



The Rainbow

photo: John Hall

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

November 2016

Diary Dates for November

All of November World Vegan Month <https://www.vegansociety.com> Saturday November 5th Quaker Sale

Tuesday November 8th US Presidential Election

Monday November 14th World Diabetes Day <http://www.idf.org/wdd-index/>

Friday November 14th to Friday 21st National Anti-Bullying Week <http://www.antibullyingweek.co.uk>

Saturday November 19th/Sunday 20th High Leigh weekend

Sunday November 27th Area Meeting, Colchester

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

***Clerk to Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting: Alison Parkes
c/o Colchester Quaker Meeting House***

6 Church Street, Colchester CO1 1NF;

Web Address:

www.essexsuffolkquakers.org

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Meetings for Worship Editorial

CLACTON

Sunday at 10.30 am
1st Wednesday each month
1pm-2pm with Soup & Cheese

Harwich

2nd and 4th Sundays 10.30 am
Nicholas' Church Hall,
Stour Road, Bathside
Contact , Audrey Hind

COLCHESTER

Sunday 10.30 am
Wednesday 12.30 pm

(Soup and Cheese Lunch)

EARLS COLNE

1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays 10.30 am

SUDBURY

Sunday 10.30 am
Friars Street, Sudbury
Thursday 12.30 pm
(Bring Picnic,
Tea/Coffee provided)

though they generally come back when it is too late!

I believe it is coming up to half-term, and in no time it will be Christmas and the new Year. My eldest great-grandson has been saving up to buy a lizard, so he has been in the market for almost any kind of tedious work to help pay for it, which has been most useful. I believe he has now got it, but I have not seen it yet.

News, please, to Valerie Graves, by the middle of the month.

Dear Friends,

Winter is on its way, and I am just hoping that it is not going to be a frosty one. But I expect we shall manage. I believe we are doing well with our programmes for migrants, and we have all sorts of discussion groups of an educational kind arranged, as we usually do in the winter. We seem to have had a lot of visitors and it was lovely to see, for instance, our old Friend Julia Fuller. As I get older I find it harder and harder, for instance, to remember people's names,

away the universality of rights. It takes away the human". As QAAAT has helped to highlight in our briefings and in our commissioned theatre piece "Feeding the Darkness", torture is made possible because the perpetrators are taught to differentiate between "us" and "them". The Conservative government has consistently and stealthily worked to undermine the accepted condemnation of torture, for example, by its intention to overturn legislation which forbids the removal of a person to a country where they face a real risk of being tortured.

In October 2016, Theresa May announced that she was planning to allow the government to adopt a presumption that it will "derogate" from the European Convention on Human Rights at times of war. She said that this would end what she called an "industry of vexatious claims" of alleged mistreatment of combatants and prisoners, brought against soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. She is also planning new penalties for firms which "drum up support" for such cases. This follows the collapse of Public Interest Lawyers which had represented many of those complaining against British armed forces. The Iraq Historical Allegations Team (IHAT), which was set up in November 2010 to look into allegations of abuse, torture and murder of Iraqi civilians by UK military between 2003 and 2009, has consid-

ered claims relating to more than 1,500 individuals. These claims ranged from ill-treatment to death by shooting.

There is a precedent, as the UK applied such a derogation in the 1970s during the Northern Irish Troubles, with the support of the European Court of Human Rights. France took the same step in November 2015 immediately following the terror attacks in Paris.

Members of the armed forces have unsurprisingly reacted positively to these proposals. It is of the utmost concern that military personnel will now feel able to act with impunity, knowing that any lapses from the expected standard of behaviour will not be pursued.

What you can do In the UK:

Be aware of the sinister developments taking place within the government and the continuing erosion and undermining of our human rights. The UK is party to both the international Conventions against Torture and must be held to account. Be aware of the work done by organisations such as Liberty and Freedom From Torture to counteract these developments. Write letters, attend or arrange meetings; do not give up.

Outwith the UK:

In spite of the referendum result, we are still part of Europe. Leaving the EU does not automatically mean leaving the Council of Europe (although some may fear that

FIRST CONTACT

FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

CLACTON.....Carol Holding

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

QAAT

Reg Webb

The Quaker Action Against Torture has just published its latest bulletin in which, among other things, it says:

Many of us will have been observing with concern the statements of Theresa May, first as Home Secretary and now as Prime Minister, about her attitude towards the European Convention on Human Rights and her plan for a "British Bill of Rights". In the words of a group of torture survivors united by the NGO "Freedom from Torture", "a 'British' Bill of Rights suggests that the government gets to decide human rights. It takes

this is the Prime Minister's ultimate goal). We need to continue our support for the Quaker Council for European Affairs which, as a European NGO, has the right to be heard by the European institutions – a right which British

NGOs will lose post-Brexit. One of the institutions where QCEA is well-respected is the Council of Europe. As well as following QCEA's reports on the work of this institution, keep an eye on the Committee on Torture web-page

which is regularly updated with details or visits and inspections.

The Future of our Faith

Ben Pink Dandelion talk at Ipswich FMH, 21/9/16

Hazel Jones

Ben dismissed the idea that we have become a truly secular state. Although only 7% of the population go to church every week, the vast majority believe there is 'something other', a spiritual dimension.

Quakers therefore have a lot to offer. "What it means to be a Quaker" fits very well with what people are looking for. There are 4 key elements:

Direct encounter with the divine. We are all spiritually equal. Quakerism has been founded on this idea that anyone can have a direct encounter with the spiritual realm and this governs what we do and how we do it.

We meet in silence. The Quaker form of worship nurtures that possibility of direct encounter with the divine.

The practice of discernment, the ability to discern when something is from the divine and when it is only our own imagination. We may do it on our own, or with others, or even in the form of a meeting for clearness.

There is a whole set of behaviours that come out of those beliefs. We can't have that encounter with the divine and not be changed by it. The experience of the spirit leads us to try to make the world a better place. Our faith is based in our experience. As a result, we are very diverse theologically, not heavy on doctrine.

We don't offer absolute answers. There is no last word, we are very much on a journey, both personal-

ly and corporately. Paradoxically, we are very very sure that we *cannot* be sure when it comes to theological statements. Truth is personal, partial and provisional, and it may change. We offer the absolute 'perhaps'. There are now 478 local meetings in Britain, almost more than ever before. Quakerism should be very attractive, 87.7% of Quakers in Britain have come to us as adults (as Ben did), the greatest percentage since the 17th century.

So what is our action plan? We have several valuable tools at our disposal:

A truly welcoming meeting house or venue.

Meeting houses can give rise to considerable emotion and Ben gave an example of discernment in his own meeting in Sawley, Lancs. A threshing meeting was held to discern whether or not the historical old meeting house should be sold in order to buy another, more accessible building in the centre of town (Clitheroe). The old meeting house is in the beautiful Ribble Valley, with spectacular views of Pendle Hill, much prized by local Friends. No unity was reached and emotions ran very high. A meeting for business a few weeks later considered the question again but this time not asking themselves "Do we want to move?", but "What is best for the future of our meeting?" Friends united very quickly on the decision to move to town.

Community and Friendship. The im-

portance of community is absolutely core to the Quaker meeting, an opportunity to test our thoughts with each other.

Although some Area Meetings have taken the decision to meet only 3 or 4 times a year, the Area Meeting for Sawley decided to continue to meet every month. There is a sense of community shared by Area Meeting Friends which they find gives out a positive energy and is of interest to other people.

Our diversity. We can embrace it: talk about it openly, talk about it with each other, communicate with each other where we are, be able to express our faith to anyone who enquires. We should be able to say what we are about, and avoid giving a long list of negatives. Can we all wear the badge which says 'I am a Quaker, ask me why'? If we have found something important and real in our Quaker life, why would we want to hide it from everyone else? Take the risk, open up to other people!

The way in which we worship, hoping to encounter the divine. It is an expression of the spiritual equality of everyone. In particular, it is a spiritual opportunity for everyone to experience God. We offer a spiritual option, we don't tell people what to believe.

Quakerism is ripe for this age and this age is ripe for Quakerism.

It is a live tradition which can change over the years, provided we keep the balance of what is authentically Quaker. More education is needed. We should talk more about individual discernment,



helping Friends who need more discernment. We can do our best discernment and our best witness together. Many meetings are reading *Quaker Faith & Practice* a chapter each month, which is helping with this. It is binding us more closely together.

How do we ensure the future of our faith? Ben gave us some suggestions of what we might say to people who may be interested in joining us:

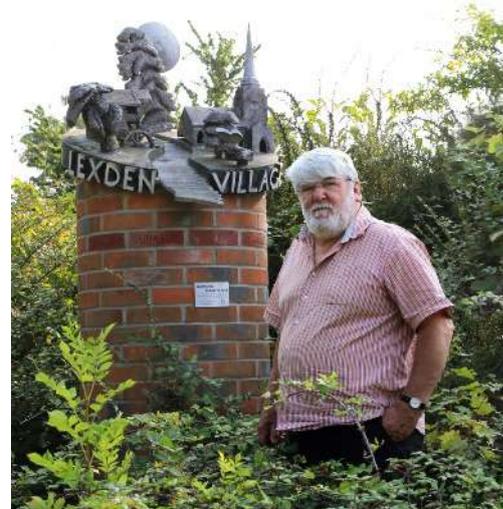
We offer a sense of encounter with the divine and out of that comes the way in which we live our lives.

Invite people to come into meeting for worship to explore their

own spirituality, rather than to explore Quakerism.

We need to be more aware of the sort of language we use, for example in our leaflets. Ben gave an example of a Quaker leaflet before an election – beautifully crafted but very wordy. Keep the message simple! Just three basic points, for example “Please vote. We believe xxxx. Please vote for someone who upholds these beliefs.”

We are in the business of nurturing spirituality, not of ensuring the survival of the meeting. Offer a public space where people may come in and do what they will with it. It is a service, it’s not about protecting Quakerism and ensuring its long term survival.



Craft People

John Hall

As promised, here is the photo of Tim for the crafts-people series. It shows the village sign he designed and made for Lexden Village.

Tim Holding of Colchester Meeting might be described as a Renaissance man, for as well as being a sculptor, he is also a painter, a builder of harpsichords and of barns. Indeed, his barn, built from recovered bricks and oak beams has been mistaken for an 18th-century construction.

Edgar Bradshaw Castle

John Hall

“There are few members of the Society called Quakers who are worthy of membership of the community to which they belong, if by membership we imply that they are as good as they ought to be or even as good as they try to be. The Church, Jesus said, is for sinners only.”

Edgar Bradshaw Castle who gave the 1941 Swarthmore Lecture although this is from his 1961 book, *Approach to Quakerism*.





The Quakers – and I!

Part 1 of 2

Ernest Hall

My wife Heather and I applied for membership of the Religious Society of Friends at Ipswich Meeting in 1948. That's nearly 70 years ago. I have a vague memory of a friendly interview and of being asked if we felt we were 'looking towards the Light' and whether we were prepared to become 'humble learners in the school of Christ'.

I had first met Heather, then a fifteen years old school-girl, a day or two before the outbreak of World War II. She had been evacuated to Ipswich with her school before the expected bombing of London and its suburbs.

I was just eighteen and had volunteered to join as a gunner in a local Territorial Army Artillery Regiment (67th Medium Regiment RA TA). Heather and I had only a few hours together. We spent them getting to know each other. I was agonisingly shy and terrified of rejection! We talked. We held hands. We kissed; and that was all. This was 1939, not 2016! After less than a fortnight her school, which had clearly been sent to Ipswich by mistake, was transferred first to Maldon and then to somewhere in Gloucestershire. As we said good-

bye I remember thinking, 'That's the girl I'm going to marry one day'. Heather told me much later that she had had a reciprocal thought

We kept in touch with each other throughout the war. I was sent overseas and was away from England for four years, three of them spent as a prisoner of war in Italy and Germany. Other POWs received 'Dear John' letters from girl friends or wives saying 'goodbye', as they had now found their true loves, but not me! Heather and I weren't even officially engaged, but she loyally waited for me despite my very uncertain future. The war ended. I made my way home and on 27th April 1946 (just four days after my discharge from the Army) we were married at Barking Side Methodist Church, Ilford. I was then 24, Heather was 22.

Discharged from the army I resumed and completed my studies to become an Environmental Health Officer (Sanitary Inspector in those days). I passed the qualifying examination and found my first job, and our first home, in the Gipping Rural District, just north of Ipswich, my home town.

We had both been church-going young people. Heather had been a Methodist and a Sunday School Teacher. I had graduated from Choir Boy to 'Server at the Altar' at an Ipswich Anglican Church. When I was discharged from the Army I was a 'lapsed' Anglican. Events toward the end of World War II (the German Death Camps, the appalling British and American Bombing-raids on Dresden in February 1945, the treatment of POWs by the Japanese, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) had robbed me of my belief in a 'Loving God'. I would have described myself an agnostic, perhaps a materialist. I wasn't really happy about this though, and I felt a certain envy of those who could still believe.

From our new home in Barham, just north of Ipswich, we went to church on Sunday. I was quite hap-

py to accompany Heather and go through the motions though I didn't believe a word of it! We weren't impressed with the local Methodist preacher and Anglican ways were unknown to Heather and no longer attractive to me. One Sunday we tried a Quaker Meeting for Worship. I remembered as a child having seen the Meeting House in Ipswich's Fonnereau Road, just outside Christ Church Park. We were made welcome and the nature of Quaker faith and practice was explained to us. We were given Quaker literature to read. We had found our spiritual home, and we became regular attenders.

At about the same time it became clear to me that Heather's health was failing. We visited the doctor. X-rays and other tests revealed that she had pulmonary and laryngeal tuberculosis, possibly the result of wartime privations. She would be admitted to what was then a TB Sanatorium at Nayland near Colchester as soon as possible. This devastating news made us decide to apply for membership of the Quakers rather sooner than we might otherwise have done. Hence the visitation and friendly inquisition. Heather's positive replies and my own rather more doubtful ones must have been acceptable. We both became members of Ipswich

Quaker Meeting, though it was not till after her discharge from the sanatorium two years later that Heather became again a regular attender. I did attend



most Sundays before driving to Nayland to visit her.

At the sanatorium Heather was given streptomycin (to qualify for this then 'new' drug the patient had to be very ill, but not quite beyond hope!) and was sent to Papworth Hospital for an operation that involved removing eight ribs to collapse the left lung completely, allowing it to heal. Streptomycin cleared up the laryngeal TB and the surgical intervention 'cured' her pulmonary TB but at the cost of leaving her with a degree of disability for the rest of her life. She could never carry her own shopping and had to rest for an hour after lunch each day, but she made our bungalow a warm and welcoming 'home' and produced and brought up two fine sons. I was proud of her and them!

From the time we became Quakers in 1948 till we moved to the Clacton area in 1955 we knew no Quaker Meeting other than that in Ipswich. We imagined it was a typical Meeting but whether it was I really don't know. Its members certainly believed that Quakerism was not a new religion but a different and exciting way of looking at Christianity. None of us had any doubt that we were part of the Universal Church of Christ. On the Meeting Room Table were copies of the Bible and of the predecessors of 'Quaker Faith and Practice' that affirmed our Christian heritage. Every Sunday, someone present was asked to read one of the Queries and Advices (I was very proud when I was asked to do so) and every Sunday one of the Elders would read a passage from the New Testament. How this was chosen I have no idea. Heather and I were both very much 'back bench Friends'. We also discovered early in 1953, just two years after Heather's discharge from the Sanatorium, that our first child was on his way. We had other things to think about!

Peter was born in July 1953. In 1955 I took up a new job as a Health Inspector with Tendring Rural District in north Essex. Our

second son, Andrew, was born at the end of that year in Thorpe-le-Soken. Shortly after his birth I obtained a similar job with the then Clacton Urban District Council. I thought, probably correctly, that our sons would have better educational opportunities in Clacton than in Thorpe-le-Soken. After a brief spell in a Council house in Holland-on-Sea we bought (with a mortgage!) the bungalow in Clacton's Dudley Road in which I am writing these words. I have now lived here for sixty years. Sadly, Heather's life came to an end on 12th July 2006, just three months after we had celebrated, with f/Friends and family, our Diamond Wedding Anniversary. The Meeting House was crowded for her memorial Meeting. I was very pleased to note that as well as f/Friends and family, the vicar of St James Anglican Church and the Minister of the nearby Christ Church United Reformed Church were present.

We became members of Clacton Quaker Meeting when we moved to Thorpe-le-Soken. We found the Meeting House and contacted one or two of the members. I remember in particular Stuart and Doris Hunt 'The mother and father of the Meeting'! Stuart was a tomato grower on his own small-holding in Weeley. They remained our close friends till their deaths. When we moved to Dudley Road in Clacton we were, of course, nearer to the Meeting House. We had by then, one son who was still a baby in arms and another who was a three years old toddler. Although we were Quakers and members of Clacton Meeting, it was several years before we could attend Meeting for Worship regularly and play an active part on the Meeting's affairs.

I can't remember when exactly we did become active members of the Meeting but I know that activity was (very gently but very persuasively) requested from us. We were still youngish and there was a lot we could do for the Meeting.

Heather was asked if she would at first help with and later run the Children's Class. The Meeting had at that time, several young families. We had two sons, Joyce Bissenden (later Joyce White) had a daughter Heather and a son Stephen, Mary Musgrave had two daughters, Judith and Serena, and Eileen and Louis Plater had a daughter Hazel. In addition there were some children (four I think) from Elm Grove whose parents didn't come to Meeting but who thought a Quaker Childrens' Class would be good for them, and two little children of mixed race Stephen and Joanna Browning. Their father was Nigerian. Joanna, now Joanna Best and a grandmother herself, is living in the USA and is still in touch with me. She has happy memories of Clacton's Children's Class and we had lunch together at



Children's Class & below Joanna



a local restaurant when she called to see me recently during a visit to her mum and brother. There was

also a little boy, Colin Ridout, who should, so he told us, have been at St James' church but came to us because he had been told the Quaker Children's Class 'was more fun'!

It was quite an active Children's Class. Heather wrote the scripts and directed several short Quaker plays that were rehearsed during Children's Class and enacted before the adults after Meeting. A newly acquired tape recorder provided appropriate 'noises off'. The children also corresponded with a similar Quaker Children's Meeting in Schenectady, USA. The parents of one of those American children came to Europe to attend a major Quaker event. They stayed with

Heather and I over a weekend in which I showed them something of 'historic Colchester', including the memorial plaque at the entrance to Colchester Castle to James Parnell the first Quaker martyr. They came with us to Meeting for Worship at Clacton Meeting House on the Sunday morning.

I remember going with Stuart Hunt to meetings of the Clacton Council of Churches, and quite enjoying them. Then I was asked if I'd be prepared to take over as Clerk to Clacton Meeting. I hadn't the faintest idea of the duties and responsibilities of a Preparative (local) Meeting Clerk and it appears that my predecessor had been equally

ignorant. Business Meetings were held as and when there was any Meeting business to transact and we both clearly had no idea that our business meetings were supposed to be in preparation (hence Preparative Meeting) for the next Monthly (Area) Meeting. I gradually learned how Preparative Meetings should be held (I owe a lot to Hugh Clunes who, with his family, moved home from the Colchester area to Clacton during this time) and I actually served as Clerk for two periods. I doubt if I was ever a 'good' clerk but at least I didn't provide an 'awful example' of how it should not be done!

Jonathan Bartley

Robbie Spence



Jonathan Bartley, the Green Party's new co-leader alongside Caroline Lucas, is

a direct descendant of Elizabeth Fry, the Quaker prisoner reformer. She was his great (times four) grandmother.

He told the Eastern Region Green Party this today when I asked him about his faith. While he said he was from a Quaker family, he did not define his faith. But you can guess where he is coming from by knowing that he was a founder of Ekklesia, the independent think-tank that examines the role of religion, beliefs and values cri-

tiques public policy "from a forward-looking, theologically-resourced perspective based on a strong commitment to social justice." Ekklesia is rooted in broadly nonconformist Christian traditions and is not tied to any one denomination or church body. One of Ekklesia's current associates is Symon Hill, a Quaker who is well-known to Colchester Meeting. <http://roadlesstraveller.blogspot.co.uk/2016/10/jonathan-bartley-green-party.html>

Art and Religion

John Hall

In the September edition of *The Big Issue*, Yann Martel, the author of *Life of Pi*, writes, "I see religion as a cousin to art. Both involve a suspension of disbelief."

Such was the discernment of this remark, it made its way into ministry.

However, the opposite may also be true. Both art and religion are representations of truth but they can also direct us away from the same.

In art, consider *trompe l'oeil* where the representation is so accurate, it deceives not only the eye but also the brain. One such example is the Chatsworth Violin which appears to be a violin hanging on the back of a door in the music room. However, there

is no violin. It is just the painting of one by Jan van der Vaardt on the back of a door which came originally from Devonshire House.

So just as art may deceive the brain, so may religion. Which may explain why very close adherents, sometimes called extremists, perpetrate acts which those of other religions or denominations regard as crimes.



The Other Vitamin D

from Valerie Graves

I have written about this before, and it may at first seem an odd concept, but I believe it is important in our hygienic age. There are many relevant things beginning with D, which are very important to us all, especially children. They include Dirt, Danger, Deprivation and many others that we all need to meet and overcome if we are going to be useful adults. The picture shows my youngest son, aged about five, showing us his filthy hands: he and his older sister have been exploring the hypocaust of a Roman fort somewhere on Hadrian's Wall. They have clearly had the time of their lives, though I expect they were a bit scared some of the time.

Children, and adults, need to experience all kinds of difficult experiences and how to overcome and endure them, if they are to become useful and resourceful people. If they are always protected, they will not, and they will always be afraid.

I Dreamt of a Meeting

John Lewis

Across the windswept uplands of central France, rain driving further and further up my sleeves, I had a distant vision. A marvellous distraction from the cold and wet. It was the sight of a Quaker meeting where every person, Friend or attender, really shared every decision and out of this shared responsibility grew a truly knit community.

But is that what happens in Quaker meetings now anyway? Well, in Evelyn Waugh's pointed words: up to a point that does happen. We have appointed committees for this and that so we may be tempted to be content to leave it to the committee to get things done. Our bookkeeping (*how did Quakers, of all people, adopt the presumptuous title of treasurer?*), our property, our investments, even care of our own members, these are all left to committees.

Some committees are secretive and that divides them from Friends and especially from attenders. Other committees have such loose terms of reference that neither the committee members nor other Friends really know what their role is.

It is a curious fact, but true, that children living on a farm are less likely to develop allergies! I do not mean that children should not be guided or allowed to do foolhardy things.



Sometimes members of committees are expert in their subject, but rarely, they often unskilled, even when dealing with sensitive personal matters. These committees do not create a unified community.

And hanging overall is the stress of the nominations committee, searching often fruitlessly for new committee members. Could we do better? Is there any system that might deliver a better result and, most important, permit every single friend and attender to feel part of the work and share the responsibility of the work.

As the cold rain inside my waterproof trousers trickled into my boots, I asked myself "What if just one person, properly supported, took the responsibility for each task?" It would not offend against any Quaker concern or pillar of our faith. I spent some hours turning it over. I wonder what George Fox's response would be.

Much later, whilst stuffing my boots with newspaper, a rare material in rural hamlets, it became clearer. Support by the whole Meeting is important. How do we make sure everyone in the Meeting Room shares the burden, shares the responsibility and thereby creates a working community?

Let us call the person responsible for each job, whether it is Friends welfare, the Meeting House, the attenders welfare or the library, a 'lead Friend'. If a lead Friend feels they need a second opinion on an issue, or help or information, or any help at all, they would be given priority after Meeting for Worship on Sunday to ask for the support they felt they needed. Every person in the Meeting Room would then share that need and be able to respond if willing and able.

The whole of the Meeting present would be the support for that lead Friend and it would be in the spirit of the Meeting just ended. Sharing the burden would bring us all together and create a closer community. One of the obvious advantages of this idea is it could be tested one step at a time, on one of the smaller less sensitive committees. If it works, we could extend it, if not, nothing is lost.

Supper awaits. No sophisticated meals in poor rural France but aligot and a sausage every day without fail.

Experiment with Light

Offer Outreach.

At a brain storming session recently with Mary and Lucien plans were initiated to offer outreach. Two distinct categories were identified who might appreciate such an Experiment with Light session

1. Someone who is unable to make it to meeting but would welcome a home visit to engage with the practice regularly all being well.

2. Some people who are only free at short notice and would like the opportunity to have a single session.

We are sure that other outreach potential will emerge from local meeting. In the meantime we are putting the logistical nuts and bolts together. More info to follow.

We also intend to hold a Winter Solstice, Pre Christmas get together at my house early December. Invitations from the Experiment with Light team to our faithful regulars,

occasional or one off participants and those interested who haven't quite managed to make it to a session yet.

Watch this space.

There is certainly a light meeting at the Meeting House on Monday Nov 7th at 2.15.

Do come along. All welcome. In Friendship.

Ellen Cohen.