



General Meeting 1906

by special request of Ros Thomas

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING

September 2020



Dahlia

Photo: John Hall

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

SEAQM Correspondence Clerk: Hazel Jones

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Meetings for Worship

CLACTON

Harwich

COLCHESTER

EARLS COLNE

SUDBURY

FIRST CONTACT FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Charles Bather. Alison Parkes



Editorial

John Hall

During the past few months I have found many of the articles Friends have sent for inclusion in the *Newsletter* to be of great interest. Apart from one example in this month's edition, however, there have been no follow-up articles either from the original writers nor from other readers. What I have in mind is articles extending the ideas or experiences or presenting alternative views. This month's issue gives an opportunity for Friends, perhaps those who have not contributed this year, for example, to add to what is in this edition. We have two articles relating to this year's

Swarthmore Lecture which could prompt responses and perhaps alternative views. Also, perhaps provocatively you may think, I have written something about the perceived difference between swearing

an oath and affirming. Some short time ago, a younger Friend suggested to me that these days there really is no difference and that to act as though there is is perhaps stilted, fussy and perfectionist. What do you think? Could you write something for October's publication? Copy may be sent to John Kay at gen@millrind.co.uk or to me at wittonwood2@gmail.com

We are slowly returning to normal with at least four of our meeting houses being used for Sunday Meetings for Worship – a welcome development supplemented by the on-line Zoom Meeting for Worship, details for each being available from Anne Watkinson.. But it is also evident, from comments made to me that Friends appreciate the content and the work John Kay does to get the *Newsletter* out to us, mostly electronically. However, you will see that this month we have a slightly shorter edition. So Friends, John and I are looking forward to your contributions for next month's edition – to reach us by 20th September if at all possible. Keep safe.

Trustees Annual Report and Accounts 2019

Jenny Kay, Clerk to Trustees

This report, produced by Whittles has been agreed by trustees, signed by the Clerk and the Treasurer and is now ready to be presented for AM's approval when we meet on 13 September on Zoom. You can find the report on the AM website. Please download and read it.

<https://essexsuffolkquakers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SEAQM-final-accounts-2019.pdf>

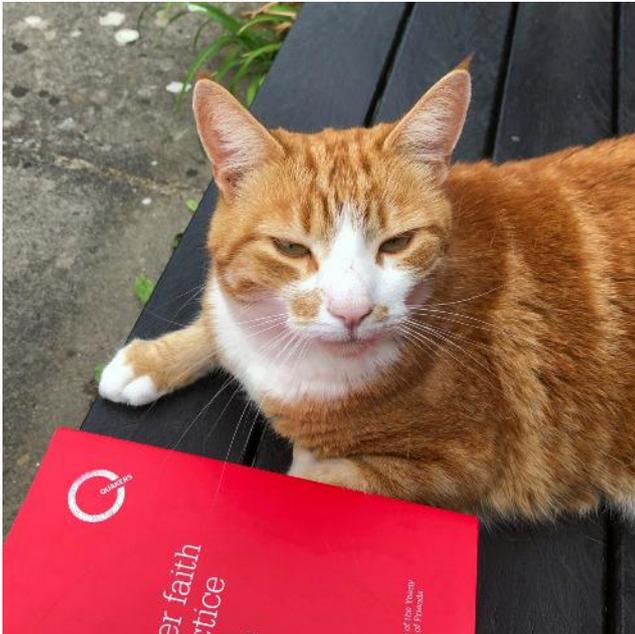
Pages 1-3 of the verbal report describe the position in 2019 and set the scene for 2020. A paragraph on the impact of Covid 19 has been included in the section 'Public Benefit and Activities'. The section on 'Reserves' is essential reading. You will find the expected overspend of £109,000 largely made up of a £30,000 donation to Glebe House, agreed the previous year and £47,000 spent on the Colchester flat. In approximate figures the overspend of £40,000 indicates that we were unable to balance the budget.

My report last year ended with the request from Trustees that we try to bring our income and expenditure into balance for 2019. In spite of income being up by nearly £20,000, we didn't succeed. Page 7 gives the full picture and the comparison with 2018 in figures. We have reserves which enable us to meet our liabilities and plan for the future. When we recorded as usual in the report: 'Trustees are satisfied that our assets are sufficient to cover all contingencies.', we had no idea what those contingencies might be.

Earls Colne News

Jenny Kay

Following two Meetings for Worship in the Burial Ground, we opened up the Meeting House. After clearance and cleaning, including taking down the curtains the room was ready for us. Us-



Attender on Sunday 16th August
Photo by Steph Felton

ing the benches there is room for everyone who might want to join us for worship. With all the doors and windows open we were vulnerable to the outside. At our second meeting the wind was making it hard to keep warm but at our first Meeting the seven gathered were joined by unex-

pected attender; a ginger cat. The open door was an invitation that he was not going to resist. As doorkeeper my main concern was that one of us might be allergic to cats, I had tried to 'shoo' him out more than once but was encouraged by the elder sitting next to me to let him be.

During the half hour plus that the cat spent with us, we were each visited in turn. Gently brushing past our feet and he received gentle strokes from cat-friendly Friends. He settled for a while underneath a raised bench marked 'Please sit here' before moving to another similarly marked. Jumping up on the cupboard top he proceeded to groom before finally settling in the centre of our gathering for more grooming and rolling on his back.

The cat's presence prompted ministry. He was a reminder that whatever we do to keep ourselves safe, the outside world would find its way in. Perhaps it was a sign of hope, a reminder of normality. A cat-friendly friend socialised with the cat on the seat outside and took his photo. A memorable meeting.

Outgoing Epistle

Epistle of 2020 Annual Pre-Gathering Retreat

The Outgoing Epistle of the 2020 Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and their Families

Friends General Conference

"We are a harvest of survivors. But then, that's what we've always been."

-Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower

To Friends Everywhere:

We begin by remembering our ancestors who were strong enough to make a way for us.

Friends of Color and their families met for Pre-Gathering Retreat on 26 Day through 28 Day Sixth Month 2020. This is the eighth year Friends of

Color have met for our Pre-Gathering Retreat. First-timers felt welcomed and validated. This year, we met virtually with our largest attendance yet. There were 47 attendees, ranging in age from 11 months through 77 years from Canada, Mexico, Switzerland and the United States of America.

The importance of this Gathering for Friends of Color worshipping in community together cannot be overstated. To our Friends in the wider Quaker world, we the Friends of Color, can't breathe. During this weekend, we enjoyed the rare opportunity of not being othered In Quaker space. We experienced the joy of being seen as we are and the affirmation of a supportive spirit among ourselves in the "Amen

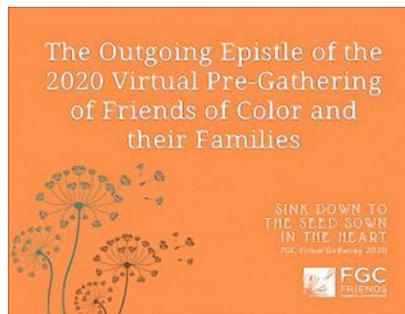
corner". The term "Amen corner" comes from the Black church and is a communal space that validates, affirms and uplifts the spirit. In isolation, due to COVID19, we are being kept apart and away from those we love, trust and need. The pre-gathering retreat brought back the source of community and family that has been missing. We were able to exhale, relax, and breathe together. Many of us did not realize how exhausted we were until we were able to relax with one another. The gifts of the spirit were abundant. We shared in worship, gentle yoga and meditation, meaningful discussions, journaling and self-discovery. We also listened and shared in each other's joys, triumphs, pains and sorrows.

We experienced spiritual renewal that was awakened by moving through pain to hope for the future for ourselves and our children. Attention and space was given for people to play games, dance, talk, grieve, play music, watch videos, and write.

We have much gratitude to the Program Coordinator for the Ministry on Racism; the pioneer who laid the groundwork to make the Pre-Gathering Retreat available to us within FGC gathering and who faithfully makes it happen each year. We are grateful for being able to acknowledge all that makes us human, for finding home and connection.

Our inner Light is magnified and our capacity to breathe deeply is nurtured when that of God is acknowledged in each of us. It is our hope that other Friends of Color will know that such a space exists and know that they are desired, needed and will be warmly embraced.

The Pre-Gathering Friends of Color Retreat provides a reprieve. Friends of Color need respite from the systemic racism too often found in our American Quaker community that often goes unseen by many white Friends. Friends of Color need respite from the insidious



lie of white supremacy manifested in daily oppressive traumatic stressors (microaggressions) which have the effect of blaming the oppressed for our own oppression. Friends of Color need respite and support which our home meetings have not provided. Friends of Color are fatigued from being asked to teach white folks.

We ask all Quakers to heed a Call to Action. Please sit with these queries:

- 1) What is the Spirit leading me to do about the historic and ongoing racial pandemic across my meeting, my community, my work environment and my country?
- 2) How can we honor the memory of people who have lost their lives to the struggle for a better world?
- 3) How can we construct ways for people to engage and remain engaged beyond good intentions in the struggle for true equality in health, education,

wealth and against state sanctioned violence?

- 4) How can we encourage the support of Friends of Color in Quaker worship and meetings around the world?
- 5) How can Friends de-center themselves in order to listen to and hear Friends of Color?
- 6) How can I support respite for Friends of Color?

In this time of COVID19, People of Color discovered that a deadly pandemic is secondary to the long-time pandemic of racism in our lives. People of Color are more likely to die from COVID19 due to the effects of racism and oppression. Think about how this pandemic has turned your world upside down, economically, emotionally, psychologically. Now imagine there is no one working on a vaccine, and that if you get sick or die, no one notices or cares. For People of Color, the human-made pandemic of racism is deadlier than COVID19, and we need you to do work so that we can BREATHE.

In Peace, Love and

2020 FGC Virtual Pre-Gathering Retreat for Friends of Color and their Families

George Fox the Singer

In the later summer of 1652, George Fox was in Carlisle where he was put in jail for blasphemy with the thieves and highwaymen. He bore incredible hardships from cruel goalers who assault him and from the loathsome surroundings. He describes an event: "On one occasion as the goaler struck me, I was made to sing in



the Lord's power; and that made him rage the more. And then he fetched a fiddler, and brought him into the dungeon, and set him to play, and when he played I was moved in the everlasting power of the Lord God to sing; and my voice drowned them, and struck them and confounded them, that it made them give over fiddling and go their ways."

A Query

John Hall

I have, for a long time, been troubled by the concept of affirmation. Early Friends were led by the Bible (*But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne. Matthew 5:34 AV*) to reject the swearing of oaths and suffered badly for it. For example, John Archdale, Quaker governor of the Carolinas for ten years, on his return to England was elected MP for High Wycombe but was not allowed to take his seat because he refused to swear the oath. And when Bristol City

Common Council, following the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685, elected Quakers to the council and the Quakers refused to take the oath of allegiance, massively fined them up to two hundred pounds each (£22,000 in today's purchasing power – the Council was very short of money). Up until the Toleration Act of 1689, Quakers were fined for refusing to take the oath of Allegiance and that Act permitted Quakers in England to offer solemn affirmation *in the presence of Almighty God* in place of an oath, but prohibited them from

giving evidence in criminal cases, from serving on juries, or from holding any office. Then in 1695, the Quakers Act (An Act that the Solemne Affirmation & Declaration of the People called Quakers shall be accepted instead of an Oath in the usual Forme) was passed. The text of the affirmation was the following: "I A.B. do declare in the Presence of Almighty God the Witsesse of the Truth of what I say". The current wording is, "I do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth."



The problem, as I see it, is that first, Friends no longer take the

Bible as an instruction manual on how to live our daily lives, and secondly that one is required to say that on this occasion, here, I promise to tell the truth. But Friends will be familiar with A&Q 37 which says, in part, "Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do?" If one is to follow the *Advice*, then one continuously tries to tell the truth to one's ability *at all times*. To state, in a court of law, for example, that now I am going to tell the truth is, by implication, a suggestion that one does not always follow the *Advice*.

I have served on a jury on three separate occasions at different locations and I have been a witness at trials and on each occasion, I have affirmed, stating that I am doing so because of my Quaker convictions, not because of Matthew 5:34 but because I try to follow the *Advice*. At my stage in life, I am now unlikely to be called upon to choose between affirmation and swearing, but I am beginning to believe that on those occasions, I should have refused to either swear or affirm. Does this seem pedantic?

Atlantic College

Alex Ford-Gould

The time has come for me to write my final Atlantic College Newsletter. This is the last thing I will do towards AC that is not as an alumnus, so this has been very hard for me. It feels like a definitive ending for the best two years of my life



– an ending that I am not yet ready for.

Covid really changed the ending to my experience, within 12 hours of finding out that we had to return to our home countries.

Of course, what has made this all so incredibly difficult has been the fact that Atlantic College has been the most amazing experience I have ever experienced and ever will experience. My very own castle by the sea has changed my life forever, I have grown so much since I drove through main gate on the very first day. I have learnt pa-

tience and understanding, I have heard so many perspectives. I have become curious and strong. Of course, it is not perfect – no place is but that’s what made it even better – the faults force you to think critically and develop tangible solutions. It may not have been perfect in every way but for me it was my own bubble of perfect,

The people I have met, the experiences I’ve had and the person I’ve become will stay with me throughout my life and I cannot thank you enough for your contribution in making my dream come true. There is nothing I can say that can express how much this has all meant to me but I want to say from the bottom of my heart thank you for all the support

over the past two years it means more than you will ever know to me.

Overall, I love the school and can honestly say it is the best thing that has happened to me so far. I cannot express to you how much it all means to me and how much I love the people there. Thank you for helping me achieve this!



Atlantic College

Bob Brewer

As a self-exiled, South Wales, Welshman: Alex Ford-Gould’s resume of her experiences at The Atlantic College of South Wales brought kind memories of my short sojourn there in the mid 60’s. The college had recently been established and there some of my school friends did their Finishing School.

It set up as a corollary to Gordonstoun Outward-bound Schooling, for the expectation of grounding a cosmopolitan education for the future diplomatic core. My introduction to the Manor House was through the local Welsh PA to Randolph Hearst, during the 40’s

and 50’s wherein he refurbished after restoring to its C11 condition. He insisted that the floors remained uncluttered stone slabs. His solution was to have all the staff fitted with silenced Dollis shoes. Then, when each sample of his stock of wine in the cellar could be perambulated about his dining table quietly, before he made his considered choice. When one vacated a toilet, all the towels were changed, regardless. This was expected by his many famous guests of the Silver Screen, such as Marion Davis. There were only wooden barrel cooper baths at that time in England, but he chose to have white Corona Marble Italian baths, as copies of that Period.

Business Meeting

The way of Friends is to think quietly and to listen. We ask the question, we consider how the answer is made by different people, we ask again, answer again, change our minds; we reach an understanding. The Meeting evolves this way, not by shouting each other down, not by the weight of the majority, but by the capacity of individual human beings to comprehend one another.

Molly Gloss *The dazzle of the day*

Quaker History Answers

ACROSS

1. Bright
2. Coalbrookdale
6. Charney Manor
9. Pendle Hill
10. Lucretia Mott
13. Hanbury

15. Advices
16. Palmer
17. Allotment
19. Godliness
20. Swarthmore Hall (or Swarthmoor Hall)
22. London

DOWN

1. Bradshaw
2. Grellet

4. Bunhill Fields
5. Kenya
7. Whittier
8. William Penn
10. Luke Howard
11. Mary Fisher
12. Darbys
14. George Fox
18. Balby

A Quote for Today

Stand together yet not too near together:

For the pillars of the temple stand apart,

And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

From The Prophet Kahlil Gibran



After Breughel

Julia Usher

During a Birthday Lockdown, I was given a 1,000 piece puzzle. The picture was of the Flemish Parables of Breugel. Fiendishly difficult to make sense of it. Mesmerising. Here is a Cover Poem, using the parables to describe our state.

PUZZLING

Locked down, time eludes us.
The whole picture, fragmented.
Each piece a clue:
Only on the Box Lid whole.: Chaos inside.

The Flemish Breugel knew;
When meaning escapes us and chaos rules,
We seek sense in Parables,
As did the Teacher to his crew.

Covidly, our cure, no cure....
We Zoom in, Zoom out, but touching is forbidden
In Isolation.

The Painter warns:

To be impatient – is to sit on hot coals.
To spread gossip – is to blow in the ear.....
Spill your porridge – cry over spilt milk.
Stand in your own light – blot out joy.

The Pitcher goes to the water until it breaks:

Everything has limitations.

Suspended between heaven and earth - this awkward place to be.

The journey is not over – so, – do not give up til the job is complete.

An open gate – pigs in the corn – Disaster ensures from carelessness.

One foot shod, the other bare – Balance is paramount.

To find our balance must be our care.

Sailing into Silence

(for Rod Usher)

Tony Johae

We are out on the Blackwater
my uncle, my cousin, my brother and I
with motor chugging, sails unfurled.
We've set off on a rising spring tide, choppy
with the wind from the west breezy
to leeward in the bright midday.
Uncle spits orders out – mains'ls hauled up
flapping in the slack; jib's full
yearning seaward beyond the estuary.
The engine phuts off . . . silence . . . silence . . . quiet
as Quaker calm . . .
deep, deep . . . time's held fast, avast, avast . . .
nature's opened . . .
hush and gentle swish through water
sail filled, rattle of boom let out, we heel,
pull ropes tight against the wind, cleat them
and tack off towards the Bradwell Point.

Now my uncle's tranquil at the helm
with wings drawn on fair and friendly thoughts
his worthless worries left on Mersea's shore.

And standing tall at the prow, cousin Chris
whose best boat, and hope, got storm-smashed
one night, thrown up on Brightlingsea wall.
Timothy and I sit small in the cockpit
in thrall of high water, unsteady heaving sea,
wind's keen gusts, the lurch and shudder
as we go about – gybe – and rush fair wind away
from land.

Our father loved his ocean-goer, *Mina Dhu*;
he'd tie up in North Sea ports,
anchor off cosy Jersey coves,
pass lit liners in the night, dark cargo ships,
wave back at passengers on Channel ferries,
mark trawlers' trailing nets, look out for bobbing
buoys
and with lovely land in sight follow courteous pilots
in.
In war he took Dunkirk soldiers off
then laid her up and waited for the end,
for he found peace in thinking of the moment
sail would unfurl, chugging stop, and immanent
silence enter.

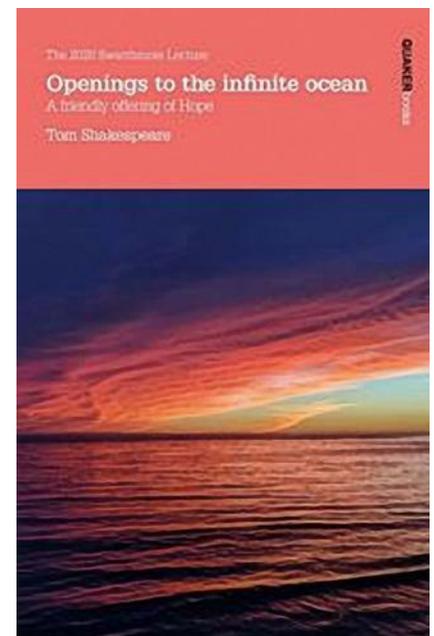
Tom Shakespeare on Hope

(Quote from the *Swarthmore Lecture*)

“I think that life is like living in a house. Your dwelling has different rooms. One is about issues intellectual. Another is about things emotional. There should be a room for activities physical. And the last is for matters spiritual. When you have a house, you do not spend equal amounts of time in all the rooms. You probably have a favourite room. But if you never went into one of your rooms, it would surely be odd. You would be closing yourself off from an important experience. You would not be deriving the full benefit of this wonderful house that is yours. I think

that too many people never go into the room that is about the Spirit. They lack this aspect in their everyday. Or perhaps they feel they can compensate by buying more things, going on more holidays, having better food and drink, or spending more time at the gym or the cinema or the theatre. But these things are merely decorative, compare to the fundamental things in life. Quakers might say: we have a room for you. Come and sit in silence for a while with us. Find hope. Be refreshed in the Spirit, and leave knowing more about your purpose on this earth.

And outside our meetings for worship, what to do? I think a good question might be to ask: what would make us, as Friends, really unpopular to-



day? As Quakers it seems to me that we need to be a constant disturbance in society. We need to be a troubling people. Maybe we are called to be just that.”

Product description

Anonymous

As Quakers, we still rely on virtues of trust, solidarity, toleration, compromise. We have our testimonies to peace, truth, equality, simplicity. We have our social witness. But are these enough in practice? Does an emergency not demand more of us? Where can we find hope when everything looks dark?" What to do, in an era of pandemic, climate emergency, and right-wing populism? Does Quaker history or the Bible offer hope? Can we find positive stories in Britain and abroad that help us see a way forward? What if we looked close up, or saw the bigger picture, or saw things from the point of view of eternity? Tom Shakespeare argues we must nurture "active hope". Through doing inner work on

ourselves, and outer work in society, joining with others, we may contribute to the creation of God's Kingdom. With a lever and a place to stand, we can move the world. Tom Shakespeare is a social scientist, writer and broad-

caster. He has been active in the disability movement for three decades, and served in the voluntary and cultural sectors. He has worshipped at Newcastle, Geneva, Wymondham and Westminster Quaker Meetings since 1997.

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

Jenny Kay from Joan Rew

Joan rang me with thoughts she hoped could be published in the Newsletter. The words of a favourite spiritual song were in her mind; verses 3 and 4 from Jesus Christ, the Apple Tree, a poem by Joshua Smith written in 1784 set to music by Elizabeth Poston (1905 -1987) and sung as a Christmas Carol.

For happiness I long have sought,
And pleasure dearly I have bought;
I missed of all but now I see

'Tis found in Christ the Apple-tree.

I'm weary with my former toil

Here I will sit and rest awhile,
Under the shadow I will be,
Of Jesus Christ the Appletree.

These words had prompted Joan to write her own verse:

The sand below, the sky above,
Surrounded by the ones I love,
There's nowhere else I'd rather be
Than wading through the shining sea.
And when I die, a heaven for me
Would be the beach hut by the sea.

Friends World Committee for Consultation Videos

Gretchen Castle, retiring General Secretary of FWCC

Varying Quaker Ways of Worship

Friends worldwide come together to worship, but the means of expressing and celebrating our love of God varies between Quaker communities, countries, and traditions.

At FWCC we work to connect Friends across the branches, which means we hope to deepen our understanding of our differences.

In a short video series, available at fwcc.world Gretchen Castle, General Secretary of FWCC, was joined by Friends from the four

FWCC sections (Europe and Middle East Section, Section of the Americas, Asia West Pacific Section, and the Africa Section) to talk about our different ways of worship within and across the four sections.

Friends responded to the following questions in order to explore the varying worship styles across the branches:

Video 1: What kinds of worship might we expect from Friends within your FWCC section? And is there a predominant form of worship?

Video 2: How has the cultural context of Friends influenced

Quaker worship in your FWCC section?

Video 3: What do you appreciate about our different ways of worship? And how has your experience expanded your sense of there being many ways to God among Quakers?

Video one has the full introductions of Friends, but videos two and three build on their conversation. Please be aware of this when watching or sharing the videos independent of the first video.

We hope this may lead to greater curiosity. We also hope this will lead toward a celebration of our Quaker diversity.

