Diary Dates for April

Friday April 3rd Colchester Farmers' Market
Monday April 13th Global Day of Action Against Military Spending http://demilitarize.org.uk
Saturday April 25th World Malaria Day http://www.worldmalariaoday.org
Sunday April 26th Chernobyl Remembrance Day http://www.chernobyl-day.org
Dear Friends,

Dare we really hope that spring has come? Yes, I know it has been frosty, with really cold winds, and squally rain, but on the whole it has been nice, all sorts of things are springing up and one starts thinking about cutting the grass. I planted some seeds, and though I can’t actually say that they are coming up, it’s fun going to look.

And yes, the frogs did turn up en masse this year, such a noise they make! Unfortunately you can’t show them to small grandchildren, as the least noise will send every frog under water. (But they can look from a bedroom window). I wish there were a few toads, too, to eat the slugs.

But the social scene is less promising. It is very worrying to know that the need for our food bank is growing three and fourfold, and though there are more jobs, most of them are very badly paid.

On a nice warmish Spring afternoon, Area Meeting got underway at 2:15pm at Clacton Quaker Meeting House. Present were 31 members and 5 attenders.

The first items on the Agenda dealt with reading the Minutes from Earls Colne, Sudbury, Clacton, and Colchester concerning reviewing the duties of Local Meetings as set down in Quaker Faith and Practice 4.33 and 4.34. We heard that all of the Local Meetings are fulfilling their responsibilities however we note that Earls Colne Friends continue to discern their becoming a full Local Meeting again.

We then read out the Minute concerning responsibilities of the Area Meeting (QFP 4.13) and found that Area Meeting fulfilled its responsibilities as well but with particular concern for the Eldership and Oversight of Clacton and Harwich meetings. A meeting for Elders and Overseers will be held on 21 March to discuss this further.

After Membership and Appointment matters, there followed minutes recording grants available from Greenwood Trust, the dates of the next Britain Yearly Meeting (1-4 May 2015) at Friends House in London, and the appointment of Colchester as host of the Regional Gathering on 26 September. Also discussed briefly was the Area Meeting Gathering which Peter Whiteley, Phyl Reid, and Jan Squire agreed to organize with the help of Jenny Kay. We are looking to 2016 for such an event.

The majority of the discussion at Area Meeting revolved around the three Minutes received from Colchester meeting. Feeling the sense of urgency concerning support for charities, Colchester meeting has requested £30,000 from Area Meeting funds to support Circles of Support and Accountability at Glebe House, an organization which houses and helps rehabilitate recovering male sex offenders. They also requested £20,000 a year for three years to give to local charities within the community. Honor Chamberlain spoke to the Glebe House concern and Rosemary Sturgiss is coordinating the local charities communications between Friends and the local community. After a lengthy discussion of the previous matters, Area Meeting requested Trustees’ advice and more specific information about how the funds would be used.

We then moved to a report from Reg Webb about the opposition to Trident group that meets at Colchester. His report is in this newsletter.

We took a 10 minute comfort break and came back to view the web site that Area Meeting had commissioned at its last meeting in January. The web site creator is CallKwik from Bury St. Edmonds and I was appointed web manager. The web manager will oversee information updates on a daily or weekly basis as necessary. I gave a tour of the web site using John Kay’s computer and the projector. Everyone seemed pleased with the web site and we advised people to view it themselves with a login and password and get back to Area Meeting with any concerns or suggestions. You may contact me or Alison Parkes for login information.

We then come to the intriguing matter of the 【】

Enjoy the Easter holidays!
Goodbye John Tann
from Valerie Graves

He was a very special person, a Friend from Earl’s Colne Meeting. He was in his eighties, and ran an organic orchard. Before that he had been a teacher, but he had done many things in his time, and was amazingly well-informed. His cottage was full of books, and he seemed to have known people from every walk of life. “Been there, done that” but he was never one to boast or show off. He loved to cycle round his bit of Essex. A few weeks ago he laughed mischievously at me as he showed me a really dreadful photo of himself in his youth, with a villainous black beard.

A good many years ago he was struck down with a sort of leukaemia, and though he made a sort of recovery it never quite went, and he had to have some more treatment. Gradually he became more and more disabled, walking was slow and difficult and he was very deaf. I used to visit him every Thursday at 11 am and we chatted for about an hour, after which he had had some more treatment. The job is neither outreach nor counselling although both might occur. It is basically to be there for whoever in the organisations concerned might feel the need of another who can listen to their concerns of spiritual nature, faith or belief and maybe hold services of worship. The phrase ‘share the cloak’ was used over the weekend. Clearly in hospital, these concerns can be around fear, end of life issues, bereavement and joy such as childbirth. The sacraments may be needed. In the military, chaplains are there for those who want them but also for ceremonial purposes, and sadly, to still the fears of those about to go into battle and pray for them.

We are there for those of any faith or none as we are usually part of a Multi Faith Chaplaincy who form a mutual support group as well as serve any need. I met Quakers over the weekend who are working in prisons, including those with dangerous inmates, hospitals and hospices, universities, a police station, a shopping centre and workplaces. There are also chaplains in a growing multitude of places including airports and town centres, even Canary Wharf. Some are paid, for some it is even a fulltime job. These latter are usually Anglican or Roman Catholic. There are female Muslim chaplains, who are there in some areas for the women of the mosque. It seems unlikely that Quakers will provide chaplain services to the military but I can see a potential role for them for those leaving the forces or returning from a battle zone. An interesting thought. There is beginning to be research into the area and some demand for accountability from those who fund chaplains or provide the Multi Faith areas and support the chaplaincy service in their establishment. How does one evaluate such care and love as a chaplain may provide?

Colchester University has a Multi Faith Chaplaincy area which is due to be renovated by the university which should make it more welcoming and accessible to students and staff who want to visit. I haven’t met all of those involved yet and I have struggled to find a way to be a Quaker presence. Friends attending the Woodbrooke weekend tell me it can take several years to establish trust and systems in which to work. All Meetings have been sent a copy of ‘A brief guide to Quaker Chaplaincy’ if you want to know more. It is going to be a challenging and interesting experience, but I do feel supported by local Friends.

Quaker Chaplaincy
Anne Watkinson

I recently had the privilege to attend a Quaker Chaplains’ residential gathering at Woodbrooke. One of the suggested outcomes was that we should inform our Local and Area Meetings about what we might be up to as we are working in their names.

I was appointed to be the Quaker chaplain at Essex University first by Colchester Local Meeting and then approved by the university this January. Our AM also has a hospital chaplain, Carol Harding, and Hazel Jones who is the St. Helena Hospice chaplain. There may be others I am not aware of.

The job is neither outreach nor counselling although both might occur. It was the meaning of the word “altered” which, with the word “hospital”, haunted their conversation.

From: The Fur Person by Mary Sar- ton, 1957

A Visit to the Vet
Rosalind Kaye

Friends might be amused by this quote from a delightful story of a cat, which has become a classic.

It never occurred to the Fur Person that what they were contemplating was to change his personality, not his name, to change him, in fact into a believer in nonviolence, a Quaker cat for whom the glories of doing battle and tearing out the fur of enemies would become anathema. This was the meaning of the words “altered” which, with the word “hospital”, haunted their conversation.

From: The Fur Person by Mary Sarton, 1957
ing to an ‘enrichment assembly’ of 250 five-to-eleven year old children at Engaines Little Clacton Primary School.

They graphically showed us how they had told the children of our core belief that there is ‘that of God’ – a divine spark – within every man, woman and child in the world, and that from that conviction sprang our opposition to all war and our determination to help our fellow humans whatever their colour, race or creed. Silva told them (and us) a story about an old man, a young boy and some starfish to illustrate the value of small acts of compassion and kindness.

They had then illustrated Quaker faith in action by graphically telling the story of the ‘Kindertransport’, the 10,000 Jewish children from Germany and elsewhere in Europe who were saved from Nazi Concentration Camps just before World War II by the initiative of Quakers who brought them across the North Sea to Harwich and safety. They were given temporary accommodation in the Holiday Camp in Dovercourt and were then despatched to loving, largely Quaker, homes for the duration of the war. Margaret used a somewhat battered suit-case dating from the 1930s as a prop to illustrate that it was in just such cases that those little children carried all their worldly goods with them to safety in England.

At the end of the presentation Margaret and Silva gently guided those 250 children briefly into the prayerful-and-expectant silence of a Quaker Meeting for Worship.

It was, I felt, a presentation that deserved a wider audience than those of us gathered after Meeting for Worship on 1st March. The thought occurred to me how happy and proud it would have made Margaret’s mum and dad, Hugh and Florence Clunes who had been for many years very active members of Clacton Meeting.

**Appointments**

Although we hold a deeply gathered Meeting for Worship every Sunday, hope soon to resume our ‘First Wednesday’ Meetings for Worship, and undertake to the best of our ability all other responsibilities of a local Quaker Meeting, we have so far been unable to find anyone to fill important positions within our Meeting.

Our Clerk reminds us that we have not yet been able to appoint a permanent Treasurer and that we will face the need to appoint a new Clerk at the end of this year. We exercise corporate eldership and oversight but have been unable to find anyone to represent us for these responsibilities at Area Meeting level. We have not found anyone to serve on the Area Meeting Nominations Committee. Nor have we found a member to act as a first point of contact for funerals.

Our March Meeting for Church Affairs hoped that this problem might be discussed at the Area eldership and oversight meeting on 21st March and wondered if it might be possible to make appointments from the whole area Meeting – for instance there might be one point of contact for all Area Meeting funerals and one Treasurer for the three smaller meetings.

**A Quaker Wedding**

The wedding of John Howarth and Judith Musgrave in April 1974 was not the first Quaker wedding in Clacton but it was the first to take place in our ‘new’ Meeting House, officially opened by George Gorman in July 1969. John’s career has subsequently taken the married couple to Australia and to Germany but he has recently retired and they have made a home in Ipswich.

Also on the photograph are Judith’s mother Mary who recently celebrated her 95th birthday, and Judith’s younger sister Serena. Mary is the only local Friend who can remember attending Meetings for Worship in Oak Lodge, Jaywick Lane (the home of the Jessop family) before Monthly Meeting purchased 26 Granville Road as a Meeting House. Although now unable to come to Meeting, she takes a keen interest in our activities, regularly reading the Newsletter and enquiring after the sadly diminishing number of (Friends whom she remembers.

Both Judith and Serena were members of the children’s class that my wife Heather ran in the 1960s and early ‘70s. Serena and her husband now live in Chelmondiston, near the Orwell Bridge. Serena (Beany to her friends!) was a regular attender at our ‘First Wednesday’ meetings until she was prevented from coming by ill-health.

**Quaker Values in Education**

Anne Watkinson

Are there any teachers or ex-teachers, we are all ex pupils, who are interested enough in current education to pen a few words to me about how they feel. Quaker values should/could manifest themselves in formal education. The particular concern is for those children and young people, teachers and school staff having to go through or work in the current state system. Several groups were formed following the Bath Gathering last year to follow up the concerns of teachers struggling to maintain their values while teaching in state schools.

I am going to a meeting of one group who are hoping to produce a publication called, or about, *Quaker values in education*. Email would be great but snail mail is fine, my details are in the List of Members. Any comments to take with me on April 15th would be welcome.
Opposition to Trident

renewal Report,
Reg Webb

Opposition to the proposed renewal of the Trident weapons delivery system has received strong support from Quakers in Britain. Parliament has already approved expenditure on design work, for a project which will not come before the house until after the election. In an attempt to counter the efforts of politicians to keep this off the election agenda, many peace groups, such as Stop The War, and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, together with The Green Party, the Scottish National Party, etc, were joined in London by Quakers for the “Wrap Up Trident” demonstration on January 24th this year; a demonstration attended by many friends from this meeting.

Since then, our Alternatives To Trident group has met twice, attended by Quakers and other people of like mind on this issue.

With the election approaching, our concern has been how to get Trident onto the radar of potential voters, while trying to avoid vulnerability to accusations that the Society Of Friends has a party political agenda.

Members of the group have written to their MPs, newspapers, and online political groups, trying to get some definite statements of policy, without much result so far, although I would be very pleased to be corrected on this point.

Quakers, like other local religious groups, have legitimate concerns about public services and their funding problems. Accordingly, we have sought to begin to make an association in the mind of the local electorate between the well-perceived threats to the funding of our public services, and a poorly understood proposal to “defend the realm” by spending vast sums of money on a weapon which can never, or should never be used by anyone sane who wishes the planet to stay more or less intact. Such a weapon could only be used by someone who was prepared to contemplate “first use”, obliterating vast numbers of civilians, possibly in the weapon’s country of origin, due to the unpredictability of the upper atmosphere.

On Saturday March 7, 2015, we made a small start by distributing leaflets from the forecourt of Colchester Meeting House to passers by, -- CND’s leaflet on what you can buy for £100,000,000,000, and the 38 Degrees ‘Save Our NHS’ leaflet, together with their petition. In this, I would like to offer special thanks to Mervyn Carter, the warden of this meeting house, for his off duty help.

Our understanding of the difficulty of making that association in the mind of the electorate was confirmed by this exercise, now all we need is a solution to it. The problem is that there is enormous public support for many of our public services, especially the NHS as originally envisaged by Beveridge, but almost no-one knows what Trident is, let alone whether or not they support its renewal.

All we can do, I think, is to redouble our efforts to try to gain some “traction” for Trident as an election issue in the little time which remains.

At the time of writing, I have heard of two hustings to be held in the town—one, of which I still need confirmation from the vicar, at St Botolph’s church on April 27th, and one, definitely to be held at the Mercury Theatre on May 4. (Booking at the Mercury is required but tickets are free).

It would clearly be better if any question submitted and selected to be put to the candidates were answered against a background of public awareness of what the question is about. In fact, unless Trident gains some public currency before a hustings takes place, a question on it is perhaps less likely to be selected. We can of course choose to submit relevant questions as individuals, in an attempt to raise the profile of Trident as an issue.

http://mercurytheatre.co.uk/event /ask-the-candidates/

So, we suggest that interested friends need to try to get answers from those who wish to represent them in parliament. The notion that Trident is beyond the competence of us, the electorate, and can safely be left to our betters, is strongly to be discouraged. Impoverished public services, and the possibility of slow death by radiation poisoning are very much the concern of the electorate and, I think, a prime concern for Quakers, from the point of view of our wish to promote a more ethical, peaceful and fairer society.

Wildlife: a New Book

from Valerie Graves

I have been reading the latest in the New Naturalist Books: Nature in Towns and Cities, by David Goode, a heavyweight in several ways, a big heavy book in great detail and a work of solid knowledge and research. It is chiefly concerned with plants, birds and animals and insects in cities and how it is surviving, with reference back to older works like the Victorian Birds in London (Hudson) and the more recent popular Unofficial Countryside (Richard Mabey) a very good read, too, about wildlife flourishing in most unlikely places.

I enjoyed it enormously, though it was hard work, but I ended up really cheered by its conclusions, that in spite of relentless problems wildlife is indeed flourishing in most unpromising places in our towns, including roofs and scruffy patches of wasteland.
King Canute’s Daughter
Ernest Hall
When my wife Heather and I holidayed with our motor-caravan on the Sussex coast we never failed to visit the village of Bosham (pronounced Bozzum) which lies beside an inlet from the sea near Chichester. Part of its ancient church dates back to Romano-British times but the greater part was built towards the end of the dark ages, before the Norman Conquest. Earl Harold Godwinsson (later to become King Harold and to be killed at the Battle of Hastings) lived there. The Bayeux Tapestry shows him kneeling in prayer in the, clearly recognisable, nave of the church.

King Canute (or Cnut) and his family also lived here and it is believed to have been at Bosham that Canute demonstrated to flattering courtiers that neither he, nor any other man, could stem the course of the tide. Canute is said to have had a well-loved twelve year old daughter who was accidentally drowned in the millstream that still runs through the village. Her body was buried in the nave of the church.

There was no written record of this, nor even of the twelve-year old child’s existence, but the story of her death and burial was passed on by word of mouth within the village from generation to generation. In 1865 some building work was carried out on the church and the then vicar instructed the builders to excavate the nave where the little girl’s body was said to have been buried. There they found a 10th/11th century stone coffin containing the skeleton of a twelve year old child.

The remains of the little Anglo/Danish Princess were reinterred and the children of the village collected the money to provide a memorial for her, complete with an engraved Danish raven, inside the church. It is there to this day.

Whenever I am told that this, that or the other story from the Gospels can’t possibly be true because there was no record of it until two, three or four centuries after the events were said to have taken place, I remember Canute’s daughter whose story was passed on by word of mouth for generation after generation for over 800 years before its accuracy was established.

Is your money really there?
Quakers discuss private banks
In the week leading up to the Budget, Colchester Quakers held a meeting to discuss the things many people don’t know about money - like how the government allows profit-seeking private banks to create almost all of our money supply as debt. Worse still, the debt fuels the economic growth required to find the money to pay back the interest we owe the banks. As we cannot have infinite growth on a finite planet, this means that our money system is directly contributing to the destruction of the eco-systems on which we depend.

Quakers have a long-standing concern about money and two of Britain’s best-known High Street banks, Barclays and Lloyds, started out as Quaker businesses.

Representing the charity ‘Positive Money’, Sue Holden, a Quaker expert in this topic who travels the country to hold discussions about the problem and possible alternatives, came to address Colchester Quaker Meeting on Saturday 14 March.

Peter Whiteley, Clerk of Colchester Quaker Meeting said: “This was a fascinating discussion on a subject that gets hardly any attention but makes a huge difference to our lives. Part of the solution, we learned, could be to set up an independent body, accountable only to Parliament (not the government of the day) to oversee the process of money creation. It would then be as illegal for private, profit-seeking banks to create money as it would for people to forge bank-notes. Colchester Quakers hope to hold more discussions like this in future.”

A media release from Robbie Spence

Two recent deaths
John Tann, for many years a long time member of Earls Colne Meeting died last week. His funeral will be at the Colchester Crematorium on Monday 20 April at 2 pm.

Norman Frith of Sudbury Meeting and a long serving Friend died Sunday 22nd March aged 101. Funeral arrangements will be announced later.
**Spiritual Health in Our Meeting.**

Ellen Cohen

“We recognised signals in our meeting, feeling that it does not give us the spiritual help we need; or it may be that we continue to go on and are too outward appearances actively engaged in the meeting’s life and business, while, within, we feel the agonies of isolation and the longing to lighten our darkness” – Quaker Faith & Practice 21.20

All of us on this Woodbrooke course identified with these feelings or knew of a Quaker friend in distress. We recognised signals in our meetings, such as those clear and open about their stress and what they need. Or indirect stress expressed as anger or cynicism. Dropping out of meeting and contact. Incessant repetitive talk. Hard to follow communication which prevents mutual understanding. Inappropriate and abusive shouting which can escalate to verbal conflict.

How on earth can we Quakers possibly “Know One Another” when mutual understanding and reciprocity fail. Do we simply label such behaviour as difficult, ungrateful or rejecting and leave it?

The Special Place We Quakers Can Offer at Meeting

Amazing what active Quaker Friends can provide with Meeting Role Holders active support. Somewhere safe for all who come. A place to be with others and to belong. A place to turn to for support and to be upheld. A place where meeting for worship and ministry are gently explained in ongoing spiritual conversation. A place where all feel valued and their spiritual engagement is recognised. We in Colchester can offer this Quaker Service with active Friends help.

Quaker Processes and Discernment

Things will go wrong if we do not offer grounded Quaker processes true to our Quaker discernment. We can begin by explaining boundaries in meeting. Unease arises from unexplained silence. Ministry may not make sense unless clarified by accompanying someone to a 10 min. Afterwards. What binds Quakers together emerges when meeting includes Upholding. Anxiety is aroused by too rigid a meeting. Silence, ministry, notices, coffee alone, out the door! Being “too nice” can be superficial and draining without meaningful opportunities to bring up spiritual and personal issues. Once these issues are addressed, we can deepen our responses to emotional and spiritual distress.

Quakers Helping Not Fixing.

The Quaker “Retreat” mental health centre considered 200 years ago: “By what means the power of the patient to control a disorder is strengthened and assisted.” Woodbrooke rephrases this as “What Spiritual Support can Meeting offer to strengthen a person’s buffers to reduce stress?” First, always be aware that distress thwarts our culture’s demand for a “Quick Fix.” Quaker Helping not Fixing depends on Friends’ patience and has 2 main themes.

1. **Listening and Paying Attention.**

In listening we enter a world of uncertainty. We do not know what we will hear, as in Meeting for Worship. Being heard enables a person to speak. George Fox in 1657 said of Meeting for Worship:

“When friends meet together and know one another in that which is eternal” Central to a “helping” relationship is PEACEFUL LISTENING which can be linked to stillness in meeting. Be peaceful within, calming the mind to listen deeply. Listen with your heart, open, receptive and non-judgemental. Only if the person finds it difficult to speak, encourage with open ended queries. Be aware that interruptions can distract someone telling their story their own way.

The emphasis is different from “Active Listening” Peaceful Listening is nearer to Ministry as in Advices and Queries 13 “When prompted to speak, wait patiently to know that the leading and time are right…Pray that your ministry may arise from deep experience and trust that words will be given to you…Beware of speaking predictably…and of making additions…when it was well left before.” This is a warning against “Giving Cheerful Hope” which may spring from the need to “Fix It.” But if we do get it wrong and what we offered was in the right spirit then we’ve done the best we can.

Quakers help by prayer and upholding in the light. Advice+ Queries 9 + 10. “Yield yourself and all your outward concerns to God’s guidance. Try to find a spiritual wholeness which encompasses suffering, prayer springing from a deep place in the heart may bring healing, as nothing else can.” We need keen awareness of the impact this listening has on ourselves and on the other person. We must protect ourselves when exchanges get “raw” and demanding. The other person needs to know what can be safely said without feeling exposed, judged, out of control or confidence broken.

2. Accompaniment

Quaker accompaniment, as in music, involves related qualities; to listen and attend, work in harmony and accept differences, respect and understand others views, be a stable point, offer time, uphold spirit in the relationship. Quakers use accompaniment working within Israel and Palestine.

Two Essential Points:
1. There are limits to our involvement. We offer what we can. Listening support may be all we can do when practical help is impossible.

2. Be grounded and maintain this position. Use the whirlpool analogy. Keep on the bank, throw a line, never jump in. Accompaniment may be individual or the meeting or a group within meeting.

Pendle Hill pamphlet 344: Mysticism and Mental Illness” speaks of seeking to accompany people in their mystical experiences, many of which are seen as mental health problems. How would early Quakers who regularly heard voices be viewed now? What spiritual price are we paying for accepting society’s ever narrowing view of “normal behaviour” and rejection of traditional idiosyncrasies? What suffering results from the loss of a Spiritual vocabulary and conversation?

Jennifer Elan says: “To accompany another person requires holding a level of uncertainty that is not valued in our culture... I did not impose a set of rules for distinguishing true from untrue. Success in the accompaniment role depends on an ability to stand with people... honouring their unique experiences... It also involved knowing my limits clearly and standing true to myself when I could not accompany.”

Such readings connect us to the spiritual heart of the Quaker way to help those in spiritual or mental distress. May we in Colchester take action on this wise Woodbrooke advice.

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**Clerk’s Corner**

Alison Parkes

**Living out our faith in the world**

In May, Friends from around the country will gather at Friends House in London for the annual meeting of British Quakers called “Yearly Meeting”. If you’ve been to Yearly Meeting before, you’ll know how extraordinary it can be to sit in hushed, mindful stillness with up to 1000 others. There have been powerful moments, such as when Yearly Meeting (YM) discerned its support for same-sex marriage or for committing the YM to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. These, and many others, were transforming experiences for everyone present, and their effects have cascaded down to Local Meetings and individuals as well as influencing public attitudes at large.

Yearly Meeting 2015 is the first of three YMs with the theme “Living out our faith in the world”. As an Area Meeting, this is a theme that seems particularly relevant, as we have wrestled with how we might do exactly that. One of the focuses at YM this year is housing, as a particular example of a tested concern in the areas of inequality and injustice. Our own Area Meeting responded to the challenge for social housing when the Colchester Housing Association was founded 50 years ago. Its story is recorded in the book “Housing and Hope”, by Liz Taylor Jones, which is in the library at Colchester Meeting House. Clacton Friends continue to support the Derek Crosfield House which was set up as a home for single mothers and their babies. Challenged by the structural injustice we see all around us, we are asked whether we can draw inspiration from the work of Friends a century ago, recorded in Quaker faith and practice 23.16; here are two brief extracts:

“May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possession.” – John Woolman

“We should seek for a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and mere conveniences, that will raise no barrier between man and man, and will put no excessive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.”

There is much in QFP Chapter 23 “Social responsibility” to challenge us and also to affirm the path we are on. Although as an Area Meeting we continue to have unanswered questions about the right use of our unrestricted funds, we made a significant decision at our last business meeting to support the work of Glebe House, which changes the lives of young men aged 15 - 18 with a known history of harmful sexual behaviours, who are in great need of ongoing support. We recognised the hostile environment ex-sex-offenders face in the outside world, and how this is not a matter that achieves popular support. We accepted that as Quakers we have the opportunity to offer unconditional love to young people who are in great need of it. Even if you are unable to attend Yearly Meeting, I hope you will engage in the topics under consideration there. As YM preparative material asks us: “How might we express now our spiritual insights that give rise to our testimony, prompting us to take action in the world?”

**Friends not in membership** (Attend-ers) can attend YM sessions with the permission of the YM Clerk. If you would like to attend, please ask an elder at your local meeting to write a letter of support to the Yearly Meeting clerks via Friends House, as set out in Quaker faith and practice 6.15. In this letter, the elder should confirm that s/he is content that you know what to expect and that it is appropriate for you to attend YM.

Next Area Meeting takes place at Sudbury Meeting House on Sunday, May 10 at 2.15 pm. Yearly Meeting takes place on May 1 - 4 at Friends House, Euston. More information is available from Elders and from the Quakers in Britain website [http://www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk/)