



Sudbury AM Tea

photo - John Kay

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

Diary Dates for April

April 2016

Friday April 1st Colchester Farmers' Market

Saturday April 9th Silent Retreat, Colchester FMH 10.30 - 4.30 pm

Sunday April 17th "About Quakers - all welcome", Attenders' Meeting, Colchester FMH 12.00 - 3.00 pm Bread & Cheese lunch provided or bring your own.

Monday April 18th Global Day of Action Against Military Spending <https://demilitarize.org.uk/>

Monday April 25th World Malaria Day <http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/about/about-rbm/rbm-mandate>

Tuesday April 26th Chernobyl Anniversary Day <http://www.chernobyl-day.org/?lang=en>

Sunday May 8th Next AM Sudbury Contributions to tea will be very welcome

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

email address: AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org

Meetings for Worship

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)

Editorial

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Spring! well, it is meant to be spring now, but there are mutterings about horrible weather to come at any minute. (we could probably do with some rain, anyway). We now have quite a lot of refugees settled in the town, and a lot of activities for them. I am sure they will settle in the town.

We have a good number of things planned, such as a retreat and various courses, for our Meeting. I often feel rather guilty as I don't manage to attend as many of them as I used, but I know they are well attended and usually reported in the newsletter. I do always come to the Meeting on Christmas Day and hope I shall be able to go on doing this for many years yet. It usually attracts a variety of Friends who are rarely seen at other times.

Great excitement as my youngest granddaughter has just moved into a new home in the area behind Butt Road, but it proved very hard to find. It used to be an army house

and is near a group of army houses nearby, but a lot of new houses have been built, road names and even post codes changed: even Sat-Nav got it wrong! But we did find it, and it is a really nice house, with (believe it or not) an entrance gate, drive, quite large garden and two garages! She is really happy to be there. We got lost on the way home too, as there were no end of diversion signs and "Road Closed" signs. It really felt like supernatural mischief!

Now it is the Easter Holidays and then we shall embark on the summer term. We have been fortunate to have missed out on a bad winter. I now have quite a lot of great-grandchildren who attend school and will now soon be struggling with exams and university entrance and other stressful things, there is a lot to be said for being old. News, please, to Valerie Graves, by the middle of the month.

FIRST CONTACT

FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

CLACTON.....Ray Attrill

COLCHESTER.....Carol Holding

SUDBURY.....Peter Whiteley

Area Meeting Report

March 2016

Ann Webb

It was a cold March day in Clacton-on-Sea, but a few hardy Quakers huddled together for warmth to partake of Meeting for Worship for Business on March 13.

I, as Assistant Clerk, braving the cold winds of March, stood and read Quaker Faith and Practice 29.01 which will also be the defining introduction to the Area Meeting Gathering at High Leigh later in November; 'How can we walk with a smile into the dark?' I was reminded of the words of Matthew when Je-



sus said, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way, your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give

praise to your Father in heaven." (5:14-16) We walk with a smile into the dark by being Lights that show the way. But I digress.

Following the membership details of deaths, appointments, representatives, and nominations, the members and attend-

ers of meeting discussed our responsibilities as an Area Meeting and I read out QFP 4.10, which while not as elegant and lovely as 29.01, is nonetheless necessary for our organization to contemplate. After the reading we ruminated on whether we had met our responsibilities and it was generally agreed that we had done so. Following in this vein, Jenny Kay delivered the Trustees' report about our accounting practices and the future of same. Confidentiality restrains me from summing up, but you may contact Jenny for details.

A Meeting for Sufferings Report was read, as was a letter from Friends World General Conference about the Nairobi lady our Area Meeting sponsored to go with a donation of £2,000. Mary Grocock gave a delightful recap of the Refugee Support Groups' activities over the last few months and the support the refugee families have received from Fresh Be-

ginnings and fellow Quakers. Carol Holding enlightened us about Greenwood Trust and its purposes.

We bravely moved on to the exhibition of the Quaker Tapestry. I must confess to having never seen it and not really knowing what it is, but rather than showing my ignorance, I decided it was best to remain silent and to record the Area Meeting's decision to send a donation of £3,000 towards the costs of the Tapestry's exhibition in Chelmsford 20th August through 4th September this year.

There was lively discussion and undercurrents of excitement over the upcoming Area Meeting Gathering in High Leigh 18-20 November. Booking forms are available from the Elders or Phyl Reid and also on our website; essexsuffolkquakers.org. Go to the Events page, click on the November event and the form will be a link on that page. Please book

early to show your intention for going. Sadly, the committee felt that the gathering could not accommodate children at this event. Bless 'em.

And finally, we were reminded that Yearly Meeting is coming up 27-30 May at Friends House. There you will be able to sit literally in the Light and soak up the atmosphere of a few hundred Quakers doing Business. Our overseers of the Light would like you to express your interest in going by visiting their page at quaker.org.uk/ym. You are not registering, but merely noting your intention to go. There, also, you will find preparatory papers and reading suggestions to put you in the right frame of mind. And there endeth our gathering and not having had much lunch I high-tailed it to the other room for a good cheese scone and grapes, along with tea ... of course. Until next time...

Eldership and Oversight

Woodbooke on the Road at Colchester 12.03 2016

Jenny Kay

Sixteen elders and overseers from including five from Mid Essex took part in a full day session led by Barbara Windle, of Friargate meeting, York, and Mary Jo Clegg, of North West London AM. It was a varied programme beginning and ending with silent worship.

It was a day which gave us time to hear new approaches from the facilitators and most importantly to listen to each other. We were invited to share our experience of prayer. Guided by Quaker Faith and Practice we discussed our understandings and feelings towards the roles we hold giving thought to our own strengths and weaknesses and how we support each other. In the entertaining way of card games we explored the issues relating to our meetings for business and worship through card games; 'The Boundary Game' and 'Worship Rummy'

It was good to share this day and exchange of ideas with Friends from another Area Meeting. Although much of the ground we covered was not new to me it was a refreshing experience and a very worthwhile event. We thank Mid Essex Friends for joining us and are grateful that the Area Meeting has the financial resources to provide training session for Friends holding appointments.



Southern East Anglia Area Quaker Meeting

'The Mystery' of the Holy Trinity

Ernest Hall

Over eighty years ago, when I was one of those angelic little choirboys nowadays more likely to be encountered on a Christmas card than in a church, I was bothered by the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. How could one God possibly be three persons? My mum and dad couldn't help. They seemed a little embarrassed by my questions but, like other adults, they just told me it was something I was expected to believe.

When over half a century later in Quaker Meetings in Ipswich and Clacton-on-Sea where – after several years of agnosticism and doubt – I was regaining my Christian Faith, the idea of the Holy Trinity was still a stumbling block. Early Quakers and a great many other folk both past and present, whom I much admired and wished to emulate, appeared to have accepted it without question.

I was also assured by others that the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity had been imposed on early Christians to 'ensure male supremacy' or 'to ensure the supremacy of "men in frocks" who claimed to have a unique understanding of these "holy mysteries"'. A fairly 'weighty' Friend assured me that it was just a ploy to discover how many impossible things we could be persuaded to believe before breakfast. I was very reluctant though to believe that early Christians, any more than early Friends, had deliberately tried to deceive or trick us

I began to develop my own understanding of the Holy Trinity when I learned that the word 'person' derives from 'persona' (plural 'personae') the Latin word for the mask that actors wore in Greek classical dramas. From this knowledge I began to find meaning in the idea of One God in three persons. The Father is

God wearing his persona as creator and ruler of the Universe. The Son (whom I prefer to think of as The Word or The True Light) dwells in the heart of every man, woman and child in the world. In that wonderful preface to his Gospel John assures us that the true light 'shines in the darkness and cannot be overwhelmed by it'. Christians believe that some two thousand years ago that 'true light' was incarnate, made flesh, personified (whichever you prefer) in Jesus of Nazareth.

What about the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit? The Nicene Creed refers to the Holy Spirit as the 'Lord of Life' – of all life, not just that of humankind; the difference between the stone and the moss that grows upon it, between the ocean and the myriad of creatures that live within it. The Holy Spirit also inspired the prophets of old and inspires us, if we seek its inspiration, in our Quaker Meetings for Worship today.

God made himself (herself or itself) known to early Christians in these three 'personae'. Yet early Christians realised that all three were manifestations of the one God. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity was not a great and hidden mystery. Like Quakerism it developed experientially, from the every-day experience of early Christians.

How, it may be asked, can God possibly rule the universe, dwell within the heart of every human being, listen to the prayers of the faithful, be present in every religious service and Meeting for Worship and note 'the fall of the sparrow', and the birth and death of every living thing, all at the same time? This only presents a

problem if we think of God in human terms, as a sort of Superman living above the clouds who occasionally takes an interest in his creation below.

The God in whom I have come to believe pervades the Universe. In him (her or it), as Paul told the Athenians, we all 'live and move and have our being'. He is independent of both time and space. My God has no problem in ruling the universe, being present in every religious service and Meeting for Worship, listening to and answering the prayers of the faithful and noting the fall of the sparrow, all at what we would think of as being 'the same time'.

I conclude these thoughts on the Holy Trinity by confessing that I have never studied theology. The conclusions to which I have come are my own, derived from my own experience and an acquaintance with the New Testament, 'Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the Society of Friends' (the predecessor of 'Quaker Faith and Practice') and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. I do not suggest for one moment that everyone, or even anyone, else should come to the same conclusion as I have. But it does satisfy me. It may help some other reader of the Newsletter.



Clacton News

Margaret Ahmed

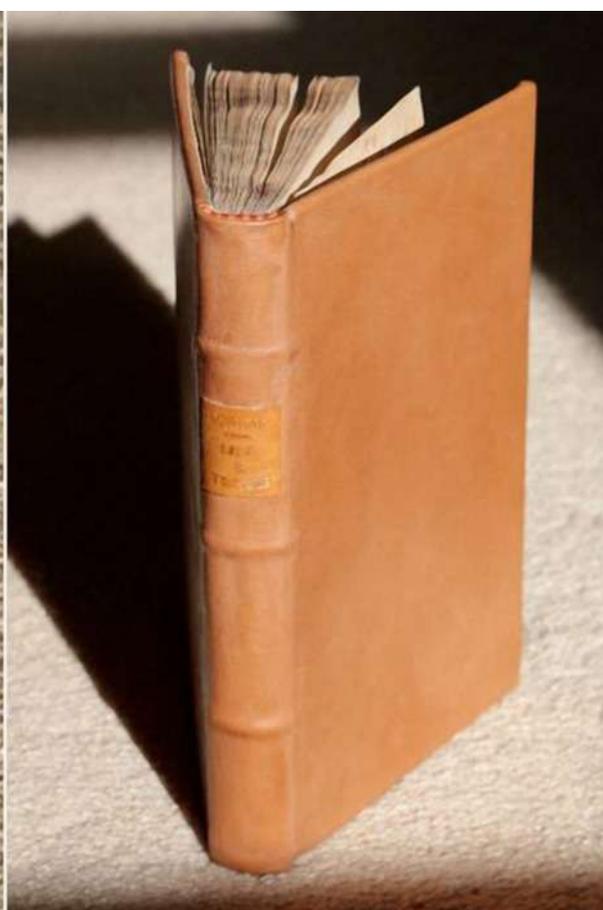
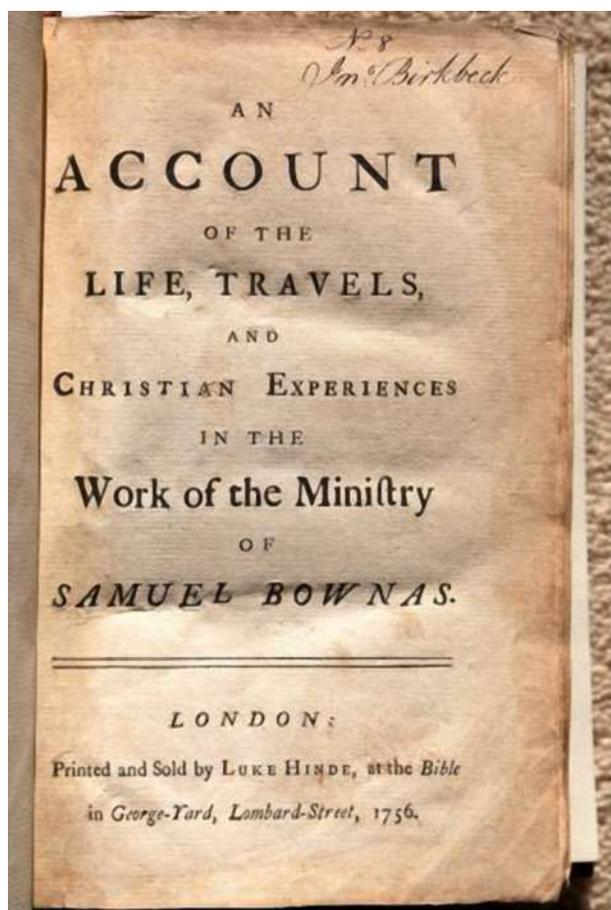
Area Meeting was held at Clacton Meeting House on Sunday 13th March. This was another opportunity to use the renovated Meeting Room for a large gathering of Friends. The Meeting finished a little earlier than anticipated but this meant there was more time to enjoy a good tea in the small meeting room, which was also renovated last year.

In March the recently-appointed Treasurer, Liz Prockter, attended a New Treasurers' Course. She writes of this event: 'When I arrived on a warm, sunny day the

gardens at Woodbrooke were at their best, full of spring flowers and the grass newly-mown. Most of the course covered basic bookkeeping in depth, and was aimed at those with no accountancy experience. However, we also learnt about the yearly accounts, so that we could appreciate what our basic records were building up to. The importance of an annual budget, to be presented in an entertaining and thought provoking way, was stressed, so that all Friends would be encouraged to be involved in decision-making and make best use of resources. The course was brilliantly led, with a lot of humour and much laugh-

ter and the best advice was that we should at all times be happy and smiling, so that at the end of the three years, people would be clamouring to take the job on!'

At the March Business Meeting Clacton friends briefly discussed the possibility of having an Open Day at the Meeting House during Quaker week in October in which visitors could have an experience of Quaker Worship. It was decided that if two or three people are interested in organizing this event a small planning committee would be formed at the next Business Meeting in May.



Book Restoration

John Hall

As well as being Colchester's LM Clerk, Peter Whiteley is also able to turn his hand to the restoration of old books. Here is an example of his work on a 260-year-old Quaker book.

Colchester 1740

From John Hall

"Then into Essex to Saffron Walden, Thackstead, and Coggeshall, and had tolerable good times: so to Colchester Yearly-meeting, which was very large, and I had the company of John Gurney, and

Joshua Toft, who both had eminent service in that Meeting."

From the Journal of Samuel Bownas, March 1740

[This would have been in the Great Meeting House in St. Martin's Lane - now East Stockwell Street].

Attenders' Event

Anne Watkinson

April 17th 2016

Colchester Meeting House.

12 noon, through lunchtime until maybe 3.0pm or when it runs out of steam.

Please bring a packed lunch.

Colchester meeting are holding an Attenders' event on April 17th 2016. We need as many members to come as can to share their experiences with attenders.

Friends and attenders from other meetings are welcome.

The main thread will be how, when, where and why Quakers do what they do, and who does what. It will have some input

on what is British Yearly Meeting and what is happening this year during the last weekend in May in Friends' House London, on what is Quaker Faith and Practice, our book of discipline, from a few members speaking on why and how they became members of the Religious Society of Friends, with a quiz to set you thinking.



Wildspot

from Valerie Graves

Nature is in a very muddled state of mind and does not quite know where it is. Magnolias are in full bloom but so are all sorts of other things like foxgloves. Primroses are really rioting, and snowdrops, and lots and lots of tiny miniature daffodils have suddenly appeared. The gloomy among us are saying "We shall pay for this later", but personally I am just enjoying it all! I have lots of old photos of me taking the dog for walks in deep snow and spiked shoes, and can only be thankful.

Remembering Opal

from Valerie Graves

Opal Markin Reeves, a long-standing Member of our Meeting, died recently in her middle to late nineties. For many years she had not known anybody. I had known her, had indeed been a close friend but like so many people who spoke at her cremation service I had known her very well yet had known practically nothing about her. I used to meet her regularly in Colchester as she did typing for my husband and I, difficult technical stuff in which she never made mistakes. This was probably during the 1960s and 1970s. When I came to Col-

chester in 1988 I was astonished to meet her in the cloakroom at the Meeting House. I had had no idea that she was a Quaker. We saw a lot of one another and she used to come on holidays with me. By that time she was living in a bungalow in Riverside, she always had a cat or two and enjoyed her little garden. Sometimes she drove her battered little car, or sometimes we went in mine. She was great fun to be with, and we had some great times. But we never discussed anything personal. Not that we avoided the subject, it just somehow never came up. She does leave quite a hole in my life!

News from Sudbury

from Betty Scrivener

Sudbury Meeting is very much diminished by the death of Jane Carter on January 14 2016. She was cremated on February 10 2016. Close friends and family attended. At 3.15 a celebration was held at the Meeting House.

Her grandson Tom read an appreciation of her varied and interesting life. At the time of her death she was as-

sistant clerk at Sudbury Local Meeting. She was also on the nominations committee. A Testimony to Jane's life will appear later.

Barbara Hart-Appel has written to inform us that her partner Harvey Hart-Appel has died suddenly of a heart attack. Harvey has had a heart problem for some time. I wonder if Barbara will stay in Southern Spain on their small-holding. It is very dry, nearly desert, where they live.

AM Weekend

at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddeston

18 -20 November 2016

The booking forms are now available in Meeting Houses, via the AM Website or Yahoo group. Your form needs to be with Phyl Reid by 30 April. The cost is £150 and bursary help is available through Overseers.

The theme for the weekend is 'Leadings' Quaker Faith &

Practice 29.01. The programme will include worship; an introductory talk on our theme by Sandra Berry (Director of Woodbrooke); various sessions on our theme and opportunities for leisure activities. You might be willing to help with the programme; if so please let us know. Full details will be available by the end of September.

Jenny Kay

The Famous Oak Tree of Colchester Castle

Dave Lawrence

Once upon a time not many years ago, a little while after the last World War, an acorn started growing.

It was in a small crack in the high up walls on the edge of Colchester Castle, and although this is not the normal place for an oak to settle down for life, it managed rather well in its own special way.

No one knows how it got there; it might have been dropped by a bird, or hidden there by a squirrel as part of its hoard for winter. On the other hand, it may have been a small girl or boy, visiting the castle earlier that year, who had hidden it there. Far below those high up walls the castle gardens lay around like a giant dress spread out about its feet, and many strong sturdy oaks grew there. They were fine trees, well looked after, with their roots set deep in centuries of soil. They gave shade and shelter to the many visitors that came to see the castle.

The oak high up on the castle wall grew more slowly as its food was scarce and it had difficulty finding places for its roots, yet steadily and skilfully it managed to find all the nourishment it needed so that in a year or two it had grown enough for small birds to visit and perch amongst its branches.

In lots of ways the little oak missed out on the natural life that an oak tree should have, but in other ways it found that it enjoyed many advantages. To start with, because it was very high up, it could see the whole of Colchester and all the surrounding villages, so it learnt much about life, even when it was small. More than

this, as it had to live with different plants, instead of the plants in its normal habitat, it learnt to understand them, they for it, and in harmony they lived closely on the castle walls as friends.

The most unexpected advantage however was that the little oak tree became famous!

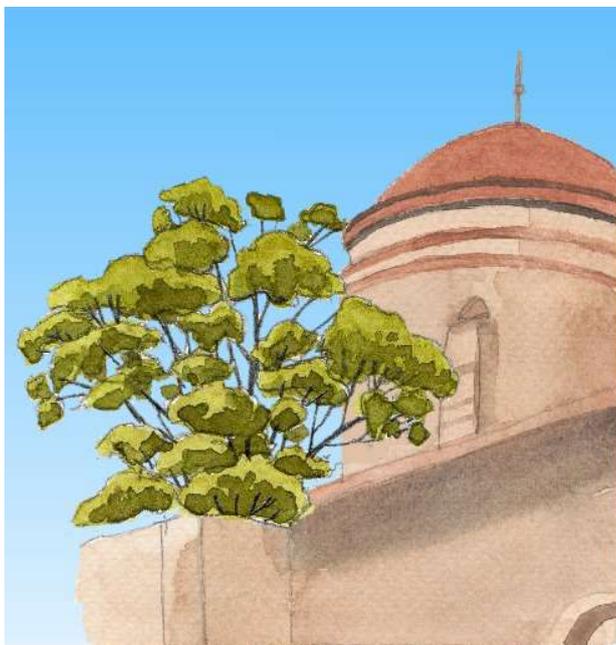
You see, when visitors came to the castle they were aware of the huge well cared for oaks and other trees in the gardens, but the one they all noticed and remembered was the little oak tree growing bravely high up on the battlements. Many visitors took photographs and newspaper journalists often wrote stories with pictures about the little oak.

In Colchester and all around the little oak tree became a symbol to the people, a symbol of hope and a symbol of the courage they needed to restore their land after the War. The people admired it and they loved it.

Now and then some expert would come along and try to say that the oak tree was causing damage to the walls, moreover that it should be cut down, but careful examination showed that it was doing no harm at all.

The little oak lived for many years high up on the walls of the castle growing a little more each year until the time came when those who cared for it, realised that it must be moved.

Very carefully its roots were untangled from the masonry where it had stood, thoughtfully the soil around them was preserved, then gently it was

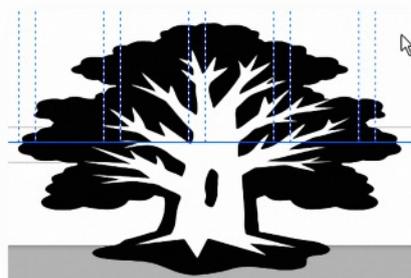


lowered and transplanted into the grounds of the castle.

Once transplanted into the rich deep soil of the castle grounds the little oak tree prospered, it sent out new roots in all directions; and good strong branches towards the sky. All that it had learnt on the castle walls helped it in its new life; it made new friends and eventually grew enough to have its own acorns. A great many of the little oaks now growing in the gardens are its children.

The little oak tree, now a large tree, grows there still, but only a few people, a few other trees and some birds know which one it is. One thing is sure, it will never be forgotten, it will always be remembered by the people for its courage and strength for as long as the castle stands.

Its story will be handed down through generations.



Clerk's Corner

Alison Parkes

Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting Clerk

Perhaps it's the American presidential contest going on at the moment that caused me to reach for a biography of Thomas Jefferson recently. Jefferson (1743-1826) was the third US president. Perhaps his greatest claim to fame is that he wrote the Declaration of Independence. It is to Jefferson that the US owes the following: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Congress preferred the word "certain" to "inherent"; it is one of a handful of amendments made to Jefferson's original draft.

Jefferson's faith was simple. Although no church-goer, he was a sincere Christian, "a real Christian", as he called himself. He did not oppose the church but certain churchmen. According to his biographer (Saul K. Padover), Jefferson "fully accepted the moral principles of Jesus, whom he regarded as one of the greatest figures in all history." He regarded himself as a disciple of the ethical doctrines of Jesus. What Jefferson rejected was sectarianism; he reported that an eloquent Quaker preacher is said to have exclaimed aloud to his congregation that he (the preacher) did not believe there was a Quaker, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist in heaven... and that in heaven, God knew no distinctions, but considered all good men as his children and as brethren of the same family. Jefferson said, "I believe, with the Quaker preacher, that he who steadily observes those moral precepts in which all religions concur, will never be questioned at the gates of heaven, as to the

dogmas in which they all differ." It is regrettable that not all the current presidential candidates appear to have learned this fundamental truth.

In March, Di Naylor facilitated two evening discussions at Colchester Meeting House which looked at the historical context of Quakers in the 17th century. We discussed the social, political and religious upheaval taking place throughout Europe, creating the conditions for Quakers to emerge as a strong religious group. To hear how Quakers regarded themselves as being true to the original teachings of Jesus chimes with Jefferson's attitude to religion 100 years later.

Were Thomas Jefferson alive today, I suspect he might have included other faith groups (and none) as being judged by their actions rather than what they believe. For us as Quakers, it is how we conduct our lives that matters. Not only are we all ministers in Meeting for Worship, but what we say and do outside the meeting - our witness - matters. I think Jefferson would have agreed with that too.

In recent months, Colchester has become a crucible for interfaith events, centring on welcoming refugees to the town. AM Quakers are playing a significant part in this welcome, which in turn has enabled Friends to meet with other faith groups and work together towards a common goal. A "Pledge Assembly", held at St Botolph's Church on March 22, attracted 230 people, representing 30 communities and organisations. Quakers were there, playing their part in an initiative which goes beyond religious and political boundaries and is setting an example to the rest of

Essex and the UK. In the words of Jean-Michel Knutsen, one of the organisers of the event, "It was impressive to see so many people coming onstage and offering tangible help to make sure we can welcome more refugees in the months to come." Tim Holding spoke on behalf of Quakers, pledging that we would invite the Syrian families to afternoon tea at the Meeting House and also, along with Peter Whiteley, to a creative day at the Holdings' home in the summer.

Our Advices & Queries No. 6 asks us: "Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship."

The next Area Meeting will be held on Sunday May 8, 2.15 pm at Sudbury Quaker Meeting House, 22 Friars Street, Sudbury CO10 2AA. For more details, please see the AM website Business page

www.essexsuffolkquakers.org

. All are welcome, though if you are not yet in membership, please ask the Clerk for permission to attend.

