

Words of Encouragement from Friends

An ongoing record of weekly encouraging thoughts sent to all prisons, via Chaplaincy HQ at the Ministry of Justice, as faith support during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in 2020 - 2021.

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Introduction

Prison Chaplaincy during Lockdown.

From the beginning of the 'lockdown' at the end of March 2020 all corporate worship in prisons, including Quaker Meeting for Worship ceased, although Chaplaincies continued to support prisoners on an individual basis wherever possible. This has been in an effort to prevent Covid-19 becoming as widespread in prisons as it is in the outside world.

All prisoners in the UK are seen by a prison chaplain within 24 hours of coming in to prison and are registered either in their religion of choice or as having no religion if they prefer. For many prisoners their faith is key to sustaining them through the challenges of imprisonment, so it became very important to chaplains of all faiths that ways of maintaining contact be found to sustain faith and hope during lockdown and to reassure prisoners that they were not forgotten.

To this end the faith leaders working through Prison Chaplaincy Headquarters have each week sent Chaplaincy Managers in every prison faith materials for distribution to those prisoners registered in their faith and Christian denomination.

Many Quaker Prison Chaplains have contributed towards a leaflet called "Quaker Words of Encouragement", for distribution to those registered as Quakers in prison and to those who attend groups such as "Quiet Inside" organised by QPCs. This leaflet has been sent out every week since the end of March 2020. Some Quaker chaplains have not been able to go in to prison each week but have taken it as an opportunity, with permission, to contact prisoners in their groups and send them the Words of Encouragement leaflet. I have seen how much these efforts have contributed to maintaining morale during the very restrictive lockdown conditions.

Denise, Quaker Prison Chaplain and Clerk to Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee.

One of many responses to Quaker Words of Encouragement received in November 2020:
'What an exceptionally beautiful leaflet. Thank you so much to all those who contributed. The phrase "My Friend speaks my mind" occurs to me. As Covid cases are rising and chaplains are off sick, to have such encouraging words is really helpful. Thanks,' Tricia, Quaker Prison Chaplain

Compiled by Quaker Life.

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30 March 2020

Quakers have a positive and distinctive way of seeking to explore a way of being, inspired originally by the teaching of Jesus.

Unlike most Christians, Quakers do not have a creed - a statement of belief. Instead, we share our experiences and “leadings” with each other. Our principle experiences come from silent waiting, listening, and openness to the Spirit.

Advices and Queries, our “little red book”, and **Quaker faith & practice**, our “big red book” are the shared experiences of Friends – providing guidance, inspiration, challenges and encouragement in the Quaker way. Here are a few quotations, which will hopefully help you this week.

The Inner Life: *Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?*

(Advices and Queries, 7)

In silence, *without rite or symbol, we have known the Spirit of Christ so convincingly present in our quiet meetings that his grace dispels our faithlessness, our unwillingness, our fears, and sets our hearts aflame with the joy of adoration. We have thus felt the power of the Spirit renewing and recreating our love and friendship for all our fellows. This is our Eucharist and our Communion.*

(Quaker faith & practice, 26.15 - London Yearly Meeting 1928)

What is love? *What shall I say of I, or how shall I in words express it's nature? It is the sweetness of life; it is the sweet, tender, melting nature of God, flowing up through his seed of life into the creature, and of all things making the creature most like unto himself, both in nature and operation. It fulfils the law, it fulfils the gospel; it wraps up all in one, and brings forth all in oneness. It excludes all evil out of the heart, it perfects all good in the heart. A touch of love doth this in measure; perfect love doth this in fullness.*

(Quaker faith & practice, 26.30 - Isaac Pennington 1663)

On Prayer: *Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blusterings and storms. That is it which moulds up into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God, with his power.*
(Quaker faith & practice, 2.18 - George Fox, 1658)

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

Isaac Pennington, 1667
Quaker faith & practice 10.01



6 April 2020

'However alone you may feel, you are not forgotten. You are held in prayer, a prayer that you may be given strength and feel God's peace. I offer you this blessing:

*Dear child of God you are blessed
God within you blesses you from within.
Allow yourself to accept this blessing.
May you find the peace you seek.'*
Blessing from Jane, a Quaker Chaplain

And people stayed home
And he read books and listened
And he rested and did exercises
And he made art and played
And he learned new ways of being
And he stopped

And he listened more deeply
Someone meditated
Someone prayed
Someone was dancing
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently

And people healed.
And in the absence of people who lived In ignorant ways Dangerous
Meaningless and heartless, Even the earth began to heal

And when the danger ended
And people found themselves
They mourned for the dead
And they made new choices
And they dreamed of new visions
And they created new ways of living
And they completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.

Taken from "Iza's story", by Grace Ramsay, 1869:

'Hold fast the hope which anchors the soul, which is sure and steadfast, that you may float above the world's sea, for your anchor holds sure and steadfast in the bottom, let the winds, storms and raging waves rise never so high.'

George Fox



**Deep peace of the Running Wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you**

Celtic Blessing

13 April 2020

Reflection on isolation

I'm over 70 and the government has asked me to isolate myself behind my door for twelve weeks. To have deliveries of my food order or medicine left at the door, and see no-one.

That's ironic. I can't now visit the folk that I usually see isolated behind high walls. People that might benefit from a friendly face and a listening ear.

I am not sick, not a dangerous person in myself. But what I have to recognise is that I might unknowingly carry a virus to another, get ill and take a hospital bed that could be used by another, or die [cos I'm too old to recover if I get it] and cause grief to my family.

Does knowing the reason for my isolation make it easier? Yes. Always.

But what if I don't recognise the reason, or agree with it?

Do I trust the authority that has imposed this on me? If I Believe they act for the best – then Yes.

What if I don't trust the authority [forgive me if I say the PM has always seemed a little mad]

I'm left with - 'This is the best they can do with limited options in the circumstances.'

Does that make me feel better? A little.

But that little can be enough. This is the way it is right now. I'm human, not beyond ageing, sickness, or making mistakes, but I can deal with it the best I can.

What shall I do? Find small ways that I can be kind to myself and others until it passes.

And it WILL pass.

That is something that seventy two years has taught me. So there's advantages in being old too.

I wish you well in your confinement, to remember there is another way when it passes.

Medhina (Quaker prison chaplain)

Praying

*It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.*

Mary Oliver

Beyond the rightness and wrongness of things there is a field, I'll meet you there.

Rumi

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
The courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference
(One that I read to myself daily! Judith, Quaker prison chaplain)*

Sometimes waiting in the narrow passage is not confinement, but shelter for the soul —And the only way the light who guides us can truly be seen . . . is from darkness. The point is not so much the sometimes painful waiting but rather the seeing, in otherworldly light, what ought best come next to more satisfy the true self...

Clarissa Pinkola Estes

And these words: 'You will not be overcome' were said very insistently and strongly,

for certainty and strength against every tribulation which may come.

God did not say: You will not be troubled,

you will not belaboured,

you will not be disquieted,

but God said,

You will not be overcome.

Julian Norwich: Showings

As events unroll, it may be only too easy to give entry into our minds to the two great enemies: Fear and Depression. Bar the gates against them! On the other hand, welcome into the home of your spirit, Faith, Serenity and Courage. Open your doors widely to receive these three good friends, and be at peace. Realise that the sun never ceases to shine; however dark the clouds may be which seem to obscure its light...

Wellesley Tudor Pole – 1958

20 April 2020



George Fox wrote to Friend in November 1663, during the time of severe persecution:

Sing and rejoice, ye Children of the Day and Light, for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt: and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign.

And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth.

This Prayer from St Paul to the Ephesians can speak to us all during this terrible pandemic.

'This is what I pray, kneeling before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

Out of His glorious riches may He strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

I pray that you will know this Love which is beyond all understanding and that your lives be filled with the fullness of God. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14 – 19)

This is my day

This is my day - sifted sand
shifting grain by invisible grain.

This is my day – a seed
lightly sown in the earth.

This is my day – a bud
to unfold in the sun, a flame
to protect from the wind,
a flickering wick in my shrine.

This is my day – a bowl
to be emptied or filled, a cup
to be proffered or drained.

This is my day – a page
to be written or read, a race
to be witnessed or run, a gem
to be cherished and polished
and given away.

This is your day.

*by Eleanor Nesbitt from
'Making Nothing Happen - Five Poets Explore Faith and Spirituality'
Ashgate Press 2014*

Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

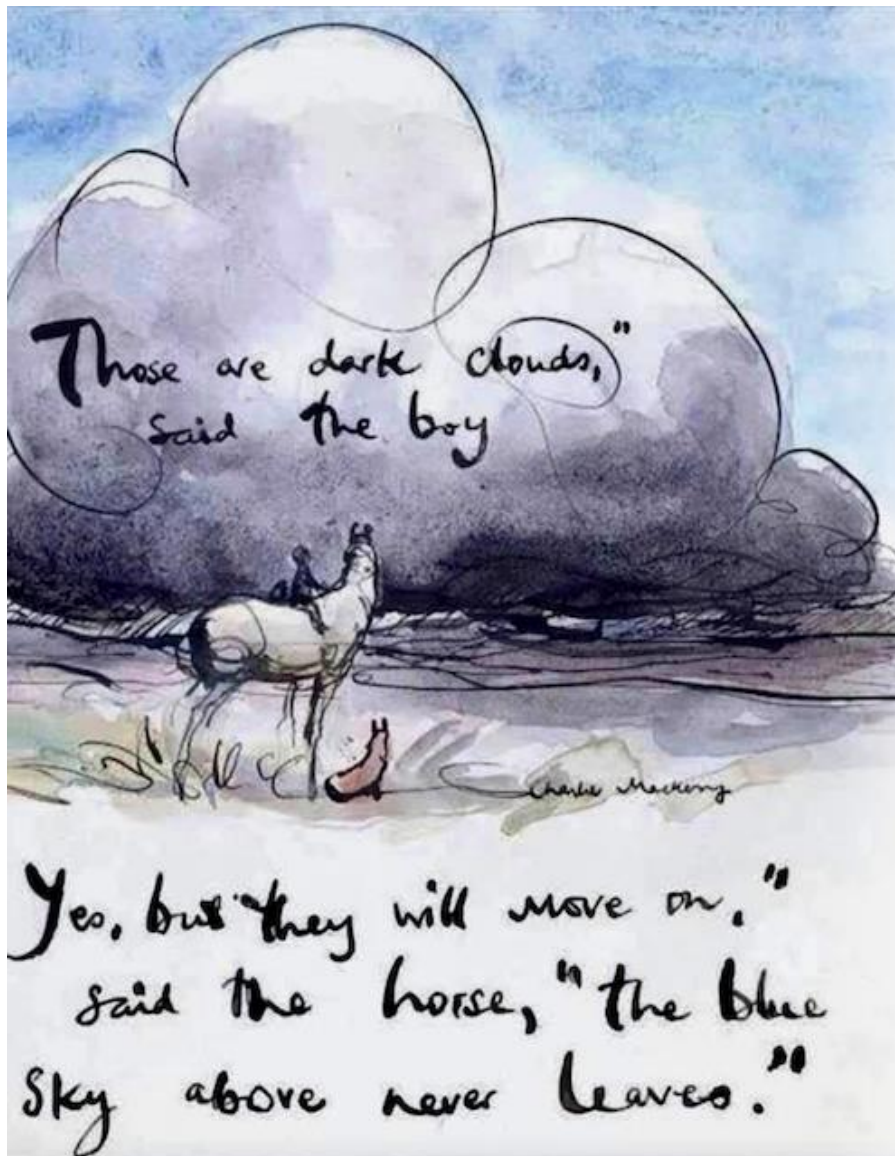
Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

Lynn Ungar 11 March 2020

Lyn is a poet who is also a Unitarian Minister, but it felt very 'quaker' to me.
Denise, Quaker prison chaplain.

27 April 2020

"There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself."
— James Nayler



I feel that this image expresses the Spirit of what we stand for.

Nigel, Quaker prison chaplain

Reflection on 'Brokenness'

Today I received for the second time, from two different sources, this passage by L R Knost

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world.
All things break and all things can be mended.
Not with time as they say, but with intention.
So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.
The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.

This quotation is obviously bringing hope and comfort to many people. People are searching for uplifting thoughts and ideas that will help us to get through this difficult time. And what is even better, they are sharing them with one another. If this passage works for you, you might want to stop reading here.....

On the surface this an optimistic call to action, to put the responsibility right back on us, the readers, to fix this. Mmmmm

I can't help it. I rarely take things on face value.

Can all things be mended? When someone dies we can't bring them back to life can we. When the creatures of the earth become extinct, they're gone. When I got divorced the reconciliation didn't work. Some things just don't mend. Well not in their original form. Sometimes we have to let go.

What about the things that can be mended?

Right intention is definitely a part of it. A big part. We have to want to mend it.

But there's ability too. If the broken world is waiting for me, a little voice says, 'Me?' I'm nobody, not a doctor, not a scientist, hardly capable of organising my own life to stay out of trouble.

But the next line is where I'm hooked right back in.

'Love' is a big word, but if I substitute care then it all makes sense.

CARE intentionally, extravagantly and unconditionally

If I CARE about the brokenness I see, then I'm willing to pay a bit more tax to close the poverty gap, I can offer a helping hand without looking for a medal, I can live more simply to use less, I can listen more.... I can follow the gov. advice that will infect less people. The list of what the least of us can do is endless.

The health of us all is on the line as thousands get ill, the economy is taking a dive as people lose their jobs and businesses close. If we pull together in the same direction, then, after the restriction we live under, we can mend the ways of this society so that it's better than before.

There's no time like the present to get started – to care about one another, and where we live.

I don't suggest you take my words on face value. 'What canst thou say?' said George Fox.

Medhina (Quaker prison chaplain)

30 April 2020

Quaker faith & practice 20.10

The place of prayer is a precious habitation: ... I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world.

John Woolman, 1770

PRAYER

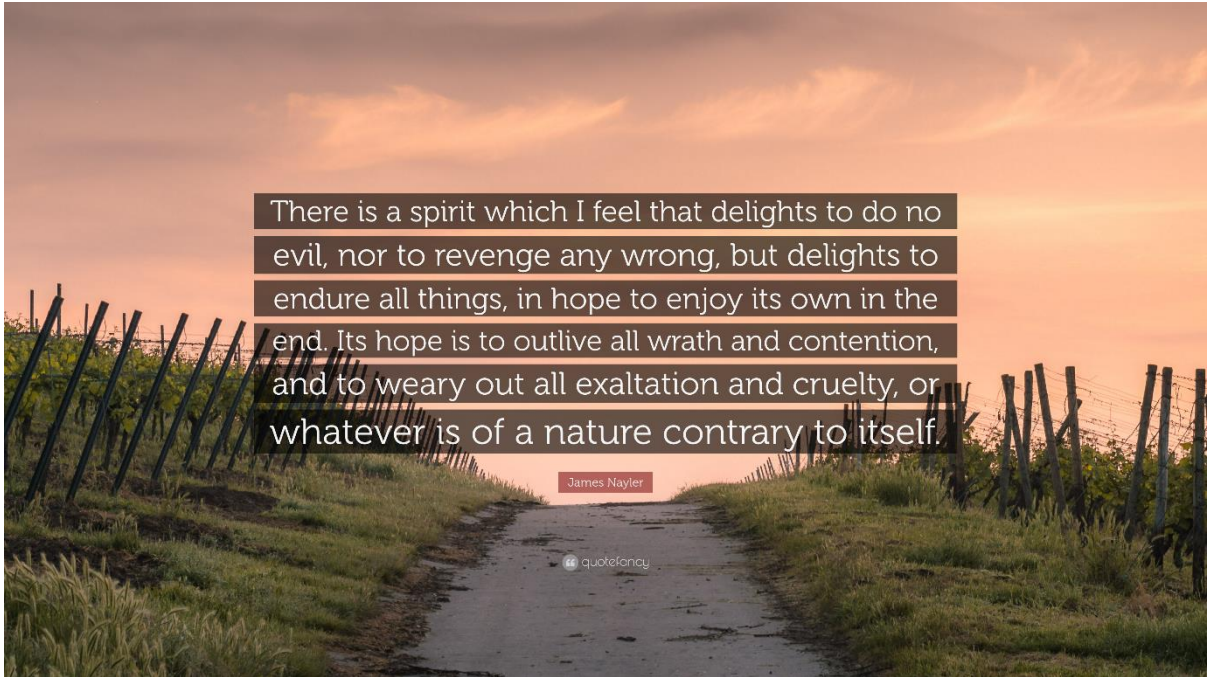
**Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer
Utters itself. So, a woman will lift
Her head from the sieve of her hands and stare
At the minims sung by a tree, a sudden gift.**

**Some nights, although we are faithless, the truth
Enters our hearts, that small familiar pain;
Then a man will stand stock still, hearing his youth
In the distant Latin chanting of a train.**

**Pray for us now. Grade 1 piano scales
Console the lodger looking out across
A Midlands town. The dusk and someone calls
A child's name as though they named their loss.**

**Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer
Rockall.Main.Dogger.Finisterre.**

Carol Ann Duffy 1993



There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself.

James Nayler

quotefancy

There is a Spirit which I feel:

***Can I, imprisoned, body-bound, touch
The starry garment of the Oversoul,
Reach from my tiny part to the great Whole,
And spread my Little to the Infinite Much,
When Truth forever slips from out my clutch,
And what I take indeed, I do but dole
In cupfuls from a rimless ocean-bowl
That holds a million million million such?
And Yet, some Thing that moves among the stars,
And holds the cosmos in a web of law,
Moves too in me: a hunger, a quick thaw
Of soul that liquifies the ancient bars,
As I, a member of creation, sing
The burning one-ness binding everything.***

by Kenneth E. Boulding

7 May 2020

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

Desmond Tutu

A message of Hope

from Elizabeth, a Quaker prison chaplain:

This week I have been thinking about hope. I know some of you are struggling and some have already lost family members through the covid virus or from other causes. It is so hard when you feel powerless to do anything but one thing that is really important is to keep hope alive.

How is your hope? Does it bounce back after being hit? Does it cause you to doubt when you lose hope in a situation?

The author C S Lewis talked about hope. He said it is a continual looking forward to the eternal world. It's not a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do.

The bible has a lot to help us with about hope. When you need encouragement and refreshment for your soul, you can find many references that offer hope and inspiration. So when you are grasping for something to give you hope, open your bible and check it out.

Ben Pink Dandelion, a long-time Quaker, talks about his experience of silent worship: *We review our lives. We pray. We hold in the Light. We think. We feel connected, refreshed, accepted. We walk with our guide. We hand things over to God. We trust. We find faith need not be total. We see that hope is more important than belief.*

So I want to encourage you to know that God can always be your source of protection, strength and peace during these unsettling times.

My prayer for you today is taken from Romans:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Wren and Primroses, by Robin Tanner

Keeping Quiet


by Pablo Neruda

Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still for once on the face of the earth, let's not speak in any language; let's stop for one second, and not move our arms so much. It would be an exotic moment without rush, without engines; we would all be together in a sudden strangeness.

Fishermen in the cold sea would not harm whales and the man gathering salt would not look at his hurt hands. Those who prepare green wars, wars with gas, wars with fire, victories with no survivors, would put on clean clothes and walk about with their brothers in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused with total inactivity. Life is what it is about; I want no truck with death. If we were not so single-minded about keeping our lives moving, and for once could do nothing, perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness of never understanding ourselves and of threatening ourselves with death. Perhaps the earth can teach us as when everything seems dead and later proves to be alive. Now I'll count up to twelve and you keep quiet and I will go.

Pablo Neruda, 1904-1973, was one of Chile's most famous poets



You may say I'm a
dreamer, but I'm not the
only one.
I hope someday you'll join
us.
And the world will live as
one.

John Lennon

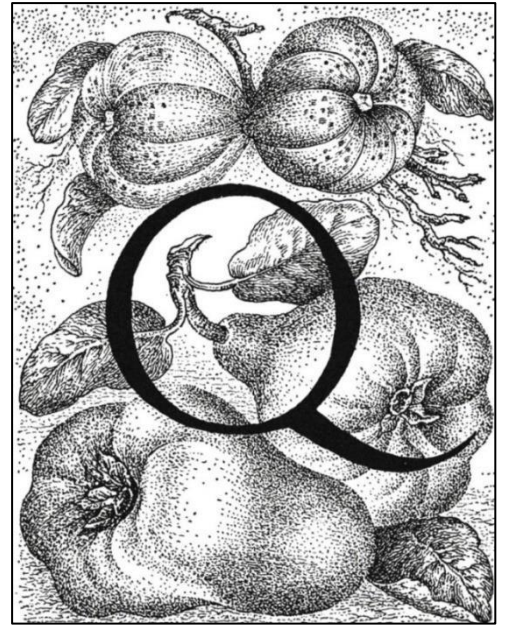


14 May 2020

Our place in the World...

We do not own the world, and its riches are not 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. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.

Quaker Advices and Queries, Number 42



Still by Harvey Gillman

This earth is the same earth, is it not, which we traversed with determination, where, in former times, we ventured forth, when travel was permitted, and choice was ours over time and destination? This earth now proclaims a different dominion. It cries out now from the fissures we have torn it in, from the scars we have clawed in it, from the brutality of our embrace, our craving conquest.

Yet we, defeated by victory, remain apart until in the bowels of the earth we bury our dead, and scatter our ashes in its still fertile loam. Still even now it is ready to receive us.

We are its children, are we not, made of its flesh, dust of its dust? Our hearts beat to its rhythms. We spin as the earth spins. Though we tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge; and Eden became exile, we remain the offspring of its seasons.

Still the earth offers us ground for our planting, generous still if we would grow wise and tender, earth for our planting, trees for our healing, a new fragile, an abundant harvest. Still.

Published in The Friend April 2020 Harvey is from Rye Meeting.

A Portable Paradise by Roger Robinson

And if I speak of Paradise, then I'm speaking of my grandmother

who told me to carry it always on my person, concealed, so no one else would know but me.

That way they can't steal it, she'd say. And if life puts you under pressure, trace its ridges in your pocket, smell its piney scent on your handkerchief, hum its anthem under your breath.

And if your stresses are sustained and daily, get yourself to an empty room - be it hotel, hostel or hovel - find a lamp and empty your paradise onto a desk: your white sands, green hills and fresh fish Shine your lamp on it like the fresh hope of morning, and keep staring at it till you sleep.

Roger is an international dub poet and this poem won the TS Eliot prize for poetry in January 2020



The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

*When despair for the world grows in me and
I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his
beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.*

I come into the presence of still water.

*And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting
with their light. For a time*

I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell is an American poet, environmental activist and farmer

21 May 2020

Keep going.....

Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.

Nelson Mandela



*Art thou in the
Darkness?
Mind it not, for if
thou dost, it will fill
thee more, but stand
still and act not,
and wait in patience
till Light arises out
of Darkness to lead
thee.*

James Naylor in 1659,
one of the early Quaker
preachers called the
Valiant Sixty

Martin's Hovel, 1927, by Robin Tanner (a Wiltshire Quaker)

Sometimes religion appears to be presented as offering easy cures for pain: have faith and God will mend your hurts; reach out to God and your woundedness will be healed. The Beatitude

‘Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted’ ** can be interpreted this way too, but the Latin root of the word ‘comfort’ means ‘with strength’ rather than ‘at ease’.

The Beatitude is not promising to take away our pain; indeed the inference is that the pain will remain with us. It does promise that God will cherish us and our wound, and help us draw a blessing from our distressed state.

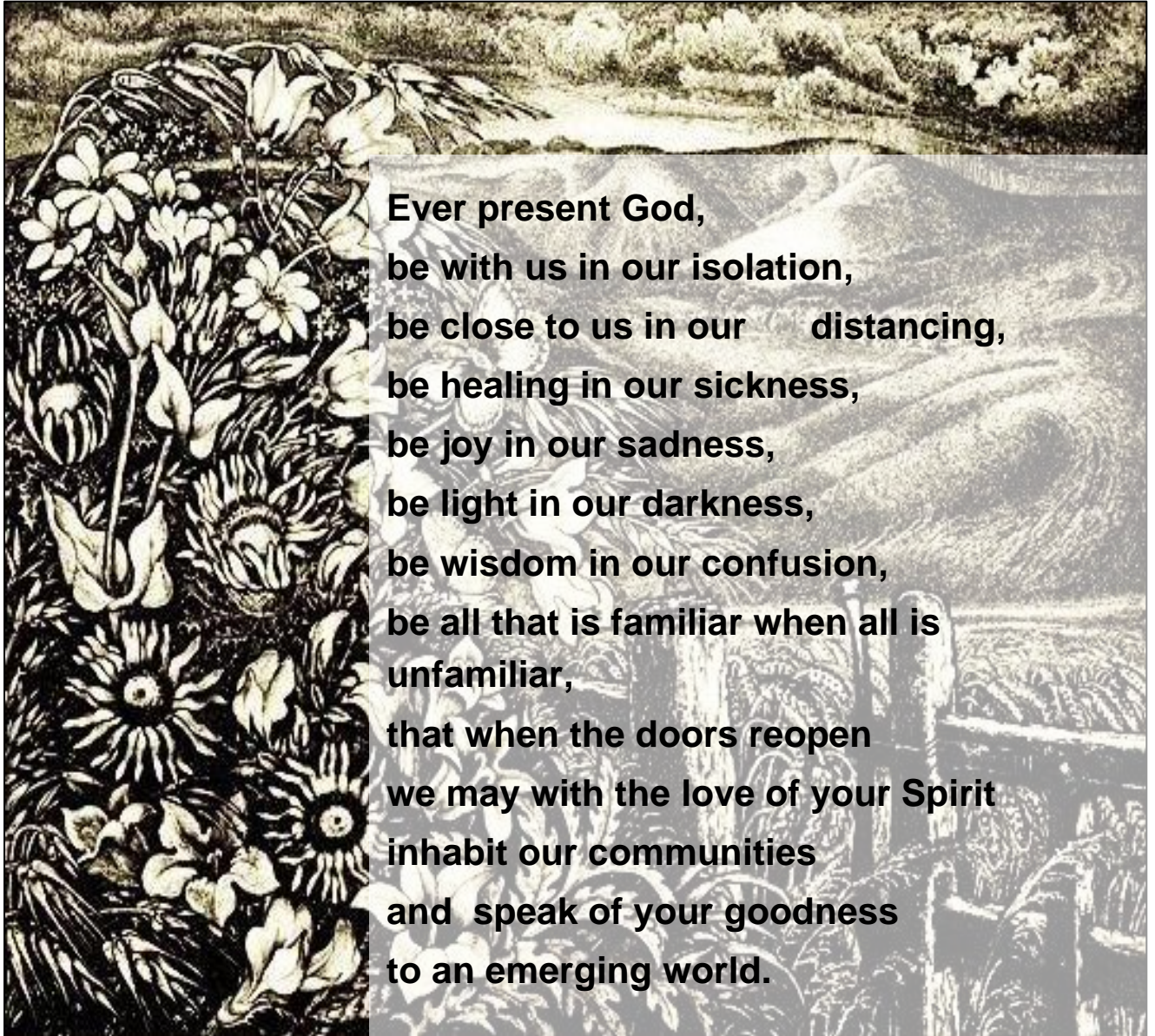
S Jocelyn Burnell, 1989 (Quaker Faith and Practice, 21.66)

** *Matthew 5:4*

We were made for joy and woe
And when this we rightly know
Through the world we safely go.

Joy and Woe are woven fine,

A clothing for the soul to bind. *William Blake, poet (1757-1827)*



**Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is
unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the love of your Spirit
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.**

Rock bottom became the solid foundation in which
I rebuilt my life.

J.K. Rowling

28 May 2020

Walking in the Light.....together

We are all children of one source.
There are no favourites, no chosen
people. No one asks to be born.
Every person is equally gifted with
life and equally to be valued as an
expression of it. Each of us is
different, with unique DNA, but
each is a member of one human
family.

from 'Twelve Quakers and Equality'



A human being is part of the whole 'Universe'; a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest [of existence] - a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely but striving for this is, in itself, a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

Albert Einstein in a letter written in February 1950 to a friend who was grieving after the loss of his son.

*Thy Light in all forms
Thy Love in all beings*

from a prayer by Hazrat Inayat Khan (Sufi teacher)

Take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light. Remember the importance of the Bible, the writings of early Friends and all writings which reveal the ways of God...While respecting the experiences and opinions of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value. Appreciate that doubt and questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to a greater awareness of the Light that is in us all. *Advice & Query No 5, Quaker Faith & Practice*

Dear Friend

Believe in what you feel in your heart about most things. The Native American belief is the one that is most truthful to me. 'The answer is inside you and all you have to do is find it'. I love this saying! I have studied and looked into a lot of different beliefs in my time on earth. And I do think most of them are good. And it's always interesting to me to meet someone that believes in something different to me, as long as they don't try to convince me their belief is the only way. Matakuye Oyasin!

*Part of a letter from an inmate on Death Row in North Carolina to his Lifelines Friend in the UK written in November 2018. **Matakuye Oyasin** means 'we are all one', the belief in inter-connectedness held by the Lakota people of North America.*

Walk in the Light

Words and music: traditional

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Walk in the Light". It is written in G major and 4/4 time. The score is divided into Verse and Chorus sections. The lyrics are: "I. The Spi - rit lives to set us free; walk, walk in the light. It binds us all in u - ni - ty; walk, walk in the light. Chorus: Walk in the light, walk in the light, walk in the light, walk in the light of love." The chords are: Verse (G, Bm, C, G, C, D, G, C/D, D7), Chorus (G, G7, C, D, D7, B7, Em, Em7, C, Am7, D, D7, G).

Please turn over

4 June 2020

You'll Never Walk Alone.....

Isolation of spirit..comes to most of us at one time or another,
Times when the tides of faith seem far out, Times of dryness,
Times when we do not feel the comfort and guidance of God's
hand....while within, we feel the agonies of isolation and longing
for light to lighten our darkness.

I can think with thankfulness of Friends who have brought Light to my
darkness...their help was perhaps given unconsciously but it was
because they were sensitive to God's leadings that they were able to
do it. Do we seek to be the channels of God's love and caring?



Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.

IT IS IN MY HEART TO PRAISE THEE,

O MY GOD;

let me never forget thee,
what thou hast been to me:

In the night, by thy presence in the
day of trial when I was
beset in darkness.

When I was cast out as a wandering bird,
and when I was assaulted with
strong temptations,
then thy presence... did preserve me,
and in a low estate
I felt thee near me...

When my way was through the sea,
and when I passed
under the mountains

there was thou present with me;

When the weight of the hills was upon me
thou upheld me, else had I sunk
under the earth;

When I was as one altogether helpless,
when tribulation and anguish
was upon me day and night,
and the earth without foundation;

When I went on the way of wrath,
and passed by the gates of hell,
when all comforts stood afar off,
and he that is mine enemy had
dominion;

When I was cast into the pit,
and was as one
appointed to death;

when I was between the millstones,
and as one crushed with the
weight of his adversary,

**AS A FATHER THOU WAS WITH ME
AND THE ROCK OF THY PRESENCE.**

*James Nayler, an early Quaker leader,
after his release from prison in 1659*

Quaker Faith & Practice 20.21

YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark
Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone...

*'You'll Never Walk Alone' from the 1945 musical 'Carousel' by Rogers
and Hammerstein and later a hit for Gerry and the Pacemakers in 1963*

11 June 2020

Reflection from Tricia, a Quaker Prison Chaplain

You may be aware that most chaplaincies receive a wide variety of publications in the post from a number of charities and faith groups, including a variety of Bible study notes such as *Living Light*, *Bible Alive* and *Every Day with Jesus*. Early Quakers in the time of George Fox, knew their Bible very well and having been brought up in a Quaker family it has always been important to me to try to read a passage each day.



I tend to read mine last thing at night when I also say my prayers for colleagues and all of you known to me. Recently I read in the New Testament Acts 17 v24-28 and I was particularly struck that “He (God) is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist”.

I've always recognised God as the creator of our beautiful world but never thought about living in him, though I do believe he lives in me! Something perhaps to ponder when you are wondering about God?



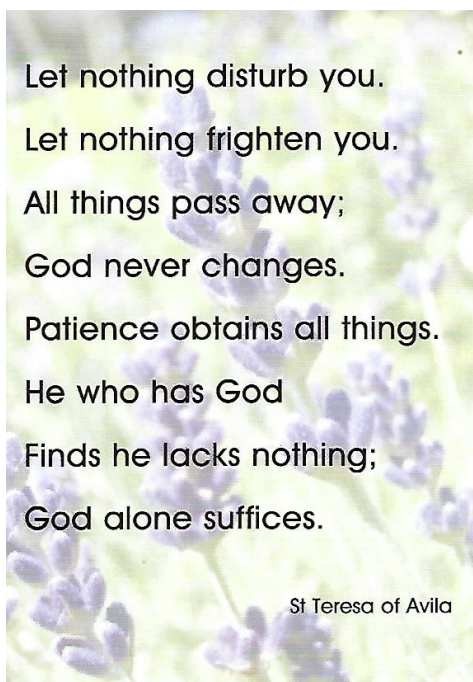
True silence...is to the spirit what sleep is to the body,
nourishment and refreshment

William Penn's advice to his children. Penn was a Quaker nobleman who founded the American state of Pennsylvania. Quaker Faith & Practice 2.13

Duncan, a volunteer Quaker chaplain, found this meaningful: -

The theology and concepts that we hold are like the sides of a pool, holding water within. When we jump into the waters of contemplation, into the deep resting presence of God within, we leave the pool walls behind and swim in the formless (non-conceptual), love of God. This love, God, is never bound or limited by any walls, for how can the Infinite be bound by the finite?

The walls of our particular pools may be quite different. The walls of my pool are my Quaker spirituality, and for other faiths it may be their worldview and perspective. The important thing to note is that although the pools may differ, it is the same Living Water that is present within them. The walls of religion, when healthy, hold the love of God. They are the concepts and forms that give shape and hold space for us to open to the Divine within us. But the walls are not the living water themselves. (Source unknown)



Matthew 11 v28

St. Teresa of Ávila was a nun in the Carmelite Order who lived in Spain in the 1500s. She was a mystic and wrote about the interior journey of faith she experienced. One of her most well-known books is *The Interior Castle*.

19 June 2020

Refugee Week.....

....takes place in June each year to celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK and to encourage a better understanding between communities. At this time of limbo, the call to imagine feels vital. We live in uncertain times; the old ways of doing things are no longer working. The climate crisis, political division, rapid change and ongoing conflicts around the world mean the future is unclear, not least for people on the move.



Respect the **wide diversity** among us in our lives and relationships.

Refrain from making prejudiced judgements about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of **mutual understanding** and **forgiveness** which our discipleship asks of us?

Remember that each one of us is **unique, precious, a child of God?**

Quaker Advices and Queries No. 22

The Universal Light

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

Words written by American Quaker and abolitionist John Woolman in 1762, QF&P 26.61

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.
On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.
Novelist Arundhati Roy

26 June 2020



Trouble of soul can teach us things that raptures never could – not only patience and perseverance, but humility and sympathy with others.

Edward Grubb in Flowers of the Inner Life, 1933 QF&P 21.12

See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because God is near.... Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in God's name... You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what God finally brought about. God is full of compassion and mercy.

JamesChapter5:taken from7-11

James, Jesus' half-brother, writing to the earliest Christians, scattered and persecuted, to encourage them in their faith during difficult times.

Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion.

Isaac Pennington 1661. Quaker faith & practice 26.70

Patience is not sitting and waiting

It is foreseeing

It is looking at the night and seeing the day

Rumi, 13th-century Persian poet and Sufi mystic

Patience by Mary Oliver



What is the good life now?
Why, look here, consider the
moon's white crescent
rounding, slowly, over the half
month to still another perfect
circle—

the shining eye that lightens the hills, that lays down the
shadows of the branches of the trees,
that summons the flowers to open
their sleepy faces and look up into the
heavens.



I used to hurry everywhere, and
leaped over the running creeks. There
wasn't time enough for all the wonderful things I could think
of to do in a single day. Patience comes to the bones before it
takes root in the heart as another good idea.



I say this
as I stand in the woods and
study the patterns of the moon
shadows, or stroll down into the
waters that now, late summer,
have also caught the fever, and
hardly move from one eternity to
another.

3 July 2020

Experiment with Light

Take Heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of Love and Truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.



This first Advice in *Quaker Faith & Practice* is a simple description of how Quakers seek to connect with God and how that relationship can transform our inner darkness and bring about renewal. This process is embedded in Quaker worship but it can sometimes elude us.

In recent years Quakers have rediscovered and revived a spiritual practice followed by early Friends that we now call 'Experiment with Light'. Today Quakers follow a pattern of prompts with time for reflection which allow the individual to tap into the Inner Light and wait there, often leading to an 'Aha' moment of realisation which might be humbling and revealing, sobering or amusing.

Most Quakers who follow the practice nowadays gather together as a group, meeting regularly and sharing insights afterwards. I have introduced the practice into prison with different groups. However, if you do try it on your own, remember to go easy and be gentle on yourself. There are 6 stages and you'll find the prompts set out on the other side of this sheet. Hold each phrase in mind for around 5 minutes before you move on to the next prompt. Then leave time at the end to write down or draw anything you discover.

This process is worth persisting with. It allows us to see things differently and it leaves us with greater sense of peace but it doesn't promise quick fixes. It is a spiritual discipline that takes practice and the rewards come in the longer term. I have learned over the years to trust, to be open, and to listen to that still small voice. During these difficult times of lockdown while we can't meet together, it offers us a way of maintaining a Quaker spiritual practice.

Barbara, a Quaker Prison Chaplain

More about Experiment with Light can be found in Rex Ambler's book 'A Light to live by'

1. Relax body and mind	Allow yourself to be receptive
2. Let the real concerns emerge	What are the real concerns?
3. Now focus on one issue	What causes you unease?
4. Why is it like that?	Wait in the Light, Let the answer come
5. When the answer comes, welcome it	Trust the Light
6. Accept what you have found	Now there is peace



Bright Field by R.S.Thomas

I have seen the sun break through to illuminate a small field for a while, and gone my way and forgotten it. But that was the pearl of great price, the one field that had treasure in it. I realise now that I must give all that I have to possess it.

Life is not hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past. It is the turning aside like Moses to the miracle of the lit bush, to a brightness that seemed as transitory as your youth once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

How to see

I close my eyes in silence,
enter the inner elevator
and press "down."
I look around as I descend
into the darkness inside.
What will I find this time?
Those many doors to open,
a multitude of voices to
hear.

I tune in with wonder.
There is a voice that knows, a
light that shines the way ahead
one step at a time,
if I listen deep enough.
I trust the way will open.
I breathe deep and feel
the expansion begin,
opening inward and outward.
I wait expectantly
for that sense of
what is whole and
true
that never fails to guide me.
I open my
eyes. I see.

Alice Carlton
February 2020

10 July 2020



Finding God within

To you who are seekers, to you, young and old who have toiled all night.....

I want to speak as simply and clearly as I can. For God can be found. There is a last rock for your souls, a resting place of peace and joy and security. There is a Divine Centre into which your life can slip, a new and absolute orientation in God, a centre where you live with God and out of which you see all life through new and radiant vision, tinged with new sorrows and new joys.

Thomas Kelly, American Quaker educator and mystic, writing in 1941 QF&P 26.72

The Still Point

*by Madeleine Sophie Cooney,
nun, poet and inter-faith teacher*

Roll time from both ends
into a ball.
Fold space from four directions
into yourself.
Hold the ball.
Be still.

Space will not unroll
If you sit upright on your mat,
breathing quietly
slowly
deeply
inhaling and exhaling
Here.

Time will not unravel
into past
into future
if you hold the ball lightly
gazing at it in stillness
letting it distill
Now.

The ball of time
shrinks to a point.
The mat of space
dwindles to a point.
Space and time meld.
The mind holds this still point.
The still point contains the mind.

The still point
is the heart of the cosmos,
the centre of reality,
the hub of the wheel of change,
the dimensionless locus,
the place that is nowhere and
everywhere.

The point is where we meet,
You and I,
Beyond time and space
in the within-most centre
of my world and Yours.
To find You there
I have wound up time
and folded space
and turned within
where the two centres become
One.

*At the centre of our being is a point of nothingness
which is untouched by sin and by illusion,
a point of pure truth, a spark which belongs entirely to God,
which is never at our disposal,
which is inaccessible to all the fantasies of our own mind
or the brutalities of our own will.*

*This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty
is the pure glory of God in us.
It is a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven.*

*It is in everybody and if we could see it
we would see these billions of points of light coming together
in the face and blaze of a sun that would make
all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely.*

*I have no programme for this seeing.
It is only given.
But the gate of heaven is everywhere.*

Thomas Merton, Trappist monk who lived at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky. He was a writer, poet, and social activist, and a proponent of inter-faith dialogue with Buddhist leaders such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh.

Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit? All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the Divine and to find the inward source of our strength. Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life. Do you encourage in yourself and in others a habit of dependence on God's guidance for each day? Hold yourself and others in the Light, knowing that all are cherished by God.

17 July 2020

Boy by the Sea

by Yang Lian, 1982

I don't know who that boy is
The one playing an intriguing game by the sea
Owner of a sandcastle and daydreams
A straw hat shading his eyes.
He's laughing robustly
As he strolls together with the sun.
I don't know who that boy is...



The art of living must be studied, as must every art. It calls for imagination, so that every advance, every change, is not merely a difference, but a creative act. Achievement, at any level above the lowest, calls for courage to hold on, in spite of current moods, and for exacting self-discipline. The art of Christian living calls for the same self-preparation; but its reward is not merely aesthetic satisfactions. The soul, hungry for God, is fed. Life itself takes on new meaning.

Thus it is that we break from the confines of the prisons we have built about ourselves. Thus it is we are brought into the freedom of the Kingdom of God which, every day, through the wide world, is being realised in the hearts of men.

*Horace Pointing,
& Practice 21.21*

*Albert Einstein
interview for 'What
in 1929.*

**Imagination is more important
than knowledge. Imagination is
the language of the soul. Pay
attention to your imagination
and you will discover all you need
to be fulfilled.**

1946 *Quaker Faith*

*quoted in a newspaper
'Life means to Einstein'*

**As the tree is in the earth and the earth in the tree,
as the sea is in the fish and the fish in the sea,**

As the bird is in the air and the air is in the bird,
As the word is in the breath and the breath is in the
word,

**As rhyme is in the music and music in the rhyme,
As time is in the season and the season is in the
time,**

As grief is in the loving and loving is in the grief,
As belief is in the hope and the hope in the belief,
As desire is in the will and the will in desire,
As fire is in the flame and the flame in the fire,

**As you, Christ are in God and God is in you,
So are you in us and we in you,
So are you in us and we in you.**

Andrew King, 2014



I believe in the powers of ordinary men and women;
in their immense potentialities; in their capacity to rise higher than themselves;
in their essential creativeness; I believe in us all.

I believe and glory in the uniqueness of every child and every man and woman.

I believe that it is that uniqueness that above all needs to be cherished,
protected, nourished and helped to grow and flower and come to fruition.

Our job is to discern and to promote this uniqueness.

In greater or lesser degree we each bear the privileged responsibility for using
the artist in us. Yes: I believe in having the best of both, of all, worlds!

I believe in work. I believe in play. On the whole I see no distinction.
Let us not be afraid of work! Play – games – poetry – music – movement –
all the Arts, are unnecessary yet absolutely essential.

They make possible the impossible and reconcile the irreconcilable.

I believe in the absolute necessity for the arts.

Man cannot live by bread alone.

Robin Tanner, 1963 QF&P 21.36

24 July 2020

We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

Joseph Campbell, author of The Power of Myth, 1988



Last month Quakers in Britain co-launched the Build Back Better campaign and this month they are one of 40 faith groups to sign up to a vision for our future to address deep and long-standing challenges:

COVID-19 has unexpectedly taught us a great deal. Amidst the fear and the grief for loved ones lost, many of us have found consolation in the dramatic reduction of pollution and the restoration of nature. We have rediscovered our sense of how interconnected the world is. The very health and future of humanity depends on our ability to act together not only with respect to pandemics but also in protecting our global ecosystem.

At the same time, less travel and consumption and more kindness and neighbourliness have helped us appreciate what society can really mean. We have also seen yet again that in times of crisis, injustice becomes more obvious, and that it is the poor and vulnerable who suffer most.

All this shows us how precarious 'business as usual' was, socially, economically, ecologically and spiritually. Yet we have also demonstrated our capacity to adapt to new realities.

Many people have discovered a deeper sense of spirituality. We have seen the possibility of creating a more sustainable and generous society in which we care more deeply for each other and the world.

Our faiths teach us that this planet, with its rich resources and inspiring diversity, is lent to us on trust only and we are accountable for how we treat it. We are urgently and inescapably responsible, not just before God but to our own children and the very future of humanity.

This unique moment calls us to develop a shared new vision for our future which we cannot afford to miss. As faith leaders we are committed to working alongside the people and governments of this nation and the world to formulate and live by such a vision.

Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath— the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life. Center down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives
are in one another's hands. (Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love— for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

Lynn Ungar 11 March 2020

31 July 2020

Take Heed, dear Friends,
to the promptings of Love and Truth
in your hearts.

Trust them as the leadings of God
whose light shows us our darkness
and brings us to new life.

Advice No.1 Quaker Faith & Practice



The key to life is to
find the kernel of
pure Truth in every
situation.

Thomas Merton

I had a dream some months ago, about a field
covered with snow.
But something about it wasn't right.
The sun never rose, it was everlasting night. Eternal darkness
all through the day; the snow never melted, never went away.
A sky filled with darkness, a field freezing cold. Hell is panoramic, a
picture to behold.

Weakened are the shackles that kept me bound to fear.
As Divine Truth permeates my mind each day, illusions become clear.
Divine Love is enfolding, as ever, God is here.
Now I see You everywhere and infinite blessings abound.

Written by Phil in 2019 HMP Long Lartin



Acceptance means that though there is need for growth, I am not forced. I do not have to be the person I am not.

Acceptance liberates everything in me.

Only when I am loved in that deep sense of complete acceptance,
can I become myself. *Peter van Breeman, SJ, 1974*

PAUSE written by John June 2020, HMP Usk

Be easy on yourself

For the wisher of kindness and peace are at your door

Allow them to enter

Their simple wish is to greet you lovingly,

Be their friend,

Sit with them patiently and welcome their wisdom,

Be easy on yourself

And the breath of kindness will kiss your lips
And the gentle touch of compassion will light your path.

I give myself this advice: Do not fear Truth. Never give up the search after it; let me try from the bottom of my heart to do that which I believe truth dictates.... I want less love of money, less judging of others, less tattling, less dependence on external appearance. I want to see more fruit of the spirit in all things, more devotion of heart, more spirit of prayer, more real cultivation of mind, more enlargement of heart towards others; more tenderness...and above all more of the rest, peace and liberty of the children of God.

Extract from Journal of Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845), Quaker prison reformer

Loving God,

We ask for healing for the world,

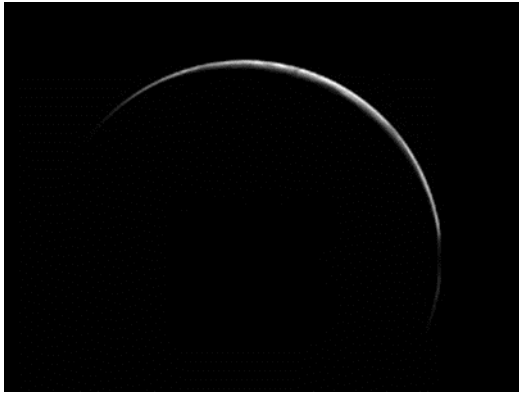
and ask that as individuals and at all different levels of community – family, local,
national and international –

we may have courage to change our ways and attitudes, that all
people may live healthily and securely,
and the gift of the world that you have given us may be
sustained.

And may the boldness of the Holy Spirit transform us, the
gentleness of the Spirit lead us, and the gifts of the Spirit
equip us

To serve and worship you. **Amen.**

7 August 2020



Crescent Earth (Photo Courtesy of NASA)

Try to find a spiritual wholeness which encompasses suffering as well as thankfulness and joy. Prayer, springing from a deep place in the heart, may bring healing and unity as nothing else can. Let meeting for worship nourish your whole life.

From Advice No 10, QF&P

From Andrew, a Quaker Prison Chaplain

Prayer plays a vital role in all the world's religious traditions and takes many different forms. For Quakers, our starting-point is silent reflection. When we meet together collectively, as we settle into worship Friends often describe the initial phase of worship as 'centering down'.

For several centuries, Quakers have found that simply sitting quietly provides the opportunity to re-balance ourselves, to step aside from everyday pressures and demands in order to consider our lives and relationships from a different perspective - to open our hearts to the promptings of God's love and inner guidance.

Sometimes our prayers find expression in words, at other times we can find ourselves in a place of deep stillness and gatheredness where no words are needed. After such times of inner withdrawal from the world, we can return to our daily routine feeling refreshed, re-energised and ready to face challenges that may previously have seemed impossible to deal with.

The place of prayer is a precious habitation:
I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet,
when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world.

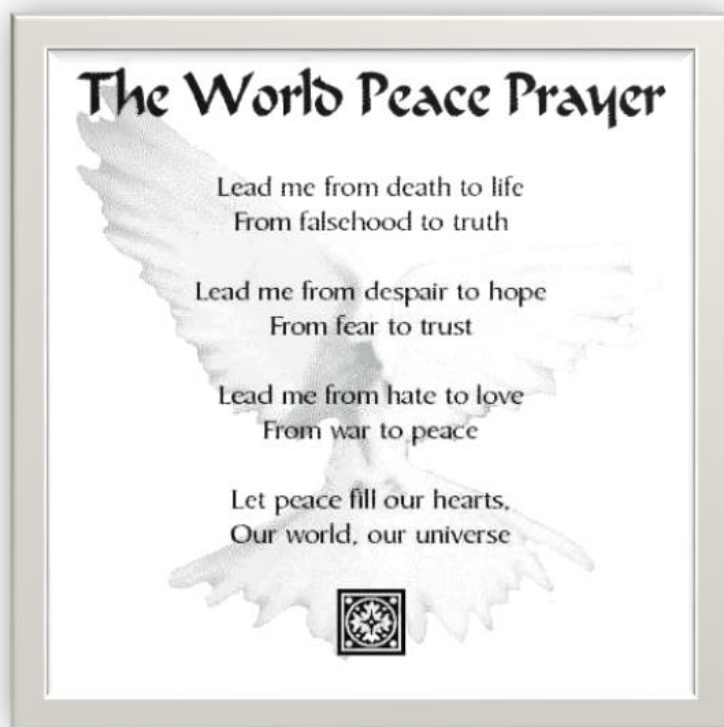
John Woolman 1770, Quaker Faith and Practice 20.10

Prayer is an exercise of the spirit, as thought is of the mind. To pray about anything is to use the powers of our spirit on it, just as to think clearly is to use our mental powers. For the best solution of every problem, the best carrying out of every action, both thought and prayer are necessary.

To pray about any day's work does not mean to ask success in it. It means, first to realise my own inability to do even a familiar job, as it truly should be done, unless I am in touch with eternity.

My faith is the point in me at which God comes into my work; through faith the work is given dignity and value. And if, through some weakness of mine, or fault of others, or just 'unavoidable circumstances', the work seems a failure, yet prayer is not wasted when it is unanswered, any more than love is wasted when it is unreturned.

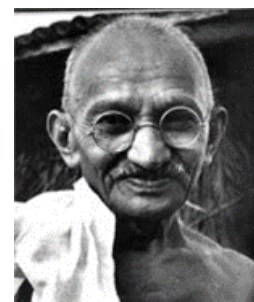
Mary F Smith, Quaker Faith and Practice 20.08



Each day at noon people of all faiths and none use this 'Universal Prayer for Peace'. This forms a wave of prayer and hope rippling each day around the globe.

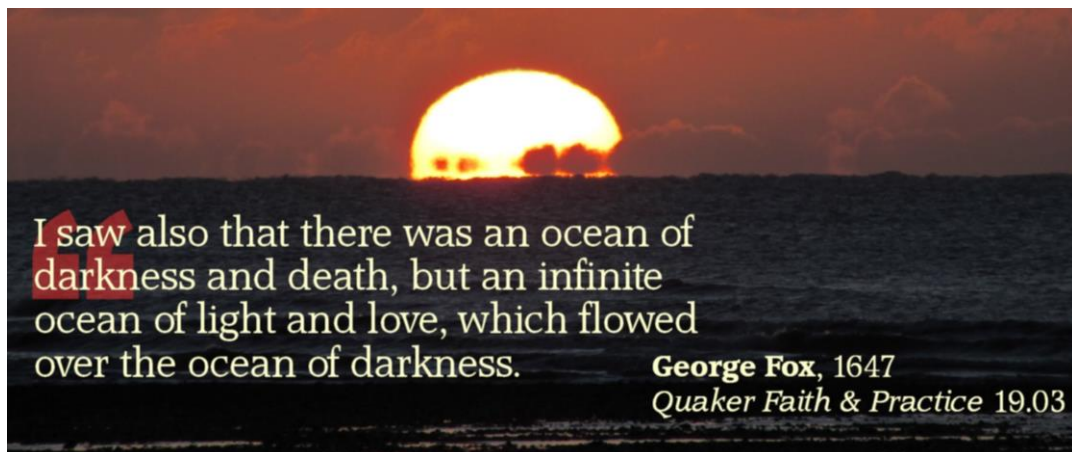
And in our own lives, each time we recite the words of The Peace Prayer, the journey of transformation has already begun.

Be the change that you
wish to see in the world



Mahatma Gandhi

14 August 2020



Openings to the Infinite Ocean: A Friendly Offering of Hope

Tom Shakespeare gave this year's Swarthmore lecture on 1st August online instead of during the annual gathering of Quakers in Britain. Tom is a lecturer in social science and a disability activist. Here is an extract from his interview published in 'The Friend' magazine.

How do we face all the very real things that are happening in our world and still have hope? How did Quakers in the past have hope in dark times? George Fox describes staring into the abyss. But is it realism.

'Absolute hope' means having a sense of self, waiting patiently, where you are with others. I think this realism - what the Bible calls 'fortitude' and psychologists call 'resilience' - is a tremendous human quality that we can build and grow..If we can find this 'absolute hope, it is the Kingdom of God'.



Our human spirit is not defeated and when we have a crisis as we do now, we dig into that. Let's look differently in three ways. One is putting things in perspective. Second, let's not forget some very positive things that are happening during Covid. Amid the suffering there has been great love and community feeling so it's about looking up close at the things that go well. Thirdly it's about taking the long view.

History despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived but if faced with courage need not be lived again. Maya Angelou

In the dark times
will there also be
singing?

Yes, there will also
be singing about the
dark times.

Berthold

Brecht

*Hope is the Thing
with Feathers*



Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all.

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm

I've heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

Emily Dickinson

WE MUST ACCEPT **FINITE DISAPPOINTMENT**, BUT
WE MUST NEVER LOSE **INFINITE HOPE**. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



21 August 2020

Live adventurously.

*When **choices** arise,
do you take the way
that offers the fullest opportunity
for the use of your gifts
in the service of God
and the community?
Let your life speak.*

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

We live and move and have our being in God; we are bound up in the bundle of life in Him, and it is reasonable to believe that prayer may often find its answer, even in outward things, by the reaction of mind upon mind. Prayer is not given us to make life easy for us, or to coddle us, but to make us strong ... to make us masters of circumstance and not its slaves. We pray, not to change God's will, but to bring our wills into correspondence with His.

William Littleboy, 1937, part of Quaker Faith & Practice 2.24

Those who have difficulty in accepting the idea of a personal shadow as far as they themselves are concerned, whose knowledge of human nature is two-dimensional, all too easily think that morality attaches to feelings, that hateful, hostile, cruel or greedy feelings are immoral. They do not perhaps realise that the feelings that arise in us are neither moral nor immoral but neutral. The supreme importance of morality is the way we choose to act on our feelings. And we shall not be free to choose if we do not know what they are.

.Jack H Wallis 1988 QF&P 21 11

The Road not Taken by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.



The poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), a Massachusetts journalist and anti-slavery campaigner, continues to find a place in modern hymn-books, far beyond the Quaker community.

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.*

*In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow thee.*

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!*

28 August 2020



Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness. Advice No 18

Friendship and Community behind bars reflections from the Long Lartin Quaker group and in memory of Friend Guy

We look forward to the peace and tranquillity of our Friday Circle.

We look forward to the visitors who come and join us, and thank them for being with us

We look forward to the conversations, laughter, tea and coffee after our meeting.

So don't look back - the Past has gone. Look forward to Life's continuous Circle.

Stepping into the circle feels like stepping past the wall. Moving from bars and bullies to a better place for a short time. A place my heart can return to when I need it.

I am extremely grateful for our meetings as it's the one time each week that I can feel at genuine peace - the silence is so powerful and revitalising and the people who attend are pretty awesome too!

Our circle is inclusive. We welcome everyone. In the stillness of this space you can find the Living Light which is in all of us. By waiting in this Light you can become the person you are meant to be.

This meeting represents to me a time when we can forget our past, our labels, our prejudices, and meet together in mutual acceptance, respect and friendship.

Friendship, Companionship, Fellowship - the journey that we make together.

For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unclaimed. And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.*from The Prophet by Kahil Gibran*

May God bless me with discontent-

*at easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships,
so that I may live from deep within my heart.*

May God bless me with anger –

*at injustice, oppression, and the exploitation of people,
so that I may work for justice, equality, and peace.*

May God bless me with tears to shed

*for those who suffer from rejection, starvation and war,
so that I may reach out to comfort them and turn their pain to joy.*

May God bless me with enough foolishness

*to believe that I can make a difference in this world,
so that I can do what others claim cannot be done.*

Guy's Testimony written in August 2019

There was something immensely powerful stirring in people throughout England in the 1640s and 50s. There was a collective spiritual need to challenge the status quo - something was afoot. People were concerned about the way the church operated and were searching for spiritual Truth and a way to live out their faith in the world. In a nutshell they felt a need to transform how things were. They believed this was for the good of all. It was a crisis point in our history.

Well Friends, I believe we need to re-ignite the spiritual fire of those early pioneers of our faith. We must be true to their legacy and humbled by their endeavours. Collectively and individually we need to speak up, to act wherever we can. God does not expect us individually to change the world but we are asked to do whatever we can.

This is not now simply the right thing to do, it is the only thing. When we see millions of refugees fleeing war zones, people persecuted for their faith, colour or sexual-orientation or children dying in the streets from knife crime, we cannot remain silent and pass by. We need to help, protect, write letters, mediate and speak Truth to those in power. To remain idle is to condone wrong action.

So Friend, don't just *think* what you can do, *do* what you can do.

I believe, I believe, I do believe,
People get ready, there's a train comin'
Don't need no baggage, you just get on
board,
All we need is faith to hear the diesels
hummin'
You don't need no ticket, well just thank the
Lord

People get ready, for the train to Jordan
It's picking up passengers from coast to
coast
Faith is the key, open the doors and board
'em
There's hope for all among His loved the
most
I believe, I believe, I do believe....

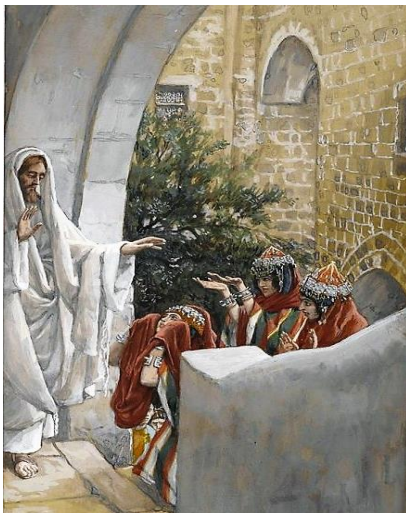
4 September 2020

From Yvonne, a Quaker Chaplain

The last few months have been a time of uncertainty for all of us, as well as anxiety and loss for many. I have felt grateful day by day for simple gifts, easily overlooked at other times. A lot of choices have been taken away, and the pleasure of a new flower unfolding, the song of a small bird, or a conversation with a neighbour become suddenly heightened, always with that underlying edge of not knowing what the next day's news may bring.



Times of stress, crisis, and even disaster can really draw out the hidden strengths in people and societies, but can also bring to light our hidden weaknesses. Some of the old props, strategies, and diversions don't work any longer or are suddenly taken away and we can be left feeling exposed and vulnerable. When I look back at some of the hardest times in my life whilst attempting to follow a spiritual path, I would certainly not wish to relive them, but I can recognize a dynamism they gave to my faith, a greater dependence on God when the defences were down. At such times, passages of scripture, even strange and difficult ones, can light up with new meaning, and prayer becomes more vital.



James Tissot (1836 - 1902)

Earlier this week I was reading Matthew Chapter 15 in the Bible, where a Canaanite woman begs Jesus to heal her daughter of a frightening disorder. It's a troubling passage in some ways, drawing attention to the racial and cultural differences between Jews and Canaanites which create a "social distance" between Jesus and the woman. She is very persistent and elaborately addresses Jesus as "Lord, Son of David", but eventually she resorts to the words "Lord, help me", a simple and profound prayer. A deep and direct cry from the heart leads to transformation. Few words are needed.

I know many friends behind bars are deeply scornful of stuff that seems to be "just words" and sometimes the fewer the words the better. Some of you will know that as Quakers we sit in stillness and silence, using little formal religious language, but sometimes moved to speak from a deep and simple place, a form of worship I find so powerful and prayerful in the ways I have tried to describe.

The city of Birmingham, England, where I live, is one of the most racially and religiously mixed communities in Europe. It has a stimulating, challenging and exciting atmosphere. On one occasion, at a big interfaith gathering, I was being very Quakerly and very enlightened. The discussion was about prayer, and I confessed that it was my habit to pray anywhere and that I could do so sitting comfortably in a chair. A devout Muslim woman in the conference was shocked at what she saw as my easygoing familiarity with God, my lack of respect, my denial of my own human dignity. When you think of God, she said, there is only one possible response. It is to go down on your *knees*.

I recognised the truth in what she said and have acted on it ever since, though I regret I have not yet been brave enough to kneel in the meeting house. That will come. From this unnamed woman I learned something of Islam – submission to God – in a way that no Christian had ever taught me. But the words are immaterial. It was not the Mosque or the Qur'an addressing me, but the living God I know in Christ speaking through her.

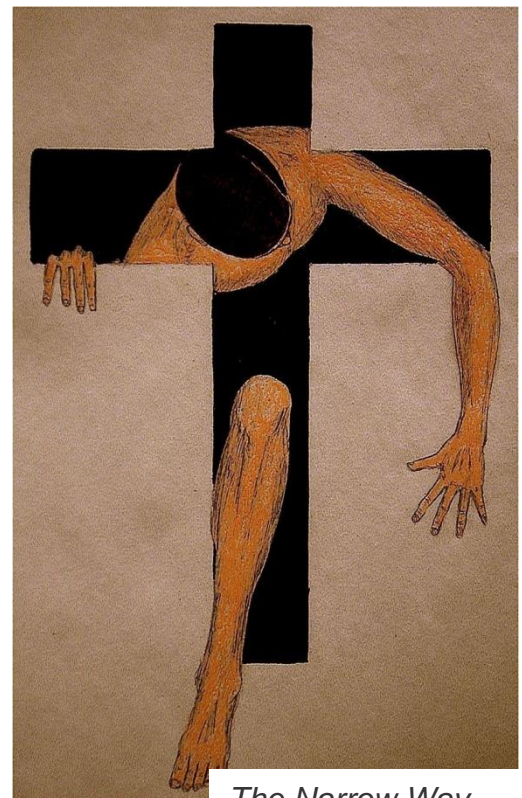
Your neighbour is your other self
dwelling behind a wall.
In understanding, all walls shall fall down.
Who knows but that your neighbour
is your better self wearing another body?
See that you love him as you would love yourself.

He too is a manifestation of the Most High,
whom you do not know.

Your neighbour is a field where the springs
of your hope walk in their green garments,
and where the winters of your desire
dream of snowy heights.

Your neighbour is a mirror wherein
you may behold your countenance made beautiful
by a joy which you yourself did not know,
and by a sorrow you yourself did not share.
I would have you love your neighbour even as I
have loved you.

On the Neighbour from *Jesus the Son of Man* by Kahlil Gibran



The Narrow Way
by David Hayward

(2002)

11 September 2020

Chinese Symbol for “Conflict”



Danger

Opportunity

Mary Lou Leavitt, 1986 *Quaker Faith & Practice* 20.71

Conflict happens even in the most peaceful of worlds. And that’s good – our differences help us to learn. Through conflict handled creatively we can change and grow; and I am not sure real change can happen without it. We’ll each handle conflict differently and find healing and reconciliation by different paths. I want to offer three keys, three skills which I’ve found helpful from my own experience.

The first skill is ***naming***: being clear and honest about the problem, stating what I see and how I feel about it. What is important about these statements is that I own them: ‘I see’, ‘I feel’ (not ‘surely it is obvious that ...’). This ability to name what seems to be going on, is crucial to getting the conflict out into the open, where we can begin to understand and try to deal with it.

Such a skill can feel dangerous and confrontational. It feels like stirring up trouble where there wasn’t any problem. It needs to be done carefully, caringly, with love, in language we hope others can hear. We need to seek tactfully the best time to do it. But it needs to be done.

The second skill is the skill of ***listening***: listening not just to the words, but to the feelings and needs behind the words. It takes a great deal of time and energy to listen well. It’s a kind of weaving: reflecting back, asking for clarification, asking for time in turn to be listened to, being truly open to what we’re hearing (even if it hurts), being open to the possibility that we might ourselves be changed by what we hear.

The third skill is the skill of ***letting go***: I don’t mean that in the sense of giving up, and inviting people to walk all over us, but acknowledging that there may be other solutions to this conflict than the ones we’ve thought of; letting the imagination in – making room for the Spirit. We need to let go of our own will – not to surrender to another’s, but to look together for God’s solution. It’s a question of finding ways to let go of our commitment to opposition and separation, of letting ourselves be opened to opportunities for connectedness as human beings.

If we are to do any of these things well – naming, listening, letting go – we need to have learned to trust that of God in ourselves and that of God in those trapped on all sides of the conflict with us. And to do that well, I need to be centred, rooted, practised in waiting on God. That rootedness is both a gift and a discipline, something we can cultivate and build on by acknowledging it every day.

Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations? *Advice 32*

The Guest House ~ Jalaluddin Rumi (1207 – 1273)

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness
some momentary awareness comes as
an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
They may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the
malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.



Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from above.

Calligraphy by Timothy Botts



18 September 2020



The International Day of Peace is marked by millions around the world on 21st September each year. The UN General Assembly declared this as a day for all humanity to strengthen the ideals of peace, by observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire, to allow humanitarian work.

This year, it is clearer than ever that we are not each other's enemies. Rather, we face a common threat to our health, security and very way of life. COVID-19 has turned our world upside down and starkly shown us that what happens in one part of our planet has an impact on humanity everywhere. Building peace has never been so important.

If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations.

If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities.

If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbours.

If there is to be peace between neighbours, there must be peace in the home.

Submission from New Zealand Quakers during review of government defence policy in 1987:

We equally and actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations, and violence to other species and to our planet. We must start with our own hearts and minds. Wars will stop only when each of us is convinced that war is never the way.

The places to begin acquiring the skills and maturity and generosity to avoid or to resolve conflicts are in our own homes, our personal relationships, our schools, our workplaces, and wherever decisions are made.

We must relinquish the desire to own other people, to have power over them, and to force our views on to them. We must own up to our own negative side and not look for scapegoats to blame, punish, or exclude. We must resist the urge towards waste and the accumulation of possessions.

Conflicts are inevitable and must not be repressed or ignored but worked through painfully and carefully. We must develop the skills of being sensitive to oppression and grievances, sharing power in decision-making, creating consensus, and making reparation.

.Read the full statement in Quaker Faith & Practice 24.10



Peace is not the product of terror or fear.

Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.

Peace is not the silent result of violent repression.

Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all

Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity. It is right and it is duty.

by Oscar Romero (1917-1980)

The [Quaker] Peace testimony is about deeds not creeds; not a form of words but a way of living. It is the cumulative lived witness of generations of Quakers...

The peace testimony is a tough demand that we should not automatically accept the categories, definitions and priorities of the world. The peace testimony today is seen in what we do with our lives. We pray for the involvement of the Spirit with us, that we may work for a more just world. We need to train to wage peace.

Quaker Faith & Practice 24.11

Peace is the fragile meeting

Of souls in harmony.

Peace is an embrace

That protects and heals.

Peace is a reconciling of opposites.

Peace is rooted in Love,

It lies in the heart,

Waiting to be nourished,

Blossom and flourish,

Until it embraces the world.

May we know the harmony of peace,

May we sing the harmony of peace,

Until in the last of days, we rest in peace.



Terry Waite is a humanitarian who spent four years as a hostage in Lebanon in 1980s.

Blessed are the Peace-makers
for they shall be called the Children of God
Matthew 5:9

25 September 2020

Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships.
Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

Advice 22



In personal relationships and in community, a positive response to destructive behaviour through **reconciliation**, **restitution** and **reparation** may take longer but it is more likely to encourage the good in all parties, restore those who are damaged, reduce resentment and bitterness, and enable all those involved to move towards fuller integration. *Six Quakers, 1979*

Restoring Relationships - Richard Rohr, OFM

We are all interconnected. In the Hebrew scriptures, **shalom** is a vision of living in a sense of “all-rightness” with each other. Many cultures have a word that represents this notion of the centrality of relationships. For the Maori, it is communicated by **whakapapa**; for the Navajo, **hozho**; for many Africans, the Bantu word **ubuntu**; for Tibetan Buddhists, **tendrel**. Although the specific meanings of these words vary, they communicate a similar message: all things are connected to each other in a web of relationships.

In African justice making, any wrongdoing emphasizes the importance of making amends and “putting right”. Rather than an occasion to inflict punishment, it is an opportunity to address the problems that give rise to interpersonal harm. A wrong can be made right by subsequent actions of the person responsible and other community members. Community is central.

We all need to apologize, and we all need to forgive, for humanity to have a sustainable future. Otherwise, we are controlled by our past. History easily devolves into taking sides, bitterness, holding grudges, and the violence that inevitably follows. A restorative approach to wrongdoing has a concern for all involved – those harmed, those who cause harm, and their communities.



Ten Ways to Live Restoratively

Howard Zehr: Changing Lenses

1. Take your relationships seriously, as part of an interconnected community.
2. Try to be aware of the impact of your actions on others and the environment.
3. When your actions have a negative impact on others, take responsibility by acknowledging and seeking to repair the harm.
4. Treat everyone respectfully, even those you feel don't deserve it, even those who have harmed or offended you or others.
5. Involve those affected by a decision in the decision-making process, as much as possible.
6. View the conflicts and harms in your life as opportunities.
7. Listen, deeply and with compassion, to others, seeking to understand even if you don't agree with them.
8. Engage in dialogue with others, even when what is being said is difficult, and remain open to learning from the encounter.
9. Be careful not to impose your views on other people.
10. Challenge with sensitivity those everyday injustices including sexism and racism.

For Peace

John O'Donohue, A Book of Blessings

As the fever of the day calms towards twilight
May all that is strained in us come to ease.

We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.

For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.

That those who make riches from violence and war
Might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.

That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.

That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.

That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
That our swords be beaten into ploughshares

And no hurt or harm be done
Anywhere along the holy mountain.

2 October 2020

Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion. Isaac Penington. 1661



Reflections from Judith, a Quaker Chaplain

As we begin October I recall Harvest Festivals in my childhood, singing 'all is safely gathered in' at school assemblies and taking boxes of fruit and veg to the elderly in the community. This year is different. The pandemic continues to limit the ways in which we can connect, share and show gratitude.

Yet nature has been quietly gathering momentum, blessing us with a joyful spring and abundant sunshine through to September. This year's harvest seems more fruitful than ever. So this week I'd like to share words around the theme of seeds and fruit which I cherish.

For early Quakers like Isaac Penington, the image of the Seed represents the divine spark within us, tiny as a mustard seed but full of potential to grow and guide us. This seed is within everyone. We simply need to be willing to put aside our own agendas and egos, and trust this inner Truth.

When I was teaching primary RE around Harvest time, I used to enjoy sharing this story by Anthony de Mello (Indian Jesuit priest, psychotherapist and spiritual teacher) to help us understand the images of seeds and fruit lived, out in our human life:

A woman dreamed she walked into a brand-new shop in the marketplace and, to her surprise, found God behind the counter.

"What do you sell here?" she asked.

"Everything your heart desires," said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human being could wish for. "I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear," she said. Then as an afterthought, she added, "Not just for me. For everyone on Earth."

God smiled, "I think you've got me wrong, my dear," God said.

"We don't sell fruits here. Only seeds."

from *Taking Flight: A Book of Story Meditations* by Anthony de Mello (1931-1987)

Another guide who helps me understand how God lives, not only within and through humanity but also in all of creation, is the writer of **Revelations of Divine Love**. She is known to us only as **Julian of Norwich** from the church where she lived as a recluse in the 1300s, after she survived the plague known as the Black Death:

And in this he showed me a little thing, the size of a hazel nut, in the palm of my hand, and it was as round as a ball. I looked upon it with my mind's eye and thought, 'What may this be?'

And answer came, 'It is all that is made.' I marvelled that it could last, for I thought it might have crumbled to nothing, it was so small.

And the answer came: 'It lasts and ever shall, because God cherishes it. And all things have their beginning through the love of God.'

In this little thing I saw three truths. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God looks after it."



Last month I watched a squirrel busily running backwards and forwards from a hazel tree in the garden, burying nuts for the winter and hoping that no-one was watching. And I look forward to next Spring when I will find hazel saplings growing in unexpected places that the squirrel has overlooked and I will transplant them to a place where I hope they can flourish.

There are many passages in our red book, *Quaker Faith and Practice* exploring the theme of the seed, for example: George Fox 20.67 & 21.49, William Penn 26.44, and Isaac Penington 19.14. These words by Edgar Castle are taken from 26.69 and they sum up the understanding of these early Quakers:

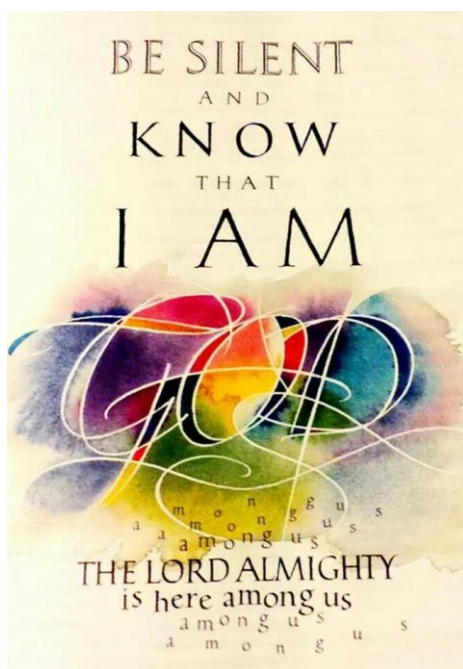
When early Friends likened God's gift to a 'Seed' they did not think of it as growing inevitably into a noble tree. They were fully aware of the influences that might arrest its growth. Fox never regarded the conquest of sin as a casual undertaking. But with astonishing psychological insight he laid the emphasis not on the sin but on the light that revealed it. Fox assured his friends that light will come on conditions. These conditions were well laid down by Isaac Penington in the darkness of Reading gaol: 'We were directed to search for the least of all seeds and to [be aware of the smallest] appearance thereof, which was its turning against sin and darkness; we came by degrees to find we had met with the pure living eternal Spirit'....
.....We are to tend the small Seed and help it to grow.

9 October 2020

Prayer has far more to do with listening than with talking. In emotional stress our thoughts are so obsessive that they leave us no opportunity to listen. So, when we know someone is in trouble, we can and must listen (pray) for them.... We are seldom given guarantees that it is effective, just hints along the way; but they are hints we cannot ignore.

A friend tells me that when she prays for someone she does not so much pray *to* God for them as *for* God for them. This seems to me a vital clue about prayer. It is God that the troubled person needs, not our advice and instructions. As we learn more about prayer we learn to listen more deeply so that we can be channels through which God's love reaches the other person. It is God at work, not we ourselves; we are simply used.

Diana Lampen 1979, Quaker Faith & Practice 2.26



Prayer is like

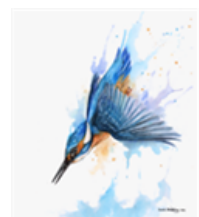
*watching for the Kingfisher.
All you can do is
Be where he is likely to appear,
and Wait.*

*Often, nothing much happens;
There is space,
silence and
Expectancy.*

*No visible sign, only the
Knowledge that he's been there,
And may come again.*

*Seeing or not seeing cease to matter,
You have been prepared.*

Psalm 46.10
Calligraphy by Timothy Botts



One Heart

Look at the birds.

Even flying is born
out of nothing.

The first sky
is inside you, friend,
open at either end of the day.

The work of wings
was always freedom,
fastening one heart to every falling thing.



Young Lee, in Book of Nights

Prayer is *communion*, whether it takes the form of petition, intercession, thanksgiving, or whether it be just the quiet unveiling of the heart to a trusted friend, the outpouring of the soul to the One who is nearest of all.

William Littleboy, 1937 QF&P 2.34

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and
through us.

May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and
all beings.

Help us to become a community that shares each other's
burdens.

Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world....

~~~~~

Knowing that you are hearing us better than we are speaking,

We offer this prayer in all the holy names of God, Amen

*Find a time to sit quietly with these words, with a still mind and an open heart.  
Read them slowly and let them speak to you in the depths of your being.*



16 October 2020

For Courage John O'Donohue

When the light around you lessens  
And your thoughts darken until  
Your body feels fear turn  
Cold as a stone inside,

When you find yourself bereft  
Of any belief in yourself  
And all you unknowingly  
Leaned on has fallen,

When one voice commands  
Your whole heart,  
And it is raven dark,

Steady yourself and see  
That it is your own thinking  
That darkens your world,



Search, and you will find  
A diamond thought of light...

Close your eyes.  
Gather all the kindling  
About your heart  
To create one spark.

That is all you need  
To nourish the flame  
That will cleanse the dark  
Of its weight of festered fear.

Jesus knows no fear, nothing holds him apart from other people. His fearlessness, however, flows from his communion with God. But this communion with God can be achieved by all men. Thus he sees in the other man only his brother, his neighbour. Next to the love of God, the commandment '*Love thy neighbour as thyself*' is for Jesus the most essential of all commandments.

Such a concept does not mean that opposite views are abolished... The courage for clarity and the strength to stand up for truth are repeatedly demanded of us. However, the secret lies in the way in which truth is spoken. If it is spoken with contempt, bitterness or hatred, it results in bitterness; if, however, truth is spoken in love, the door to the other's heart can slowly open so that the truth can perhaps have some effect...

We can help to ease the tensions and live within them in the right way if we fulfil simultaneously Christ's two commandments – the commandment to love and the commandment to speak truth. A synthesis of these two must be found. Out of fear, we may betray truth; out of bitterness or self-righteousness we may betray love. A desire for peace without truthfulness is worthless and does not bring about peace; without love truth has no effect because it is not heard.

*Extract from 'Christians in a divided world' by Margarethe Lachmund,  
Quaker Faith & Practice 24.34*

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark;  
the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.  
Plato

Moving out beyond our fear, we gain our freedom to live fully.  
This is the eye of the needle in all faiths.

Without faith in the Truth that we all belong to God (Romans 14:8),  
we don't move from something nice we recite on Sundays  
to something you know in the marrow of your bones.  
Then you walk on the earth as a vessel of love and nothing can touch you.

*Cynthia Bourgeault, Wisdom in Times of Crisis, Easter 2020*



All of us are afraid  
More often than we tell.  
There are times we cling like mussels to the sea-wall,  
And pray that the pounding waves  
Won't smash our shell.

Times we hear nothing but the sound  
Of our loneliness, like a cracked bell  
From fields far away where the trees are in icy shade.  
Many a time in the night-time and in the day,  
More often than we say,

If people say they are never frightened,  
I don't believe them.  
If people say they are frightened,  
I want to retrieve them  
From that dark shivering haunt,  
Where they don't want to be, Nor I.

Let's make of ourselves therefore, an enormous sky  
over whatever  
We most hold dear.

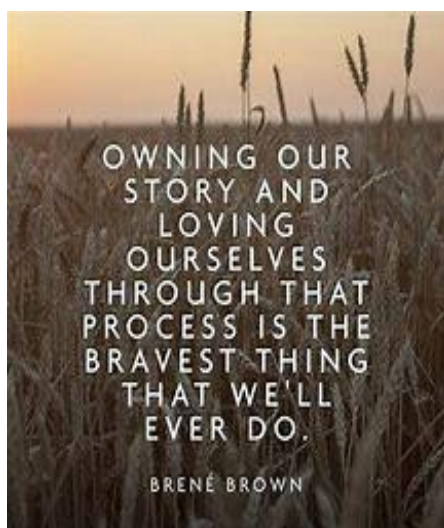
And we'll comfort each other,  
Comfort each other's  
Fear.

*Kit Wright, born 1944  
Author and poet*

23 October 2020



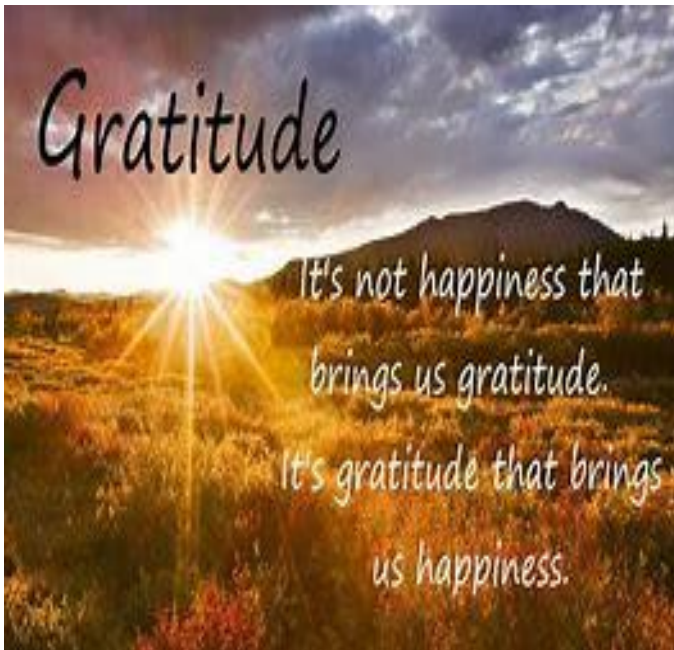
"The real gift of gratitude is that the more grateful you are, the more present you become." -Robert Holden



If the only prayer you said was thank you that would be enough – Meister Eckhart

Beauty breaks through not only at a few highly organised points, it breaks through everywhere. Everything from a dewdrop to Mount Shasta is the bearer of beauty. And yet beauty has no function, no utility. Its value is intrinsic, not extrinsic. Its own excuse for being. It greases no wheels, it bakes no puddings. It is a gift of sheer grace, a gratuitous largesse.

*Rufus Jones 1920 Quaker Faith and Practice 26.32*



*Ursula Franklin 1979 Quaker Faith and Practice 23.32*

John O'Donohue from *Benedictus*

Take refuge in your senses  
To all the small miracles you rushed through.  
Become inclined to watch the way of rain  
When it falls slow and free.  
Draw alongside the silence of stone  
Until its calmness can claim you.  
Be excessively gentle with yourself.  
Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.  
Learn to linger around someone of ease  
Who feels they have all the time in the world.  
Gradually, you will return to yourself,  
Having learned a new respect for your heart  
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

---

“  
This is a  
wonderful day.  
I've never seen  
it before.

MAYA ANGELOU

88.COM/QUOTES

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I have never lost the enjoyment of sitting in silence at the beginning of meeting, knowing that everything can happen, knowing the joy of utmost surprise; feeling that nothing is pre-ordained, nothing set, all is open. The light can come from all sides. The joy of experiencing the Light in a completely different way than one has thought it would come is one of the greatest gifts that Friend's meeting for worship has brought me.



30 October 2020



In its early days the Society of Friends(Quakers) owed much to a people who called themselves Seekers.

They joined us in great numbers and were prominent in the spread of Quakerism.

The name Seeker has died out, but I think that the spirit of seeking is still the prevailing one in our faith, and for that reason it is not embodied in any creed or formula.

*Arthur Eddington, 1929 Quaker Faith & Practice 26.16*

On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might draw near to the Divine Presence. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and, before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at the least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven. And, since that day, now more than seventeen years ago, Friends' meetings have indeed been to me the greatest of outward helps to a fuller and fuller entrance into the spirit from which they have sprung; the place of the most soul-subduing, faith-restoring, strengthening, and peaceful communion, in feeding upon the bread of life, that I have ever known.

*Caroline Stephen*

*writing in 1890 QF&P 2.02*



### The Journey by Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and  
began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice-  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
'Mend my life!'  
each voice cried.  
But you didn't stop.

You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice,  
which you slowly  
recognised as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and  
deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do-  
determined to save  
the only life you could save.

Let us look at the mystery of seeking...

The way to find God is to look deeply into your seeking itself.

Seeking is not merely a simple decision;  
it contains all your internal trends and nature.  
Self-knowledge is a very proper part of the process.

God is hidden in you.

On the way to discovering how this is so,  
you learn all about what is hidden in you.

*Returning to the Source by Wilson Van Dusen 1996*

WE SEEK OUTSIDE THE WONDERS WE CARRY  
INSIDE OF US.  
- RUMI



6 November 2020

## Reflection from Russell, a Quaker Chaplain

As I was unable to visit my prison during the initial lockdown and concerned about the wellbeing of the men who attended our weekly Meeting for Worship and those I saw regularly one to one, I decided to send in a weekly letter to them all. I spent hours thinking of a theme each week, I searched avidly through *Quaker Faith & Practice* and the Bible for inspiration, I copied photographs to illustrate my text and I was generally pleased with myself and my efforts each week. I also thought it would be good to include Friends from my local Meeting in some way. After some discussion it was agreed that they could send in postcards to the men each week via the chaplaincy. Friends took it in turns to do this.



When I eventually returned to the prison, the first thing everyone of the men said to me was how much they had appreciated receiving the postcards. Not a word of my weekly missives! It was a reminder to me that it's not the big grand gestures that make a difference but the small acts of kindness. This brought to mind one of my favourite Bible passages, **Matthew 6**. I think Jesus' advice in this passage reflects what many Quakers try to do when they put faith into action in the world. Whether it be visiting prisons, hospitals and universities as chaplains, or working in local food banks, visiting the isolated - the list goes on, but it is carried out not for recognition or reward but to help and make a difference.

Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in their synagogues and on the streets. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

*As we enter a second lockdown, how do we find inner strength and resolve to endure another difficult period? Where is the Spirit leading us? Quakers seek to keep the rich openings we have inherited and be open to continuing guidance in changing circumstances. This will only be possible if we heed the promptings of love and truth which we trust as the leadings of God. As we try to respond to new leadings we often cannot discern what will remain important and what we can let go. There will be tensions as we wrestle our perceptions and values. Our hope and our experience is that when we are faithful, we shall be rightly led.*

How can we walk with a smile into the dark? We must learn to put our trust in God and the leadings of the Spirit. How many of us are truly led by the Spirit throughout our daily lives? I have turned to God when I have had a difficult decision to make or when I have sought strength to endure the pain in dark times. But I am only slowly learning to dwell in the place where leadings come from. That is a place of love and joy and peace, even in the midst of pain. The more I dwell in that place, the easier it is to smile, because I am no longer afraid.

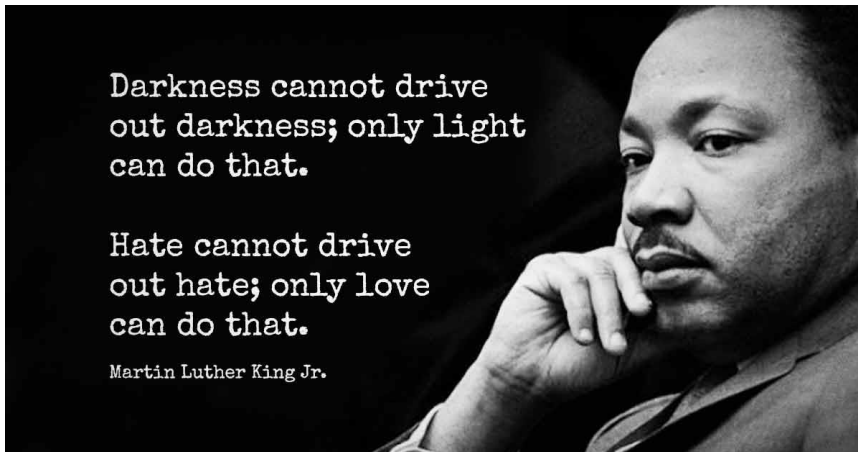
If we dwell in the presence of God, we shall be led by the spirit. We do well to remember that being led by the spirit depends not so much upon God, who is always there to lead us, as upon our willingness to be led. We need to be willing to be led into the dark as well as through green pastures and by still waters. We do not need to be afraid of the dark, because God is there. The future of this earth need not be in the hands of the world's 'leaders'. The world is in God's hands if we are led by God. Let us be led by the Spirit. Let us walk with a smile into the dark.

*Gordon Matthews, 1987 Quaker Faith & Practice 29.01*

Darkness cannot drive  
out darkness; only light  
can do that.

Hate cannot drive  
out hate; only love  
can do that.

Martin Luther King Jr.



13 November 2020

Inter Faith Week this year runs from 8–15 November. It is a chance to explore the interface of Interfaith which to me is a spinning diamond with different aspects of the Divine seen through the lens of the different faiths. It is a fascinating place to be. We get glimpses through the doorways of other paths and practices, and if our minds and hearts are open we may get the opportunity to see into their experiences of the Divine. It is at that deep level that the doorway itself and that sense of separation can melt away.

Lynda Williams, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations writing in this week's *Quake* bulletin for *Quakers in Britain*



*Gaia* by Luke Jerram,  
installed in the nave of Gloucester  
Cathedral last month. It features detailed  
NASA imagery of the Earth's surface,  
offering an extraordinary opportunity to  
appreciate our planet. It was surrounded  
by the sound of music mixed with audio  
clips of Apollo astronauts describing the  
beauty and fragility of our home  
suspended in the black void of space.

### **One Earth, one People, one Love**

*We are all connected....~ with the past, with the future but also with NOW!  
~ with all species, even those we shun (like insects!)  
~ with material things, though we also need freedom from our 'stuff'  
~ with all people but also with our own singularity  
~ with our need to be agents of change,  
each from our own centre of stillness.*

### **One Earth, one People, one Love**

*Our fragmented world needs healing  
We can work together restoratively.....  
~ to realise the blind spots within ourselves,  
~ to build trusting relationships within communities,  
~ to find creative solutions to conflict between peoples,  
~ to heal our planet's ecosystem,  
so that we bring All into Wholeness.*

### **One Earth, one People, one Love**

Gloucestershire Quakers creative writing workshop July 2019

How can we learn to draw from the deep aquifer, the common Source of Love for all religions, without denying the goodness of our own small spring? This is the marriage of unity and diversity.



Once we tap into the deeper stream of our own religion, we will recognize its fountains and springs everywhere. We cannot see this as long as we remain floating on the surface or looking at mere externals. Here we can only see differences.

Once we discover our deep source, we realize that it's not a competition. We don't need to put anyone down, prove them wrong, or exclude them from the great banquet. The wedding feast was Jesus' metaphor for final and loving union. Though it is a simple metaphor, it is a good one. We are invited to the great banquet where we are all sisters and brothers. That's not just wishful thinking. We all came forth from God, and we will all return to God.

With maturity, we come to recognize that all religious language is by necessity metaphorical. God is ineffable, a mystery that cannot be captured in words. In the early stages, religions get lost in protecting these metaphors, reasserting our group's truth, and building impassable walls rather than creating bridges and gates. The global awareness we now have access to will not allow future generations to stay comfortably in our separate camps. We are already one.

*Richard Rohr, OFM, Interfaith talk 2017*

This is the truth which we know and try to live ... that every person is capable of response to the divine Spirit; that this Spirit, or Light, or God reaches out to each one directly and freely; that if we follow the leadings of this Spirit faithfully we are led out of sin into unity with the divine will; that this unity leads us into love of and care for all humankind, who are our kin; that what the Spirit shows us is living truth which cannot be fettered by words.

*Janet Scott, 1980 Quaker Faith & Practice 27.26*



**20 November 2020**

Many times I have found my way home in the dark because my feet felt the road when my eyes could not see it. There is something in us deeper than hands and feet, that finds the way to the central Reality, and when we arrive we know it.

*Rufus Jones - American Quaker and author*



## **Darkness**

At this time of the year many find the long darkness of winter difficult. Our ancestors grew fearful at this time of the year, and lit beseeching fires that the Sun might not die but recover. Each year, with the coming of the Winter Solstice, they regarded with wonder the rebirth of the Sun, as light began to return, redeeming the darkness. Celtic spirituality is deeply rooted in Nature, and it is from Nature that we learn the ultimate lesson: that at the moment of deepest darkness light returns – at midnight noon is born.

*James Roose-Evans British theatre director, priest and writer*

**Ice - by Gillian Clarke**

Where beech cast off her clothes  
frost has got his knives out.

This is the chemistry of ice,  
the stitchwork, the embroidery,  
the froth and the flummery.

Light joins in. It has a point to make  
about haloes and glories,  
spectra and reflection.

It reflects on its own miracle,  
the first imagined day  
when the dark was blown

and there was light.



That in the winter, seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time, the leaves would be renewed, and after that the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the Providence and Power of God which has never since been effaced from his soul. That this view had perfectly set him loose from the world, and kindled in him such a love for God, that he could not tell whether it had increased in above forty years that he had lived since.

*from conversations with Brother Lawrence.  
The Practice of the Presence of God 1692*



*Every heart to love will come  
But like a refuge.  
Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering*

In dark times, poetry and music provide the kind of transcendence that we need to interpret painful events. This is not the place where you make things perfect. The thing is imperfect. And worse, there is a crack in everything that you can put together - physical objects, mental objects, constructions of any kind. But that's where the light gets in, and that's where the resurrection is and that's where the repentance is.

It is with the confrontation, with the brokenness of things.

*Leonard Cohen, speaking about his song **Anthem** written in the 1980s*

We seem to be at a turning point in human history. We can choose life or watch the planet become uninhabitable for our species. Somehow, I believe that we will pass through this dark night of our planetary soul to a new period of harmony with the God that is to be found within each of us, and that S/he will inspire renewed confidence in people everywhere, empowering us all to cooperate to use our skills, our wisdom, our creativity, our love, our faith – even our doubts and fears – to make peace with the planet. Strengthened by this fragile faith, empowered by the Spirit within, I dare to hope.

*Pat Saunders, 1987 Quaker Faith & Practice 29.03*



27 November 2020

Be honest with yourself.  
What unpalatable truths might you be evading?  
When you recognise your shortcomings, do not let that discourage you. In worship together we can find the assurance of God's love and the strength to go on with renewed courage.  
*Advices and Queries No.11*

The chief task in life is simply this: to identify and separate matters so that I can say clearly to myself which are externals not under my control, and which have to do with the choices I actually control. Where then do I look for good and evil? Not to uncontrollable externals, but within myself to the choices that are my own. *Epictetus, an ex- slave who became a teacher*

We are often more frightened than hurt; and we suffer more from imagination than from reality.

You become what you give your attention to..... If you yourself don't choose what thoughts and images you expose yourself to, someone else will. *Epictetus*

*Reflections from the 'Stoics' of Ancient Greece and Rome who evolved a practical philosophy blending realism and endurance.*

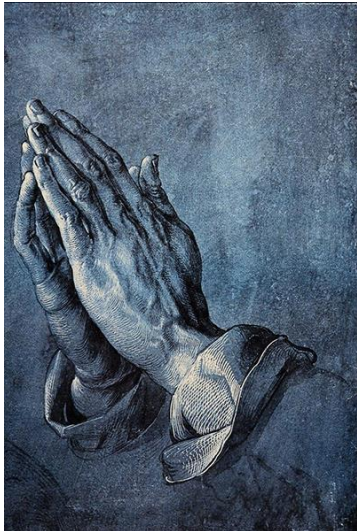
Some situations which cause pain or suffering are avoidable, so part of our learning must be to analyse the situation and see if this is such a case. If it is, we must try to prevent it happening again. But perhaps the most painful situations are those that are apparently beyond our control. Another part of our learning is to recognise that there is unfairness, uncertainty, fear, loneliness and hurt in this world; learning to accept that this is the nature of the world can, of itself, be painful.

*S Jocelyn Burnell, 1989 Quaker Faith & Practice 22.50*

Do I just wait  
And pass my youth through to my greying days  
In petty pastimes, and misery for ways  
Of life I dare not hope to live?

Am I too late  
To live; to study how to learn; to try  
And fail yet seek another way to give,  
To gain myself? In this exchange the dry  
Desert of my poverty may flower – live  
In ways undreamed – and the pain of fading  
Hopes will disappear in life's rich trading.

*Jonathan Griffith, writing in the Friend Magazine 1977 part of QF&P 21.60*



*Praying Hands*  
by Albrecht Durer, 1508

I could not face the next day without a time in which life is renewed... The essence is regularity and time – time to reach down to the level where I can begin to see myself and my work straight, where that strength we call love can break through my anxiety and teach me how to respond instead of react, where I am not ruled by conscience but by Jesus the true man within; the level where I can accept my whole nature and forgive myself and others... Prayer alone can reopen the road to the spirit, blocked repeatedly by busyness, self-importance, self-indulgence, self-pity, depression or despair.

*Donald Court, 1970 QF&P 20.09*

For I am convinced that neither death nor life,  
neither angels nor demons, neither the present  
nor the future, nor any powers, neither height  
nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God  
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:38-39**

4 December 2020

**Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.***Advices & Queries No 1*

*A seasonal reflection by Catherine, Quaker Faith Advisor*



Light and dark have been a fascination of the world's religions for millennia, and were very likely a fascination of humans long before they thought of religion at all. Seeing the sun rise every morning out of the

darkness of the night sky has engendered awe and wonder in generation after generation of human beings. The alignments at Stonehenge, built we think around 3000BC, shows us that human beings



have had darkness and light at the centre of their worship from very early times.



As Quakers we celebrate everyday as filled with God's presence and potential, no one day being any more special than another. But it is hard not to think of this time of year, the period of Advent, as kept in Christian churches, as not being a bit of a special time for Quakers! As Quakers we often refer to God as Light. We speak of holding people and situations in the Light, as our way of praying for them. In section 19 on "The

Light" in QF&P we read "The Inward Light is the light of Christ. It is a universal Light, which can be known by anyone". And there is little doubt at all that it is this Inner Light and our determination to shine this Light in the dark places of our souls which distinguishes the faith of Quakers from many around us.

*As Jo Farrow wrote in 1984, QF&P 26.29*

"If we set our hearts on goodness as a personal goal, it means that we have to ignore or suppress all the other parts of ourselves that do not fit into our ideal of goodness. That was what George Fox had already done and he was actually shocked when, on the first part of his inward journey, he came upon the dark and unacceptable parts of himself. Like Simone Weil, the twentieth century mystic, he found that he knew from the inside a potential for all possible crimes. His fantasies

were guided by no one but himself, but he quickly made the acquaintance of the things inside him that could be bestial, murderous and depraved. Instead of slamming the door of his consciousness, as many of us do when we come on the less acceptable bits of our inner world, he went on through them, understanding that he would not be of any use to others if he did not acknowledge in himself the impulses to kill, to lust or cheat or indulge his more primitive passions. If he had not had the courage to accept what he discovered, he would never have made the discovery that sets Quaker spirituality apart from the narrow righteousness of the Puritans. He found that, having faced and acknowledged his dark self, he came upon a more liberating truth at the heart of himself. He experienced the moment of enlightenment which enabled him to trust the creative and intuitive part of himself and know that it could not be obliterated by the dark side... He spoke of 'the ocean of darkness and the ocean of light'. Both are symbols of the unconscious and of the contradictions and polarities of our being - our dark negativities and our shining possibilities."

So this time of year is a wonderful reminder of the power of this Light. A time to see the lights around us, whether they be the traditional candles, the pin prick stars in the night sky, the sun as it creeps above the horizon each day, the tiny stand-by light on your TV or just the fluorescent light on the ceiling of your cell.



All can be reminders to us, of that universal Light, seen both, in material form as these lights are, or felt as the Inner Light illuminating and enlivening all human beings from within. Each light can transform the darkness into light. At the end of the season of Advent the Light which enlivens and dwells within each one of us is celebrated in the event of the incarnation, when at Christmas, the Light of God is wrapped in flesh becoming a human being, the Christ, of whom we are all brothers and sisters.

The darkness and the light are interwoven within each one of us, "the ocean of darkness and the ocean of light", perfect creations, ready to experience what it is to be a human being in this world, determined to understand the light **and** the dark within us, which will ultimately lead to transformation of both.

We love the light, it is often easier to live with than the dark, but without the dark we would not be able to see the light. The stars are still in the sky during the day, but we can't see them.

Our ocean of dark is there to help us to see the difference between it and the ocean of light. Our task, like George Fox, is to make friends with our darker side and allow it to be transformed by the indwelling eternal Light.

What a rich and glorious season for Quakers!



11 December 2020

## Seeking an Inward Stillness

Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit? All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength. Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life. Do you encourage in yourself a habit of dependence on God's guidance for each day? Hold yourself and others in the Light, knowing that all are cherished by God.

Advices & Queries No.3

We hope that reading *Words of Encouragement* through lockdown has helped you to create space to be still, in the way that we do when we are able to meet together. But we are all a bit out of practice after so many months! Over the next few weeks, we offer ways of seeking inward stillness to enable us to open our heart, mind and body to a deeper awareness of God's abiding presence. We invite you to use each one for a while as a way of developing a regular spiritual practice.

## Contemplation through the Written Word

*Sacred Reading (lectio divina)* is the slow, meditative reading of a short text such as you'll find in these leaflets. This reading is with heart as much as mind.



As you read through the first time, **listen** with your heart's ear for a phrase or word that stands out for you. During the second reading, **reflect** on why that touches you, perhaps speaking that response aloud or drawing or journalling. Then read the passage a third time and **respond** with a prayer or expression of what you have experienced and what it calls you to. Finally, read it a fourth time and then **rest** in silence for a while.

## A Meditation

Sit on a chair or on your bed with your back supported.....let your hands rest lightly on your legs..... allow your eyes to close.....let the muscle tightness from your face, your head, your neck, drain down through your arms.....through your hands..... down through your legs and away. As you relax your body will feel heavier, warmer.

Now think about your breathing.....feel the soft area below your ribs gently rising and falling as you breathe in and out.....try to breathe more slowly and deeply. Each time a thought comes in to your mind, gently let it go.....return your focus to the gentle movement at your centre as you breathe in and out.

When you feel ready, try reading the words below.

Read the first line slowly, close your eyes and take three slow, gentle breaths.

Then open your eyes to read the next line, and so on to the end.

Be silent  
Be still  
Empty before your God.  
Say nothing

Let your God look upon you  
That is all.

God knows  
God understands.

God loves you with an enormous love  
And only wants to look upon you  
with that love.

Quiet  
Be still  
Be.....  
Let your God love you.



*Part of a poem by  
Edwina Gateley*



18 December 2020

## Seeking an Inward Stillness

In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to glow – a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamour of our emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out.

*God is Silence by Pierre Lacout, 1969 Quaker Faith & Practice 2.12*



During this period of lockdown we have all come to appreciate the benefits of Mindfulness from the Buddhist tradition as a way of reducing anxiety and bringing our awareness to the present moment. Mindfulness sounds very simple but it's not easy in practice. Practising mindful awareness of the breath can help us to connect at a deep level with the sacred beyond ourselves.

## Meditation with the Breath - The YHWH Prayer

In the Jewish tradition, God's name was not spoken but breathed with a open mouth and throat: inhale - **Yah**; exhale - **weh**. In the act of breathing we are speaking the name of God and participating in God's breath. For a period of meditation, say fifteen minutes, use this breath as a focus.

*Begin by acknowledging your wish to be present to God.*

*Breathe naturally, slowly, and deeply, inhaling and exhaling **Yah-weh**.*

*Let your focus on the syllables fall away into silence.*

*If any thoughts arise, notice them and then let them go.*

*Simply return to breathing slowly and deeply **Yah-weh**.*

*Each interruption is another opportunity to return to being present to God.*

*This is what you are to do.*

*Lift your heart up to the Lord with a gentle stirring of love,  
desiring him for his own sake and not for his gifts.*

*Cloud of Unknowing, an anonymous 14th century Christian guide*

### **Centering Prayer Practice - a practice of letting go**

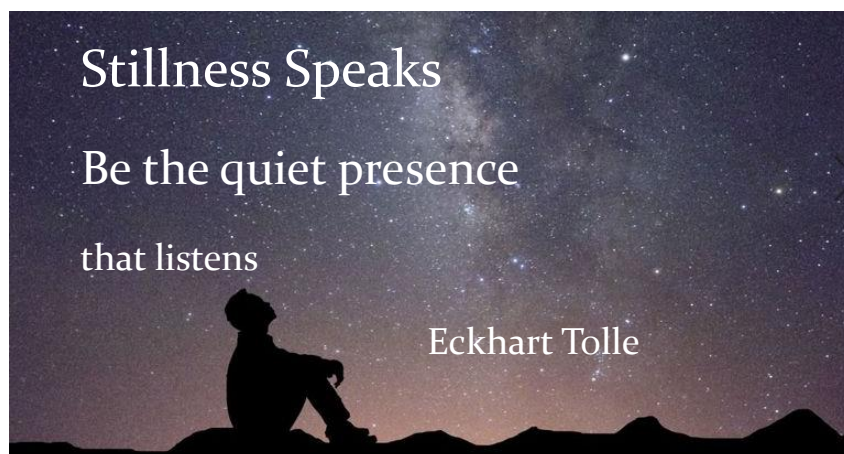
From the Christian tradition, Centering Prayer is simply sitting in silence with an *intention* to be open to God's love within us. It's about *letting go* of any thoughts without latching onto them and *letting God* in. There is no way to succeed, except to return again to our intention. Centering Prayer can bring our relationship with God to a level deeper than conversation, to pure communion, in the way that early Quakers found when they discovered the depths of silent worship.

*Choose a sacred word with either one or two syllables,  
such as God, Love, Peace, Trust, Stillness or the breath.  
This word expresses our intention to be open and let go*

*Sit comfortably with eyes closed, settle briefly,  
and then silently introduce your sacred word...*

*Whenever distractions come, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word....*

*At the end of the prayer time, remain silent for a few minutes.*



25 December 2020

The Light of Christ



To me Jesus is a window through to God, a person who in terms of personality, in a way that can be grasped by our finite minds, shows what mercy, pity, peace are like in human life. I turn to the Jesus of the New Testament – to his healing word, his freedom from anxiety, his outreaching insight, to him as a whole person – not to imitate him but to let him live and grow in my life...  
*Ruth Fawell, 1987 Quaker Faith & Practice*

### Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem by Maya Angelou

Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes  
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.  
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche  
Over unprotected villages.  
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

We question ourselves.  
What have we done to so affront nature?  
We worry God.  
Are you there? Are you there really?  
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?

Into this climate of fear & apprehension, Christmas enters  
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope  
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.  
The world is encouraged to come away from rancour,  
Come the way of friendship.....

Hope is born again in the faces of children  
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.  
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things,  
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.  
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.  
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.  
We hear a sweetness.



The word is **Peace**.  
It is loud now. It is louder.  
Louder than the explosion of  
bombs.

We tremble at the sound.  
We are thrilled by its presence.  
It is what we have hungered for.  
Not just the absence of war.  
But, true **Peace**.

A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.  
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.

We clap hands and welcome the **Peace of Christmas**.  
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.  
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.  
Peace.  
Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.  
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,  
Implore you, to stay a while with us.  
So we may learn by your shimmering light  
How to look beyond complexion and see community.

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.  
On this platform of peace, we can create a language  
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ  
Into the great religions of the world.  
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.  
We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.  
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices  
To celebrate the promise of **Peace**.

We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Non-Believers,  
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.  
**Peace**. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.  
**Peace**. We look at each other, then into ourselves  
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.  
**Peace, My Brother**.  
**Peace, My Sister**.  
**Peace, My Soul**.





1 January 2021

*Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities.  
Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to  
undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt.  
Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.  
Advices and Queries 28*

Reflection by Diana, a Quaker Chaplain

As we cross the threshold into a new year, we can pause for a moment to reflect on the past and look towards the future. 2020 has been a difficult year with many challenges to overcome. May there be more light and hope in 2021!

Twenty years ago I spent Christmas in St Davids, Pembrokeshire. In Welsh it is known as Tyddewi, meaning David's house and the cathedral there was built from 1123. It stands within sight of the sea in a small valley and is very serene and beautiful.



On Christmas Eve we wrapped up warmly and trudged along the frozen track to go to Midnight Service in the cathedral. Our breath hung in the still air as we walked past silent fields. There was a full, bright moon and a sky full of stars. We needed neither torch nor guide and when we reached the cathedral we found two seats in the already crowded congregation. Suddenly all was quiet and still, hushed and waiting expectantly - before we heard the perfect voice of a chorister singing 'Once in Royal David's City'. I will never forget that night or that moment of stillness before the lovely singing.

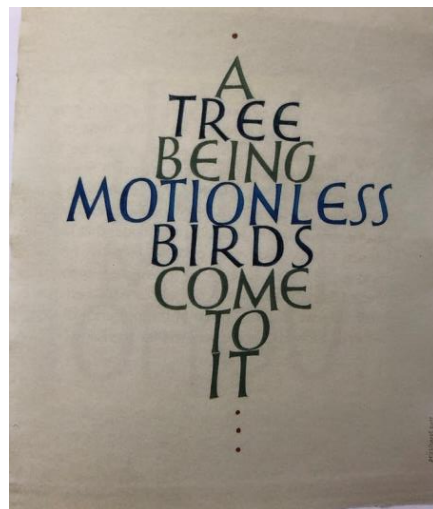
We can sense that same moment of stillness before moving on in many situations and places. I think it is part of the silence and quiet in a Quaker Meeting for Worship. It is that moment of preparation for the silence that will follow, "*a gathered stillness*" in the words of Advice No.8, in which "*all may feel the power of God's love drawing us together and leading us*".



I trained as a dance teacher and before any movement began, I would say 'And....' just in that instant - then the dance would begin. When I was young, my piano teacher used to say 'And....' just before I struck the first note of a tune. We see athletes, their feet in the blocks poised and still, waiting for the starting gun and the moment just before the referee blows the whistle to start a match. Attention is focused expectantly for an instant. It is a wonderful feeling.

Just as we know that without light, all would be darkness, so without that still point there would be no dancing, no music, no action.

Sometimes when I need to find that still moment, I focus on a picture or a piece of writing, such as these words by John Rowlands Pritchard:



Psalm 46 has the verse 'Be still and know that I am God'. It sounds a bit like a teacher telling her class to be quiet and pay

attention, but maybe this is what we need to do - to pay attention to what is around us, to bring our awareness to the people in our world and to *be still* before we make that all important choice or say what is on the tip of our tongue.

We all know how awful it is not to be able to still our minds or rest our bodies when we are beset by worries and it is sometimes hard to find that still point when we know that we are standing on the threshold of something special.

*Art thou in Darkness?  
Mind it not, for if thou dost it will fill thee more,  
but stand still and act not,  
and wait in patience till Light arises out of Darkness to lead thee.*

*James Naylor, part of QF&P 21.65*

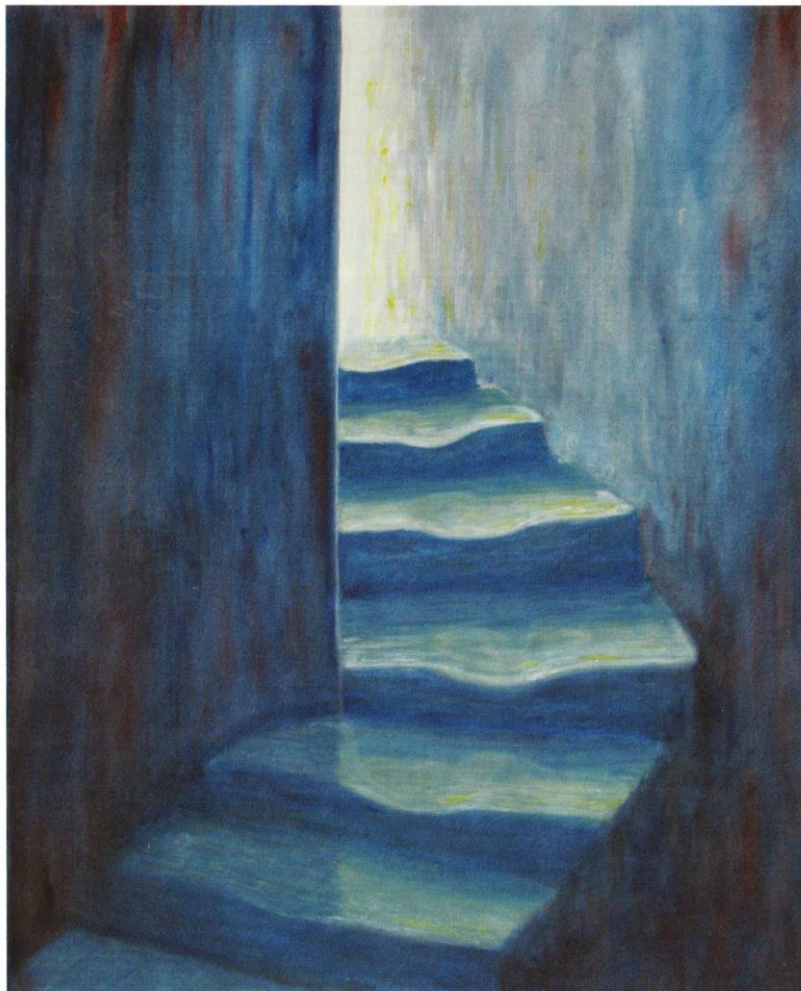
Here, at the turn of another year we know that -  
**At Midnight, Noon is Born. Happy New Year!**

7 January 2021

The light for which the world longs is already shining. It is shining in to the darkness, but the darkness does not apprehend it. It is shining in to the darkness, but the darkness is not overcoming it. It is shining in many a soul and already the new order has begun within the kingdom of the heart.

Thomas R. Kelly 1941

QF&P 26.62



*Journey in to Light* by David Ashbrook

*David, whose painting you see overleaf found faith and creativity during a life sentence in prison. On his release, he focused upon hope and renewal and was starting to share this message of love through his artwork when his life was tragically cut short in an accident in 2006.*

*Looking at his picture it speaks to me of when in a dark place in life it is hard to believe that there must be something more, something better. But if we proceed in faith and hope we will get round that corner at the bottom of the stairs and at last see the light ahead and be guided onwards and upwards. How worn the steps are; so many people have already made that journey!*

*Spend some time studying the picture as I have done and think about where you are on your journey and where you hope to be.*

.....

*In our Meetings for Worship we have a common purpose in waiting and listening together in silence believing that every activity of life should be subject to divine guidance.*

*Therefore dear friends, wait in the light, that the Word of the Lord may dwell plentifully in you.*

*William Dewsbury 1675 QF&P 29.19*



15 January 2021

Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity; but, for that reason,  
it should be most our care to learn it. William Penn 1693 QF&P 22.01



The silence of eternity interpreted by love

John Greenleaf Whittier (Quaker poet)

As we sit in the silence and stillness of our worship, our mind stills and our heart begins to open. Allow yourself to sit still and silent. Become aware of yourself, of your breathing, the rising and falling of your chest, the feeling of your clothes against your skin, the pressure of the chair/bed you are sitting on. Keep this awareness going for a few minutes then become aware of your surroundings, what you can hear, what you can see, what you can feel. After a few minutes move your awareness to beyond what you can see, hear and feel directly, to the people you like, to the people you like less, to the people you find hard to like. And now come back to your breathing and imagine you are breathing in love. Breathe it into your lungs and then as you breathe out direct that love into yourself, feel it spreading out inside your body and reaching right down into the tips of fingers and toes. Now breathe in love and direct it into your surroundings, towards all the things, sounds and sights you are aware of in your surroundings. And then, after a few moments of breathing like this, breathe in love and direct it to the people you like, then to the people you like less and then to the people you find it really hard to like. Rest in your breath again and rest in the love you have created in the world by this exercise. The silence of eternity interpreted by you into love.

Exercise – Catherine, Quaker Chaplain



**Jesus said “The greatest commandment is this, that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, that you love your neighbour as yourself.”**  
**Mark 12: 30-31**



Listen with ears of **tolerance!**  
See through the eyes  
of **compassion!** Speak  
with the language of **love!**

– *Rumi*

AZ QUOTES

### Every Direction

When traveling  
love's pathway,  
never stop  
turning your soul  
toward the eternal sun.

But since the Real  
shines forth  
from every direction,  
why aim your prayers  
at only one spot?

by Fayd Fayyadi

LOVE IS PATIENT  
LOVE IS KIND  
*It does not envy, it does not boast*  
**IT IS NOT PROUD.**  
IT IS NOT RUDE, IT IS NOT SELF SEEKING  
IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED,  
IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.  
LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL  
*but rejoices with truth.*  
**IT ALWAYS PROTECTS,**  
**ALWAYS TRUSTS,**  
always hopes, always perseveres  
**LOVE NEVER FAILS.**

1 Corinthians 13: 4-7



21 January 2021

## Speaking of prayer:

The place of prayer is a precious habitation ..... I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotion in the world.

John Woolman, 1770

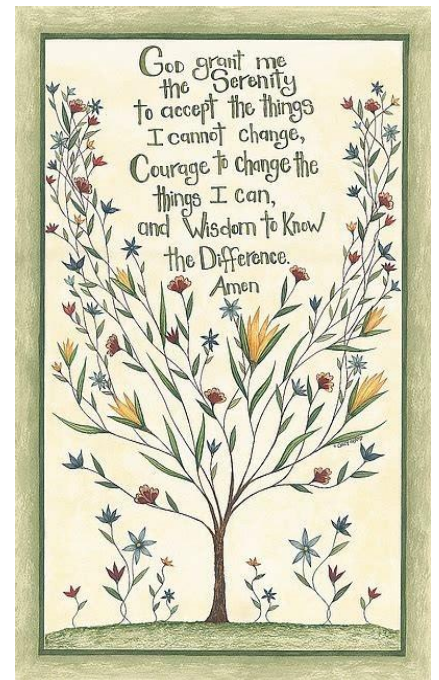
QF&P 20.10



*Do we need to use the right form of words when we pray?*

*Early Quakers used the word 'breathings' when speaking of a gentle, humble prayer, hardly needing words, as natural as breathing. A continuous connection with and awareness of the divine with each breath taken.*

*In the Book of Exodus (3:14) in the Bible the name of God is translated as Yahweh. This is the closest interpretation of the original Hebrew symbol used, YHWH which represented the sound of breathing. It was believed that God was telling us that his name was breath, spirit. That just saying his name gives life.*



**Prayer is not an occasional nod  
Given in passing to God. It's more like marriage – a closeness of living, A constant receiving and giving.**

**Louie Horne, 1987**

Richard Rohr the Franciscan monk and theologian describes prayer as practising heaven now

I read that I was supposed to make 'a place for inward retirement and waiting upon God' in my daily life, as the *Queries* in those days expressed it... At last I began to realise, first that I needed some kind of inner peace, or inward retirement, or whatever name it might be called by; and then that these apparently stuffy old Friends were really talking sense. If I studied what they were trying to tell me, I might possibly find that the 'place of inward retirement' was not a place I had to go to, it was there all the time. I could know the 'place of inward retirement' wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, and find the spiritual refreshment for which, knowingly or unknowingly, I was longing, and hear the voice of God in my heart. Thus I began to realise that prayer was not a formality, or an obligation, it was a *place* which was there all the time and always available.

Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 1983      QF&P  
2:21

Not everyone is at ease with the word God. The following prayer or meditation is based on the peace prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

*Each day may I dedicate myself to be a channel for peace. May I bring love where there is hatred and healing where there is hurt, and hope where there is fear.*

*Each day may I try to understand and comfort other people – as well as being willing to receive comfort and understanding from them.*

*Wherever possible, may I choose to be a light in the darkness; A help in time of need; and a caring honest friend.*

*And may justice, kindness and peace flow from my heart forever.*

Adapted from Greta Vosper's book "With or Without God"



28 January 2021

Advices and Queries 42: We do not own the world, and its riches are not 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. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.



**28th January is Tu B'Shevat, a festival which celebrates the New**



*Year for trees. Jewish tradition marks this day when the sap in the trees*

*begins to rise, heralding the beginning of spring. It is customary for Jews all over the world to plant trees at this time. It has been adopted as the festival to focus on the care of our planet and environment.*

***To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:***

***A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up  
that which is planted;***

Ecclesiastes ch3 v1

This is an old rhyme from the 1400s written in the English of the period which explains the work to be done on the farm in each month.

### The Months

Januar By thys fyre I warme my handys;  
Februar And with my spade I delfe my landys.  
Marche Here I sette my thynges to sprynge;  
Aprile And here I here the fowlis synge  
Maij I am as light as byrde in bowe; Junij And  
I wede my corne well I-now.  
Julij With my sythe my mede I mawe;  
Auguste And here I shere my corne full lowe.  
September With my flayll Ierne my brede  
October And here I sawe my whete so rede  
November At Martynesmasse I kylle my swine;  
December And at Cristesmasse I drynke wredde wyne.

Glossary: delfe = delve; thynges = seed; sawe = sow; rede = red

Anon

*From: a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Digby 88)*

### "Turn! Turn! Turn!"

To everything - turn, turn, turn  
There is a season - turn, turn, turn  
And a time to every purpose under  
heaven

A time to build up, a time to break down  
A time to dance, a time to mourn  
A time to cast away stones  
A time to gather stones together

A time of love, a time of hate  
A time of war, a time of peace  
A time you may embrace  
A time to refrain from embracing

A time to gain, a time to lose  
A time to rend, a time to sew  
A time for love, a time for hate  
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late!

*From the folk song by Pete Seeger.*

### When The Song of The Angels is Stilled.

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and the princes are  
home,  
When the shepherds are back with  
their flocks,

The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among people,  
To make music in the heart.

*Howard Thurman 1899-1981, an African-American Quaker, academic and civil rights leader*



5 February 2021

### Quaker Faith and Practice 21.11

Those who have difficulty in accepting the idea of a personal shadow as far as they themselves are concerned, whose knowledge of human nature is two-dimensional (that is, without depth), all too easily think that morality attaches to feelings, that hateful, hostile, cruel or greedy feelings are immoral. They do not, perhaps, realise that the feelings that arise in us are neither moral nor immoral, but neutral. The supreme importance of morality is the way we choose to act on our feelings. And we shall not be free to choose if we do not know what they are.

Jack H Wallis, 1988



No one can make you feel inferior without your permission. ~ *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter.  
~ *Francis Chan*

God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile  
~ *Max Lucado*

God will meet you where you are in order to take you where He wants you to go."  
~ *Tony Evan*



## Quaker faith & practice

21.66

Sometimes religion appears to be presented as offering easy cures for pain: have faith and God will mend your hurts; reach out to God and your woundedness will be healed. The Beatitude 'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted' can be interpreted this way too, but the Latin root of the word 'comfort' means 'with strength' rather than 'at ease'. The Beatitude is not promising to take away our pain; indeed the inference is that the pain will remain with us. It does promise that God will cherish us and our wound, and help us draw a blessing from our distressed state.

*S Jocelyn Burnell, 1989 21.67*



### Release

I was terrified I'd break down.

I did.

It didn't matter.

*Rosalind M Baker,  
1986*

Let there be light

12 February 2021

*All shall be well, and all shall be well*

*And all manner of things  
shall be well.*

**Julian** (or **Juliana**) of **Norwich** (1342–after 1416), also known as **Dame Julian** or **Mother Julian**, lived in the middle ages in England.

She wrote the best-known surviving book in the English language written by a mystic. The book is the first written in English by a woman, called ‘Revelations of Divine Love.’

For much of her life, Julian lived in permanent seclusion in her cell, a very small, enclosed room, which was attached to **St Julien’s Church Norwich**

Along the paths of the imagination the artist and mystic make contact. The revelations of God are not all of one kind. Always the search in art, as in religion, is for the rhythms of relationships, for the unity, the urge, the mystery, the wonder of life that is presented in great art and true religion.

**Horace B Pointing, 1944 - Quaker Faith and Practice 21.32**

*“All shall be well...”*

*She must have said that  
sometimes through gritted teeth.*

*Surely she knew the moments*

*when fear gnaws at trust,*

*the future loses shape,*

*The courage that says*

*all shall be well*

*doesn’t mean feeling no fear,*

*but facing it, trusting*

*God will not let go.*

*All shall be well*

*doesn’t deny present experience*

*but roots it deep*

*in the faithfulness of God,*

*whose will and gift is life”.*

**Ann Lewis**

**A prayer for times of isolation from Christian Aid.**

**'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'**  
**(Romans 8:38-39)**

*God of heaven and earth, in these times of isolation,  
apart from loved ones, distant from friends, away from neighbours  
thank you that there is nothing in all of creation, not even coronavirus,  
that is able to separate us from your love.*

*And may your love that never fails, continue to be shared, through the  
kindness of strangers looking out for each other, for neighbours near  
and far, all recognising our shared vulnerability,*

*each of us grateful for every breath, and willing everyone to know the gift  
of a full and healthy life. Keep us all in your care.*

Amen.



Julian of Norwich

19 February 2021

Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

Advices & Queries 22

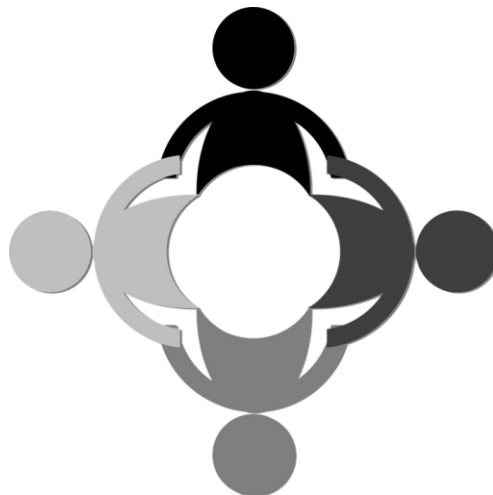
We know, with varying degrees of acceptance into awareness, our own weaknesses, and there is a tendency to think that others – who seem, on the surface, to be very sure and confident – do not struggle in the way we do.

But many of those who appear to cope and be strong and tireless are indeed very different behind their masks.

We are all wounded; we all feel inadequate and ashamed; we all struggle.

June Ellis, 1986

Quaker Faith & Practice 21.14





*Consider:*

*Do we have to be strong to connect to others? Why do we value connectedness?*

*If we don't feel connected what happens?*

*Can we sometimes use other things to replace connectedness?*

#### **Ask Not for Whom the Bell Tolls**

No man is an island, Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thine own  
Or of thine friend's were.  
Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,

It tolls for thee.

By John Donne



*We yield ourselves up in our desire to be part of the whole, to be part of all that is.*

*Deepening the life of the Spirit – Body Prayer*



26 February 2021

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

Isaac Penington, 1667

Quaker Faith & Practice 10.01

I have found in my life that from time to time when revelling in new-found joys or faced with decision, problem or grief, there must be for me a listening ear.

Even if my listener says little but sheds over me a feeling of rejoicing with me, of being alongside me as I strive, of sorrowing with me in my hour of distress, then I can better appreciate or face the situation.

I believe this is true for most of us. There are moments when we need one another. If this sometimes unuttered cry is answered, then truly we meet, and do not grope or slip past each other.

But if two individuals share at an even deeper level from out of their own experience in their search for ultimate reality in life, then the divine in the human shines through and a new creation is born for both.

Margaret S Gibbins, 1969    QF&P 21.15

*Consider:*

*Do I feel listened to?*

*Does it help me in dark times?*

*Who can I turn to when I am down?*

*Do I need my listener to offer me advice or just to hear my story?*

*Do I use my time to listen to others?*



Slowly

She celebrated the sacrament of Letting Go...

First she surrendered her Green

Then the Orange, Yellow and Red...

Finally she let go of Brown...

Shedding her last leaf

She watched its journey to the ground...

She stood in silence,

Wearing the colour of emptiness

Her branches wondering:

How do you give shade, with so much gone?

And then, the sacrament of waiting began

The sunrise and sunset watched with

Tenderness, clothing her with silhouettes

They kept her hope alive.

They helped her understand that

Her vulnerability

Her dependence and need Her emptiness

Her readiness to receive

Were giving her a new kind of beauty

Every morning and every evening she stood

in silence and celebrated the

sacrament of waiting.

A poem by Macrina Wiederkehr of  
the Order of St. Benedict



Remember this my dear brothers (and sisters): everyone should be quick to listen but slow to speak, and slow to human anger; God's saving justice is never served by human anger: so do away with all impurities and remnants of evil. Humbly welcome the Word that has been planted in you and can save your souls .....

James 1 19-21

NJB

5 March 2021

**Now, when did you last sing – ‘Jesus bids us shine’?**

Jesus bids us shine  
With a pure, clear light,  
Like a little candle,  
Burning in the night.  
In this world is darkness,  
So let us shine--  
You in your small corner,  
And I in mine.....

It possibly wasn't in 1868 when it was written by Susan Warner! Faith and I both recall singing it in Sunday School whilst my children, now all in their 30's, have never heard of it! But we have all read and know the passage from Matthew 5:13-16 where Jesus said, 'You are like salt for **everyone on earth**..... You are like a light for the **whole world**.....**Make your light shine**, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.' In my Bible I have written (in pencil) How? Why?



**'Snow Storm - Steam-boat off Harbour's mouth' by JMW Turner**

Well, a few weeks ago there was chaos in Washington as Trump supporters stormed the Capitol and forced the lockdown of Congress BUT this was followed by Joe Biden's inauguration where a young woman of colour, wearing a long, gorgeous, warm, yellow coat, read her amazing poem giving hope, not only to Americans, but across the world. Amanda Gorman's poem, 'The Hill We Climb' concluded with these words:

“When day comes we step out of the shade,  
afraid and unafraid  
The new dawn blooms as we free it  
For there is always light,  
if only we’re brave enough to see it  
If only we’re brave enough to be it”

This got me thinking, firstly, ‘are we ‘brave enough to see it’? Can we see the light in our present darkness? Some of us may be able to, others will find it more difficult, and I started to look for a painting that would hold and support these thoughts. First I found this quote from Dorothy Koppelman who wrote, ‘Magnificently, in the paintings of J. M. W. Turner, there is a light so blazing and so deep, one can almost be completely absorbed—and always, too, there is that blackness.’

And so, ‘Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour’s Mouth’ painted in 1842 by Joseph Mallord William Turner (The Tate) has become my picture of the week. As I looked at the painting, ‘The swirling storm’ encouraged my eyes ‘to circle around the canvas repeatedly’ – in fact at one point I felt a little queasy, never having been a good sailor! Anyway, I noticed ‘The black of the wind and the waves of the sea create a circle around the doomed ship. Through the windy peephole, (you) can see the helpless ship at the mercy of nature’s violent motion.’ BUT within the chaos of the storm there is light. In fact, it was the bright light that drew me to the ship in the middle of the canvas.

Although we, today, may feel powerless against the storm of the virus with numbers of UK deaths reaching 100,000, Amanda has reminded us ‘there is always light’. So let us look for the light, let us look towards the hope we have in the vaccination program and the falling numbers of cases, let us look and see Spring is on its way, ‘Aslan is on the move’, let us begin to see there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Often in order to be brave enough to see the light there needs to be those who are ‘brave enough to be it’ encouraging those who currently can’t see. Susan Warner almost urges us to shine ‘in (our) small corners’ and Matthew 5 encourages us to make our light shine for others to see. You may like me ask ‘How’? Well just now after walking Ossie I met a delivery man, we greeted each other and then I mentioned the miserable weather, his cheerful response agreed then he added ‘but it’s what you make of it! Have a lovely day’ and left with a smile on both our faces.

So today I want to inspire us all to ‘be brave enough to be it’, ‘be brave enough to look for it’, ‘be brave enough to see it’. Remember there is always light.

Diane Stone

12 March 2021

Quakers worship in silence. Except it isn't really what we would traditionally call 'silence'. It is more expectant waiting, a shared experience of being gathered together in prayer, a bit like meditation or mindfulness. People may be moved to find words in the silence motivated by what we might call Spirit or God or Light. A Quaker called Pierre Lacout wrote this in 1969:

*'In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to glow - a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamour of our emotions must be stilled. It is by attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out'.*

2021 brings a new year and our paths carry naturally onwards despite the continued restrictions due to Covid 19. It is a period of waiting, of often quietly being on our own, perhaps continuing to miss family and friends. The January snow may have meant this winter feels bleak, but spring will inevitably always follow, as the seasons always do. We just have to wait....

a Friend





*Snowdrops - From: "Dr. Hessayon's Armchair Book of the Garden*

*The little snowdrop is a welcome sight each year in early spring, its nodding white flowers serving as a promise that the floral year is about to begin. It has long been a symbol of Hope - the legend is that Eve was weeping in her barren garden after the Fall of Man when an angel comforted her by blowing on to a snowflake and turning it into a snowdrop. A flower bloomed and Hope was born.*

*Early monks travelling back and forth to Rome brought the flower to England and it has become naturalised in the vicinity of old monasteries. It became a church flower and on Candlemas (February 2nd) the image of the Virgin Mary was taken down and snowdrops spread in its place.*

Quote from an early Quaker woman called Sarah Blackbarrow. She wrote a pamphlet in 1658 called 'A visit to the Spirit in Prison'. The idea being that Spirit is inside all of us and is born/released in to freedom within ourselves when we realise it is there, acknowledge it and start to live in a Spiritual way.

*'Oh! Love truth and it's Testimony. Whether it's Witness be to you, or against you, love it, that into my Mother's house you all may come, and into the Chamber of her that conceived me, where you may embrace and be embraced of my dearly beloved one, Love is his Name, Love is his Nature, Love is his Life'.*

19 March 2021

Holding  
In  
The  
Light

*Duncan,  
chaplain  
volunteer*



I had been involved for 7 years with a weekly soup kitchen at a local church I attended. I remember sharing at the Quaker meeting in HMP x in October 2019 that the relationship between the soup kitchen and the church had become difficult.

They held me, and the situation, in the light.

In December 2019 we had the final soup kitchen at the church and I felt confused and angry at the time. Was that it after 7 years? After sorting out all the legalities with the local council we began again in March 2020 and managed 2 meals elsewhere before we had to shut due to Covid regulations.

We had some food left over and J, who ran the soup kitchen, said she was prepared to produce meals and I was happy to deliver them.

In April 2019 I delivered 6 meals. Since then the team of volunteers has grown and 9,000 meals have been handed out. At present we deliver to 400 people (individuals and families who have been referred) each Thursday.

I believe **holding me, and the situation, in the light** for several sessions at the Quaker meeting in HMP x helped me to move on personally and I can now say that finishing at the church, which at the time I thought was the end, has instead been a blessing in disguise.

Advices and queries are not a call to increased activity by each individual Friend but a reminder of the insights of the Society.

Within the community there is a diversity of gifts. We are all therefore asked to consider how far the advices and queries affect us personally and where our own service lies. There will also be diversity of experience, of belief and of language. Friends maintain that expressions of faith must be related to personal experience. Some find traditional Christian language full of meaning; some do not. Our understanding of our own religious tradition may sometimes be enhanced by insights of other faiths.

The deeper realities of our faith are beyond precise verbal formulation and our way of worship based on **silent waiting** testifies to this.

Quaker faith & practice 1.01



Photographs from Transition  
Quaker, *Revision of Quaker faith &  
practice committee*

*Quaker faith & practice 29.19*

*Therefore, dear Friends, wait in the  
Light, that the Word of the Lord may  
dwell plentifully in you.*

*William Dewsbury, 1675*

26 March 2021

**mandala** (can be coloured in) is intended to be used as a tool for meditation – this one is with **yin yang** symbol: light-dark, sky-earth, up-down ... it represents the balance of life.





### Advices and queries 33.

Are you alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are or because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and **fear**. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?

### Fear - Khalil Gibran

It is said that before entering the sea a river trembles with fear.



She looks back at the path she  
has travelled,  
from the peaks of the  
mountains,  
the long winding road crossing  
forests and villages.

And in front of her,  
she sees an ocean so vast,  
that to enter  
there seems nothing more than  
to disappear forever.

But there is no other way.  
The river can not go back.

Nobody can go back.  
To go back is impossible in  
existence.

The river needs to take the risk  
of entering the ocean  
because only then will fear  
disappear,

because that's where the river will know  
it's not about disappearing into the ocean, but of becoming the  
ocean.



1 April 2021

The resurrection, however literally or otherwise we interpret it, demonstrates the power of God, to bring life out of brokenness; not just to take the hurt out of brokenness but to add something to the world. It helps us to sense the usefulness, the possible meaning in our suffering, and to turn it into a gift. The resurrection affirms me with my pain and my anger at what has happened. It does not take away my pain; it still hurts. But I sense that I am being transfigured; I am being enabled to begin again to love confidently and to remake the spirit of my world

S.Jocelyn Bell Burnell

Quaker Faith and Practice 26.56



Nick Fewin, Unsplash



*All of the faiths celebrate this time of year as a time of new beginnings, new life when seeds planted in the earth start to grow and new shoots and leaves appear. Isaac Penington, an early Quaker, described that of God, that divine spark within each of us, as a seed, “this seed, this low beautiful thing of power and potential yet small and apparently weak”. If we quietly nurture this seed and allow it to grow it has the power to transform our lives,*



### **Loveliest of Trees, The Cherry**

Loveliest of Trees, the cherry now Is hung  
with bloom along the bough, And stands  
about the woodland ride Wearing white for  
Eastertide.

Now of my three score years,  
Twenty will not come again,

And take from seventy springs a score. It only  
leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom Fifty  
springs are little room,

About the woodlands I will go

To see the cherry hung with snow.

*A.E. Houseman*

In all things of nature there is something of the marvellous.

Aristotle

9 April 2021

I cannot explain the mystery of how someone who is a human being just as I am can also be worshipped. And yet the more real the mystery has become for me, it isn't that Jesus has become more like God, but that all my brothers and sisters have. It is through him that I recognise God in my neighbour – through Jesus I've discovered the uniqueness of everyone. And there was in him a quality of willingness to be defeated and destroyed by his enemies and to go on loving them, that alone made possible a new quality of life afterwards Paul Oestreicher 1981

QF&P 26.53



We read in the gospel of Luke in the New Testament that after the crucifixion two of the disciples were walking to the town of Emmaus. They were very depressed and upset by what had happened. They were joined by a stranger who accompanied them and listened to their story and explained writings in the bible to them. It was only when they sat down to share a meal on arriving in the town that they recognised the stranger as Jesus. The story of the road to Emmaus symbolises our faith journeys. How can we remain open to an awareness of Him in our own lives and those that we meet on the way?

*I would say that my only real definition of a Christian is one who can see Christ everywhere else and even in oneself.*

*Richard Rohr*

# Footsteps

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,

You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you Never, ever, during your trials and testings.

When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you."





16 April 2021

**mandala** (can be coloured in) is intended to be used as a tool for meditation – this one is with **yin yang** symbol: light-dark, sky-earth, up-down ... it represents the balance of life.



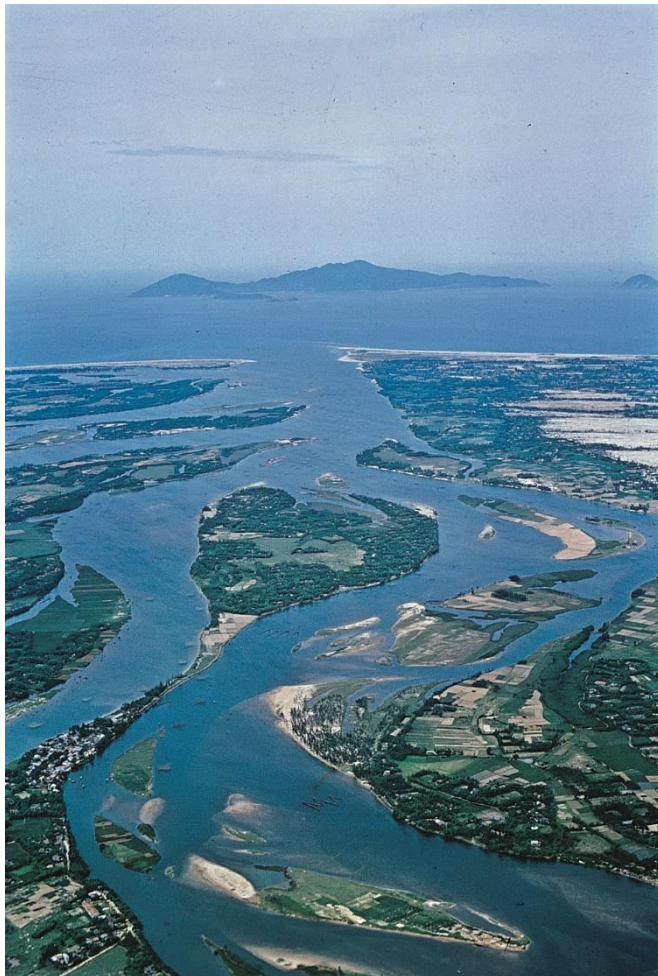


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The river needs to take the risk  
of entering the ocean  
because only then will fear  
disappear,

because that's where the river will know  
it's not about disappearing into the ocean, but of becoming the  
ocean.

23 April 2021

Bring the whole of your life under the ordering of the spirit of Christ. Are you open to the healing power of God's love? Cherish that of God within you, so that this love may grow in you and guide you. Let your worship and your daily life enrich each other. Treasure your experience of God, however it comes to you. Remember that Christianity is not a notion but a way

Advices and Queries 2

Quaker Faith and Practice



*"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."*

— Rumi

Photo by [Jon Tyson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

What is love? What shall I say of it, or how shall I in words express its nature? It is the sweetness of life; it is the sweet, tender, melting nature of God, flowing up through His seed of life into the creature, and of all things making the creature most like Himself, both in nature and operation. It fulfils the law, it fulfils the gospel; it wraps up all in one, and brings forth all in the oneness. It excludes all evil out of the heart, it perfects all good in the heart. A touch of love doth this in measure; perfect love doth this in fullness.

Isaac Pennington 1663

Quaker Faith & Practice 26.30

## Leisure

What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait until her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare

W. H. Davies

## Quaker Word Search

L Q P A B C J I K L M N X Y D B  
M N O F O X G H C O P Q W Z E C  
W R X Y Z D E F H R S T U V F D  
V S W A L K S W E X G O D H A E  
A T A L S D F G E Y H J K I N F  
B E L M Z X C V R B N M P J S G  
C V O N I U Y T F R E W Q K W E  
D E A O S I N D U F T H A T E D  
E R G V H J K Z L X L C V S R C  
L Y B E N M Q W L E R T Y T I B  
M O A R S D F G Y H J O F U N A  
X N L Z X C V B N M K J H V G K  
Y E K J H T H E G F D S W A X J  
Z L M O P Q X E R T Y U I B Y I  
G E O R G E Y W O R L D E C Z H  
A B D E F P Q R S T U M N O P G

George Fox who founded the Quaker movement told us:  
**WALK CHEERFULLY OVER THE WORLD ANSWERING THAT OF GOD IN  
EVERYONE**

Find his words and name

30 April 2021

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

First epistle to John Chapter 4 Verse 16 NRV

### **Loving-Kindness Meditation – from Buddhist practice**

We begin with loving ourselves, for unless we have a measure of this unconditional love and acceptance for ourselves, it is difficult to extend it to others. Then we include others who are special to us, and ultimately, all living things. Gradually this can lead to an understanding of loving kindness.

Find a comfortable position – focus on the gentle rise and fall of your belly as you breathe in and out. Next think about being kind to yourself, move away from judging yourself to a place where we can care for ourselves.

Still focusing on the gentle flow in and out of your breath choose one of these phrases to repeat to yourself.

“May I be safe and protected” or “May I be free of mental suffering or distress” or “May I be happy” or “May I be free of pain and suffering”

Next think with loving kindness of someone close to you and repeat the same phrase that you chose for yourself, for example “May he/she be free of pain and suffering”

Now think of someone you neither like nor dislike and repeat the same loving care for their wellbeing

Finally, extend loving kindness to all beings, using words such as these: “May all beings in existence have safety, happiness, health, joy, and peace”.

End with a period of silence concentrating on your breathing.





## *Kindness*

*Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness ...*

*Naomi Shihab Nye, in Words From Under the Words*



7 May 2021

*This statement comes in George Fox's letter to ministers, which he sent in 1656 when he was in prison in Launceston in Cornwall. It was written down for him by Ann Downer (1624–1686), who had walked from London to help him. Later she was a very influential Friend in the women's meetings in London. George Fox wrote:*

And this is the word of the Lord God to you all, and a charge to you all in the presence of the living God: be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

Quaker Faith & Practice 19.32

Christ has no body now but yours  
No hands, no feet on Earth but yours  
Yours are the eyes through which  
He looks with compassion on this world  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do  
good. Yours are the hands through which he  
blesses all of the World.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes,  
You are his body.  
Christ has no body now on Earth but yours.

St Theresa of Avila 1515 - 1582



Quakers in Britain do not have a Creed, a written statement of our beliefs. We believe that each one of us experience God in our lives in a way personal to us and that cannot be encapsulated in a single statement. The scriptures help us to understand that experience. In 1989 the decision was made to apply for full membership of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. One of the conditions for joining is having a Creed stating a church's Christian beliefs. But an exception was made and we were eventually accepted, on the basis that as Quakers we share a way of life that speaks of our faith, rather than a Creed. What a responsibility this lays on each one of us to let our lives speak.

“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.  
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.” Rumi

*Take refuge in your senses, open up  
To all the small miracles you rushed through.  
Become inclined to watch the way of rain  
When it falls slow and free.  
... Draw alongside the silence of stone  
Until its calmness can claim you.  
Be excessively gentle with yourself.  
Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.  
Learn to linger around someone of ease  
Who feels they have all the time in the world.  
Gradually, you will return to yourself,  
Having learned a new respect for your heart  
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.*

*John O'Donoghue, in Benedictus*

14 May 2021

*Caroline Fox (1819–1871) wrote in her journal at the age of 21, of an experience in Meeting that renewed her faith.*

The first gleam of light, 'the first cold light of morning' which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit,

'Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.'

Then I believed that God speaks to man by His Spirit. I strove to lead a more Christian life, in unison with what I knew to be right, and looked for brighter days, not forgetting the blessings that are granted to prayer

*Quaker Faith & Practice 26.04*

I ask for daily bread, but  
not for wealth, lest I forget  
the poor.

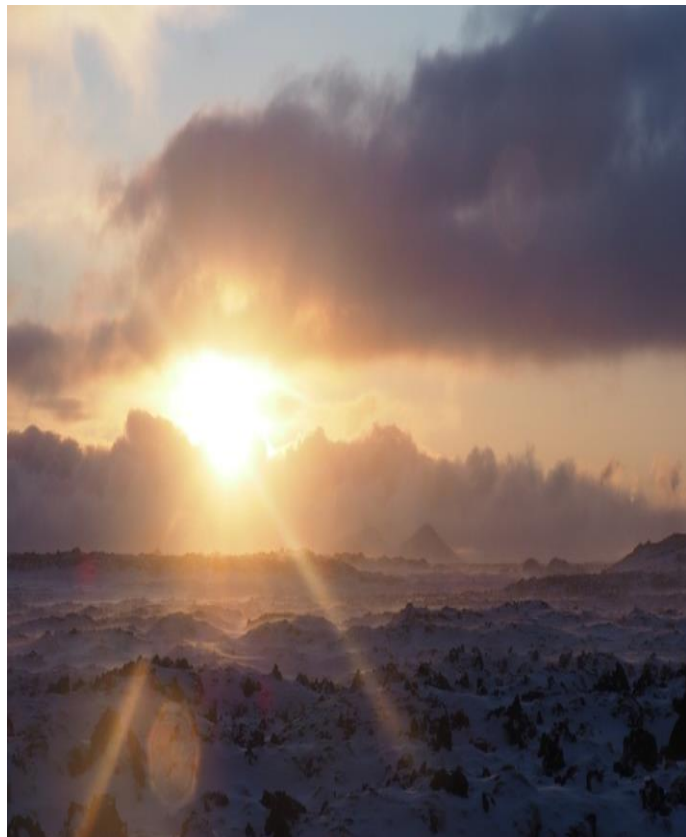
I ask for strength, but not  
for power, lest I despise  
the meek.

I ask for wisdom, but not  
for learning, lest I scorn  
the simple.

I ask for a clean name, but  
not for fame, lest I  
condemn the lowly. I ask  
for peace of mind, but not  
for idle hours, lest I fail to  
hearken to the call of duty

Inazo Nitobe 1909

QF&P 20.01



## A prayer - Adapted from Ephesians 4:1-16

The Spirit calls to us. The Spirit calls each and every one of us. The Light longs for us to follow it, to walk in it, not just as individuals but as a community. May we live up to this calling, with humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, working hard to be united in the Spirit of Peace.

There is one world, one humanity. And there is one Spirit, one Light, one Divine Love. It is within us and beyond us. It moves through us, filling everything.

And within this unity there is difference, because we all have been given a variety of gifts.

Some of us are gifted at caring for others, some have deep spiritual wisdom, some have the inward strength to courageously stand up for justice, some know how to hold and resolve conflict, some have the gift of empowering others, some are inspiring teachers, some ask the right questions, some are gifted with steadfast faith, some have the gift of being open about their weaknesses, of showing others that they're not alone.

All these gifts equip us for the work of ministry, of service, for building up the body of faith, until everyone comes to know and trust the promptings of Love and Truth in their hearts.

When we grow in our gifts we become mature people of faith. And the world needs mature people rooted in loving faithfulness, people who aren't easy to deceive, people who speak and act confidently from a place of humility, truth and love, playing their own unique role in a body that grows and builds itself up in love.

So, as we move forward together, may we live up to the Light we've been given, with humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, striving to be united in the Spirit of Peace.

*Mark Russ*

21 May 2021

The practice of meditation is a pilgrimage to our own heart. A pilgrimage is a journey made in the power of the spirit to a sacred place. The most sacred place in the world is the human heart. We may travel alone but we are never alone. The solitude of Meditation cures our most painful loneliness and reveals that we are in a deep and essential relationship.

The Pilgrim's Labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Trace the path from the opening to the centre and you will get a sense of the journey to the heart we make in meditation. At times frustrating, at times feelings of being lost or wasting time, yet never far from the centre and always circling nearer and nearer until you arrive.

*John Main 1926 – 1982 became a Benedictine monk and wrote widely on the value of Christian meditation*

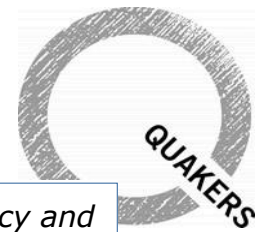


Give over thine own willing - give over thine own running - give over thine own desiring to be or know anything and sink down to the seed that God sows in the heart - let that grow in thee - and be in thee - and breathe in thee - and act in thee.

Isaac Pennington 1661

QF&P 26.70





*This passage from The Bell by Iris Murdoch spoke to me about chaplaincy and the journey of many prisoners.*  
*Paul, Quaker Prison Chaplain*

The Abbess went on looking at him for a little while, while he, feeling shrivelled and small and dry, looked at the corner of the room behind her. She said, 'You are most constantly in our prayers I know how much you grieve over those who are under your care: those you try to help and fail, those you cannot help. Have faith in God and remember that He will in His own way and in His own time complete what we so poorly attempt. Often we do not achieve for others the good that we intend; but we achieve something, something that goes on from our effort. Good is an overflow. Where we generously and sincerely intend it, we are engaged in a work of creation which may be mysterious even to ourselves – and because it is mysterious we may be afraid of it. But this should not make us draw back. God can always show us, if we will, a higher and better way; and we can only learn to love by loving. Remember that all our failures are ultimately failures in love. Imperfect love must not be condemned and rejected, but made perfect. The way is always forward, never back.'

*A friend tells me that when she prays for someone she does not so much pray to God for them as for God for them. This seems to me a vital clue about prayer. It is God that the troubled person needs, not our advice and instructions. As we learn more about worship we learn to listen more deeply so that we can be channels through which God's love reaches the other person. It is God at work, not we ourselves; we are simply used*

*Diana Lampen 1979*

*QF&P 2.26*

### **Silence**

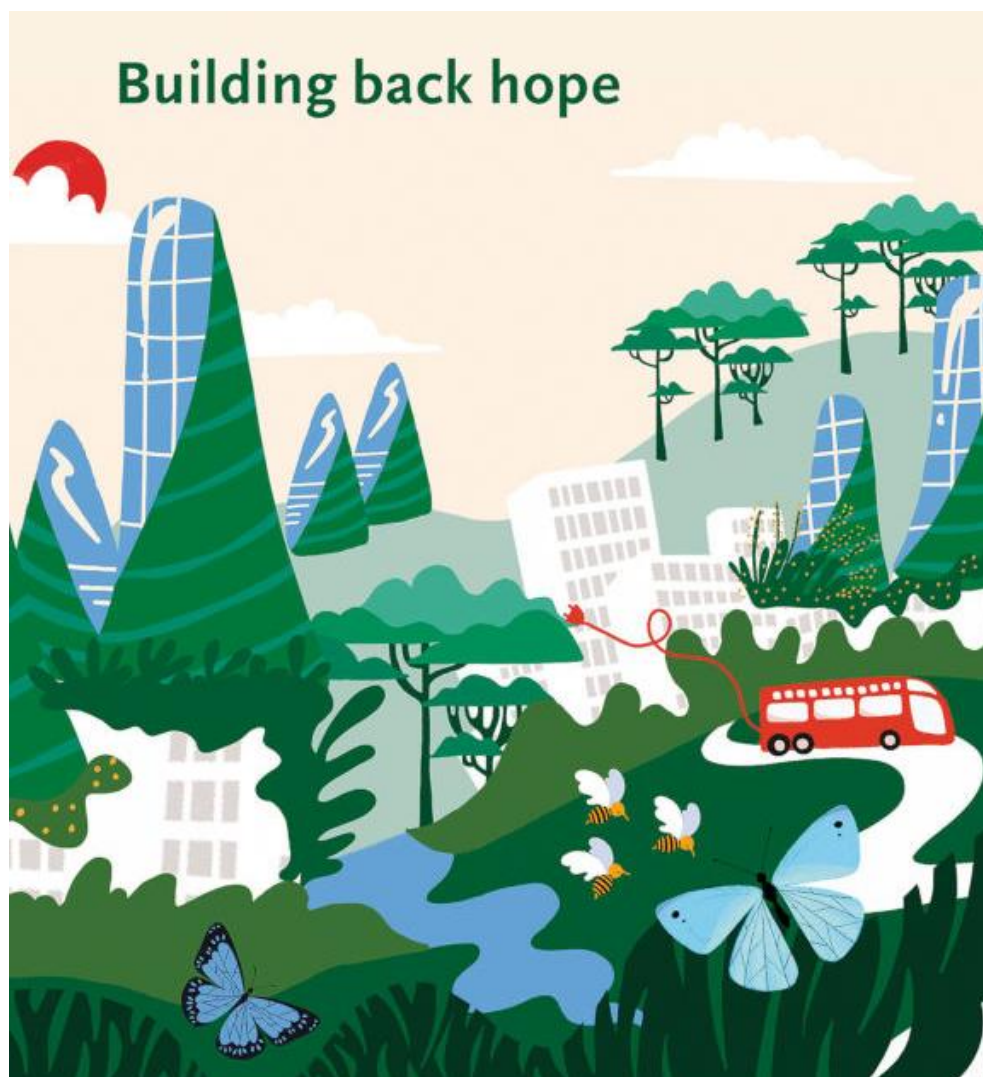
I leap  
Away from the oblivion of reality  
With its twists and turns  
Of wants and wishes  
Where spirit is sucked in to decay  
Each day a tightening of the  
tourniquet  
An abyss of illusion Cutting like a  
scythe the confusion,  
Through the labyrinth  
That is my mind  
To find again that place  
Of quietude  
Of Silence

*From Silence II by Zek published in  
"Friendly Voices" a compilation of  
writings on experience of Meeting for  
Worship by residents in HMP  
Frankland*

28 May 2021

“We lay down our arms  
so we can reach out our  
arms to one another”

Amanda Gorman in  
*Building back hope*,  
Resurgence & Ecologist Issue 326 May/June 2021



## From 'Confessions of a Prison Chaplain' by Mary Brown, 2014

'The most important thing you can do is forgive yourself,' the Quakers told him. This is something frequently discussed at our silent meetings, with many men saying this is the hardest part of accepting one's crime, some said they found it impossible.

One of the books on the table at our meetings was *Forgiveness: Making Sense of It*, by John Phillips. A poem in that book was a favourite...

### Forgiveness by VH

When the wind blows  
And the sun shines  
And the rainfall hits the ground;  
When I breath in  
And I see things  
I wish I could turn it around.

I can't earn it  
Don't deserve it  
I won't take away the pain;  
I'm not worthy  
Have no power  
And I wouldn't do again.

I can't ask for you to give me  
The things I need to move at last  
Away from all the misery and hurt  
That trail forward from the past.

Whatever things need doing  
I would gladly play my part,  
If only you could find for me  
Forgiveness in your heart.

If I could only change the world  
The first thing I would do,  
Is make me in a different way  
So I'd never have hurt you  
Forgive me.

Prayer is an act of sharing with God, the Spirit, and not an attempt to prompt God to action. It is a promise that I will do my best, even if what I am able to do seems too insignificant to be worthwhile. When I pray for peace, and that the hearts of those in authority may be changed, it is a promise that I shall do such things as write to those in power, share in vigils, and above all lead my own life, as far as possible, in such a manner as to take away the occasion for strife between individuals and between peoples. When I pray for others who are in need, it is a promise to make my own contribution, perhaps by writing, by visiting, by a gift, by telling someone whom I know could help. **When I pray for forgiveness**, for strength and courage, I try to open my heart, making it possible for me humbly to receive.

'Anna', 1984 – Q faith & practice, 2.27

4 June 2021

You say: 'But with the best will in the world, I can't get to the point of believing in God.' Well then, if you want to believe in him, if you feel something great behind it all and not just words, well, work for God, and you will see not only that it comes to the same thing as believing in him, but something infinitely more alive, more real, more powerful which fills you and satisfies you more than anything you might vaguely imagine under the name of 'real and living faith' – a reality, a life and not words      Pierre Ceresole, 1935

QF&P 26.26



*Michael Angelo, detail from the Sistine chapel ceiling*

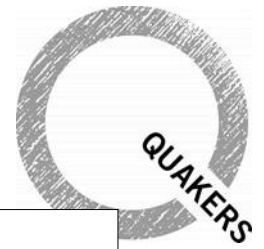
### Hands

Washing, then opening hands.

Make a ritual out of it by offering a mantra or a prayer every time.

Open your hands to new ways of living, working, taking care of yourself and others.

Open your hands to change.



## Advices & Queries 7

Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?

### The Kindness Wordsearch

L Q P A B C J I K L M N X Y D B  
M K O F O L O V I N G Q W Z E C  
W I X Y Z D E F H R S J U S T D  
V N W C A R I N G X G O D H A E  
A D A L G D F G E Y H J K I N F  
B N L O E X F O R G I V I N G G  
C E O V N U Y T F R E W Q K W E  
D S A E T I N H U F T H A G E D  
E S G V L J K E L X L C V E R C  
L Y B E E M Q L L E F T Y N I B  
M O A R S D F P Y H A O F E N A  
X N L Z X C V F N M I J H R G K  
Y E K J H T H U G F R S W O X J  
Z L M O P Q X L R T Y U I U Y I  
C O N S I D E R A T E X E S Z H  
A B D E F P Q R S T U M N O P G

Look for the qualities we seek in ourselves and in others KINDNESS;  
CARING; LOVING; FORGIVING; HELPFUL; GENEROUS; CONSIDERATE; FAIR;  
JUST

Dear Lord,  
be with me as my foundation and hope.  
Protect me when I err and stray.  
Lift me when I fall down.  
Help me to know my need  
and teach me to turn only to you for solace.  
*A night time prayer from All Will be Well, based on the writings of Julian of Norwich*



11 June 2021

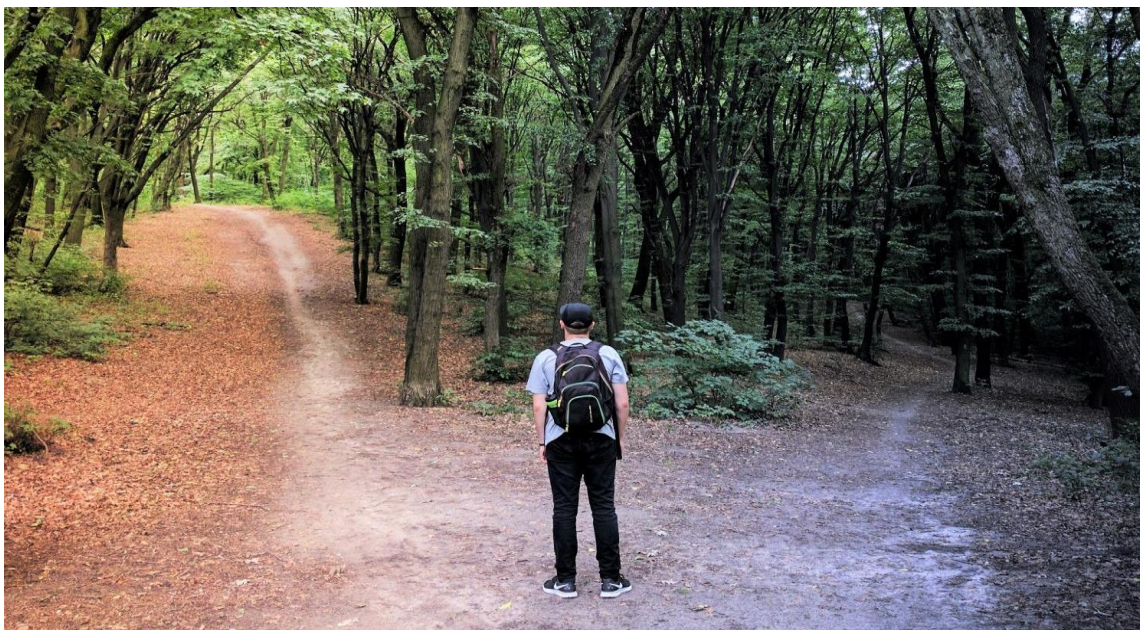
Advices & Queries 11.

Be honest with yourself. What unpalatable truths might you be evading? When you recognise your shortcomings, do not let that discourage you. In worship together we can find the assurance of God's love and the strength to go on with renewed courage.

**Note to self:** Things will continue to happen that are unexpected, undesirable and uncontrollable. But you can choose the next step....

Closing the door, completing the chapter, turning the page etc. - it doesn't matter what you call it; what matters is that you find the strength to leave in the past those parts of your life that are over and changed. Right now it is all about embracing the truth: What has happened is uncontrollable; what you do now changes everything. Stepping on to a brand new path is difficult, but not more difficult than remaining in a situation that no longer fits, or no longer exists.

*From a seminar "Think better, Live better" Marc.*



*Vladislav-Babienko-unsplash*

Frodo sighed and was asleep almost before the words were spoken. Sam struggled with his own weariness, and he took Frodo's hand; and there he sat silent till deep night fell. Then at last, to keep himself awake, he crawled from the hiding-place and looked out ... Far above the Ephel Dúath in the West the night-sky was still dim and pale. There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.

*From Return of the King part of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, J.R.R.Tolkien*



*Juskteez-vu-MwhklqGVzck-unsplash*

.....in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.

George Fox QF&P 1903

18 June 2021

We do not own the world, and its riches are not 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. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation

Advices & Queries 42

### **Pied Beauty**

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;  
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins*







**Image credit:** Chaokun Wang, *Landscape*

**Image inspiration:** *We are connected in ways we cannot begin to understand. One small water molecule sits in relationship to billions of others and is, in fact, part of an ocean. It lives in relationship to the tide, the winds, the heat, the rain, its own hydrologic cycle. And so it is with all of us, the humans, together and connected.*

From a Richard Rohr daily meditation

“Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go,  
just remember how far you have come.  
Strength does not come from winning.  
Your struggles develop your strengths.  
When you go through hardships  
and decide not to surrender, that is strength.”

*Arnold Schwarzenegger*

25 June 2021



*When you imagine things... they start to grow. If you love them, they love you back.*

*Michelle, schoolchild*

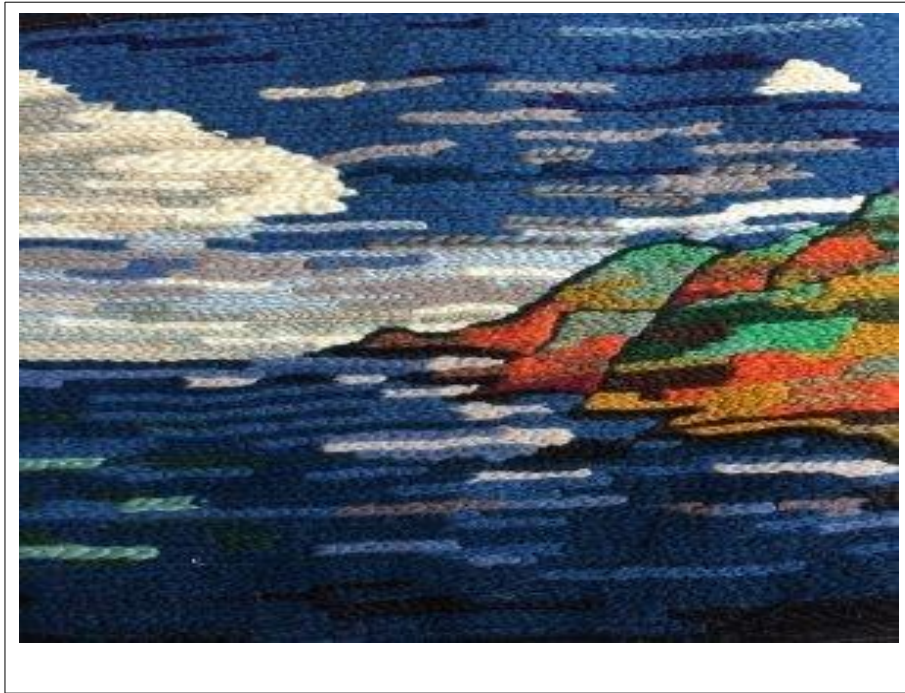
The world is made of stories.  
Good stories are hard to come by, and a good story  
you can honestly call your own is an incredible gift.  
These stories are part of a bigger story that connects us all.  
Gary Snyder

**If the world is made of stories, who knows what our best stories might accomplish?**

***If we ourselves are 'Buddha/ God/ Light', who but us can create the 'Pure Land/ Christian Heaven'?***

*Words from 'The world is made of stories' by David R. Loy, Panels above and overleaf from The Loving Earth Project.*





I do believe that there is a power which is divine, creative and loving, though we can often only describe it with the images and symbols that rise from our particular experiences and those of our communities. This power is part and parcel of all things, human, animal, indeed of all that lives. Its story is greater than any one cultural version of it and yet it is embodied in all stories, in all traditions. It is a power that paradoxically needs the human response. Like us it is energised by the reciprocity of love.

It wills our redemption, longs for us to turn to it. It does not create heaven and hell for us, but allows us to do that for ourselves. Such is the terrible vulnerability of love.

Harvey Gillman 1988

Quaker Faith & Practice 26.31

2 July 2021

Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?

Advices and Queries 27

### Going the extra mile

"Going the extra mile" is a familiar saying which I did not understand the origins of until I read about it in the writings of Rufus Jones

As you will know during Jesus' life time Judea was ruled by the Romans. In all parts of the Roman Empire a Roman soldier could compel any man he met on the road to carry his military kit for an exact mile, but no more. Jesus will have seen this on the Roman roads around Nazareth when he was growing up; he may have experienced it personally.

We understand this saying now as meaning that we voluntarily go above and beyond what is basically required.

In our lives, do we go the extra mile? Beyond the minimum observance of what our Christian faith and humanity requires of us? Jesus said "When you have done all these things that are required of you, count yourselves unprofitable servants". He is telling us that going above and beyond what is required of us is what makes our service count in God's sight.

(The Trail of Life in the Middle years by Rufus Jones, 1934)

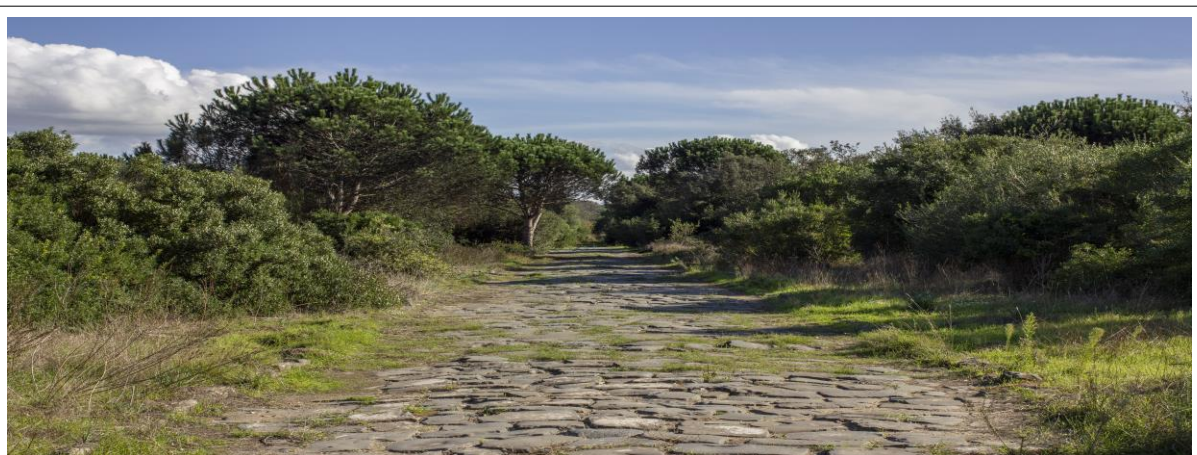
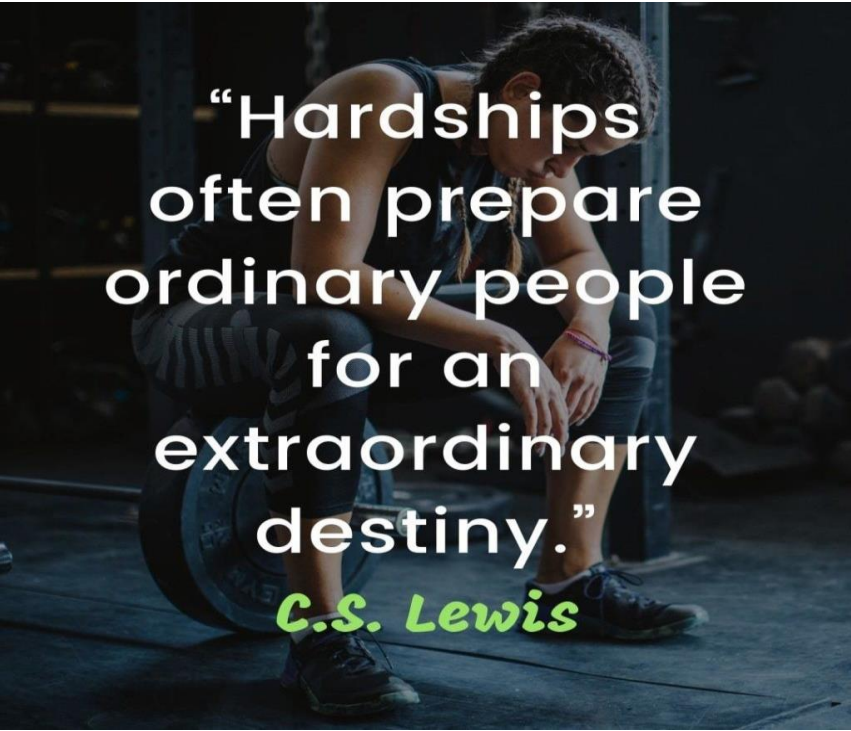



Photo by [Adriano Pucciarelli](#) on [Unsplash](#)



“Hardships  
often prepare  
ordinary people  
for an  
extraordinary  
destiny.”

*C.S. Lewis*



“The greatest  
glory in living  
lies not in never  
failing, but in  
rising every  
time we fail.”

*Nelson Mandela*

Therefore dear Friends, wait in the Light, that the word of the Lord may dwell plentifully in you.

William Dewsbury 1675

Quaker Faith & Practice 29.19