



STAFFORDSHIRE QUAKER



AUTUMN ISSUE, OCTOBER 2020

REFLECTIONS ON LOCKDOWN: FLOWERS, A BENCH AND PEACE



This year has been a challenge for everyone all over the globe. It feels like an elastic band year where we are all waiting for the inevitable snap. Our everyday lives have been disrupted and our behaviour patterns have changed in order to comply with Government legislation. On a sad note, we are all so sorry for those who have suffered and for the ones we have lost. The daily news has continually portrayed negative coverage. Travel back to early March 2020. Remember meeting together and experiencing quiet worship every Sunday? Afterwards we would chat or have shared lunch together. I know for certain, if my week had been difficult, the quiet found at

the Meeting House would always refresh my spirit and help me onwards into the week ahead. Problems would rest there and sometimes just fade into peaceful moments. And, one special treat would be to walk around the Meeting House garden afterwards.

Blink. Open your eyes. Here we are, September 2020, wearing or carrying face coverings. Walking down the street there is a mixture of responses to this “new normal” but the majority are adapting and carrying on. Our communities and our lives have changed beyond recognition. The virtual world has become essential communication for most people. On Sundays we are temporarily exchanging our Meeting House worship for online worship. These times are unprecedented, and, in many ways, we are all pioneers.

My first few weeks of lockdown was spent indoors shielding. Headaches got so bad I decided to go to the Quaker garden. There the breeze, grass, and trees

were all very intense. We had sowed wildflower seeds by the wall early in March and throughout the Summer they made a magnificent display. These had been gifted by a friend and they were beautiful. The bench, kindly donated by two friends, was relocated to the burial-ground. It felt right there. Sitting down I looked onto the burial-ground, Meeting House, Quaker cottages and into the distance St Edward’s steeple was visible. Everywhere was strangely still. All the plane trails were gone in the sky. Instead, bird song chorused whilst the world dealt with the national emergency. Leek Quaker Meeting House has stood firm since 1697. The F/friends of yesteryear who trod here would have endured many troubled times. The silence hugged the garden. Pollinators worked away busily amongst the flowers. Sitting on the bench everything felt peaceful.

Annie Egerton,
Leek Meeting

BEHIND THE COVID MASKS

- *The call of the wild*
- *Meeting again*
- *Reading with new purpose*
- *The search for the new normal*

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STRENGTHENED
WHEN WE SAT
DOWN ONCE
AGAIN WITH
FRIENDS IN
MEETING

RETURN TO MEETING IN WOLVERHAMPTON

On Sunday 6 September my husband Peter and I ventured out, equipped with facemasks and hand gel, to our first post-Covid Quaker Meeting. Although we were very much looking forward to attending our local meeting, we were also slightly apprehensive about how safe and comfortable we would feel.

Looking back now we realise that we should have had more faith as there was no need for any apprehension at all ! As soon as we approached the Meeting House

we were immediately greeted warmly and directed to the hand sanitizer and where to enter our contact details.

The doorkeeper then clearly and reassuringly explained to us, and to every person attending, the seating arrangements (and in which direction to travel!) We then sat down, closed our eyes and immediately felt relaxed. It was as if we had never been away !

During 'Lockdown' Pete and I have tried to spend more time reflecting and meditat-

ing, to enable us to feel closer to the Spirit, but this was definitely strengthened when we sat down once again with Friends in Meeting.

Finally ~ we would like to thank all the Friends who have worked so hard to enable our Meeting

House to open again. It was a wonderful moment and a great success !

Thank you again from
Lisa and Peter Stedman,
Wolverhampton Meeting

WHAT SORT OF PANDEMIC IS THIS?

Since March there has always been water in the taps. And in the lavatory cisterns. The other utilities, gas and electricity, have been completely reliable. Also Local Authorities have collected household waste regularly as normal.

In Syria and some other countries very many people suffer without any of these. In daytime temperatures well above body heat.

Incomplete contrast at our supermarkets we have had to

queue. And when you get inside, how few shortages have there been? How rarely has a shelf been empty?

The number of deaths has been about a fifth higher than normal. Usually the country loses 1% of the population a year, 50,000 a month. In 6 months since March there have been 60,000 Covid-related deaths. Of course each bereavement is deeply regrettable for the next of kin, other relatives and

friends of the deceased.

But this is nothing remotely like Ebola or the Black Death.

So until a vaccine becomes available (no guarantee about if and when) we should be able to continue essential manufacturing, distribution, health and related services, and all education.

John Nicholls,
Wolverhampton Meeting

INVITATION TO LICHFIELD MEETING ON ZOOM

Lichfield Meeting would like to invite F/friends from other meetings in Staffordshire to join us by Zoom for Meeting for Worship. You can also join by telephone. This will be every Sunday from 9.00 am, with Meeting for Worship commencing at 9.45 am.

Join the Zoom Meeting at
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342878678?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342878678?pwd=dDVYNk5zaHhuOXhaM0c1elZrV0RRUT09)
[pwd=dDVYNk5zaHhuOXhaM0c1elZrV0RRUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342878678?pwd=dDVYNk5zaHhuOXhaM0c1elZrV0RRUT09)
Meeting ID: 843 4287 8678
Passcode: 273594

Telephone joining
0 203 481 5237 UK
Meeting ID: 843 4287 8678
Passcode: 273594

Non UK based? Find your local number: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342878678?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342878678?pwd=dDVYNk5zaHhuOXhaM0c1elZrV0RRUT09)
[pwd=dDVYNk5zaHhuOXhaM0c1elZrV0RRUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342878678?pwd=dDVYNk5zaHhuOXhaM0c1elZrV0RRUT09)

When using your telephone to call into the meeting the following features are available by pressing:

*6 will toggle mute/ unmute * 9 will toggle raise/ lower hand

NO RIGHT OR WRONG

2020 has seen a global emergency that has changed so many lives in so many ways. There is so much to consider and reflect on. I feel that on an individual basis there has been great potential to be highly empowered to be an agent for sustained positive change and action in my life and the life of others. Yet at times the situation has caused anxiety and feeling of overwhelm.

On a personal level registering for the NHS SAMS scheme, starting work on an allotment (had a good first crop of potatoes!) and being 'chief cook and bottle washer' for around 14 weeks for two key workers. Who were working shifts and overtime during the initial UK peak. Provided me with a sense of purpose and routine.

The overwhelm came without warning and could cause a tidal wave of despair.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians, 1: 3 – 4,
Praise to the God of all comfort

Sleep became disturbed, the need to check media news reports became obsessive, close relationships at times challenging and tense.

Quakers helped, initially there were some telephone calls and update emails. Then one member arranged

I went to meeting.

'Here I am', I said.

'That's all right.'

'Just for a bit of a sit-down.'

'Whatever you need.'

'You mustn't expect anything from me,' I said, 'I can only bring a need.'

'Whatever you have.'

Dorothy Nimmo, 1979,
Quaker faith & practice,
21.19

for Zoom meeting to catch up, which evolved to study sessions; all of these helped me with a sense of connection. Whilst there was opportunity to join meeting for worship online via Zoom or telephone. My situation made this difficult; as it would exclude other household members from the dining room, the main thoroughfare in our terrace house to the kitchen etc.

As some of the recent lockdown eased there was op-

portunity to utilize the Meeting House garden for worship. Not only was this so positive personally to be able to meet others in the flesh so to speak and engage in joint gathering, it enabled reflection and instilled a sense of peace. As a personal observation there is currently building work going on at the site next to the meeting house. There was potential to be observed by the workers at this site as worship took place. Who knows if seeds were sown, as we bore witness to our faith?

Some 6 months on since Covid 19 became a lived with, day-to-day ongoing reality, I have reflected. Have I done too much or too little, helped or hindered my own situation and the lives of others? After much pondering and enquiry I read an article in a newspaper and a 'columnist' suggested the thought that there has never been a global emergency of this kind before and basically there is no right or wrong way to act or feel.

Feelings of contentment and clarity started to arise, if I have moments of emotional chaos that's part of my development and growth.

K.B. W - P,
Stafford Meeting

SO THAT WE
CAN COMFORT
THOSE IN ANY
TROUBLE WITH
THE COMFORT
WE OURSELVES
RECEIVE FROM
GOD

THE SEARCH FOR THE NEW NORMAL: MUTUALISM

On the face of it the Covid-19 pandemic has shown an increase in the genuine desire for mutualism. The Wolverhampton Mutual Aid Group which sprang up from individuals, political organisations, religious groups, and community organisations is a good example of the development of mutualism in action. However there seems to be a part of the UK government that would rather rely on the competitive 'free' market to address our current situation.

Building mutualism beyond and through the grass roots, organic development and into a more universal understanding means addressing the political, economic, and moral imperatives. We need to explain this effectively and clearly within our diverse population, so people become convinced of it as a real developmental alternative.

'We have the technology and

resources to build a world based on cooperation rather than competition – it is time for politics to catch up.' (Grace Blakeley, *Stolen, How to Save the World from Financialisation*, 2019)

We can take politics here in the wider sense of simply 'human organisation'. The implication of this cooperative 'organisation' of society is to move the focus of our economy from one of consumption to one of need. A way of looking at the needs and requirements of humanity as well as the planet in which we exist.

Currently western society is based on assumptions about the innate competition between life forms and therefore for an aggressive hierarchy within humanity. If we look at Natural Science, progression of species is often based around mutual aid and symbiosis rather than a competition for survival. This is a much better example to use

for human society than 'dog eat dog' competition. Maybe we can understand and engage with this mutuality in a political sense as collective cooperation and spiritually as love.

Quakerism has always been moved to challenge the need for human hierarchy from early members refusal to doff their caps to the aristocracy and through the very organisation of the Society itself. Mutualism runs through the organisational and spiritual life of Friends and provides us with a basis to help human society progress.

For us to build mutualism and a real economy of need it is important that we see it as part of the very practical fabric of our lives not just as a philanthropic or spiritual adjunct but something we see as fundamental to human development.

Richard Ashwell,
Wolverhampton Meeting

ENGAGE WITH
THIS MUTUALITY
IN A POLITICAL
SENSE AS
COLLECTIVE
COOPERATION
AND
SPIRITUALLY AS
LOVE

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN READING IN LOCKDOWN?

With libraries closed I am re-reading books from our well-filled shelves. Plenty of choice from Harry Potter to an intense read *The Changing Mind* by an American Neurologist to *Just Boris* a revealing biography of our PM. A reviewer comments 'The only person who won't want to read this is Boris'.

My latest re-read has been *With the end in Mind* by Kathryn Mannix, a Palliative Care Consultant with 30 odd years experience of working with the dying. The subtitle

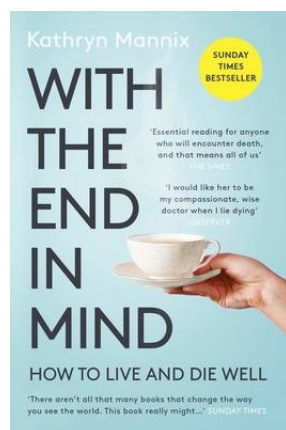
is *How to live and die well*. As she says, we are given much support and information about giving birth, but little about the process of death, and it has ceased to be a familiar part of everyday life. Through stories of guiding those dying and those closest to them to come to terms with death and the process of dying, she illustrates the variety of responses to the situation, but in the end the process is the same.

I found the book illuminating and comforting as well as sad

at times. The majority of us won't experience a sudden death, but will have time to face up to it and prepare ourselves and our loved ones.

As A&Q says 'Can you contemplate your own death and the death of those closest to you...?' For me this book helped - and maybe it will help you. If it sounds familiar, it was reviewed in *The Friend* last year.

Alison Samuels,
Wolverhampton Meeting



DEAR FRIENDS, OLD AND NEW

For several years and reasons I have not been attending meeting. However these months of lockdown and isolation have brought home the value of friendship and I have started attending Stoke meeting, with social distancing and masks of course. I started attending Stafford meeting about 20 years ago

and then Stoke when I moved, frequently with one of my now six grandsons. Now I bring my lapdog Snoopy with me as he is elderly and doesn't like being left alone whereas he loves meetings. Any misbehaviour, allergies or objections and I will stop his attendance.

I am really enjoying the solace and friendship I find there and look forward to the time when we can meet openly and visit various other meetings again.

Yours in love and friendship
Jenn Pardue,
Stoke Meeting

The Illusion of Victory
was written by
11-year-old
Arthur Romain,
one of Jenn Pardue's
grandsons.

THE ILLUSION OF VICTORY

by arthur a. romain

As we ready for battle I feel a lump in my throat, I was pulled into war by posters and the propaganda but I realise now it's just an illusion. I put on my helmet and dread to think what the horrors ahead will be, as I reload my gun I think about mother "you must goenny, for victor" my eyes water. That damned victory. As I leave the tent I fall into deep thought about the landscape around me, the bodies of fallen men lying forgotten pulled in like me, by that sweet, evil victory. The shell holes made by the factories at home where the women tire endlessly to win the war. Were fighting against evil? they said but I have become evil. I've seen thing children, men, women, but I've trooped on, past the trenches and into the front line. I feel I may never leave. I'm woken up from day dreams by a whistle, that damned victory.

'THAT SWEET, EVIL
VICTORY'

RECENT WORK BY PEACEMAKERS

OR HOW A SCHOOLS-BASED PROJECT IS COPING WITH COVID-19



I took over as Staffs Area Meeting representative on the management committee of peacemakers late 2019. At that point the project was in a very good place, with 6 staff (a mixture of full-time or contracts) and a full programme of work to do.

The courses for primary schools on peacemaking and peer mediation were going strong; a few schools were using Peacemakers to help them work towards a restorative system for school discipline; there were projects with abused women and work in schools to help reduce knife crime.

THE PROJECT
NEEDS OUR
CONTINUING
SUPPORT

*With great resourcefulness, during lockdown Sara Hagel was involved in a project to produce activities to help support school children when they returned to school. A collective of researchers, restorative practitioners and school leaders worked together to produce a set of resources available to download free on the **RESTORE** website.*

**Recognition
Empathy
Safety
Trauma
Opportunity
Relationships
Engagement**



Then the arrival of lockdown in March which led to closure of the office, schools closed and with this the income source of the project stopped.

It was a fairly easy decision that most staff should be furloughed under the job retention scheme, with only

Sara Hagel (project manager) remaining at work. It was June before some of the full time staff resumed work part-time and by September all staff were back. Was it right to accept Government funding? Without this, jobs would certainly have been lost.

Now, in late September, the future remains uncertain. A small amount of work in schools is taking place but this has to take account of covid safety and schools are preoccupied with other priorities. Peacemakers staff, mostly working from home, are trialling online training courses and revising some of their peacemaker activities for use out of doors. Who can tell when schools will function normally again?

The project needs our continuing support.

John Babb,
Wolverhampton Meeting

THE BULL STREET BASE

'Peacemakers' is the working name of The West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project and is a branch of Central England Quaker Charities.

Established in 1987 'Peacemakers' is based above the Quaker Peace Hub on Bull Street in Central Birmingham. Bull Street Meeting House lies behind it.



'Peacemakers' educates for peace, working with both adults and children to

develop social and emotional learning and build positive relationships.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

O Little Town of Bethle-
hem...

How vast your binding Wall

Making sure there is no

Peace to all men on earth...

I suspect there is seldom a Christmas that a practising Christian does not sing the carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. The lyrics were written for a Sunday school event in 1868 by the American Episcopal clergyman Phillips Brooks, 3 years after he had journeyed to Bethlehem on horseback on Christmas Eve.

The little, idyllic, and peaceful scene is a universe away from today's sprawling town riven by the ugly, enormous concrete wall snaking through the town to cause the maximum inconvenience. To travel from Bethlehem and Jerusalem, once a journey of 10 minutes by car or bus, now blocked by the Wall, becomes a circuitous 2-hour route for Palestinians to East Jerusalem, involving many hairpin bends. Not that all Palestinians may enter Jerusalem. A permit is required! Far from being a defensive Wall, it seemed to me a Wall of aggression, being twice the length of the UN border between Israel and Palestine, grabbing areas that the Israelis fancied and/or to create maximum disruption to the economic and social welfare of the Palestinians. Imagine, for example, if your house were hemmed

in on 3 sides by such an affront to human dignity!

I find it enormously difficult to sing the carol with still vivid images of the enormity of the Zionists' illegal occupation of Palestine.

Two Israeli Jewish women, key members of the feminist *New Profile* group which bravely campaigns in Israel to eliminate the militarism that permeates every pore of Israeli society outlined *New Profile's* counselling network that helps those Israelis who refuse to be part of the 54,000 annual conscripts. Women serve for 2 years and men 3 years. 12% of Israelis either don't enter military service or don't complete their term. I was surprised to learn that at any one time there are 22,000 in prison for conscientious objection to military service. *New Profile* counsellors work with some 2,000 people traumatised by their military experiences.

It may be difficult for us in this country to appreciate the extent of military penetration in civil culture. However, consider the mind-set of the Israeli mother whose son was killed in combat: 'And now I feel completely Israeli.' Imagine the state of mind that needs the death of one's son in order to feel complete.



By that, of course, she meant completely *Jewish* Israeli. The state of Israel does not exist. It was the Jewish State of Israel born out of the war of 1947/48, which led to Britain's prompt abandonment of its Mandate of Palestine granted by the League of Nations in 1920 and the dispossession and exile of some 1 million Palestinians as well as the slaughter of several thousands.

In the war to establish the Jewish State, the Zionists expropriated Palestinian property on a massive scale, destroying 525 villages and taking 78% of Palestine compared with the 56% that had been the original UN plan. This explains why Palestinians call the day after Israel declared its independence on 14 May 1948, *Nakba*, (catastrophe).

Jews from any part of the world have the right to settle in Israel whereas the Palestinian refugees and their descendants have no right of return and no right to their confiscated property. Jaffa

IMAGINE THE
STATE OF MIND
THAT NEEDS THE
DEATH OF ONE'S
SON IN ORDER
TO FEEL
COMPLETE.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM (CONTINUED)



Embroidered wall-hanging

TRADITIONAL
PALESTINIAN
EMBROIDERED
ITEMS

was the most important Palestinian commercial centre until 1948 when 90% of the city's 120,000 Palestinians were expelled.

Today there are fewer than 4,000 Palestinians living in Jaffa, part of the 2 million Palestinians living in Israel but having no right to Israeli nationality nor even to be recognized as Palestinians. The state defines them as Arab Moslems or Arab Christians. They must attend Israeli schools and Israeli colleges, use only Hebrew and are cut off from their Palestinian history. Significantly, they are not allowed military service which further disadvantages them in employment. A key question for job applications concerns military service: none is a major disadvantage and frequently a bar to employment.

Prior to their 1947/48 war of independence, the militant Zionist immigrants in Palestine compiled a Domesday-type register of all the Palestinian settlements in the area that they would declare to be Israel. They knew the position of the entrances to villages, size and composition of the populations, main economic activities and quantity and type of weaponry. Plans to forcibly remove the Palestinians were prepared in detail and senior political and military leaders (at that time more or less the same people) admitted it

would be removal by force and 'brutal force if necessary.'

I spent several days in Beit Sahur, a suburb of sprawling Bethlehem, a far cry from 'O Little Town of Bethlehem', staying with a Palestinian Christian couple, Najla and George Azar. Najla coordinates the sale of traditional Palestinian embroidered items, such as bags, shawls and cushion-covers, made by 28 Palestinian women. The women are single, widowed or with a husband too unwell to work in a country with no social security so their traditional skills create their only family income. Their website shows the colourful quality and range of the products: www.crostitch4palestine.wordpress.com.

Anyone interested in purchasing to support the vital life-line for those families may email an order to Najla: crostitch4palestine@gmail.com or to me and I will place a combined order: peter@kent-baguley.co.uk. Fortunately, the pandemic has not affected the work of the group.

In Bethlehem I visited the Wi'am community project which provides advocacy support for people as well as some facilities for pre-school and early years play facilities in the grounds, one boundary of which, is the intimidating Israeli Wall complete

with a watch tower! The metal structure mounted on the wall to the left of the tower is a 'low level' response to any activity the duty soldiers may feel needs attention: it sprays liquid sewerage - and some of us feel water cannon grotesque! Point a camera at the slim, horizontal windows at the top of the tower, as I did, and watch them open for the end of a barrel to appear! Tear gas, rubber bullets and real bullets are the 'higher level' responses to activities on the road below.

30 years ago, Basma Giacaman, then only 21 years old, established an inspiring voluntary project where she and a small team work with 35 people, ages from 14 to 35 'with moderate intellectual disabilities' for whom there is no state provision. Basma's principal aim is to enable each person to become as self-sufficient as possible. Weaving is a major activity and the excellent rugs produced yield an income. Other artistic activities are encouraged. They learn to make fuel blocks from compressed newspapers and these provide the sole source of heating for the centre during the winter months. Basma is now seeking funding so that the Centre can buy some hens. Once individuals become competent in looking after them she then hopes to be able to purchase hens for them to have at home. Self-sufficiency in eggs achieved. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM (CONTINUED)

meant the 'temporary' closure of the project.

North of Bethlehem, at Nablus, I walked through part of the incredibly claustrophobic Balata refugee camp of 23,000 people of all ages surviving in over-crowded cramped conditions with perhaps the highest population density in the world. No wonder both the first and second *Intifada* erupted there.

The camp was set up in 1951. For how much longer must it exist? I visited one of the 2 remaining soap-producing factories in Nablus. There were once 35! But the guide lamented that Israeli advertising propaganda has successfully convinced the majority of the Palestinians that anything Israeli is superior to their own products, which is ironic since, for example, a large proportion of 'Israeli made' jeans and shirts are made by Palestinians in Nablus!

My stay in Ramallah, Palestine's capital, coincided with *Nakba* Day, 15 May, the date that is the international day for remembering conscientious objectors: a nice contrast! There was a small peaceful demonstration, little more than a token gesture, but nevertheless 2 young men were shot dead.

A highlight in Ramallah for me was the Meeting for Worship at the Quaker

Meeting House in the centre of the city. There are only 4 Palestinian Members but fortunately, as when I attended, they are invariably augmented by a dozen or more visiting Members or Attenders. It is an oasis of peace in the centre of a crisis-ridden West Bank languishing under restrictions, fears and frequent Zionist attacks.

The stigmatization, ghettoization, and persecution Jews have experienced through the centuries in so many countries the Zionists themselves now deploy in their illegal occupation of Palestine.

The path to peace with justice is difficult to discern. The ideology of Zionism asserts the right of all Jews to settle in the Jewish state of Israel. Expansionism is an in-built feature of Zionism. 300 or so Israeli settlements with a combined population of some $\frac{3}{4}$ million Jews have been built within the West Bank, each with its own walls and connected to Israel by Jewish-only roads. And in case you were wondering, Israeli and Palestinian vehicle number plates are different colours.

While the USA and Britain were quick to impose sanctions and threaten 'consequences' when Russia annexed Crimea, which had traditionally been part of Russia until for some reason Khrushchev made it part of Ukraine, they appear supine



'... the ugly, enormous concrete wall ...'

towards Israel's continued unfettered aggressive occupation and expansion of its Jewish settlements.

The UK, the EU and other states feebly profess to support the 2-state solution, while hypocritically standing by witnessing its rapidly disappearing feasibility. The world idly stood aside while Israel created a one-state solution. But will the one state be for all to live side by side in peace like the Palestinians and Sephardic Jews co-existed prior to the mass immigration of the Zionist Ashkenazi European Jews? Or, will it be the Zionist dream of a Jewish Israel state from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan river, the *de facto* Apartheid situation we witness today?

Peter Kent-Baguley,
Leek Meeting

THE PATH TO
PEACE WITH
JUSTICE IS
DIFFICULT TO
DISCERN.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM FRIENDS

Seeking inspiration?

These extracts from a leaflet sent to Quaker prison chaplains for distribution to prisoners registered as Quaker may speak to your condition. They were sent by Joan Gripton of Stafford Meeting who is chaplain at Stafford prison.

FOR PEACE



As the fever of day calms towards twilight
May all that is strained in us come to ease.

We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.

For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.

That those who make riches from violence and war
Might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.

That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.

That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.

That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
That our swords be beaten into ploughshares

And no hurt or harm be done
Anywhere along the holy mountain.

*John O'Donohue, Irish poet and philosopher,
from his book 'Benedictus'*

RESTORING
RELATIONSHIPS

We are all interconnected. In the Hebrew scriptures, **shalom** is a vision of living in a sense of 'all-rightness' with each other. Many cultures have a word that represents this notion of the centrality of relationships. For the Maori, it is communicated by **whakapapa**; for the Navajo, **hozho**; for many Africans, the Bantu **ubuntu**; for Tibetan Buddhists, **tendrel**. Although the specific meanings of these words vary, they communicate a similar message: all things are connected to each other in a web of relationships.

In African justice making, any wrongdoing emphasizes the importance of making amends and 'putting right'. Rather than an occasion to inflict punishment, it is an opportunity to address the problems that give rise to interpersonal harm. A wrong can be made right by subsequent actions of the person responsible and other community members.

We all need to apologize, and we all need to forgive, for humanity to have a sustainable future. Otherwise, we are controlled by our past. History easily devolves into taking sides, bitterness, holding grudges, and the violence that inevitably follows. A restorative approach to wrongdoing has a concern for all involved - those harmed, those who cause harm, and their communities.

Richard Rohr, American spiritual writer and Franciscan friar

MAY AN
UNEXPECTED
SERENITY
SURPRISE THEM.

TALKING ABOUT SKIN

Rosa Carter will be known to Staffordshire Friends as Rosemary Crawley of Lichfield Meeting. She has written a memoir of her life which is available in book or kindle form from Amazon. I wrote this review which was published in "The Friend" of 11th September. Do read the book itself – you are certain to find it really interesting.

REVIEW OF
"TALKING ABOUT SKIN":
A MEMOIR,
BY ROSA L. CARTER

Rosa Carter, who is a Staffordshire Quaker, has written a fascinating memoir. Although originally only intended for her three sons, it has now been published for a wider audience. It should be essential reading for white Quakers who wonder about the lack of black people within the Religious Society of Friends.

The preface begins "I am one of the two thousand "brown babies" born in Britain to white mothers and African American GI fathers during

the last two years of World War Two". Her mother with the support of her much-loved Granny resisted pressure from other family members to give Rosa up for adoption. She spent her early life with her mother with very little knowledge of her father who disappeared on military service before she was born.

It is an interesting account of life in the 1950s for Rosa with her mother Ellen who was in domestic service in a rural village. This was extremely hard work with basic housing and, as the only black child in the community, Rosa experienced racism at school, in the community and from her wider family. There were, however, positive people in her life including some good friends and caring adult women.

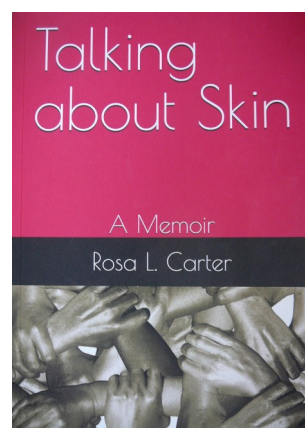
Further education was prevented when her mother refused to fill in details about her father on a grant application and so she was unable to go to university. Rosa's life then took a different path

through nursing training where she met for the first time another black person, Elaine, who became her life-long friend. Through her, Rosa found a positive identity as a black woman.

Rosa experienced two failed marriages – the second having a terrible effect on her resulting in a major breakdown and mental health problems for some years. Recovery came in time with the aid of a counsellor and good friends.

Rosa became a Quaker at this later stage in her life, drawn by Friends' testimonies to Equality, Truth, Simplicity and Peace. But the testimony of Equality does not reflect all of Rosa's experiences within our Society. We should be thankful that she has remained with us, particularly in Staffordshire where she has given much valuable Quaker service.

Helen Lockwood,
Stone Meeting



THE TESTIMONY
OF EQUALITY
DOES NOT
REFLECT ALL OF
ROSA'S
EXPERIENCES
WITHIN OUR
SOCIETY

THE CHILDREN OF ADAM

*Human beings are members of a whole,
since in their creation they are of one essence.
When the conditions of the time brings a member (limb) to pain,
the other members (limbs) will suffer from discomfort.
You, who are indifferent to the misery of others,
it is not fitting that they should call you a human being.*

This is the literal translation of a poem by the 13th century Persian poet Saadi of Shiraz, displayed above the entrance to the United Nations building.

Sent by Nigel Peckett.
Stafford Meeting

WHY IS RACISM A PRIORITY FOR PEACE CHURCHES?

This paper was presented by Rosemary Crawley at a recent European Church and Peace conference. The aim of the conference was to discuss why racism should be a priority for peace churches and peace groups.



church and peace

Church and Peace is the European ecumenical peace church network of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies.

Rosemary is on the steering committee of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network which recently became a member of Church and Peace.

'LET JUSTICE
ROLL DOWN
LIKE WATERS'

Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

Words spoken by Reverend Martin Luther King Junior as part of his, now universally acclaimed "I have a Dream Speech", delivered in front of the Lincoln Memorial on 28 August 1963 at the March on Washington DC, for Civil Rights

Dr King emphasised the absoluteness of the need for justice for black people, linking it quite explicitly to peace. "now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children..... .. The whirlwinds of revolt

will continue to shake the foundation of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges." He demanded again and again the security of justice and liberty as promised in the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Abraham Lincoln a hundred years earlier and still not delivered.

And still not delivered fifty seven years on...

How can there be justice and peace when black people still can't breathe?

There can be no peace without justice. Racism is unjust and it is violent.

The three aspects of racism touched upon here include, the micro aggressions of every day racist behaviour, systemic institutionalised racist abuse and the racism inherent within the causes of climate change and the global responses to it. Be in no doubt that all of these forms of racism damage, and in many cases kill people of colour whether directly or indirectly.

The numerous micro-aggressions of day to day racism occur as commonly within faith organisations as they do anywhere else in our communities. However, experiencing them within a faith setting is so much more hurtful and damaging, if only because it severely compromises what is potentially a place of refuge. Just like everyone else in a worship space, people of colour need the joy of validation, uplifting and spiritual renewal. Living in constant fear and expectation of being 'othered' and reacting to it when it happens is exhausting and debilitating and plays itself out in our increased vulnerability and susceptibility to so many stress related conditions. A young Friend wrote only too movingly and very recently of her hurt and fear of the opinions and expectations of others about and towards her, a young woman of colour.

Numerous and varied injustices are perpetrated through the criminal justice systems and asylum and immigration systems of many European



WHY IS RACISM A PRIORITY FOR PEACE CHURCHES? (CONTINUED)

countries and the UK and the USA. Such systems are built on racism and hostility towards people from the global south, constructed as they are, popularly and democratically on the basis of institutionalised racial biases and racially constructed projects. For the large part, popular support for this racially biased legislation has gone unchallenged by faith organisations.

The hostile environment of the UK has developed over many years. As far back as 1947 the recruitment of labour from the West Indies was being opposed for a range of racialised reasons. The hostility of the environment was demonstrated in so many ways throughout the early decades of settlement, not least in the national failure to properly accommodate newly recruited migrants. Neither were the churches free from hostility towards incoming black Christians. Indeed their reactions came as an unexpected and genuine shock, the repercussions of which have played out over subsequent years in the large scale development of black-led churches across the UK. In black worship spaces people are able to feel the sense of community and family that we all need. They can “exhale, relax and breathe together”. The legacy of that early hostility lives on in what are

now predominantly white churches where the absence of people of colour is at last being seen as a loss and an exclusion though still without any real understanding of how and why this came about.

The so-called race riots in 1958 in Nottingham and in Notting Hill in London triggered the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrant's Act which restricted immigration quite specifically from the new or Black Commonwealth, leaving it largely unaffected for immigrants from the old or White Commonwealth

In the years since we have been swamped by a complex and impenetrable mass of legislation: a further 14 acts followed the 1962 Act culminating in the 2015 Act, which openly introduced itself as setting out to create a hostile environment as though this were a new agenda rather than a continuation and intensification of what had gone before.

Few churches have actively opposed the hostility and exclusion explicit within this long term legislative programme

Thirdly climate change; clearly a concern for faith

groups, but in Europe and the UK still discussed largely in terms of a future event which is likely to have an impact on the lifestyles that people have come to expect and aspire to. In other words it is seen as a threatened apocalypse which we still might manage to avert, with little recognition that its impact is already with us and has been for many years. The impact of climate change is manifested in the numerous typhoons, hurricanes and floods that now regularly beset communities in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East (the global south) and marginalised people in the global north.

“We don't need to read the latest scientific reports to know that those least responsible for causing the climate crisis are usually the most vulnerable to its effects, including displacement. And that those people are overwhelmingly poor, black or brown, and in the global south.”

All of these factors threaten peace and security across the world and the idea that churches can effectively work for peace without attention to the racism that underpins and underlies them is clearly absurd.

Rosemary Crawley,
Lichfield Meeting



Aftermath of the Notting Hill 'riots', 1958

FEW CHURCHES
HAVE ACTIVELY
OPPOSED THE
HOSTILITY AND
EXCLUSION
EXPLICIT WITHIN
THIS LONG
TERM
LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAMME



Black Lives Matter rally in Stoke

DEEP ADAPTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Area Meeting has asked for further explanation of its agenda item 'Deep Adaptation and Sustainability'. Here Damon Hoppe elaborates on the article in our October 2019 edition.

'THE END OF THE WORLD IS EASIER TO IMAGINE THAN THE END OF CAPITALISM.'



Another of the photos of Leek Meeting House garden taken by Stephen and Annie Egerton of Leek Meeting in connection with the article on page 1.

In the innocence of my youth, 'sustainability' was a buzzword. It meant living your life today in such a way that future generations could live just as well. I had high hopes that we would move towards a sustainable way of life, economy, etc, and prevent any possible 'ecological emergency'.

Of course we were all dangerously naive and had no idea that the term would come to mean sustaining 'accelerationism'. That is, sustaining the drive for ever higher levels of technology-fuelled consumption and economic growth.

We now live in a time of ecological collapse in which, as the late Mark Fisher put it, 'The future has been cancelled', for 'the end of the world is easier to imagine than the end of capitalism.'

Movements like Extinction Rebellion, Schools Strike4Climate, etc have emerged in a desperate attempt to halt this 'acceleration', this extinction event. I would urge you all to support them.

Yet as Bill McKibben says 'We have to do something braver than just try to save the world we have known.'

We must accept the fact that the world we have known is going to change in hideous and damaging ways.' Thus a new concept - Deep Adaptation - has come to the fore.

This starts from radical acceptance that we must adapt to the reality of ecological collapse. Prof. Jem Bendell, who coined the term, says '...human societies will experience disruptions to their basic functioning within less than 10 years due to climate stress... Such disruptions include increased levels of malnutrition, starvation, disease, civil conflict and war... This makes redundant the reformist approach to sustainable development...'

What does this mean for us? It is difficult to get our minds around the implications, that everything that we care about is disappearing before our very eyes. We may feel powerless as individuals in the face of the sheer scale of the crisis but by working together as a community we can make 'deep adaptations' in our way of life.

Four possible first steps are: **Dealing with Ecological Grief.** Supporting each other emotionally, as a community, as many are already becoming consumed by feelings of 'ecological grief' (despair, anger, etc). Maybe setting aside time after meeting for worship so that people can express these feelings and support each other. Maybe using the arts to express these feelings and get involved in things like

'No Planet B' in Stafford.

Food Resilience. One of the most important things we must do as a community is to grow our own food. Each Quaker community should facilitate the growing and distribution of organic fruit and vegetables as a community. Have a local Quaker allotment plot and use our gardens to grow for our community.

Skill Sharing Perform a skill audit and facilitate trading skills across the Quaker community eg making bread in exchange for help in the garden.

Make, sew, knit, repair, borrow, exchange. We could repair things, lend out or exchange things we seldom use, and even make our own things. Maybe organise a repair café or a clothing exchange for example.

We can start doing these things now, increasing the depth of our adaptation with each step.

Damon Hoppe,
Stafford Meeting

If the terminology remains confusing might Area Meeting consider adopting another title? We suggest 'Living our Earth Testimony' as a possibility.

Damon Hoppe,
Roger Oldfield,
Stafford Meeting

NEW GOVERNANCE FOR STAFFORDSHIRE AREA MEETING

*This draft is to be considered
at Area Meeting on
October 10*

Area Meeting trustees have recommended that our Area Meeting should register as a charity by adopting the model Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) governing document whose wording has been agreed between the Charity Commission and Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC). This will replace the unincorporated excepted charity governing document (also agreed between the Charity Commission and QSC) accepted by Area Meeting in 2011. Area Meeting minute 13(5) of 12 September 2020 records that local meetings should receive a memorandum explaining this proposal for their consideration, before it returns to AM on 10 October for discussion and maybe decision by Friends in the light of responses from local meetings.

The full documentation involved in this proposal can be forwarded to meetings or individual Friends who wish to study it in detail. Questions and comments can be addressed to Anthony Wilson on behalf of the trustees.

The background to this registration proposal lies in recent Charity Acts, which are bringing the excepted charity status of churches to an end, though the terminal



Area Meeting trustees in action

date is not yet clear. The earlier registration of our QSC-drafted 2011 document was a casualty of austerity, which brought a drastic cut in Charity Commission staff: the registration programme was restricted to those AMs with a regular income of over £100,000 pa. The right ordering of our outward affairs is hard to sustain in this uncertain situation, and the CIO route to registration has been adopted by some other AMs within the Yearly Meeting.

Friends are already aware that our current AM is administered through two procedures, with the same trustees appointed to each for different periods of service. The 1984 Staffordshire Monthly Meeting United Charities (SMMUC) Scheme brings together separate charities pertaining to the management of each of our five meeting house properties (whose custodian ownership rests with Friends Trust Ltd), together with the General Purposes and Relief of Needs funds. The excepted charity governance

document covers our Quaker business method in church affairs. This division has long proved cumbersome and confusing, and would be ended by folding the responsibilities of SMMUC into the new structure and formally winding it up.

In legal terms, the essential difference in this proposed new governance is evident in its title: being incorporated, the trustees would no longer be personally liable for the property and assets of the AM. Becoming a CIO means that the AM as a whole is answerable in the event of any claim against it; and the legal framework is that of company law. This latter point has been carefully addressed, so the Quaker business method in its governance structure is taken word for word from the Quaker Stewardship Committee charity document, and any change in company legislation will be adapted to Quaker practice as stated in our Book of Discipline (Quaker Faith and Practice):

(continued on page 16)

THIS CHANGE IN
OUR LEGAL
FRAMEWORK IS
LIKE THAT IMAGE
OF THE SWAN
WHICH GLIDES
GRACEFULLY
WHILE IT
PADDLES
DESPERATELY
BELOW THE
SURFACE.

NEW GOVERNANCE FOR STAFFORDSHIRE AREA MEETING (CONTINUED)

any matters arising from legislative changes would be handled by QSC on behalf of all AMs affected.

Completing the CIO application is detailed but routine, and will be followed by charity registration. Professional assistance might prove necessary, but we would be drawing on wider experience and expertise within the Yearly Meeting so this may not be called for.

This change in our legal framework is like that image of the swan which glides gracefully while it paddles desperately below the surface. Meetings will be aware of no discernible change in our current practice if the change is made. More immediately, Friends are welcome to join in the continuing discernment involved in the paddling, which has already drawn in the Charity Commission, Quaker Stewardship Committee, Friends Trust Ltd, and other Area

Meetings which have completed the process. Our own trustees are open to a change of course, but meanwhile are commending registration as a charity by becoming a Charity Incorporated Organisation subject to the assent of LMs and AM in session.

Stephen Langford, clerk, for Staffordshire Area Meeting Trustees, 16 September

Anthony Wilson, trustee, 10 Beacon Mews, Lichfield WS13 7AH; 01543 258016;

... AND FINALLY ... THOSE MASKS, THOSE MASKS AGAIN ...



Watching as Friends arrived at Wolverhampton's first physical Meeting for Worship the other week, I was struck by the wide range of face-coverings displayed - a few "standard" ones; the black ones giving their wearers a

slightly sinister look; brightly coloured ones; dainty-patterned ones. Some were homemade, including by a refugee, from a variety of cloths, and the "his and her" masks made from lovely soft cotton by a kind neighbour for my husband and me - one pink and one blue. He declined the pink one!

Various comments afterwards included "I don't like wearing one"; "It makes my specs steam up" (tip I had read was to put a folded tissue on the bridge of your nose, presumably held in place by mask/specs, but I haven't needed to try it); "Can't take it off without

sending hearing aid flying." - definitely a problem I've not resolved. The other problem was struggling to hear spoken ministry through the masks, especially in the enlarged meeting space. But the Meeting House felt a safe place to be thanks to much preparation by our Premises Committee, and it was good to be together again, though we continue to worship by zoom on alternate Sundays.

Alison Samuels
Wolverhampton Meeting



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