

Leeds Area Quaker Meeting

the Quiet Word, December 2020

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Meetings for worship

Adel Friends Meeting House, New Adel Lane, Leeds LS16 6AZ
0113 267 6293, Sundays 10.45am

Carlton Hill Central Leeds Friends Meeting House, 188 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX ,
0113 242 2208, Sundays 10.45am, Thursdays 6.00pm

Gildersome Friends Meeting House, 75 Street Lane, Gildersome, Leeds LS27 7HX ,
0113 285 2466, Sundays 10.45am

Ilkley Friends Meeting House, Queens Road, Ilkley, Leeds LS29 9QJ
01943 600 806 and 01943 601 181, Sundays 10.30am

Leeds University Claire Chapel, Emmanuel Centre,
University of Leeds, Tuesdays 1.05pm

Otley Friends Meeting, in The Robing Room,
The Court House, Courthouse Street,
Otley, 01943 463 351, dmr@cooptel.net
1st and 3rd Sundays of the month 10.45am

Rawdon Friends Meeting House, Quakers Lane, Rawdon,
Leeds LS19 6HU, 0113 250 4904, Sundays 10.45am

Roundhay Friends Meeting House, 136 Street Lane,
Leeds LS8 2BW, 0113 293 3684, Sundays 10.45am



News

Although we are back to square 1, blended Sunday meetings are still happening at Carlton Hill. There are many online events via Zoom.

Zoom details

If you have not yet participated in online meeting, it is quite easy to install Zoom here:

<https://zoom.us/download>. It will run on laptops, iPads, and smart phones. Once you have installed it and signed up, just click on the relevant link to join a Meeting.

If you can't join by Internet you can access a Zoom meeting by phone, at normal geographic rates, by dialling 0131 460 1196 or 0203 4815237. You'll be asked to key in the meeting ID which is the nine-digit number at the end of the Zoom link, then, if required, the password. Use *6 to mute/unmute the call.

Most Zoom links will ask you to make contact for the Zoom details, which are the meeting ID and possibly a password. This is because of the possibility of being hacked. You can do that via

<http://www.leedsquakers.org.uk/contact-us/contact-us>.

Also the relevant Zoom codes and passwords are in Robert Keeble's weekly email and the LAQM monthly email.

N.B.: Always refer to the most recent information for your Zoom links in case there has been a change. You might find it helpful to create a folder just to hold relevant emails so you can access the links easily.

Children on Sunday – if children join our Zoom Sunday meetings, they will stay in the meeting for up to 15 minutes and then do children's activities in a zoom break out room.

Update for July: Zoom is changing (again), which means that from mid July, you may also need to enter the security code when joining the meeting via the automatic link.

the Quiet Word is written by & for the Leeds Area Quaker Meeting, to swap valuable information & insight, and to join with those who don't often get to Meeting.

It is published bi-monthly. Articles, poems, short stories, and letters should arrive by the end of the month. They can be sent via Robert Keeble at robertkeeble@hotmail.com, or via the Quiet Word email quietword@leedsquakers.org.uk, or directly to the editor (below). A page is about 600-1000 words & an article should be around 2-3 pages.

The Letters page offers a way of contributing on a smaller level in both time and effort. A letter should be around 100 words.

the Quiet Word is available online at www.leedsquakers.org.uk/activities/a-quiet-word

front page picture: a path in Roundhay Park in late Autumn 2020.

editor: Patrick Herring, ph@anweald.co.uk, Carlton Hill meeting

Diary

These dates are for events other than Meetings for Worship, and are via Zoom unless otherwise stated.

Saturdays (1st of the month) 10am - Light Group connecting with the spirit of the Quaker Worship experienced by early Friends – a session with guided meditation.

Tuesdays 1.10pm to 1.40pm – BREATHE – Quaker style worship with the Leeds Universities Chaplaincy Team

Tuesdays 7.30pm Bible book club – everyone is welcome as we value differing views – this week we will continue the theme of 'Miracles'

Thursdays 8.30am to 9am – BREATHE – Quaker style worship with the Leeds Universities Chaplaincy Team

Fridays 2pm Poetry – Bring one or two poems to share, your own or those of others, or just come and listen – all are welcome

Letters to the editor

The Light Within

Richard Rohr is an American Catholic Franciscan friar who writes (it isn't just him!) a daily spiritual email on a weekly subject referencing any and all of the spiritual traditions that he can find relevant. On 2nd October it was the turn of the Quakers as part of a week about mysticism. Here is his introduction:

First gathering in 17th-century England as the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers have always existed on the margins of Christianity, but that doesn't mean their impact has been small. In many ways, they were ahead of their time (and even our times) when it came to women's legitimate place in spiritual leadership, abolitionism, pacifism, and even the necessity of silence to hear the voice of God. From the beginning, they insisted that every individual had access to the "Light Within" and must follow their own conscience. It took the Catholic Church until Vatican II to state that clearly!

Then follows a quote from the American Quaker mystic Thomas Kelly (1893–1941) which you can find online by searching for Rohr and this title.

Patrick Herring

Plant a trillion trees?

In the May Quiet Word I included, as a letter, a reference to a YouTube video called "*Navigate the Afterlife, A Tourist's Guide*" by Richard Martini who related, right at the end, a reply from the spiritual world about how to solve the climate crisis. Their answer was: "*plant a trillion trees*". So I wished to know whether this held any water at all. Following a random web-advert one day I found that there is a campaign called the Trillion Tree Campaign, sponsored by the UN. In fact it's in Wikipedia, has its own website (trilliontreecampaign.org), and started in 1977. It says about a trillion trees will offset about 10 years of carbon emissions. So the spirits knew something! Unfortunately perhaps the causers of the problem will just say they can keep going and make more money.

Patrick Herring

Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners

On iPlayer now - and for 6 months - is David Olusoga's very watchable documentary about what happened in the 18th century and after. It includes reference to a website called **Legacy of British Slave-ownership** (link <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>) where you can look up your own family name and other details. Of course I looked up my own and various names in my family tree with only vague matches that would take much more investigation to resolve. But then I tried William Lindow. He had a portrait done by George Romney of him and his wife, Abigail, complete with a sailing ship in the background. It's in the Tate. He was a trader in Lancaster in 1765. I've inherited a family story, and a copy of the picture, that he is part of my family tree. The justification seemed to be that his wife looks very like my mother and the female line. But it turns out he was also a slave owner with plantations in Saint Vincent and Grenada. The ship wasn't for general trade it was for bringing the sugar back, presumably to Liverpool.

It turns out that they didn't have any children, so I can't be their descendant. Even so I need to investigate what is the truth behind the family story. Why I'm mentioning this here is that the families mentioned are all Quakers in Lancaster. The main one was the Rawlinsons. Which makes you think. My thoughts before this discovery were that anyone benefiting from an economy that's reliant on enslaved people is connected to that history, though not really in the same way as a slave-owner, or is it?

Patrick Herring

The Spiritual Dimension Of Life

Dear Friends,

I have only been in touch with a few of you since the Covid-19 pandemic took hold. I have begun work on a pamphlet-sized book which may interest a few Quakers. Here is the introduction – a first draft, but I hope it will be stimulating and may even provoke a little discussion.

The Spiritual Dimension Of Life – Introduction

I have become interested in what people of various faiths may have in common. I include secular humanists here, for they also put their trust in a set of values by which they seek to live.

In my opinion a secular humanism can serve as the starting point of a religious faith. If we believe in the value of each created human life, this is an implicitly religious faith. If we take humane values seriously, we have to trust that they apply equally to people in the final stages of dementia or mass murderers like Adolf Hitler who remained unrepentant and whose last vestiges of control lay in committing suicide in a bunker. If there is something of value in their lives it must surely lie in their own spiritual nature which survives bodily death and gives them the potential to rise to great heights of wisdom and compassion. If humane values are to have a rational foundation, this must be it. The same applies to religious forms of faith in which everyone has a potential for redemption which can never be destroyed.

It is a tall order living by humane values when we are confronted by extreme examples such as this. Instead of giving up on the people we love when they cannot even recognise us, we need a kind of blind faith. Instead of reacting with fear and loathing towards the more notorious psychopaths of the world, we also need a kind of blind faith. Whatever precautions we may take, we ourselves are damaged by the obsessional forms of fear and loathing which prevent us from recognising anything of value in a fellow human being.

Yet, if blind faith is to give way to something more insightful, we know what form it must take. We should find reasons for believing that each and every one of us is endowed with a spiritual nature like the one I have described. If the reasoning is good, the more we focus on this conviction, the more our humane values may be sustained in practice: values which are in accord with the way things are become less fragile when we are in a moderate state of physical and mental health. By helping to calm our agitation and giving us a more optimistic outlook in the here and now, they can improve our morale. By focussing steadfastly on our conviction, we may also become more resilient.

It does not take a genius to recognise this practical form of reasoning. All that remains is to provide forms of reasoning which establish that we are each endowed with a spiritual nature. They should be open to everyone, regardless of whether or not they have any kind of religious doctrine: they should, however, be willing to keep an open mind.

That then, is the purpose of this little book: I hope to communicate the forms of reasoning which establish that we are indeed endowed with a spiritual nature. If I can apply them to my own life, other people should be able to apply them to theirs. As an added bonus, I will also be discussing some of the more accessible forms of “engaged spirituality”. These are forms of quiet contemplative practice in which we may calm our minds as we sit still, in readiness to care for ourselves and others. In embryonic form, they may be found in Quaker meetings and they many complement more outwardly exuberant forms of coming together as a human spiritual community.

When the Covid-19 pandemic was not limiting people's lives, I used to attend Quaker meetings. In deference to the Christian origins of the movement, they are called “meetings for worship”. These days people who join the Quaker movement in Britain come from a variety of faiths, whilst some here become disillusioned with the more formal kinds of religious doctrine and practice. Neither the religious institutions of the world, nor the teachers who are regarded as gurus are able to live up to our ideals of human perfection – as some of use have found out to our cost. It is not surprising that people become disillusioned.

Yet there is a spiritual practice which we may all have in common. On the surface it requires no religious faith. Through all the vicissitudes of life, we can keep returning to a practice of opening our hearts to our fellow human beings and the natural world. It sounds simple, a cliché even, but it is an act which may be learned through periods of silent meditation and the practical ways of integrating this into our daily lives. We are sometimes so overwhelmed by circumstances in this unpredictable world that our concerns become ever narrower. Our own physical and emotional distress may swamp out any other concerns, whilst we may also feel so powerless to help even ourselves that we feel worthless and sink into depression. So, even when we have high humanitarian ideals, they are not nought: we must be able to return once more to the practical business of caring for ourselves and others and the meditations which open our hearts. Our supposedly “inward” emotional lives and subjective states of awareness are not so inward after all: they communicate, or send signals to others. Consciously, or less consciously, they are affected by our moods.

When we ask what we are doing through such an “inner” practice, the answer is quite simple. We are modifying the human biology and past conditioning which have such a marked effect on our moods and subjective states of awareness. How is this possible? Once again the answer is simple: there must be a dynamic aspect of our lives which cannot be reduced to the human biology and conditioning which have operated since we were conceived in our mother's womb. In other words, we are endowed with a spiritual nature – and is it this which enables us to turn out lives around. So are better able to care for others. We are not as powerless as we may at first appears to be.

This little book is divided into two parts. The first is entitled "*Reason and Spiritual Awareness*": here I will be looking at the reasoning which establishes that we are endowed with a spiritual nature. In the second part, I will be exploring some of the more basic spiritual practices which may help to turn our lives around. "*An Engaged Spirituality*" is concerned with practices which are reasonably accessibly to ordinary people and may lead on to the more profound forms of meditation and prayer which are to be found in the various religious traditions of the world. If we are to work well together in an opening of the human heart, we will need practices that ordinary people can return to in the midst of their everyday lives. This is the key to any engaged spirituality whose ripples spread out into the wider world.

As I have mentioned, Quaker meetings are one of the places where people have been developing an engaged spirituality which cuts across ancient religious traditions – and includes people who have drifted away from those traditions. As someone who has begun to explore the Quaker path, I have been asking myself a typically Quaker question: "Are there ways in which this path can be strengthened and deepened?" During my adult years, I have been a secular humanist trying to work for peace and justice. Feeling the need for an inner practice to support this work, I have explored the Buddhist tradition in my own limited way, before returning to my childhood Christian faith. So, in my old age, I am asking whether I can draw from my experience to transform my life a little more and share what I have learned with a few Quakers, at the very least. There may be fresh ways of enhancing our Quaker faith and practice, ways we may share with others who are interested. This is something I hope to explore by the end of the book.

Andrew Lloyd

Spiritual practice in daily life

It seems that there's no separation between what we "do" in Meeting for Worship and how we go about our daily lives. This is a collection of write-ups of what people "do" in their spiritual practice. That started being expressed at a meeting one Sunday, called by Ben Wood and Andy Watson. The collection was introduced by Andy in the April issue.

Spiritual healing with Heart Centering 2

I've continued to experiment with heart centering energy as a healing energy, with partial results. A main finding is being more still & silent in meditation gives a stronger *qi* effect, although I haven't as yet experienced any definite effect from the *qi*. I do keep experiencing the relationship between maintaining a calm and peaceful life with a meditation practice, and finding a reduction in symptoms, though I'm not sure what is causing what.

There has been no more reduction in insulin needs, though the balance is always shifting slightly. No change is a good thing in itself. Instead, I've experienced a reduction in blood pressure. It easily goes up again due to being stressed by many things, so I have to start again, with patience. I'm currently trying to reduce the dosage of pills, which would be most welcome since there are always side effects with long-term usage.

There's little else to report at this stage, but I always intuited that progress would be slow.

Patrick Herring

Poem: *winter presence*

*On bare fuchsia stems
orange brown yellow
snails cling like berries*

Rose Anderson

Seeing with Pictures

Some art has a spiritual interpretation. It may not be the intention of the artist, nor be the only possible interpretation. But sometimes you see things in a new way. It's worth writing it down to remember the thought. Hopefully others will have such thoughts to contribute.

all things shall be well

This one is a meditation on some music rather than a picture. If clicking on the image doesn't work try copying this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br0qOYFDB6k> to a web browser.



Mozart, *Clarinet concerto, adagio*, 1791

I've heard it mentioned that the 18th century Viennese composer Mozart was the same person, via the mechanism of reincarnation, as the 14th century English mystic Julian of Norwich.

This seems ridiculous. Surely there can be no connection between those two people, or those two cultures, and over such a long period of time. But the slow movement of his clarinet concerto was written whilst he was also working on *The Magic Flute*, with its themes of trial and initiation into higher knowledge. And also on the *Requiem*, which he thought might well be his own.

Now read her words which were written four centuries earlier in summary reflection after nearly dying, receiving the Last Rites, and then receiving many visions about sin and love:

*All shall be well,
and all shall be well,
and all manner of thing shall be exceeding well.*

Time stands still indeed.