

when we were eating! We saw several posters round and about, encouraging local people to stop sharing their barbecues with these feathered friends.



On the last night of the camp, despite high winds and a bit of rain, we managed to light a cheery fire and shelter under some tarps for marshmallows and a wonderful array of party pieces from Friends. These included some lovely

singing, flute playing, poems, a nail-biting Quaker rocket launch to Mars (involving some effervescent vitamin tablets and a squash bottle!), more singing and lots of laughter.

Event though the weather was not always kind to us, we managed to meet for worship every morning for half an hour without getting too wet. Fortunately the sun shone on pack-down day, after which many Friends headed off to Yearly Meeting Gathering, some to



Quaker Voices

carry on camping and others to warm and dry self catering accommodation.

This was, yet again, another fun-filled, worshipful and warm community gathering; one where Friends took care of each other and welcomed new and old campers to the site. Many thanks to all those who helped organise and research the campsite and we look forward to camping with Friends next year in Pembrokeshire.

Nancy Thompson is a member of Cornwall Area Meeting.



Photos by Chris Edwards, David Mason and Charles Edelstein.

Christmas: Present

Though still in my infancy
I bring a layered defence
against all ills.

My mission-driven data
will give intuitive
real-time protection
on whole-of-life
to critical end-point.

Allow the software
to make changes to the core
of your device when you agree.

Central Management
will, as always, oversee.

*Maggie Norton is a member of Swarthmoor
(South West Cumbria) Area Meeting.*

Weirdness, the True Self and *raison d'être*

Elizabeth Angas



I was born dead—anoxic. The cord was wrapped three times round my neck, too tight to be looped over my head, so the midwife (in a home delivery) had to cut it before I could emerge.

She then resuscitated me. I then promptly died again and once more had to be brought back to life.

I then had various life-threatening illnesses, but just managed to be pulled through each time. This meant that I was often surrounded by continuous prayers being said by relatives, hoping I would be saved from dying.

So there was a joke in my family that because only the Good die young, I must be very Bad, as I was still alive!

It was also wartime. We were bombed out twice. We slept during night raids in the strong, safe cupboard under the stairs, and so were then dug out alive in the morning.

From an early age, I wondered whether I was being kept alive for a reason, and was taught to thank God for this. I believed I had a *meaning* and *purpose*.

I didn't speak until I was nearly four, although it was evident that I understood everything that was said to me. I then suddenly started speaking in complete sentences, without any baby language.

As I was having pre-cognition experiences, I started telling my parents about events which were going to happen in the future. My parents tried to convince me that I was fibbing. However when the visions became

true, they wondered what sort of strange child they had!

I have had psychic experiences for as long as I can remember, which I gradually learnt to keep secret, and had to cope with alone. It was a relief in 2000 when the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies was founded and I could at last speak and write about it all, with support from those having similar experiences. Later I discovered and joined the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (CFPSS) – a sister organisation where I continue to find reassurance and comfort.

The precognitions came as vivid hallucinations, both visual and auditory, which often frightened me. Also during one of my illnesses, I had high fevers for two years, off and on, with delirium. So I lived in a sort of twilight world, where I was unable to go to school. Whenever I was well enough I was home-educated.

Other children and adults found me strange. Even when I became an adult, I didn't disclose what was happening to me, for fear of being thought mentally ill. So I managed to avoid ever having any antipsychotic treatment, but instead gradually discovered my own True Self, and why I am like I am. This was enabled by always feeling loved by my parents and elder brother (seven years older). This love somehow gave me a strong sense of God's love for me and knowing that I was always being kept safe in the divine presence. I was also kept stable and grounded by music.

My father was a Baptist and my mother was C of E, so singing became very important – hearty hymns as well as as classical music. Also the beautiful language of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

I was learning the piano and the cello and loved practising, and losing and finding myself in music, which also made me feel close to God.

I felt safe in church, where I had a strong sense of God's presence. Even when very young, I spent much time praying – meditating on my strange experiences: wondering why I was being 'sent' them; asking God how I could stop things happening which I had seen in the future; trying to understand about suffering and death.

I experienced many deaths as a child. This was because we had both sets of grandparents and three great-aunts, all living with us (due to the war). I witnessed all their peaceful deaths at home, surrounded by the compassion and love of my family. So being able to give people a 'good death' became a sort of mission for me.

When I was seven my younger brother Richard was born. I became like a little mother to him. I felt his musical career was my responsibility. We were very close and had a telepathic relationship. I felt he was the one person who really understood me. He became a famous opera singer. In 2013 he suddenly and unexpectedly died in the middle of a rehearsal. It has taken me a while to work through that grief.

At eleven, I became a boarder at a Catholic convent school. You may have read the poem in *Quaker Voices* (Volume 8, No. 3, May 2017) where I described how I gradually became acceptable and normal as a person! This was mainly due to the wisdom and kindness of the Walloon nuns: it was a Belgian order. I ended up as head girl and had caught up with my education!

Being at boarding school, we had the opportunity to experiment with lesbian love (as you do!). This determined the way I have been (and am) for the rest of my life. So that too had to become a secret, as in those days it was considered a sin and abnormal. However, I have had four long-term loving relationships (one at a time!) over the years. And those loves (which are also the Love of God) are what has maintained me and kept me sane.

In 1953, when I was eighteen, I started my general nurse's training at King's College Hospital. I then went on to become a psychiatric sister at the Maudsley Hospital opposite. I also became a midwife and health visitor so that I felt a 'complete' health professional. I then trained as a Sister Tutor (as it was called then).

I felt I was still pursuing my search for finding answers about suffering and death.

Although I loved nursing and teaching and felt I was following a vocation of compassionate caring, I started to become very ambitious. I also wasn't sure if I believed in God and didn't go to any church. The new Chairs of Nursing were becoming available, as we were becoming an all-graduate profession. Earlier, I had taken myself off to Goldsmiths in the 60s to obtain a psychology degree (four years part-time) so that I would be able to teach the undergraduate nurses.

In the 1970s I had become the Principal Tutor of a School of Nursing. But the NHS was being reorganised, so we all had to re-apply for our jobs. Then my mother became terminally ill. I wanted to give her a 'good

death' surrounded by our family and friends. So ambition went out of the window as I took unpaid leave to nurse her in her own home, so that she could die peacefully. This meant sacrificing my career. I had also lost my research place as I was doing a PhD. However, almost immediately, a wonderful job came up (as if to reward me!). Thus, I moved across into Education – teaching health professionals how to teach at Garnett Collage, London University. We later moved to Avery Hill, becoming Greenwich University.

This was a very happy time. I had a gay partner who was teaching Philosophy of Education whilst I was doing the Psychology of Education for our students!

In 1979 when I was forty-four I got bronchitis, which I ignored; it turned into pneumonia. This is because I had to finish writing up a dissertation for a higher degree. I later made a pun that I had a 'deadline' to meet because then my heart stopped! I was dead for three minutes whilst a friend was resuscitating me. I had a Near Death Experience (NDE) – going to Heaven and having a Life Review.

I was told by 'them up there' that I had not fulfilled my Incarnation Vows. So I needed to return to Earth to become a Spiritual Healer (as well as all the qualifications I had acquired!).

So this I did, also learning about complementary therapies and training in Psychosynthesis.

The NDE changed my whole life and I felt I had woken up as a new person with different values and beliefs which I had learnt in Heaven. So I was then led to become a vegan, a conservationist, a pacifist and a Quaker.

Of the main reasons which convinced me to become a Quaker, the first was that I could now have an Experiential Faith (instead of the doctrines or creeds of the churches). This meant all my strange and psychic experiences made sense and became acceptable at last. This was because I had realised I am an incarnation – a spiritual being in a human body on Earth, who will one day go to the After Life for eternity. This truth replaced all dogma and Bible teaching.

Secondly, I became a Quaker because Friends and the Meeting completely accepted me as a gay. I could come out and be open about my sexuality. I learnt with delight that there is 'that of God in everybody' –

even somebody like me!

The NDE also helped me to understand, for the first time, my precognitions – that they were being sent to me to either prevent before they happened, or to heal after they had.

One of these was seeing an IRA bomb being hidden: I was able to tell the bomb squad so it could be made harmless in time.

When I retired in the late 90s, healing and prison visiting and care of the dying became important jobs. I feel through all my life I have been finding and fulfilling a meaning and purpose which was ‘given’ to me before I was launched into this world. But I had to rediscover it and also my own True Self, as I had forgotten my *raison d’être* and also who I am.

Elizabeth Angas is a member of South East London Area Meeting.

Nettles

Clutch a nettle

it will sting

– at once withdraw!

But even an errant

nettle such as me

can be held quite clearly

in the light

the ever redeeming light.

Bob Ward is a member of Norfolk & Waveney Area Meeting.

New Beginnings – New Step

TC Davis



For about two years I have been leading a group devoted to helping combat veterans transition successfully to civilian life (the Interfaith Veterans Workgroup). Concurrently I have been sitting weekly with New Beginnings-Next Step, which helps former inmates transition from prison to society.

I have noticed that some veterans and many returning citizens from prison face similar emotional and behavioral challenges: managing anger, maintaining close relationships, and dealing with depression without self-medicating with substances that often lead to addiction.

One could say that these similarities stem from habits formed for self-protection in persons who have had to cope for a rather long time in dangerous and violent circumstances. The CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] study done in Wilmington in 2015 indicates that most young men who end up in prison for gun crimes experienced trauma as children. They were desensitized to violence not only by what they saw on TV or in video games, but much more so by witnessing maimings and killings where they lived, and sometimes in their own families. Furthermore, they resorted to guns not only as a means of self-protection, but also as a means to assert themselves, to gain and keep respect; and in the long run respect "in the hood" is needed for survival, or so I'm told. Thus, a habit of responding quickly and violently to even apparent challenges to the self becomes ingrained in the nervous system. Violent aggression becomes a habit of the body. One doesn't think anymore before pulling the trigger.

In 1970 I had accompanied South Vietnamese sailors to a village in

enemy territory where we distributed medicines to "win hearts and minds." On the way back to our base we were ambushed. We couldn't see who was shooting at us, but every man in our boat sprayed the dense rushes on the canal bank immediately, without thinking. Our rapid violent response suppressed enemy fire and got us out of that tight spot. Our military training had desensitized us to killing and had ingrained in our very bodies an automatic response. In an ambush there is no time to think. One shoots to survive, and if one does survive, then one has the time afterwards to sort out what one did. When there was no target, as in this case, one may wonder whether anyone got hit, and if so, was it a shooter or an innocent bystander?

I know from personal experience that a habit of violent aggression gets ingrained in persons who have had to cope with living under constant threat. That habit can be unlearned, but it takes time and dedication. Up to now our military hasn't recognized a need to de-program warriors. You fly out of a war zone and presto, you're back in the civilized world. But your body is still on combat alert. Anger, may I suggest, is a natural self-protective human response. In a war zone it can indeed preserve your life. But when you try to transition to civilization, what saved your life in war is likely to destroy it back home. Your body, not just your mind but your body too, needs to develop new habits for dealing with perceived challenges to the self.

That's where mind-body disciplines like the martial arts, yoga, and mindfulness based stress reduction come in, and also the Alternative to Violence Project invented by Quakers. The military deliberately trains people to not be anguished by killing, and to react immediately and violently to a perceived attack. Those habits of the mind and body are needed in a theater of war, but they must be unlearned upon return, else former warriors may harm others or themselves.

TC Davis attends Wilmington Quaker Meeting, USA.

Memories of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017

Thomas Nunn and Katy Nunn

At YMG (Yearly Meeting Gathering) my group was called 'Light Explorers'. YMG was at Warwick University in Coventry. Our main focus was building a better world, using our head, heart, hands and feet.

On Sunday we focused on 'heart'. We wrote how we thought we could make the world a better place. On Monday we focused on our head, and we painted a picture of a head. On Tuesday we focused on hands and made musical instruments (with our hands) to play to the 'Fox Cubs' (the group Ewan was in).

We missed out Wednesday with the children's sessions because it was family day, so instead we went cycling in Birmingham, Northfields. On Thursday we focused on feet and we walked to the Fox Cubs to play them music with the instruments we made on Tuesday. On Friday, our final full day, we focused on our Spirit/Light and listened to stories about famous Quakers. My favourite bits were box-making and the children's programme and evening sessions.

Thomas Nunn attends Dorking Quaker Meeting.

The highlight of Ewan's week was definitely making a new friend, Leo. They have arranged to meet at the next YMG when they are eight! The box-making session was another favourite. Ewan's group, the Fox Cubs, also did some real-life discernment, and chose hunger and homelessness as the issue they were going to focus on. They gave out ribbons to the wider gathering to remind us of these concerns. The ribbons come with a song (sung to the tune of 'wind the bobbin up' which we enjoyed singing to the grown ups of Dorking Meeting when we got home. For those of you who missed it, here it is:

Wind the ribbon up,
Wind the ribbon up,
Snip, snip, clap, clap, clap.

Share the ribbon out
Share the ribbon out
Tie, tie, clap, clap, clap.

Food for the Hungry,
Homes for All,
We must remember,
THAT'S OUR CALL!

“We are called to return home, and to do something useful on the way”

The week before Yearly Meeting Gathering, the boys and I were at Sunday Meeting for Worship in Quaker House, Geneva. We've been once before – my family used to live in the area, my sister still does. It is a lovely old Geneva house with a beautiful, peaceful garden. It is also where the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) is based.

The following week I sat in a room in Warwick University listening to QUNO members of staff talking about “the spiritual inspiration for their work on peace, human rights, migration, food and climate change”. I was deeply impressed. All the speakers spoke with such clarity, perceptiveness, intelligence and even wisdom about their role, not so much on the international stage, but backstage; about “quiet diplomacy” and the importance of creating space where people can come together, feel safe, talk, and be listened to. And about the spirituality that gives strength for such work.

That morning, in the main session, George Lakey had started with a story about witnessing a fight between a young couple in the street outside his home. Torn between the need to intervene and the desire for self-preservation in an area where many people carry guns, the first thing he had done was rush outside and from his porch shout “I’m watching you!” Several times. Having thus paused the conflict (due

perhaps only to the couple being so perplexed they stopped fighting) he was still waiting for further inspiration when an older woman walked up, and with great poise, removed the female victim from the situation and admonished her attacker. Mr Lakey went on to talk about his role as a 'space holder' in that situation, an idea which resonated with me and which I returned to at various points throughout the week. We are perhaps not all called to be the ones who act, but this idea of the importance of creating, holding, influencing space such that people are enabled to speak to that of God in those around them, and to listen, was a powerful one for me.

And that was just Sunday. I think it will take me some time to sift through my thoughts and experiences from YMG, and many more gatherings to figure out what tactics to employ to make the most of such a rich and exhausting event, but I certainly have come away with plenty of food for thought as I continue to search for my answer to Elizabeth Fry's question, "What is my sphere of usefulness?"

Katy Nunn attends Dorking Quaker Meeting.

Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World

review by Macy Jewel Fagborun Bennett

This is an inspiring book, which I believe that anyone can learn a lot from. It was great to see women winning in all areas when they tried hard. The book was really well presented and easy to read.

My five favourite women from the book:

- Amelia Earhart was the first woman to fly the Atlantic alone.
- Mary Seacole was an amazing nurse who stood up for herself and helped look after wounded soldiers in the Crimea War.
- Rosa Parks showed that you could be brave by doing something simple like sitting on a bus!
- Coco Chanel was one of the first women to wear trousers, and designed the first Little Black Dress in 1926.
- Sacagawea was a native Indian teenage girl who, with a newborn baby on her back, led two men through the uncharted land in the west of the USA.

Fantastically Great Women who Changed the World by Kate Pankhurst is published by Bloomsbury, ISBN 978-1408876985, £6.99.

Macy Jewel Fagborun Bennett attends Streatham & Brixton Local Meeting.