



*Tuscany colour sketch:*

*John Kay*

# NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA QUAKER MEETING

October 2024

## Contents

Editorial.....	2	Do Quakers Pray?.....	5	Watch this space:Jenny Web takes a flyer.....	8
Meetings for Worship.....	2	A Simple Faith in a Complicated World: .....	6	George Fox.....	8
Music in our Area.....	2	Remember that Lovely Pink Jumper?.....	7	Forgiveness: Freed to Love .....	9
Remembering the Past.....	3	Area Meeting at Clacton .....	7	From my Sketchbooks.....	10
Read any Good Books Lately?....	4			Heritage Open Day 2024.....	10
				Quaker Quote.....	10

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)  
 SEAQM c/o Colchester Quaker Meeting House 6 Church  
 Street, Colchester CO1 1NF  
 Email address:[AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org](mailto:AMClerk@essexsuffolkquakers.org)

WebAddress:[www.essexsuffolkquakers.org](http://www.essexsuffolkquakers.org)

## Meetings for Worship

### CLACTON

Meeting for Worship: Sunday 10:30 am

Contact: [liz.prockter@gmail.com](mailto:liz.prockter@gmail.com)

Harwich Worshipping Group

Contact:

[hazel.jones1@btinternet.com](mailto:hazel.jones1@btinternet.com)

### COLCHESTER

Contact:

[pwp.campion@gmail.com](mailto:pwp.campion@gmail.com)

Meeting for Worship: Sunday 10:30 am

Meeting for reflection:

Wednesday 12.noon

[jg.greenwood@btinternet.com](mailto:jg.greenwood@btinternet.com)

### EARLS COLNE

Meeting for Worship: Sunday 10:30 am

Clerk: Jenny Kay

[earlscolne@essexsuffolkquakers.org](mailto:earlscolne@essexsuffolkquakers.org)

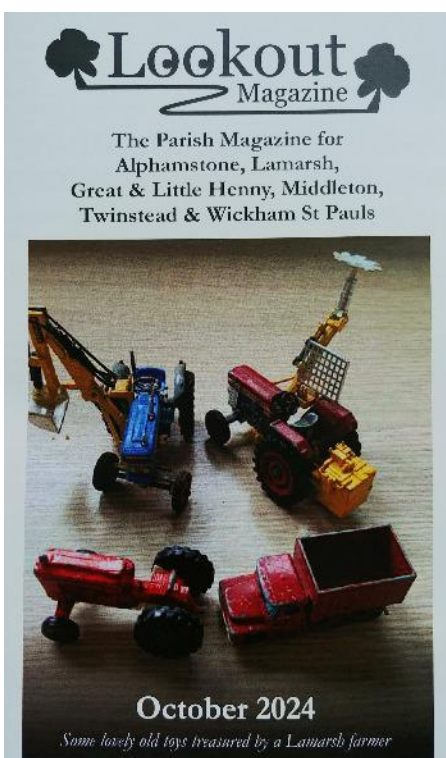
### SUDBURY

Meeting for Worship: Sunday 10.30 am

Contact : Robin Hart & Catherine Moffat

[cathmoffat@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cathmoffat@yahoo.co.uk)

FUNERAL  
CONTACT  
**Kate Powis**



**Lookout**  
Magazine

The Parish Magazine for  
Alphamstone, Lamarsh,  
Great & Little Henny, Middleton,  
Twinstead & Wickham St Pauls

**October 2024**  
*Some lovely old toys treasured by a Lamarsh farmer*

## Editorial

Hello Friends!

This is a sad day for me. It's an all-age Sunday when overwhelm has conspired to keep us from Meeting for Worship. It's a blowy but fine autumn day and I could have added to the whole experience by cycling in – cycling is wonderful for 'coming to Meeting with heart and mind prepared'. But it was not to be.

But what do I learn from this? I miss the space to breathe and reflect. I miss the autumn sunlight gently flashing into the Meeting room through the trees. I miss the faces and the warm sense of connection that each unique group of attenders brings. And I miss the way Meet-

ing resets Sunday on a clearer, better course.

It's a shame, but I've been reminded of how very much I treasure it.

Becky Hallewell



## Music in our Area

Helen Morgan

Some time ago the Editor, knowing of my interest in musical matters, asked if I might write a piece for Lookout on something to do with the subject. So I offer the following, hoping it may be of some interest to some of you.

You may not all be familiar with the Quaker Meeting House in Sudbury. Nigel and I have been to several concerts there. It is a delightful, peaceful building, set back from the road in Friars Street and practically next door, helpfully, to The Secret Garden - also a charming building with a characterful French cafe/restaurant inside which offers delicious things to eat.

Our most recent concert at the Meeting House was given by The Gainsborough Ensemble\* - a group of fine musicians on flute, cello and other instruments. The cellist, Natasha Holmes, will be known to some of you as a frequent member of the congregation at Alphamstone. For this concert Natasha was joined by Pavlo Beznosiuk, violin, to give an

engrossing recital of three items under the theme of "War and Peace" - a very appropriate programme specially chosen to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of George Fox, the founder of the pacifist Quaker movement.

The programme opened with a cello solo introduced by Natasha - Pablo Casals' - "Song of the Birds". I had not realised that Casals was not only a performer on the cello, but also composed and arranged music. This piece, which is based on a Catalan folksong (Casals was a proud Catalan), depicts birds calling out "peace, peace, peace" and was delightful. During the First World War Casals worked to help Spanish refugees fleeing Franco's fascist forces. The Song of the Birds was often included in concerts he gave to comfort his fellow countrymen and raise money to help the refugees.

Our second piece today was "Sonata La Guerra" by JP von Westhoff, a 17th century composer and violinist whose work was influenced by the disruption of the 30 years' war raging round him in his lifetime, and who had a major influence on a generation of German

violinists, as well as the compositions of JS Bach. This sonata comprises six separate short pieces on the subject of war - with fierce combat sometimes conveyed by the violin, and warlike noises from the cello. It was really evocative of conflict, and most skilfully performed, the violin part being particularly intricate.

Finally, in complete contrast, we had "Ferdinand the Bull" by Alan Ridout, performed by Pavlo on the violin and narrated by Natasha. Some of you may have read the book to your children\*\*. It's a wonderful tale of a bull who just did not want to engage in any kind of conflict with his fellows, who were all attacking each other using their horns to advantage in preparation for the bullring. Ferdinand just wanted to sit under his favourite tree, smelling the flowers. It might spoil the story to go on but I recommend it, and if you get the chance to listen to this musical version I know you will enjoy it. Pavlo conveyed the atmosphere on his violin, and Natasha's narration was delightfully humorous and gentle. I have had the inspiring experience of attending a Quaker meeting in this building once many years ago, and



again in, I think, 2012, when Terry Waite (released from his 4 years of captivity in Beirut in 1991) re-dedicated it - and so it has a special place in my heart. I will remember the 400th anniversary of the birth of George Fox as a very special occasion, so appropriately and beautifully celebrated there by these musicians.

Lest anyone think that classical concerts might be just a bit too serious, moments of humour often occur, sometimes quite unscheduled - for example, when halfway through one of the (serious) introductions by Pavlo, some-

one in the audience gave the most enormous sneeze. Pavlo, not turning a hair, said "bless you" and carried on. I have also heard an appreciative dog in the audience voice his approval most enthusiastically at the end of a beautiful flute and cello recital at one of the lunchtime concerts in Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford. The audience laughter on both occasions displaying how relaxed everyone felt at the same time as appreciating a fine performance.

From all of which it is apparent that Sudbury's music scene offers high quality listening to a broad spectrum of music aficionados, in what could perhaps be described as an inclusive and relaxed spirit?

Happy listening! Helen Morgan

\* If you would like to be sent further details of this group, please email:

[gainsboroughensemble@nmail.com](mailto:gainsboroughensemble@nmail.com)

\*\*I too loved this book as a child and read it again and again! - Edw

*Reprinted by kind permission of Lookout Magazine.*

## Remembering the Past

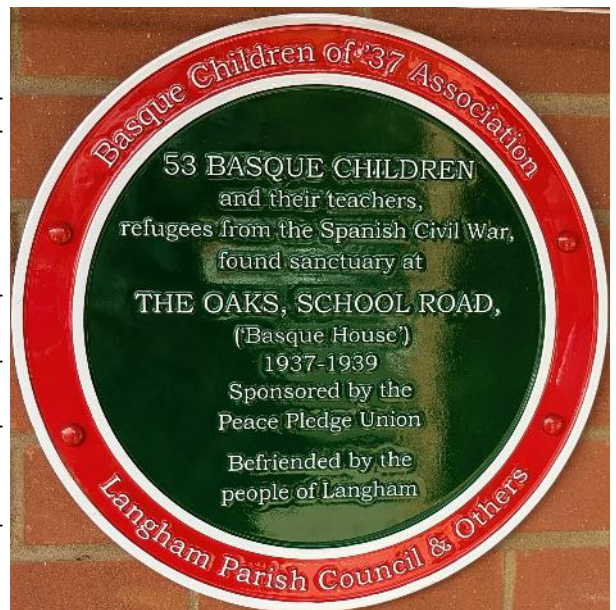
Paul Campion

Following an initiative of the Langham Heritage Group, Langham Parish Council arranged to place a memorial plaque at Langham Community Centre as a memorial to the Basque children who, with their teachers, took refuge at The Oaks School between 1937 and 1939 during the Spanish Civil War.

This 'refugee initiative' was supported by members of the then recently founded Peace Pledge Union, headed by Dr Lionel Penrose, who was a Quaker based in north Essex, together with the help of a number of local Friends.

I was very pleased to represent Colchester Quakers at the unveiling ceremony on 26 July and to meet a prominent current member of the Peace Pledge Union who spoke about the background of the original project. Langham Community Centre was packed with local residents, who took great pride in this episode of eighty five years previously.

Following the end of hostilities in Spain most of the children returned to their homes and families but some stayed on and made their lives in this country.

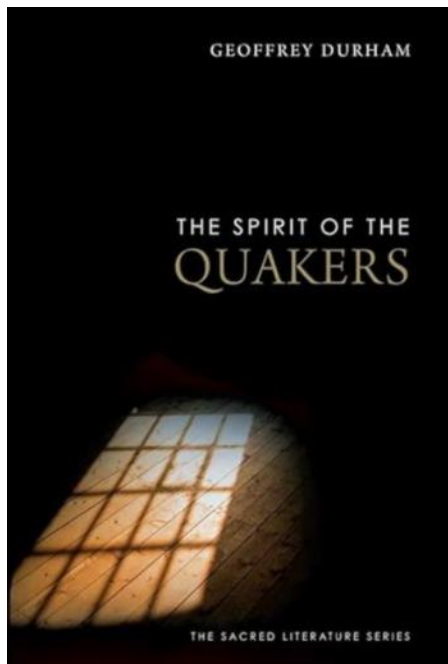


It was a very happy commemoration of an admirable episode in those tragic and troubled times - how marvellous that it still remembered and celebrated by so many, even today.

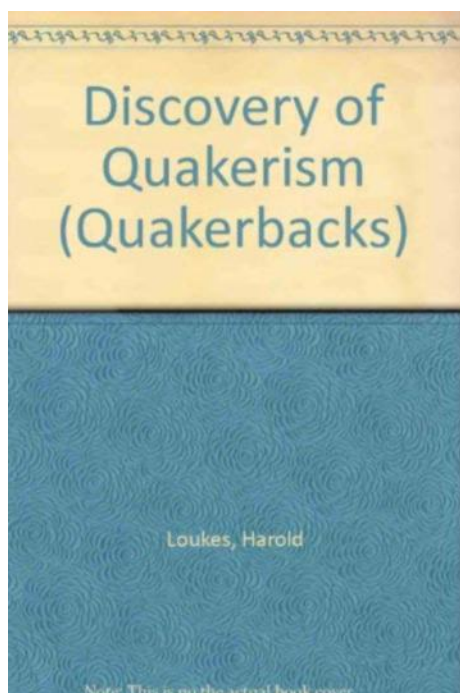
## Read any Good Books Lately?

Anni Tuffnell

Well, I have a tendency in reading more than one book at a time and the best and most informative have been those by recommendation.



Currently I am enjoying reading 'The Spirit of the Quakers' by Geoffrey Durham and in doing so learning more of the background of Quakerism. This follows my reading of 'The Discovery of Quakerism' by Harold Loukes. If

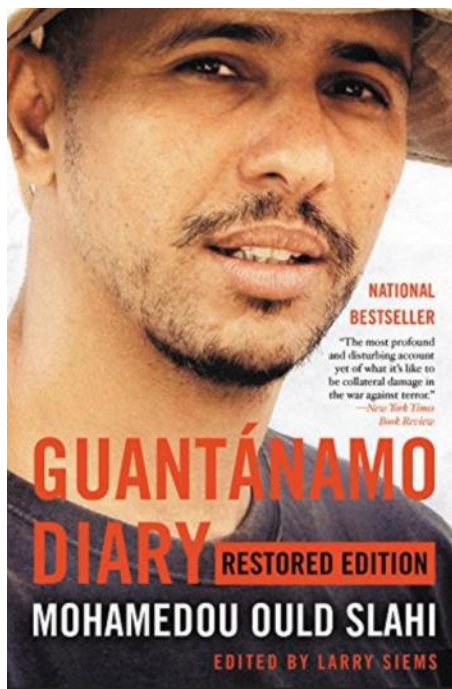


not yet read it I highly recommend both to new and longstanding Quaker Members and Attenders.

Along side these I have just ordered another book, 'Guantanamo Diary': The Fully Restored Text. Author, Mohamedou Ould Slahi. This was triggered by watching the film about this man and his story and how the publishing of this book came about.



The Film 'The Mauritanian' is on Netflix and the book 'Guantanamo Diary' is available for purchase from all major book sellers.



Why am I telling you about these books? Because I feel they are all connected. Quaker Faith and Practice urge us to walk the talk of Testimonies: Simplicity, Truth, Equality and Peace amongst others.

The young man in question relays to us that in his language, Arabic, the words 'Fear' and 'Forgiveness' are one and the same. He forgives his abusers and as a result he is free although at the time still incarcerated and abused and tortured daily within Guantanamo Bay detention camp. The Koran guides him to love and forgive his enemies.

This man is finally acquitted having been held with no charge and further more still held in captivity for a further seven years before being released.

I look forward to reading his diary and wish to share with you how affected I was by the original footage shown at the end of the Film starring Jodie Foster and Benedict Cumberbatch, the latter was also one of the Producers. Love, happiness and overall sincerity oozed from this man. No bitterness, no resentment to be traced. This is what forgiveness gives you. This man's faith in God that we are all connected and there is goodness in all and his desire to hold on to the Truth until the abuse became too much to bear. Due to belief by others who held values of high integrity and discernment, through their support after many years, this man was released with no charges against him.

*"And you, in that state, are to pray for the enemies that put you there; and if they curse and hate you, you are to bless them, and to do good to them, and you are to pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, and love your enemies, that you may be children of your father which is in heaven." George Fox, 1684*

## Do Quakers Pray?

Reviewed by Patricia McBee

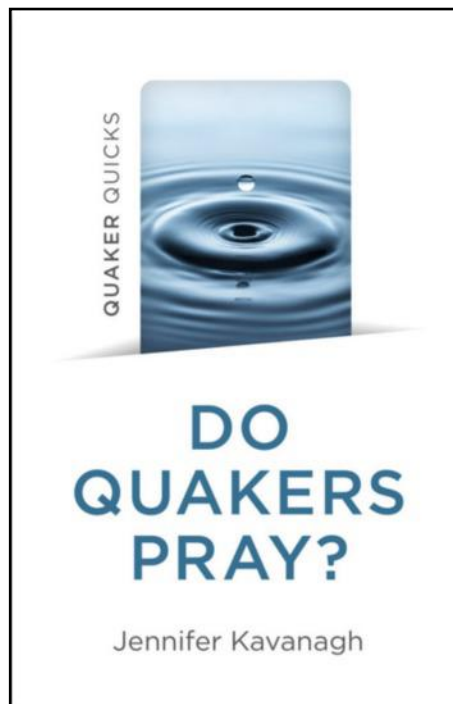
By Jennifer Kavanagh.

The short answer to the question Jennifer Kavanagh poses in *Do Quakers Pray?* is a clear “yes.” The longer answer—typical of Quakers—is, well, it depends on what you think of as prayer. Kavanagh, a British Friend writing from the point of view of the unprogrammed Liberal tradition, delves gently into what Quakers think of as prayer. Along the way, she cites her own experience and quotes a wide range of contemporary and historical Friends as well as teachers from other traditions.

Friends will find this lovely “Quaker Quick” to be both affirming and challenging—and well worth the short read. As do I and the author herself, many of her sources have a freeform spiritual practice rather than a regular daily discipline at a certain hour. I also found it affirming to find that others maintain an ongoing dialogue with an unnamed Presence. Those same affirmations, however, were also challenges. Should I try again to maintain a daily discipline? Is it important to name the Presence that I experience?

Because we Friends don’t speak much about prayer and because we are aware of a diversity of practice among Friends, we may find ourselves feeling that our personal approach to prayer is not honored, is substandard, or is out of the Quaker mainstream. Maybe it’s too traditionally Christian, we tell ourselves; too abstract and mystical; or too down-to-earth and unspiritual. Kavanagh affirms them all as valid approaches to prayer. As you read along, there will likely be stories that don’t fit your experience or belief, but then you’ll hit parts where you say, “Yes, yes, that’s me!,” and feel seen and encouraged to open your heart and deepen your practice.

Some of those she cites speak comfortably, even companionably, of



God and see various forms of prayer as ways of deepening a relationship with God. She quotes Quaker and Anglican priest John Peirce’s observation that “[a]n understanding of prayer relates to our understanding of the nature of the Divine.” Alongside that she lifts up a perspective from a contributor to the Quaker Quest booklet *Twelve Quakers and Prayer*: “A traditional understanding of prayer sees God as separate from us.” Quoting the contributor again, Kavanagh comments, “If we see ourselves as ‘of the same substance, the same eternal spiritual essence as God,’ our understanding of prayer must change to accommodate a less dualistic view of our relationship with the Divine.”

Kavanagh’s chapter headings reveal the different perspectives she addresses: forms of prayer, kinds or purposes of prayer, spiritual practice, contemplative prayer, and life as prayer. And yet common themes flow in and around one another throughout the text: does the person embrace God as a personal companion or take a nontheistic approach? Does one find spiritual support in pre-written prayer forms and liturgy or feel uncomfortable saying words that do not come directly from the heart? What about supplication: do we send wish lists to God to take care of things for us? Is

prayer a way of opening us to how *we* should care for things? What if we spontaneously express gratitude or need, even if we don’t know to whom we are appealing; is that prayer?

Is prayer a two-way conversation? If so, with whom or what?

Kavanagh asserts that early Friends wrote of hearing the voice of God, but she suggests, “Nowadays I think it is a rare occurrence.” Then in the ensuing sections she has multiple quotations from contemporary Friends who hear a responding voice, receive guidance, or have a wordless “knowing.” She also suggests that we Friends rarely discuss our most intimate spiritual experiences. I agree that Quakers are shy about such sharing. I have found, however, that when we create a context of trust and invitation, the most ordinary Friends share stories of conversations with an unknown other that they name as God; a guide; an angel; a deceased, beloved relative; or just a deep inner dialogue.

As for the meeting for worship, Kavanagh describes it as “wonderfully resistant to generalisation.” She also notes that Friends tend to use the words *worship* and *prayer* interchangeably with only a vague sense of how they are similar and how they are different. We speak almost not at all about adoration, but Kavanagh cites the writer Casper ter Kuile who sees adoration as “a chance to get beyond introspection, to connect with something beyond” and “the very same moment when they feel connected to something more than themselves is when they also feel more authentically true to themselves.” I’m thinking maybe that’s what we are all seeking in our own ways: to get beyond the words of prayer, beyond introspection, and to connect with that “something” beyond.

*Patricia McBee is a member of Newtown (Pa.) Meeting. She has been a writer and teacher of Quaker process and Quaker spiritual practice since 1970.*

## A Simple Faith in a Complicated World:

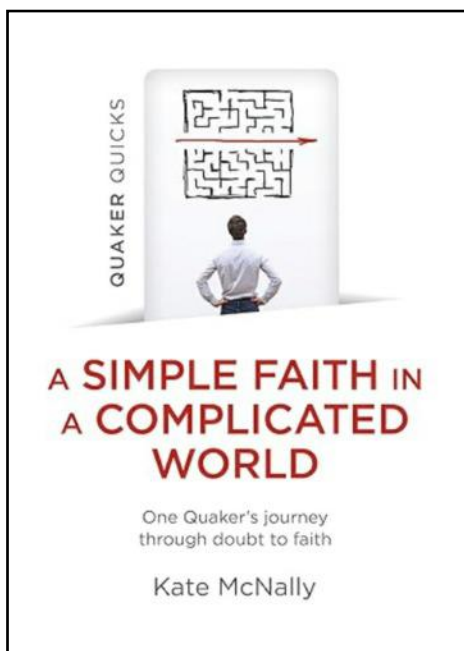
*One Quaker's Journey through Doubt to Faith*

Reviewed by Diana Sacerio

August 1, 2024

The subtitle of this book points to a personal story, the account of one individual's spiritual journey "through doubt to faith." And in the early chapters of the book, author Kate McNally describes her discomfort with many of the tenets of the dogmatic faith in which she was raised. She questioned, for example, the doctrine of original sin, and felt that the Apostles' Creed skips over the details of Jesus's life on earth. She longed to know more about Jesus as a historical figure, and she "wanted to find the faith of Jesus rather than the faith about Jesus." After exploring various faiths during her university years and striving for professional success, she eventually found her way to Quakerism.

However, in later chapters more general observations and reflections are interwoven into her narrative. As a convinced Quaker, McNally is aware that many people know Quakers only through their advocacy work (organizations such as Friends Committee on National Legislation and American Friends Service Committee) and are unfamiliar with such Quaker practices as holding someone in the Light, worship sharing, clearness, and discernment. She provides brief explanations of these practices along with the fundamental Quaker testimonies of peace, equality, truth, simplicity, and stewardship. She recognizes the diversity of Quaker meetings (unprogrammed, programmed, Conservative, Evangelical) and points out that not all Quakers follow the traditions that she describes. And McNally herself seems to be comfortable being around people of different backgrounds and beliefs. On her blog, *Brave Spaces*, she introduces



herself as "a transplanted American with an Irish passport, living in Belgium—between Germany, France, and the Netherlands—in an area where three cultures clash and co-exist."

In a brief discussion of the origins of Quakerism, she addresses the necessary shift in thinking that results when we move away from traditional images of God and Jesus (God as an omnipotent ruler, Jesus as a blue-eyed European) to having a more direct and personal relationship with the Divine. McNally observes:

Quakers are mystics, which means that we believe that each of us can have direct relationship with God. The mystical nature of Quakerism means that my experience may not be yours. However, I believe that the roots of Quakerism are not in the cathedrals and the hierarchies of Christianity. I believe that those roots are in the man who taught us to just love one another. It's that simple and that difficult.

The insights that follow are expressed in clear, lucid language and are profound and thought-provoking. How do we love one another? How do we find our way to an intimate connection with God (or for those who eschew the word "God," with the Divine or some other life force)? McNally believes that God can be found in

relationships (with ourselves and with others), through active listening, and in our actions (how we treat each other and show God's love to others). McNally also emphasizes the importance of silence in Quaker worship: of quietly waiting and opening ourselves to the Spirit. She notes that one's direct experience of divine love may best be found in a community of Quakers. In order to connect to others and to the Divine, we need to understand ourselves and to accept our imperfections while, at the same time, trying to be our best selves. McNally believes that perfectionism is an illusion and that it is through our weaknesses (as well as our strengths) that we can change and grow spiritually. Before we can "answer that of God" in others we need to answer that of God in ourselves.

This book is by no means prescriptive. Readers of the book will need to follow their own paths to faith. Nevertheless, as Kate McNally traces her spiritual journey, she provides a useful introduction to Quakerism (for those who are new to the faith), and she offers up much food for thought to those who are familiar with Quakerism. This is a book that can be read and studied by individuals or discussed in depth in Friends' reading groups.

*Diana Sacerio is a longtime attender of Haverford (Pa.) Meeting living in Rosemont, Pa. She teaches upper school Spanish at the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, Pa., and is an avid reader and lover of literature.*



## Remember that Love-ly Pink Jumper?

Anni Tuffnell

It was a lovely, corally pink, a cowl neck, light and slouchy!

It wasn't a new purchase, not even a purchase! It was acquired through a good friend of mine who had been given it by her good friend, from her own wardrobe. The clear out, 'don't need or want this any longer' action.

It was offered. I grabbed it and gave it a loving home and was identified as 'my favourite jumper'!

I loved it, so handy to grab as an extra layer, look great with jeans and even over summer dresses. Was so handy, versatile and light weight.

So when I decided to go solo to Skiathos for two weeks – red eye flight to Athens – local bus up the east coast to a little port opposite the Island of Skiathos, where I

would then take a short ferry ride to the Island – this jumper was lovingly packed in my minimalistic hand luggage.

We were together for those two weeks.

It was beautiful weather.

Height of the summer season until we had a thunder storm.

I was staying at a local residents' house. Typical marble doorstep where mothers and grandmothers would sit and watch the world go by and catch up with the neighbours. There were some young Swedish girls sleeping on the roof – cheapest accommodation and the coolest! When the storm broke they were supplied with more suitable shelter and extra blankets!

It was towards the end of my stay which had been solitary and time for reflection. Things not going so well on the romance front time to decide whether to stay or run for the hills! This trip was important.

I say I was solitary until a couple of days before the end and before the storm I befriended a young guy and girl who were holidaying on a shoe string.

This is when it happened. I was due to leave the next day, we were socialising and I realised the girl had nothing warm not even a jumper and the temperature had dropped due to the storm.

I 'loaned' her my favourite pink jumper on the strict understanding that it was to be returned. Expressed my love and attachment and how honoured she was to have this treasured item for a short period of time to keep her warm.

That was the last I saw of my pink jumper.

I still mourn for my jumper and to this day have never found one to match or replace it.

## Area Meeting at Clacton

21 September 2024.

Chris Samuel

Eight Friends met for Area Meeting, commencing with a period of worship. Readings of QF&P 2.85 and 2.90 were given.

The death of our Friend Joan Rew on 1 August 2024 was recorded, communicated to us by her family. At that stage it was not known whether a Quaker funeral would be held.

An application for membership was received from Lizzie Kennet. John and Jenny Kay were appointed to visit Lizzie, and report back to a future Area Meeting.

Ecky Prolingheuer of Colchester Meeting was appointed an elder of Area Meeting for three years (?).

Robert Parkes presented a report of Jenny Kay, as clerk to SEAQM Trustees. The report spoke of the urgent need to appoint Trustees for SEAQM. As things stand, in January 2025 three Trustees will be standing down, with only two remaining. This state of affairs is serious, because currently the Area Meeting needs at least five Trustees to retain its charitable status. If the three departing Trustees are not replaced, then SEAQM could lose its charitable status.

The report urged Friends to consider applying to be a Trustee, and to talk to an elder or clerk if interested in doing so. Trustees have responsibility for administering the fabric and buildings of the whole Area Meeting (AM); moreover, all employees of the AM are employed directly by the Trustees. Trustees meet online at least four times a year. Guidance and training via Woodbrooke could be given to Friends becoming Trustees.

In addition, an AM treasurer and safeguarding officer are being sought.

Liz Prockter, as retiring AM Treasurer, produced the SEAQM Annual Report and Financial Statement.

Overall there has been an increase in income and property income. Although there was a deficit of £20,251 for 2023, this was covered by investments. This has been the case for a number of years.

The accounts were accepted by AM, and Street Whittle were re-appointed as the SEAQM accountants.

Ann Kurra presented a report on Regional Restructuring.

There are significant differences between the sizes of Local Meetings (LMs) within Area Meetings. Larger regional groups such as Cambridge, Norfolk and Waveney are less interested in

combining than smaller AMs such as SEAQM. A number of issues have been considered, such as sharing the role of safeguarding officer, and sharing functions with Ipswich and Diss AM. Could SEAQM combine with the above for a monthly online Meeting for Worship?

## George Fox

Letter 58

My dear Friends,

Keep your Meetings, and ye will feel the Seed to arise, though never a word be spoken amongst you. And be faithful, that ye may answer that of God in every one. And do not neglect your talent, but in the life and power of God live, which ye have received. And dear Friends, dwell in the life and power and love of God, and one towards another.

Friends, dwell in the measure of the spirit of God, and to it take

## Watch this space: Jenny Web takes a flyer

‘On the face of it, there is a lot of space in Quakerism.’

I have come to a day centre for adults with learning disabilities, to deliver some flyers. The wording reads: ‘A Friendly space in the Earth Cafe at the Quaker Meeting House. Free tea, coffee, snacks and chat. All welcome - just drop in’. This wording was subject to some discussion.

We first thought of ‘warm space’, but realised it might be seen as stigmatising. A ‘friendly place’, on the other hand, sounds, well, friendly. It has the added attraction of being ambiguous, referring as it does to the part the Quakers play in the project.

BYM would like to understand the difficulties AMs are facing. Wales and other areas are considering restructuring to enable AMs to survive.

Ann Kurra read out a draft letter, prepared by Christian Climate Action Decision (CCAD). It is addressed to the major UK Banks, calling on them to disinvest in

heed, that in it ye may grow, for the true and lasting love proceeds from God, who is eternal. And abiding in the measure of Life, ye will have peace and love, that never changeth. If from the measure ye turn, iniquity gets up and the love waxeth cold, and in that lodge the evil thoughts, jealousies, evil will and murmurings. Wait in the Light, which is of God, that ye may all witness the Son of God, and witness that which shall never wither, so ye will see and feel God near.

G. F. 1656

All this set me thinking about the word ‘space’, which is itself ambiguous. It can mean ‘a blank portion or area’ but also ‘a seat or place, as on a train, aircraft, etc.’ In other words, we may see a space as being empty, with nothing to offer us, or we may see it as offering us welcome and comfort. So what sort of space do we offer new people at our Meetings? Is it an austere sense of emptiness, or is it a sense of vitality, support, guidance and belonging?

On the face of it, there is a lot of space in Quakerism.

No creed, very little ritual, no formal hierarchy, and surprisingly little guidance as to how we might find our spiritual path. Over the years I have found this difficult.

Meeting has often felt like an empty space waiting to be filled with

fossil fuels. CCAD is inviting Quakers to join with other churches in being signatories to this letter. After discussion, the Area Meeting agreed to be a signatory to the letter.

The Meeting closed with a period of worship.



the inconsequential chattering of my mind.

Meditation techniques have helped me to calm myself, but the result has generally been a far cry from the ecstatic moments described by early Friends.

We Quakers are in a state of transition. The debate about ‘God language’ is ongoing. I find that a rather disparaging term, as it obscures differences in belief and experience. I was disturbed to hear that some Friends feel that to quote the Bible, pray, or talk about Jesus, is no longer welcome.

This change is happening partly because we are moving to a more heterogeneous membership, with a wide range of spiritual experiences and beliefs. But if we do allow ourselves to be open to the wisdom of different faiths, this need not mean either that our precious silence will be filled with



a cacophony of voices, or that Quakerism will turn into an amorphous melting pot.

Rather, it means that, while retaining our Quaker identity, we can be helped in our spiritual journey and our Meetings can be enriched. Each faith has something to offer us. We know that Christianity speaks to us of a God of Love. From Buddhism we can learn about the impermanence of life; from Hinduism about the immortal within us and without us; from Islam the importance of surrendering the self. There is much else.

## Forgiveness: Freed to Love

By Christine Betz Hall

Pendle Hill Pamphlets

Review by Jon Shafer Forgive more leads to loving more. We all have emotional injuries, which we carefully feed and nurse. The longer we harbor them, the longer they will burden us and prevent our souls from growing. Christine Betz Hall's *Forgiveness: Freed to Love* is a short, remedy-packed guide full of ways to let them go. First offered as a plenary presentation to the Northwest Quarter of North Pacific Yearly Meeting in 2022, the essay now has new life as a Pendle Hill pamphlet, able to reach many more Friends seeking help or wisdom on the road to forgiveness. Betz Hall's more than 15 years of experience working as a spiritual director, facilitator, and companion comes through on every page.

In this pamphlet, she makes clear that forgiveness is our job to do, and it doesn't involve "forgetting" or ignoring. In my decades as a chaplain in treatment centers, hospices, and prisons, I have found that *not* forgiving is often foremost among the blocks on the way to wholeness and love. This is not new insight. Jesus pointed out that it is a lifelong process. Isaac Pennington wrote about it in 1667:

Sometimes these belief systems are described as paths up the mountainside, all heading towards the same summit.

The summit itself is unknowable but we may be able to feel the joy of glimpsing it - of knowing it in our hearts. We no longer live in a Christian country, and attendance reflects that. What we have in common with the adherents of all faiths is our shared search for understanding and meaning. Let's Meet together in love and acceptance, recognising our shared search. The strength of

"Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another." If we wait for the other person to apologize or initiate healing, we often end up bearing that burden our whole lives. In that case, *we* are the ones who suffer. Betz Hall makes this most clear when she cites writer Anne Lamott: "Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die."

There are situations, Betz Hall observes, when reality itself is a player in the forgiveness process. She points to culture war examples around vaccination and between ethnic groups. She warns against any shallow self-forgiveness about the harm one's race or gender has historically perpetuated through the centuries.

In my own life, one of the biggest challenges for me was dealing with my love-hate feelings toward my mother. I didn't want her to die until I could process my feelings. So when Mom's health declined, I moved to be nearby and visit her regularly. Being able to talk with her daily enabled me to better understand her and her tendencies. Her behavior didn't change any, but as my understanding grew, I could view our relationship from her perspective, even though

the Quaker space is that it makes this possible - maybe the only such space. It is our unique gift.

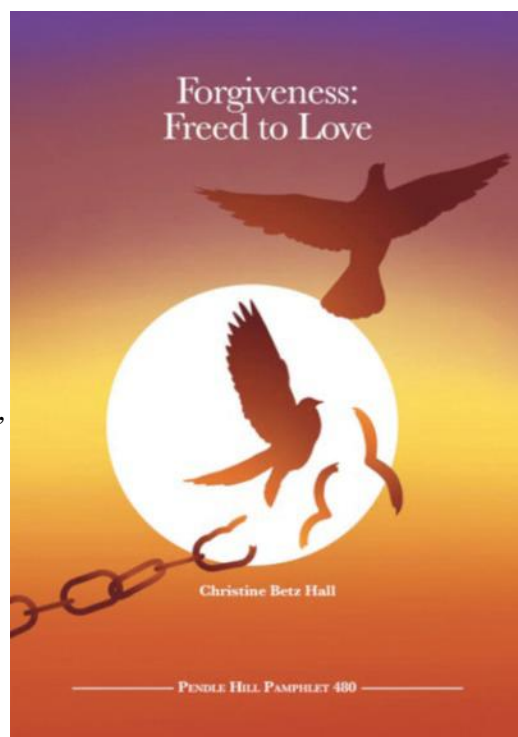
Jenny is from Chichester Meeting.



it caused me pain. So, over three years, I came to forgive her, and I credit my reaching out and listening as a big factor in finding that peace.

Most people have some unfinished spiritual work to do before they die, in order to feel clear. Sometimes a clearness committee can help, but the process needs to start and stay primarily within oneself. It will likely be difficult. *Forgiveness: Freed to Love* can be a valuable tool along the way. What forgiveness work and love remains in your life?

Reprinted from *Friends Journal*



## From my Sketchbooks

Recently I have spent some time leafing through my old sketchbooks. I have quite a few and many have plenty of blank pages that were unused.

I came across a simple sketch I drew some time ago of a bowl of dying flowers. I think they were irises but I'm not sure.

Many of my sketches are purely preparative ones, thinking out a feature or ideas for a final full colour watercolour, but this one was different. This sketch was a revelation that it had worked so well. It is not my practice to love my own work but this one I was really proud of. From the grouping of the shapes to the balance of the tones, I could not have improved upon it.

Sometimes a monocolour sketch, almost drawn without a great deal of thought or pre-intention works as a creation in its own right.

I'm not usually in the business of judging my own work, I usually leave that to others, discussions of the value of a painting seem pointless to me, they are usually based on commercial price or have a comparison with photographic detail. Failing those criteria a connection with personal experience often with a loved thing or person. Artists themselves know that the whole reward of drawing or painting lies in the actual doing of it, once a work is finished most artists lose interest in it apart maybe with leaving them with an resolve to try the subject again with more success.



## Quaker Quote

believe there is something in the mind, or in the heart, that shows its approbation when we do right. I give myself this advice: Do not fear truth, let it be so contrary to inclination and feeling. Never give up the search after it: and let me take courage, and try from the bottom of my heart to do that which I believe truth dictates, if it leads me to be a Quaker or not.

~ Elizabeth Fry, 1780-1845

## Heritage Open Day 2024

Anne Watkinson

We opened the premises of Colchester Meeting House on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September thanks to the work of more than a dozen Friends who themselves had a time of fellowship and discussion of various Quaker issues and our interesting history. The Parnell room was full of photos, information and booklets written by past members. We don't usually name those who help as each contributes what they can, but special thanks must go to Andrew Lee, our administrative assistant, who flatly refuses to be paid for this aspect of his work. He knows where things are and put them all

back after Friends had done the major clear up.

Friends made this a fun and happy day. They came on the Friday and Saturday, set out the exhibition, donated cakes and biscuits, provided guided tours, made tea for each other and guests and talked about Quakerism and the building. A new feature was the timeline, prepared for Fox's birthday celebration by Sudbury Meeting, (thank you), which Friends attached all round the wall of the Parnell room. This will stay up for a while till it gets tatty, so do make an effort to pop in and read it. We showed a couple of Quaker films, one about the history of our Meeting but also an old film produced 30 years ago, not so good and rather long but again of interest.

We received visits from individuals couples and families, at least 49 who bothered to sign up and a few more who just slipped in and out. Some comments were left from 'thank you for the chocolate bar' through "super interesting history' and 'very informative' to 'cool building', 'awesome people', 'peaceful and tranquil' and 'quietly spiritual'.

Thank you Friends, a great day and one to be proud of.

