

THE QUIET WORD



Area Meeting Events

Sunday Meeting for Worship 10:45 at all Leeds Meetings with exception of Ilkley which is at 10:30am and fortnightly house Meetings at Otley (contact David Robson 0113 3188084 for details)

3rd Sunday- Teenagers Meeting 12:15pm talk & lunch at Carlton Hill

4th Sunday Breakfast Meeting – shared breakfast 9am, MforW 9:30am Carlton Hill

Wednesdays 8pm – mid-week Meeting for Worship at Rawdon QMH

Fridays 11am – coffee morning 11am to 12 noon at Carlton Hill QMH

Sat 21st January: Quakers in Yorkshire gathering is at Leeds. There is a full range of activities for children and young people, with bowling planned for the afternoon. Full details are on the Quakers in Yorkshire website and places can be booked with Robert Keeble 0113 24222208

To make a contribution to the **Quiet Word**, please contact Ben Wood at punkrainbowbow@hotmail.co.uk or by phone on **07780 755 729**

Looking Ahead to Area Meetings in 2012



In 2012 Leeds Area Quaker Meetings are planned to be topic based, normally starting with a period of open worship and then a workshop session including speakers will conclude with a tea break before a short business session ending in much enjoyed refreshments. The LAQM gatherings are to be enjoyed by anyone attending our local Leeds meetings and can be attended in full or in part.

Sunday 12th February at 1:15pm at Adel QMH

Topic: Social justice & support for asylum seekers

Saturday 24th March at 10:30am for an all day LAQM gathering at Carlton Hill QMH

1:15pm Topic: The nature of our spiritual growth, what it means to be a Quaker and preparation for BYM theme.

Sunday 13th May at 1:15pm at Gildersome QMH

Topic: Resources, how they are raised and used. Including ethical investment, responding to poverty and homelessness in Leeds

Sunday 8th July at 1:15pm at Ilkley QMH

Topic: Economic justice and sustainability - follow up of BYM outcomes

Sunday 14th October 1:15pm at Rawdon QMH.

Topic: Criminal justice and prisons.

Sunday 9th December 1:15pm at Roundhay QMH. Topic: as led

Death and Dying: the last taboo

Leeds Assisted Dying Working Party are organising a one-day conference concerning the ethical, spiritual and legal concerns around end-of-life care and assisting dying: Death and Dying: the last taboo. It will be held at **Oxford Place Conference Centre, Leeds on Saturday 12th May 2012**. One of the

speakers will be Professor Jan Bernheim of Brussels University.

University Chaplains' report of 2010-11



Chris and I have spent the second year of our tenure building up our relationship with the rest of the universities chaplaincy team, supporting the weekly meeting for worship in Emmanuel and where we can, sharing our Quaker values.

The Team.



The Quaker chaplains serve as part of an ecumenical team which is the largest Local Ecumenical Partnership recognised by the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council. As well as WYEC member churches; Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, URC and ourselves, we have

two Associate Chaplains from the Chinese Christian churches and a lay Student Outreach Worker. We have two job share Admin. workers who make a significant contribution to the team's work.

The team meets fortnightly, starting with a short act of worship led by each of us in turn. We also meet on away days and work together on various events including outreach events aimed at raising awareness that the chaplaincy is there for all staff and students irrespective of creed. Much of the work of the chaplaincy is done in series of weekly events or meetings ranging from the Campus Communion to "Spirituality at Work" and "Stretch and Relax". The chaplaincy also supports a vibrant International Students Club. We have come to know each other's strengths in the team and much of our individual contribution to the chaplaincy's work reflects this as much as the faith communities we represent. Chris has become a stalwart of outreach events – giving out tea and coffee to staff and students and engaging them in friendly conversation. I was asked this term to host an open mike night in Emmanuel. We have had two of these so far, attended by people who in the main would not otherwise have acquainted themselves with the chaplaincy centre.

Meeting for Worship.

Every Tuesday lunchtime, there is a Meeting for Worship at 1.10 in Emmanuel followed by a free shared lunch. It is open to staff and students and has a handful of regular attenders including members of the team. We have been considering how to make this more welcoming to staff and students who might not be Quakers but might benefit from the experience of Quaker worship. There is also the legal consideration that worship in Emmanuel must be non-denominational. During the summer we considered giving the Meeting for Worship an alternative name to reflect this, but soon discovered that the name we were considering, "Breathe", was already being used by various groups, including a Buddhist meditation group meeting at Carlton Hill! I am currently working on a leaflet specifically introducing newcomers to the Tuesday Meeting for Worship.

Sharing our Values.

The diversity of the chaplaincy team is not purely denominational. Most significantly, there is a diversity of views on what the role of the chaplaincy is, in particular when it comes to sharing our values. Chris and I sometimes feel a little bit uncomfortable when some of our colleagues see their role in a more traditional evangelical way, but my perception is that the Chaplaincy as an institution does espouse such a role. On the other hand, neither is it purely an institution of pastoral support, or a showcase for different approaches to spirituality. It does have a prophetic role, not of sharing the Gospel, but of expressing "Gospel values" – values which Quakers of all theological shades hold dear.

In that respect I have begun to represent the Chaplaincy on the University Fair Trade steering group and through this I have just made contact with the Sustainability forum. Chris has attended conferences on inter faith chaplaincy and Religious Literacy in Higher Education and is helping feed into a process

moving the chaplaincy in Leeds forward in these respects. We have also helped in the sometimes fraught relationship between the chaplaincy and the Leeds University Atheist Society. Oddly enough, some of our deepest discussions with students have arisen through this relationship. A unique contribution we have to offer the Team at present is assisting Staff and students in exploring spirituality, even if they are not willing or able to accept a conventional theistic framework.

We are also reaching out to Student groups who are addressing areas of concern to Quakers – in particular “Just.Act.”, a group set up by our Student Outreach Worker, which combines spiritual reflection with political and social action. Involvement with other student societies such as the Amnesty Society and Fairtrade Society not only live out our Quaker concerns but also raise the profile of the Chaplaincy and proffer spiritual support to individuals who might not otherwise seek it.

How you can help.

To some, the notion of a Quaker chaplain might appear anomalous. Chaplains are generally seen as clergy and Quakerism is opposed to its members holding such positions. We are well aware of this and see ourselves more as Quaker representatives on the Chaplaincy team than as pseudo clergy. We are helped in this by the fact that we are not the only non-clergy in the team and that the team esteems and respects all of its members.

It is also equally important that our work is held, supported and maybe challenged by the Area Meeting. Our annual report ideally should be a small part of this process.

Here are some ways Leeds Friends can support us in the coming months:

- **Signposting:** Ensure that any staff or students of either University are aware of the Chaplaincy. Ask if they are willing to send us their email addresses so that I can contact them occasionally to let them know of forthcoming events.
- **Support group:** There is a chaplaincy support group set up by Leeds Area Meeting, who have individually given us some support but who have not yet met with us as a group. Getting this group going might help ensure that we represent Leeds Quakers more faithfully and bring forth concerns for us to address via the chaplaincy.
- **Events:** Events occur from time to time where we can have wider participation from Leeds Quakers. For example, I hope, via the University Fair-trade Steering Group, to co-ordinate joint participation between the university, the chaplaincy and Leeds Quakers in the great banana giveaway in February.

Robin Fishwick December 2011.

Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings is the national gathering of Quakers with representatives from all Area Meetings in Britain and Eileen Fowler and I went as your Leeds representative. Going to MforS has been the most rewarding and interesting of my Quaker experiences and I will miss it when we, Eileen and I reach the end of our service at the start of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) in May this year.

Meeting for Sufferings has changed much over the last few years and continues to do so. In future, only **one** representative will be appointed from each AM so it will become a much smaller, but still vital part of our Quaker Community. If you are asked to serve I think you will be very lucky as it is fast becoming one of the best jobs available.

The lengthy and detailed Retreat report was not read out but tabled in advance and the whole session was given over to questions and answers which worked very well (maybe something for us to consider?) Other substantive items included the 2012 budget – the retiring Treasurer, Rob Barden gave his dry humored report in a style that will be forever missed – who else but Ron could report a 10% drop in personal giving to our central work and still leave you hopeful for the future. His final remarks were poignant – we need to become more professional in the way we raise funds and this should, in his view, include central fundraising rather than being completely reliant on a network of 300 local treasures, many of whom do an excellent job, but there are also many who are already over whelmed with other tasks.

The Quaker committee for Christian and interfaith relations also told us about their work – their role is that of making connections and this has been more challenging in recent years, especially following our decision on same sex marriage and the boycott of goods from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The main items of business were looking at how we are to implement our Britain Yearly Meeting decision to become a low-carbon, sustainable community (BYM Minute 36). Sufferings agreed to encourage all our meetings to complete the climate impact calculator for **Quaker meetings** by the end of March so that the information can be collated and presented to our next BYM in May. We also received the Sustainability Toolkit which has been prepared by QPSW and Living Witness Project. This has been sent to all Meetings. Finally, we agreed to establish a 'Minute 36 Commitment Group' – a committee to support the realization of the commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. We looked at the draft terms of reference for this group which could also apply to our own Leeds Sustainability Committee.

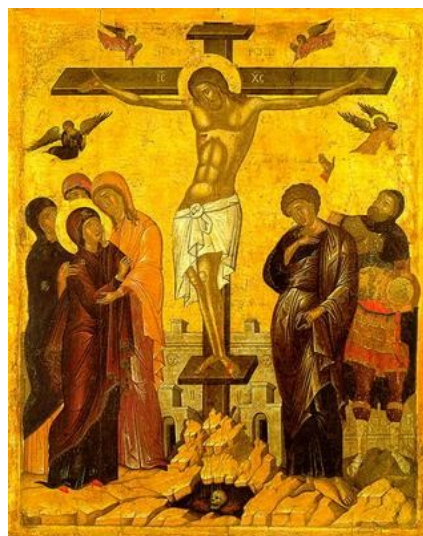
Robert Keeble

Remembering Jean McPherson



Jean was an attender at Carlton Hill Local Meeting for 12 years, living in the flats of Quaker House. This followed her move from York, where she had also attended Friargate Meeting. Despite her principled objection to organised religion, she enjoyed the spiritual and social aspects of Carlton Hill Meeting being a regular at breakfast and lunch meetings and Friday Coffee Mornings. She had a lively and intellectual interest in many subjects which informed her varied discussions. She had a deep concern for social justice and was a founder member of the Leeds Quaker Criminal Justice Group. After Meeting for Worship on Boxing Day 2010, three weeks before her death, she was at the centre of a discussion about who in society should be eaten first – children or older people – playing devil’s advocate to help people stretch their thinking. She is much missed.

Some Thoughts from the Editor: What Do We Mean by Christian?



The question of whether Quakers are Christian comes up constantly in ecumenical and interfaith discussions. There are many spiritually well-trodden

Friends for whom the **Religious Society of Friends** is less of a Church and more of a spiritual umbrella under which diverse seekers gather. Such Friends frequently arrive at this conclusion because of the deep ritual and historical chasms between 'the manners' of Quakerism and other *Christian Confessions*. In a narrow sense such Friends are probably right. If we define 'Christian' in terms of a simple set of 'ticket-boxes' then maybe Friends *aren't* *Christian*. After all, if one asks a random group of Friends about penal substitution on the cross, or the Incarnation, one is likely to receive a series of polite shrugs. Might we do better if we ask Friends about the identity of Jesus? Not really. On this apparent litmus test of Christian identity, you'll find eye-watering diversity among individual Friends and their respective Meetings. But what if we look beyond the usual sign-posts- what might we find?

If one defines 'Christian' less in terms of the cognitive notion 'believing' and focus instead upon the concept of discipleship (the act of following Jesus' example of 'love in action') then we begin to see how Quakers are profoundly 'Christian'. This act of concerted following doesn't demand intellectual uniformity; it only requires the deep and abiding trust that love has potency and peace has power. A resolutely agnostic Buddhist, who's heart is genuinely committed to the path of discipleship (a willingness to learn and be taught) is just as likely as an explicitly Christ-centred Friend to find the 'gifts of the Spirit' in Worship. Such Quakers may not be 'Christian' in any conventional sense but in the content of their spiritual experiences and motivations, we will not be mistaken if we discern a deeply Christ-like centre. In this way, the character of the religious life to Friends is less like a check-list and more like a deep and wonderfully well from which anyone who thirsts can drink. The world's spiritual deserts are many and most Friends have never been keen on monopolising their little oasis.

What does this mean for Quakers as a 'church'? If we are indeed a Church then we practice *ecclesia*, not as an identity to belittle or exclude others but as a call to participate and to be loved. As Friends we are the church at its most 'catholic' by which I mean at its most 'universal'. In this messy and inclusive vision of community there is something not merely Christian but intrinsically Christ-like. Jesus took people not as other people 'wanted them to be' but as they were. The disciples Peter and Andrew weren't the ideal people when Jesus first called them from their nets. The story demonstrates above all that the spiritual life is a process, not a destination. Likewise in Friends, we don't insist that 'the interested newcomer' instantly sign up to everything deemed 'Quakerly' to be part of the community. Instead we trust in the inner-alchemy which first brought the seeker to our door. Time, prayer and raw experience will do the rest if a person is willing to take the first steps.

There might be Friends reading this who feel that I have thoughtlessly side-stepped important theological questions about 'God', 'The Holy Spirit', 'The Bible' and the strong beliefs of Early Friends. I gently protest that I haven't side-stepped them at all but tried to place them in context. Early Friends lived in a world awash with beliefs of all kinds- beliefs about Popes, Church Councils and doctrines. What moved first-generations Quakers however was

not the quest for 'beliefs' but the search for Truth. We might come to Meeting for Worship with all kinds of intuitions and *beliefs*- Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Pagan, even Atheist- but the vital thing is to look beyond what we believe towards direct experience of the 'Inward Teacher'. This is in some ways a leap into the darkness. For many the testing of belief is a difficult and profoundly uncomfortable task, but we have the pattern of discipleship to show us the way. Jesus didn't say "people will know you're my disciples because believe the same things"- he said 'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'" When our beliefs fail, the Quaker Way advises us to fall back on the Spirit of fellowship we find in community, a spirit which affirms, but also transcends, all our words and labels of faith. If we want to get the nub of Christian identity, Quakerism insists, *we must stop believing and start living.*

Ben Wood

The Retreat York

A flavour of the

Triennial Report to Meeting for Sufferings

December 2011



The retreat is a private Quaker psychiatric hospital in York dating back to the 18th century which gets 95% of its funding from the NHS. This is because it can provide special services which are not always available in NHS hospitals. During the past three years the Retreat has been looking at its governance. It has a governing body –most of whom are Quakers and are also trustees. They have a very clear role. Much less clear has been the role of Friends nominated by various Quaker meetings to the role of Governor (now changed

to Member) In the past these members have in different ways tried to become more involved with the Retreat. However it was felt that this system could be clarified. The working party has pointed to two specific roles- 'Retreat Ambassadors' who inform meetings about the work of the Retreat and encourage concern about the of those with psychiatric conditions and 'Quaker Voices and Support' who provide a Quakerly presence especially where individuals have an expertise needed by the Retreat.

Very much linked with this has been the appointment of a Friargate Friend Bronwen Gray as its first Resident Quaker. This meant that she had to build a new set of relationships as she negotiated her place in the Retreat community. Bronwen is seen to be 'a visible demonstration of Quaker witness'. During the past year Bronwen has been busy. Amongst other things she has re-energised the Quarterly Newsletter to Meetings, led a fundraising group among friends to reinstate The Bedford Pierce Rose Garden and organised displays for Quaker Week. The Report also comments that 'The organisation certainly feels more quakerly since Bronwen's arrival; There is for example much more information about Quakers and our values in evidence around the place'. Resonating with the above a Retreat Lecture was given at Yearly Meeting Gathering for the first time at Canterbury last year. Chris Holman, the Medical Director entitled it, 'Friendship, Community and Mental Health'. It was very well received and a popular part of the YGM programme.

Eileen Fowler

**Do you feel very busy and struggle to find time for yourself?
Does the pace of life feel too fast?**

Mindfulness Meditation

Enabling yourself to experience clarity, balance and inner peace



Mindfulness Meditation Practice Group

This group is intended for anyone who would like to begin or develop their mindfulness meditation practice. It is a weekly secular (non faith) experiential group. The group will give you the chance to:

- Experience a weekly space in which you can practice being in the 'here and now'.
- Share experiences of mindfulness practice with others in the group (optional, there is no pressure to share).
- Explore different mindfulness practices.
- Gain a greater sense of general well-being
- Learn through your own insight, gained in practice, how mindfulness meditation can be used to reduce the impact of stress on your life, and cope with physical or emotional pain you may experience.

£6 per session. Concessions and pay as you go available, or get a session free when you book and pay for 6 sessions.

Location: Inkwell, 31 Potternewton Lane, Leeds LS7 3LW

Time: Tuesday evenings 6.00-7.00pm. This is an on-going group. Suitable for beginners and more experienced.

Please contact Shona at: shonalowe66@hotmail.com or on: 07583865922
for more details

[Our Attitude to Death Workshop 5 NOVEMBER 2011](#)



Death is still a persistent taboo subject in society, but Quakers and other concerned groups are now talking about it. Questions are being raised about how, where and when we might choose to die. These questions are especially relevant and poignant for anyone faced with an absolutely certain prognosis that their illness is terminal. We do not lead totally isolated lives, so partners, family and friends are also rightly involved in any end-of-life decisions.

The Leeds Area Assisted Dying Working Party, originated and sensitively chaired by Quentin Fowler, has been researching and debating these issues during 2011. On Saturday 5 November more than thirty Friends and attenders from Leeds Area meetings gathered at Carlton Hill for a day workshop on “**Our Attitude to Death**”. There is an urgent need for the debate to be opened up to a wider constituency, both in the Society and beyond, and this workshop was set up to meet that need.

“What do you see as a good death for yourself?” was the opening question of the morning session. Groups gathered to discuss their written answers and then reconvened to give their views. Everyone wants a humane death with the least pain and suffering for themselves and those near and dear to them. Some want it to be swift and assisted medically, and within the law, if faced with physical incapacity or loss, or potential loss, of mental powers, as in Alzheimer’s. Others said they preferred to leave nature to follow its course.

“ How will you achieve this ? “ was the query for Group 1 to consider, while, at the same time separately, Group 2 had to consider **“ What barriers are there to you achieving this ? “**

Group 1 talked about making a Will, creating an Advanced Decision with the help of a solicitor, and/or, Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare. Most importantly, however, to talk with family, friends and doctor, so that everyone knows their wishes and hopefully, will ensure that they will be carried out. When the time came some wanted the choice of Assisted Dying,

Many in Group 2 were concerned that in the event of an emergency they would find themselves in A. and E. caught up in medical procedures. This is most likely to mean that their wishes are unknown, and therefore, every effort to resuscitate them will be made. Many also admitted fear that things would be out of their control and the last thing they wanted was to die in an alien hospital environment.

By the end of the afternoon most people thought that the law needs to be changed so that the personal wishes of people could be respected. Thus it would be lawful for people who are terminally ill, or totally incapacitated, or incurable, to be given assistance to die. Similarly, those who wanted to be kept alive would have their wishes respected. It was suggested that the Society of Friends now needs to give a lead, to widen the debate, and to work with discernment to make change possible. We look forward to a conference next spring to be held in Leeds, open to a much wider audience and with medical and scientific contributions.

Ben Francis, The Leeds Area Assisted Dying Working Party