



The Winter Flowering Cherry Tree at Earls Colne

Photo: David Lawrence

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING
February 2020

AM Dates for 2020

9 Feb Clacton
19 April Sudbury
14 June Colchester
13 September Earls Colne
8 November Harwich

All start at 2.15 pm.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
SEAQM Correspondence Clerk: Hazel Jones

c/o Colchester Quaker Meeting House
6 Church Street, Colchester CO1 1NF;

email address: AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org

Website: www.essexsuffolkquakers.org

Meetings for Worship

CLACTON

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

Harwich

1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays 10.30 am
St. Nicholas' Church Hall,
Stour Road, Bathside CO12 3HS
Contact: Ros/Tony Eaton 01255
880500

COLCHESTER

Sunday 10.30 am

EARLS COLNE

Sunday 10.30 am

SUDBURY

Sunday 10.30 am
Friars Street, Sudbury

FIRST CONTACT FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Charles Bather. Peter Whiteley
Alison Parkes

Exploring Quaker Spirituality

This is another excerpt from a Woodbrooke-on-the-road conference held last October at Colchester.

John Kay

2. The New Covenant

A key aspect of early Quaker understanding is the belief that the coming of Christ has brought a new covenant (a new relationship between God and humanity) in which the immediate presence of Christ in Spirit has replaced the outwardly mediated ways in which God

Dear Friends,

Once again another Editorial from a past edition, perhaps it has some relevance for us today. Sadly General Meeting (Regional gathering) is no more. Hopefully we will have a new editor in place for the next edition. Jenny Kay

Editorial

Dear Friends,

What a long time it seems since Christmas! As I write, there is freezing fog and my brain is quite numb. I look at words and they don't seem to make sense. How fortunate we are to live in warm houses and have enough to eat. The other day I was in a giant supermarket with every possible brand of food and detergent and wine and toothpaste, and I wondered what a Russian grandmother, weary with endless queueing, would think of it. Indeed, I felt quite ashamed. What can we do, in our small way, to help? Very little, I suppose, except what (legal) pressure we can.

Closer to home we have plenty of cold and hungry people of our

related to humanity in the old covenant.

In the old covenant God's presence was to be found in a temple made of stone (The Temple in Jerusalem) and access to God was mediated through a human priesthood (the Aaronic priesthood). The people of God were led by human leaders (e.g. Moses) and God's law (the Ten Commandments) was written on stone. In the new covenant Christ 'fulfils all these outward and mediated forms inwardly and spiritually. He is the spiritual substance of the old outward covenant. Christ is the eternal high priest who offers every-

own. Michael Heseltine says they are "an affront to society". If he means, as I am afraid he may, that they look awful and should be tidied away, then I am even more

ashamed. Surely as Quakers we could be making more noise than we do? I remember being very cold and hungry as a student in 1941 - I used to go to bed in all my clothes and wake up dreaming of fried eggs!

Did you make any resolutions? I had a grand clear out of papers and old clothes and resolved, as I always do, to try to be more organised. Also to try not to make too many mistakes in the Newsletter. I am asked to remind you, if you have been referring to an old one, that I gave the wrong venue a month or so ago, for the February General Meeting, which is (correctly) at Brentwood on 29 February. Romantic Friends will no doubt take the opportunity to propose to someone - if it isn't still too cold and frosty!

Valerie Graves February 1992

one access to God. As a result, God may now dwell in a temple made of living stone (the human body). Christ has become the inward and spiritual leader of God's people and he writes God's law on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The early Quakers believed that the primitive Christianity of the Apostles was the life of a gathered community taught directly by the risen Christ (Gwyn 1986, p.36). They therefore believed that the true function of preaching was to enable people to hear Christ's voice within them. When this was achieved there was no longer any need for human teachers

(Wilcox 1995, p.38). Such a view had far-reaching consequences for Quaker practice and for the Quaker relationship with other Christian groups.

Based on the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21) early Friends believed that the Spirit of Christ might speak and act through anyone regardless of gender, age, education or social stand-

ing. This was particularly significant in terms of the freedom it conferred on Quaker women to fulfil the roles of prophet, preacher and minister by the direct call of the Spirit.



Christmas Lunch at Colchester



Photos: Anne Watkinson

News from Colchester

Anne Watkinson

Change is afoot in Colchester. Not only do we no longer have a resident warden, we do not have a non-resident one. From January 1st 2020 Colchester Meeting House has a manager – Rosalind Parker. She will be working with Melanie Read who was our temporary non-resident warden from April last. Melanie has been undertaking the cleaning for some while, so we have renamed her our caretaker. Both are permanent positions and we welcome them in their new roles. Both will be working with our hirers to promote our position as a community centre in central Colchester, befriending all who use the building in our uniquely Quaker way. Melanie is a member of Colchester Local Meeting and Rosalind sympathetic to our ethos, so we feel sure that members and at-

tenders will also feel the benefit of having such a team. They will share such tasks as security and befriending, Rosalind being more office and paper based with invoices and regulations and Melanie working more practically around the building.

The flat is ready for occupancy and is being marketed by Palmer and Palmers, who also manage Clacton Meeting House flat. We have had to secure parking at the back of the building against ad hoc use in order to maintain one space for the flat and one for the manager. Providing separate utilities supplies to the flat has been a challenge, but even this seems to be making progress.

Our renovation ideas are now back with our architect and we await more specific plans, hoping to go to planning permission this spring. Watch this space! We have two new volunteers for our renovation

working group, one of whom is a structural engineer who has already worked with our architect, who are most welcome and four volunteers have formed a fundraising group looking into grants and other possible sources of money for our renovation. Heating and boiler management has been another major challenge, along with the roof leaking several times during this winter's exceptionally wet spells. Friends and hirers have been very patient with us, understanding our problems. Hirers have also cooperated with us in going over to an hourly hiring rate system, common in the rest of the town. Several have recognised how cheap we are when they now make comparisons!

All this has made us look carefully at our Quakerly ways of managing the new systems and changes. We have consulted with trustees, who on behalf of Area Meeting, are actually

the employers of our staff. We have more carefully defined the terms of reference of our two committees and the job description of a line manager. We will be asking our Local Meeting to confirm a more clearly defined Premises Committee to deal with the material issues of the building, and a Wardenship committee to deal with all the employment issues on behalf of Area Meeting. Trustees feel 'wardenship' encompasses both management and care-taking. Membership of these committees will be a matter for Nominations, either local or area,

whereas membership of the renovation and fundraising working groups is by volunteering, and hopefully relatively short lived.

While all these major changes are happening, life goes on. Our Christmas lunch catered for about 40 Friends, aged from 2 to 90. In the new year, the study group (third Wednesdays at 7pm), Café Quaker (third Saturdays at 10 to 12) and the weekly Saturday Art Group and Wednesday quiet fellowship time continue. The children's organiser, Ian Brown, the elders and the parents of the young children are making

arrangements for more regular children's attendance at Meeting for Worship. At the other end of the age scale, Freda Gunton House often are able to spare staff to bring Pat Brown and Honor Chamberlain, both in their 90s, in their wheelchairs to join us on Sundays. It has been good to see Ray Atrill, in his electrically propelled wheel chair, join us with his family some Sundays.

2020 is a year to look forward to!

Earls Colne News

Jenny Kay

We held our annual Meeting for Church Affairs huddled in the Small Meeting Room with two electric heaters. The boiler had failed during Meeting on the previous Sunday. It placed an unexpected item on the end of our agenda. The

time has come to replace the boiler and update a system which has served the building for over 30 years but is now difficult to maintain and inefficient. The plumber was able to fix the boiler in just over a week and fortunately for most of our hirers it did not cause a problem. The heating controls are now in the Meeting Room, moved by the electrician when he carried out the five-year sur-

vey during the same week. We are fortunate that the Meeting has trades-people in the village that will come out to us when we need them.



George Fox Stamp

John Hall

On 21st October 2004, the postal service of Ireland, An Post, issued a special edition stamp, to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the arrival of Quakers in Ireland. The stamp features the Quaker meeting house in Ballitore, Co. Kildare, which was built circa 1708.



Winter Flowering Cherry
Photo: David Lawrence

Early Snowdrop
photo: John Hall



Contributions in 2020

to Area, Local and Britain Yearly Meeting

Jenny Kay, Collector

The schedules for giving to our LMs, SEAQM and BYM, will hopefully be available at AM at Clacton on 9 Feb and then at your LMs. The envelope contains a leaflet from BYM, a letter from Trustees and the relevant forms. Arrangements for making a financial contribution are included in the letter.

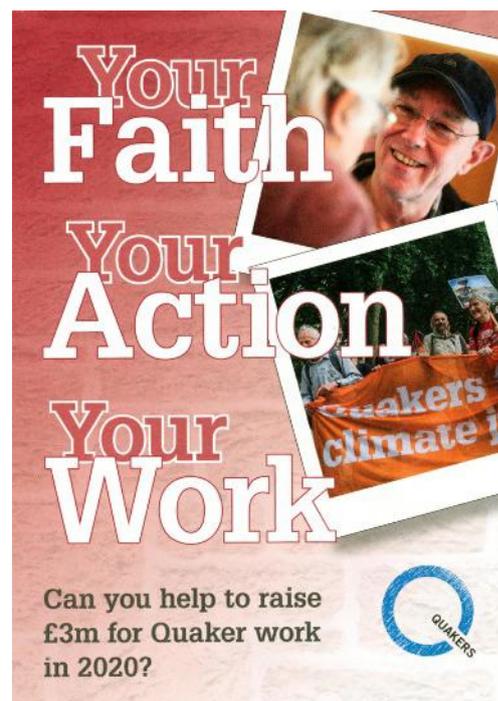
At the start of each year we are invited to review the level of support we currently give. The annual appeal is an opportunity to demonstrate our innermost beliefs in a practical way. Our donations are a central part of our Quaker membership and are essential for maintaining the Area Meeting,

our Local Meetings, BYM and the work that is carried out in our name.

For some years this Area Meeting has not received enough income to meet our commitments to the maintenance of our Meeting Houses and to support the work of our Meetings. We have been slowly using up reserves but cannot continue to do so indefinitely. Trustees suggest that SEAQM needs £250 per member, approximately £5.00 a week to raise the same income as we received in 2019.

BYM suggest a figure of £225 per member to raise a figure of £3m for central work. (Contributing to BYM through SEAQM is possible but paying directly to BYM would be helpful to the AM).

Advice and Query 20 asks us to consider giving a right proportion of our money to support Quaker work. Not every Friend will be able to give the amounts mentioned here, some will be able to give more. There are other ways in which we can make positive contributions to the work of our meetings. Perhaps it is the time to give some thought to these too.



Meeting for Worship

Through open door I step into the warmth,
My family is here.
In the familiar room my searching eye
Moves on from face to face,
Meets smiles of recognition, welcome, love.
At First a rustle, settling down of body,
A child's murmur, mother's anxious "hush!",
Then silence spreading as the mind gives way
To heart's deep search for unity and truth.
Again a rustle as the children leave -

One rushes back to give a farewell kiss;
The dog's claws scrabble - he is loth to leave.
Then silence washes back, but deeper now,
We draw together to a gathered whole.
Thoughts crystallise, disintegrate, re-form and gain in strength
I grope for words, then hear another voice
Express, enrich the message in my heart.
Silence and speech.
The Meeting ebbs and flows,
Fills its appointed time and gently ends
Friend's handclasp to friend's handclasp round the room.

We scatter, go our ways.
Yet those who knew
That deep communion, sharing in God's love,
Carry within a little of each other,
A thread that draws us once again to step
A Friend offered this as ministry at Earls Colne Meeting explaining that it had come from a relative but sadly with the last line missing. Please get in touch if you are familiar with this, know the last line and perhaps know who wrote it. At the close of worship, we gave our own suggestions for the ending. Finally, with some flippancy '... to step into the kitchen and put the kettle on.'

Extinction Rebellion (XR)

October Uprising. Fragments from the frontline - Part Two

"Uncooperative crusties"

In the days that followed I was more of an armchair rebel, happy to track the uprising as it was broadcast live around the world. These daily uplifting reports were fronted by some extraordinary young, articulate and passionate activists. It gave me hope for the future, in sad contrast to the limp coverage by the mainstream media, who, apart from the Guardian, were barely mentioning it. This was despite over 1000 arrests in the first week, wholly unprecedented for this country. Yet, curious for a peaceful non-event, it seemed to be attracting the ire of some politicians.

It hadn't taken long for Boris Johnson to call us all a bunch of "uncooperative crusties" living in "hemp-smelling bivouacs". Ah ha, that had got the media's attention. Alison and I decided to rise to the challenge, and we headed back down to London, proudly wearing our hastily drawn crusty badges. We met up with our daughter, Lorna, at Charing Cross station. She'd taken time off work to be part of the uprising. By this time the main group of rebels had been slowly pushed back into Trafalgar Square. An impromptu encampment had sprung up around Nelsons Column. Admittedly, there were bivouacs and it was all a bit ramshackle but - sorry Boris - I couldn't detect any hemp. In fact, there was a self-imposed ban on all

alcohol and drugs, probably to the disappointment of anyone sniffing around for evidence of wild outlandishness.

The XR Quakers Facebook page had told us there would be Meeting for Worship each afternoon. We found Friends in worship seated on the ground near the steps to the National Gallery. As we sat there, surrounded by all the hubbub, I had a sense of both calm and strength. The police wandered by but made no attempt to disrupt us. Tourists milled around, curious. One walked amongst us to best photograph the banner "Quakers for Climate Justice". Pretty good for outreach, I mused.

Although we were supposed to be confined to the pedestrianized part of the Square, the perimeter remained fluid. There was an ongoing game of cat and mouse between the police and activists to see who controlled which bit of the road. Ah, but who were the cats and who were the mice? By this time the police had become quite adept at anticipating what was going to happen next. Every few minutes a group would flow into the road and sit down. The police would then flow-in from the other direction with crowd barriers to hold us back. It was strangely balletic. It all remained very peaceful. At one stage a group of musicians gathered at the barriers and serenaded the police. At another barrier, I chatted with individual officers. They were quite bemused by our uncooperative crusty badges. One said they'd noticed an increase in the numbers taking part after Boris's remark. An own



goal we agreed. I realised another officer was surreptitiously tapping his fingers to the resounding Samba beat. He was trying his best to look stern, but I caught his eye and we smiled and winked at each other. It was a barely detected non-verbal signal at the nexus between the forces of law and order in this country and the people that, to my mind, conveyed so much.

During the afternoon, we gathered to listen to a keynote oration from Rupert Read, academic, Green Party campaigner, key spokesperson for XR, and Quaker. He spoke of the unfolding climate emergency and the need for climate justice. He stood atop a platform that was outside of the perimeter, so, technically, the police could have intervened, but they stood aside. In my mind's eye I recalled the day 200 years ago in St Peters Field, Manchester, that had a very different bloody outcome. Then, the Friends Meeting House nearby provided a refuge for the injured and those fleeing from the cavalry. We've come a long way since Peterloo. As enshrined in Ar-



ticle 11 of the Human Rights Act, we have the right to come together with others and peacefully express our views - "Authorities must allow people to take part in marches, protests and demonstrations. Everyone has the right to associate with others and gather together for a common purpose." On this occasion, this right was upheld and respected. Even so, I made a mental note of how far it was to St Martins Lane Meeting House - about 3 minutes walk.

Later, the police again stood back as we sat in the road and took part in an impromptu Peoples Assembly. Small groups discussing big issues. Where next for XR? Where next for the planet? We found ourselves sitting with a party of very cheerful but quite vocal ladies who had come down from Yorkshire. They found our badges hilarious too - "where can we get one of those?".

By now it was raining and getting dark. These two old crusties were tired and hungry. We slipped away and went to an Indian restaurant in Covent Garden. We asked the owner how the uprising was affecting business. He reckoned it had hit hard at possibly the busiest time of the year for him. Tourists were staying away, he said, and his staff couldn't get to work easily by bus. Any pangs of guilt I had were tempered in the knowledge that the shops, cafes and restaurants around Trafalgar Square were full and doing roaring trade, the encampment itself was a tourist magnet and souvenir sellers were everywhere. So maybe for London it was simply business as usual, just moved round a bit.

Did we make a difference? 2019 saw tens of thousands of people of all colours, ages, beliefs and backgrounds join in active rebellion. Meanwhile, it's estimated millions of young people, around the world listening to the science, left their classrooms and called on governments to protect their future. The climate and ecological emergency have never been so far at the front of people's minds. Yet for XR, it reckons the October Rebellion was its toughest challenge yet. It knows it made mistakes and

learnt some painful lessons. Despite ordinary people sacrificing their time and liberty in the biggest act of nonviolent civil disobedience in recent British history - with the arrests of scientists, school teachers, grandparents, grandchildren, rabbis, priests and politicians - including Quakers - are we any closer to taking urgent action to avert climate disaster? Over the past few months XR has listened to rebel voices, heard from experts and gathered insights. As I write it is about to launch its UK 2020 Strategy. I look forward to reading it. Next weekend I will be at Friends House as part of Quaker World Relations Committee Consultative Forum where we will be discerning how we, as Quakers, might be of further service regarding climate justice. Later in the year, in November the world's leaders gather in Glasgow for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26). This is one of the world order's last chances to avert the worst consequences of ecological breakdown. XR plans to be there in droves. One thing I feel sure of - Quakers are going to be there too!

Robert Parkes

Regular Reminder

Funeral Arrangements

Jenny Kay

Wills

One of the responsibilities of AM is to advise Friends on their outward affairs; in particular to give a regular reminder on the

timely making and revision of our wills. (QF&P 4.10n, 4.22) Our practice has been to give this in a Meeting for Business but a mention in the Newsletter may reach more Friends. When considering legacies to BYM or SEAQM it is most helpful if the legacy is left to be used as need-

ed. More detailed preferences are best expressed in an accompanying letter to be complied with if possible, but not to be legally binding. (See QF&P 14.11, 20.65-66 for more guidance.)

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS),

Robert Parkes

Friends House, 7 December 2019

This end-of-year meeting felt especially full and joyful. We were joined by nearly 30 young people on their Participation Day - including Amber and Cian from our own Area Meeting - which gave us all an energy boost, I felt.

It was an opportunity to remember Friends around the country who work on our behalf, such as the Book of Discipline revision committee, and all the employed staff across the Society (about 70 in Friends House alone) who look after us and help us in our work and worship.

It was the time of year when we tend to receive reports from the each of the four standing committees: Quaker Life Central Committee; Peace and Social Witness Central Committee; World Relations Committee; the Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations; and from BYM Trustees. Current issues we heard about included:

" Our commitment to exploring issues of diversity and inclu-

sion. In this respect we heard concerns that Friends sometimes find themselves challenged to better understand the difficulties involved in acknowledging gender diversity and developing our loving response to all persons. We hoped Quakers can find a way to come together over this issue - committed to seeing the inner person rather than the outward appearance of others. " What continues to be done, often behind the scenes, to help us towards a sustainable world. For example, the companies BYM now invests in produce only 78 tonnes of carbon per £1million invested compared with the FTSE 350, which produce 217 tonnes of carbon per £1m. We looked forward to BYM 2020 in Bath "Listening, prophecy and reconciliation: allyship in a climate emergency" " The optimism about the roll-out of Local Development Workers (LDWs). The aim is to employ one based within reach of every Quaker community in Britain within the next five years, ensuring that all its work supporting Quaker communities is more 'meeting centred'. " We were reminded that Quakers in Europe (including Britain) number only about ten per cent of Quakers worldwide and worship traditions vary: unpro-

grammed, pastor-led, and fully programmed, for example. QWRC helps BYM keep in contact with other Quaker meetings and groups abroad, understand their witness, communicating ours, and maintaining mutual support. Through QWRC there are opportunities for welcoming Quakers from other parts of the world to our meetings. Is this something SEAQM might be interested in?

In other discernment, and prompted by a Minute from Central Yorkshire, we began to explore the term 'overseer'. We sensed many strongly-held opinions. This was an early discernment and a topic we will return to.

Finally, from Trustees we were reminded of the importance of our responsibility for funding the work that we want to see happen. We do not have endless resources and we need to look at both the work that we do, and the funds that we can raise, to ensure we have a thriving Quaker community in Britain in the future.

As usual, a full report of the meeting and papers can be found on the dedicated MfS pages on the Quaker.org website. MfS also gets widely reported in *The Friend*.

Two more of Earls Colne Photo: David Lawrence

