

Quaker News



An update on Quaker work in the care of Britain Yearly Meeting



Building a faith for all ages

No. 98 – Autumn 2017

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Cover image: Quaker worship as depicted in *Let's explore the Quaker way*, a new booklet for children from author and illustrator Rebecca Price (see page 13).

Editorial

"Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age. All are heard, valued and supported both in our needs and our leadings. Everyone's contribution is accepted according to their gifts and resources. All are welcomed and included. There are clear and effective ways of working together on shared concerns. Fellowship and fun strengthen the bonds between us, enhancing a loving community."

Our faith in the future

As I write, Quakers are returning to their local meetings from the largest all-age Quaker gathering in the world this year – British Quakers' Yearly Meeting Gathering. Here 1,800 Friends came together for a week of worship, community and exploration of how we live out our Quaker faith in the world today (pages 6 and 7).

Meeting together has always been an important aspect of Quakers' lives: early Friends travelled long distances on foot and on horseback to meet, worship together, and strengthen each other to face the challenges of living a faithful life. Then, as now, it wasn't always easy. Seventeenth-century Friends spent long periods in gaol; in the week I write this,

several Quakers were arrested for worshipping in the roadway outside the world's largest arms fair (page 12). Often, it is worshipping with our Quaker community that gives us the support and courage to follow our leadings and seek to change the world. It can take bravery to take our convictions into our schools and workplaces (pages 4 and 5) or wider lives. It can take determination to work at a national and international level for peace (page 10) and the recognition of every human's right to sanctuary (pages 8 and 9).

To be a living, loving, thriving faith community, it's imperative we continue to make the Quaker experience available to all who seek it (pages 11 and 14). The guidance of the Spirit is available to us all. Yearly Meeting called for us to work on our own diversity and to examine "how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings".

What are you doing to welcome newcomers, whoever they may be, and to share with them the richness of the Quaker experience?

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

Quaker News

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A magazine about work supported by Britain Yearly Meeting.

Britain Yearly Meeting works on behalf of Quakers in Britain, supporting the Quaker faith and putting Quaker values to work in the world. It is a registered charity, number 1127633.

Quakers try to live simply and sustainably, promoting peace, equality and truth. Putting faith into action is central to their way of life and they gather weekly for quiet worship, usually on a Sunday, in around 480 locations across Britain.

You are welcome to any Quaker meeting for worship. Find your local meeting, and more information about us, at www.quaker.org.uk.

Also available in large print

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Victory in council ethical investment case

How Quakers in Britain supported a judicial review of controversial new government guidance.

Clare Wood, Head of Social Justice Programmes

An important victory took place at the High Court on 22 June 2017 that all Friends can be proud of. The government was deemed to have acted unlawfully by seeking to restrict local councils from making ethical choices in their pensions investments.

The restriction, set out in guidance issued by the government in 2016, banned local councils from divesting from the UK defence industry and from foreign nations. It also left the door open for the government to add other divestment campaigns – including the campaign to divest from fossil fuels – to the guidance without the need for parliamentary scrutiny.

Working with partners and other organisations, Quakers have been calling on the government to withdraw the guidance since it was first announced. Britain Yearly Meeting and Friends around the country submitted responses to a government consultation on it. Britain Yearly Meeting also submitted a formal witness

statement to the court in support of the legal case brought by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain, welcomed the judgement. He said: “We’re glad the decision upholds the legal and moral right of local authorities to make ethical investment decisions that reflect the values and opinions of local communities.”

Quakers engaged in the campaign because we believe the choices we make about our money should be underpinned by our values and can make a practical and positive difference to the type of world we live in. As *Quaker faith & practice* states: “Thought should be given, not only to security and the rate of interest, but to the conditions under which... income is produced and the effect which the investment may have on the welfare of all, through social or environmental impact, at home or elsewhere.”

Quakers have a long history of action on this issue and were the

Building a new economy

The final two booklets from Quaker Peace & Social Witness’s New Economy Project, which aims to help Friends work towards a fair and sustainable economic system, will be available online from October 2017. We encourage Friends to form reading groups to work through the seven-booklet series, and an event is being held on 18 and 19 November in Manchester for those who are inspired to put the ideas into practice. See www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice.

first church in the UK to divest from fossil fuels. We also support campaigns to divest from the arms trade and from trade with illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Our concern around tax avoidance has seen a review of Britain Yearly Meeting’s investments and scrutiny of companies’ tax practices.

Although the government has asked for permission to appeal the judgement, the sections of the guidance relating to the ban on ethical divestment have been quashed with immediate effect. We ask Friends to engage with their local councils to ensure they know about the judgement and to encourage them to take ethical decisions in their pensions investments.

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Choosing not to invest in weapons: a Stop the Arms Fair protest in September 2017. Photo: Ellis Brooks for BYM

Changing the narrative of remembrance

4

A new initiative is looking to take peace education further into the mainstream with a series of nationwide events.

Isabel Cartwright, Programme Manager: Peace Education

The marking of Remembrance Day can be a challenging subject for schools. The narrative pupils are most commonly exposed to is one of 'noble purpose' and 'necessary sacrifice'. Some teachers see this as sanitising or even glamorising war, but it isn't easy for them to question the dominant narrative, and many worry that they may be seen as unpatriotic if they do.

In the run-up to the centenary of the start of World War I in 2014, following requests from a number of secondary schools, Quaker Peace & Social Witness decided to help teachers offer a different point of view. This was in the form of the two classroom resources *Conscience* and *Conviction*, as well as the *White feather diaries* – a social media storytelling project following the lives of five young people who opposed World War I at the time. These

resources sought to encourage an appreciation of the moral complexity surrounding war and to encourage critical thinking about its causes and consequences.

Now, for the commemoration of the centenary of the end of WWI in 2018, we are looking to take things much further. Britain Yearly Meeting and Coventry Cathedral will be strategic partners for Inspire, a new UK-wide project that's being initiated by the Oasis

We want these events to value young people's involvement, reflect local contexts and inspire a new generation to take action.

Trust, the Christian social justice charity founded by Baptist minister Steve Chalke.

Inspire's aim is for every young person in the country to have the opportunity to go to a remembrance event where they can not only remember all those who lost their lives in war, but also reflect on the lessons that can be learnt from the conflicts of the past and on how these principles can be applied to our lives as peacemakers in our communities today.

The morning of Friday 9 November 2018 will see a series of high-profile, simultaneous events for children and young people taking place in cathedrals, mosques and other major public venues across the UK, including an event for 1,000 local children at Friends House in London. The Oasis Trust is teaming up with the BBC to cover these events and their build-up. The large-scale



A white poppy wreath laid for Remembrance Day 2016.
Photo: Anne van Staveren for BYM

events will be accompanied by hundreds of local events hosted by schools, churches, youth projects, and hopefully Quaker meetings. We want these events to value young people's involvement, reflect local contexts and inspire a new generation to take positive action for peace.

We hope that Inspire will mark a significant step into the mainstream for peace education, one that will work to further shift the conventional narrative around remembrance and war. In the run-up to November 2018 we will be producing a 'planning your event' guide, as well as teaching resources and practical tools. Get in touch to find out more.

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Remembrance Day 2017: What can you do?

- Have a look at our remembrance-themed activities and lesson ideas: www.quaker.org.uk/peace-education.
- Veterans for Peace UK invite support for their remembrance events at the cenotaph: <http://vfpuk.org>.
- ForcesWatch has a number of resources including the 2016 paper 'Rethinking Remembrance Day in Schools': <http://bit.ly/fwresources>.
- If you're in Wales check out the activities at www.walesforpeace.org.

Taking action on militarism

How can Quakers resist new developments in the militarisation of British society?

Ellis Brooks, Programme Manager: Peace Education

Militarism – the belief that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively – is nothing new. It began the first time a ruler wanted a reluctant population to fight, and it is something that Quakers have always resisted.

In Britain, as in many other countries, it is on the rise. Some things haven't changed: soldiers are still recruited at the age of 16, despite international condemnation and mounting evidence that it harms the child recruited. Economic recruitment – the targeting of the poor – continues apace. But more recent developments, from the rapid expansion of cadet forces to local councils signing up to military covenants, mean that the fabric of society is turning an even deeper shade of khaki.

There are many worrying seeds being sown in education, including the university technical colleges

linked to the armed forces or arms industry, or, in some cases, both. Significant spending from the arms industry is also going into science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) activities in schools, such as BAE Systems' 'Education Roadshow'.

When it comes to tackling this rising tide, it's worth remembering that militarism consists not only of the size of the armed forces, but also of the cultural attitudes we collectively hold. Challenging it can begin internally, reflecting on how we are influenced by what's happening around us – from what we watch to what we share online. As William Penn asked, what are the seeds of war in your life? Understanding this also gives us an insight into how others might relate to militarism.

If you'd like some ideas on how to take this awareness and put it into practice, have a look at the new *Take action on militarism* pack Quaker Peace & Social Witness is producing with the charity ForcesWatch. It will be launched at an event at Friends House, London, on 21 October, where you can take part in workshops and hear from some of the amazing local groups who are working to challenge militarism around the UK. See www.quaker.org.uk/events/taomg to book.

Britain Yearly Meeting is working hard with and on behalf of Friends to challenge militarism in many other ways. We host a strategy group of partner organisations who are intent on challenging different dimensions of militarism and produce authoritative research, such as that being done by Veterans for Peace UK and Medact

Militarism on screen



Activist filmmaker Mic Dixon is producing *War School*, a new feature-length documentary challenging militarism. The film builds on Britain Yearly Meeting's six-minute short *The Unseen March* (2015) and will feature the voices of veterans, peace educators and campaigners including Quaker Peace & Social Witness Peace & Disarmament Programme Manager Sam Walton.

Go to <http://war.school> for more on the film and to attend a special preview screening.

to expose the consequences of war for soldiers. Political action is proving effective too: Quakers in Scotland teamed up with ForcesWatch to petition the Scottish Parliament about military visits to schools on children's rights and welfare grounds, prompting a wider inquiry.

While militarism in Britain may be growing, there are many ways to resist. Contact us if you're taking action where you are, or want to.

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Children get a taste of military life at an army stall. Photo: Civic Leicester

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017: Listening and learning

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Friends from across Britain gathered for a week at Warwick University to take part in this key all-age Quaker event.

Anne van Staveren, Media Relations Officer

Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) takes place over a week once every three years. It is a hugely varied event with space for worship, decision-making, sharing and learning, and it touches us all in different ways.

One of the wider purposes of the gathering is to listen to each other and to what God requires of us. This year Quakers listened to politicians, toddlers and teenagers, young and not so young, to quiet Quakers and activists. They listened to interdenominational and interfaith guests, a Roman Catholic archbishop and those of Sikh, Muslim and Zoroastrian faith. And to many more – in plenaries, over meals, music and excursions.

Perhaps most importantly of all, we come together at Yearly Meeting to simply be with each other. The photograph of Quakers forming a 'Q' captures a fleeting moment of those present. We are all part of the Quaker community. Some personal encounters come to mind:

- Thuli and Carol from the Quaker Peace Centre in Cape Town: "We change the world, one child at a time." They teach children the ways of nonviolence and take them where they can hear birds instead of bullets.
- George finding "plenty of company in which to walk in pain". He said: "What to my heart was a monstrous violation – that my son should die before me – was in Sri Lanka a mass phenomenon."
- Jasmine singing in the stillness: "God help us to live our lives gently."

- Bridget, who demonstrates outside a detention centre. One day she spotted a sign in a window. She reached for her birdwatching binoculars and read a name, room number and "please visit". She said: "No human beings should ever be called illegal. Refugees are not criminals."

Accounts of the gathering were shared in interviews with mainstream media and by social media. Those not able to attend this year's event can listen to introductions to each session, read minutes and watch lectures at www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

An epistle from the gathering has been shared with Quakers globally. It says this about listening and taking action: "When we engage with the brokenness of the world, one of our tools can be our willingness to listen: to the vulnerable, to each other, to those with whom we disagree, and to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

This enables us to work alongside others powerfully, telling the truth of what is wrong in the world. Sometimes listening will lead us to stillness, at other times to practical action. In all things the Spirit will direct us.

"Working with others gives us strength... Ours may be a supporting role... Sometimes being there is enough.

"Action may demand courage. This may mean taking part in public protests or acts of disobedience. We may be led to challenge rooted injustices and to use our energy to bring about radical change... When our call is clear, we need discipline to test it, and faithfulness to carry it through without counting the cost. May God give us the strength and the grace to be instruments of change."

The book of this year's Swarthmore Lecture, given during YMG, is available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop: www.quaker.org.uk/bookshop



Friends at Yearly Meeting Gathering forming an orderly 'Q'. Photo: Mike Pinches

A very colourful gathering

Yearly Meeting Gathering was made all the brighter this year thanks to the colourful ribbons worn by many participants. They were provided by the Fox Cubs, the group for 3- to 5-year-olds who were part of the week's children's programme for ages 0–11.

"After lots of talking we decided to remember people who are homeless and hungry," said the Fox Cubs' minute. "We cut hundreds of ribbons to give to everyone and ask them to remember [these] people."

For older age groups there were the Young People's Programme (YPP), for ages 11–14, and Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM), for ages 15–17, which were planned and run by arrangements committees of young people supported by adult volunteers.

Both YPP and JYM engaged with the gathering's themes in their own ways. This included attending some of the main sessions and hearing from a variety of visiting speakers, including a member of the American Friends Service Committee. The two groups came together to play 'Hunt the Quaker', and find adult volunteers disguised in a variety of costumes ranging from a traffic light to a jellyfish.

As well as providing time for creativity, spiritual development and socialising, all the programmes included business meetings and nominations. This included the 5- to 7-year-old Penn Friends, who learnt "how Quakerism works and how people decide who is going to talk". The JYM arrangements committee offered optional all-age sessions for everyone, and twice during the week all children and young people came together with the adults for all-age worship.

It was a gathering to remember – and for many it left a lasting impact. "I understand a lot better the meaning of being Quaker," said one programme participant. "Therefore it's a lot easier saying 'I'm a Quaker'."



From top, photos 1, 2, 5 & 7: Mike Pinches; photos 3, 4 & 6: Children and Young People's team for BYM

Towards a culture of sanctuary

8

The Sanctuary Meetings initiative will support Quaker meetings across the country that are working to welcome newcomers to Britain.

Tim Gee, Forced Migration Programme Developer

Britain Yearly Meeting has launched a new project to challenge the government's strategy of creating a "hostile environment" for some newcomers to Britain, and to replace it instead with a culture of welcoming hospitality.

The new Sanctuary Meetings project invites local Quaker communities to become 'Sanctuary Meetings' by committing to building a culture of welcome, challenging racism in all of its forms, and changing the laws on destitution, detention and deportation.

Recognising the action being taken by many Quakers across Britain, local meetings will be provided with training support, regular teleconferences to learn from one another and an annual retreat to reflect and recuperate.

The project also provides the framework to campaign on a joint manifesto for change, including restrictions on the use of immigration detention and the right for asylum seekers to work.

Sanctuary Meetings choose

their actions based on local circumstances. This might involve hosting public meetings with migrant-led groups, assisting with campaigns to resist deportations, supporting City of Sanctuary initiatives, or even establishing houses of hospitality where longer-term residents and destitute asylum seekers live together.

Although the form of each Sanctuary Meeting varies, every meeting is united in the effort to persuade politicians to change the laws that sanction forms of state violence like deportation and detention.

The programme follows a 2016 survey by our national representative body Meeting for Sufferings, which found that more local Quaker meetings were working to help people forced to flee their homes than on any other issue. In recognition of this and Quakers' heritage of helping refugees, Meeting for Sufferings encouraged the scoping of a centrally managed programme to

support Quakers in Britain to take action and advocate for change together. The Sanctuary Meetings initiative is the result.

A video was released online to mark the launch featuring York Quaker and peace activist Kurt Strauss, who was as a child helped by Quakers to escape Nazi persecution in 1939. In it he explains: "To me sanctuary means giving help and assistance, not only to people fleeing from persecution but also people fleeing discrimination, from violence, from anything where they need protection.

"If you're thinking of becoming a Sanctuary Meeting I would encourage you to go ahead."

Acts of Friendship

In a previous Quaker News we asked you to tell us about any action you or your meeting were taking to welcome newcomers. Here are just some of the stories we've heard in the past six months:

Jo, Tottenham Meeting

"A group of us have been meeting in the garden at the Quaker meeting house in Tottenham for about a year now.

"We are a mixture of people from all walks of life, and all of the volunteers have precarious living situations in one way or another. We come together to spend time outside and grow a few vegetables. There's a couple from Kosovo that come every week, they used to live pretty much entirely off the land before they came here, and being able to garden makes them feel closer to that way of life.

"Many of the people I come into contact with struggle with



Detail from a 2017 American Friends Service Committee anti-racism poster.
Image: Kate Deciccio

accessing basic necessities such as food and housing. Some of them now live with me at Martha House in Tottenham – a voluntary organisation which offers temporary accommodation for destitute migrants.”

Anne, Edinburgh Meeting

“When I heard that our local council was asking for volunteer ‘befrienders’ to support Syrian families who were to be resettled in our area, I jumped at the chance to be involved.

“The family I was ‘linked’ to was a single mother and two children. I accompanied them, along with an interpreter, to the necessary appointments (sharing this with my fellow Quaker friend Clare) to open a bank account, register with a GP and dentist, schools and the DSS.

“Although communication was difficult, we tried most of all to show love and concern: this crosses all borders and through all barriers. If we all do something small, it adds up to something big.”

Mo, Lancaster Meeting

“When people started arriving in Lancaster we put together individual welcome packs containing new warm clothing, maps, towels and toiletries.

“There were six teachers willing to offer free English classes once a week in a space in the meeting house, provided free by Lancaster Friends. This year English is being delivered by a local college. Friends initially offered English classes as an act of faith and within a year it is



Lancaster Meeting produces welcome packs for asylum seekers. Photo: Tilly Goodwin

official and it’s funded.

“Welcoming newcomers who have fled their country can be like being very intimately involved in the lives of other members of our family. That is how it feels.”

Paul, Balby Meeting

“The Doncaster Conversation Club provides a wide range of services each week to approximately 150 refugees and asylum seekers from many countries. In addition to English lessons, we provide food parcels, help with paperwork and help tracing families through the Red Cross. This is provided by a group of approximately 20 volunteers in the meeting house at Doncaster. Funding comes from collections from Friends meetings in the region.”

Keith, Sheffield Meeting

“After hearing another member of Sheffield Meeting talk about the barriers facing asylum seekers in the UK, my wife Ethel and I took a leap of faith and set up a house for destitute women asylum seekers. These are the ones who for various reasons failed their first application for asylum in this country and for the next four, five, six years receive no state assistance. We were able to buy this house from our savings and my Quaker meeting agreed to pay for the running costs.”

Christine, Swindon Meeting

“Swindon Meeting has for many years had a close association with a project in the town providing a drop-in venue for displaced people.

A year ago, Swindon Quakers developed the connection further by inviting refugees to a Saturday afternoon in a member’s home, for tea and conversation. Numbers have increased to the extent that it is no longer possible to host in our own homes, so we host in the meeting house, offering transport for families and people who live too far from the centre.

“The children are catered for with things to do, and the conversations flow. It is a very simple way to extend the hand of friendship, understanding and support. It can make such a difference.”

Maria, Llangollen Meeting

“We are working towards having two families settled in Llangollen under the Syrian Vulnerable People’s Resettlement Scheme. We met with two Denbighshire council representatives to discuss the practicalities of this, and it was agreed that if we can identify suitable rented housing, we will be able to welcome two new families into our community.

“Llangollen itself is a small town (population 3,000). If each community this size welcomed just one refugee family, Britain as a whole could be integrating twice the number of people that currently apply for asylum here each year.”

To find out how your meeting can be a Sanctuary Meeting visit www.quaker.org.uk/migration. To read the full versions of the stories above, visit www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories.



Growing vegetables at Tottenham Meeting House. Photo: Tilly Goodwin

Nuclear weapons treaty adopted at UN

10

The possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons has long been a Quaker concern. But a world without them has come one step closer with the adoption of a new UN treaty.

Tim Wallis, Programme Manager: Peace & Disarmament

On 7 July 2017 a treaty to rid the world of nuclear weapons was formally adopted at the United Nations. Known as the 'Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons', it was finalised after months of talks between negotiators from over 70 per cent of member nations.

This treaty represents a significant step towards stigmatising and delegitimising nuclear weapons. It is something Quakers have played no small part in making possible, thanks to decades of tireless campaigning on the streets and lobbying in the halls of Parliament – a witness that has been present since the 1955 decision by Meeting for Sufferings that “to rely on the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent is faithless; to use them is a sin.”

I was at the negotiations in New York on behalf of Quakers in Britain and four other UK churches (the Methodist Conference, Baptist Union, United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland). Representatives of other churches

and peace organisations from around the world took part in the negotiations alongside government representatives from more than 140 countries. We were able to make (very short) public statements in plenary session, hold side events for UN diplomats and meet with them individually, both at the UN itself and at various UN peacekeeping missions scattered around New York.

Thanks to a generous donation from Abolition 2000 UK, I was even able to give a free copy of my book *Disarming the nuclear argument* (published by Luath Press in association with Quakers in Britain) to most of the missions, including to the UK and other existing nuclear powers that chose to stay away from the talks.

The new treaty officially opened for signatures on 20 September. The UK, US and France have already issued a declaration stating that they will never sign such a treaty. Since government policies change – and no government

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The new treaty prohibits signatory countries from developing, testing, producing, stockpiling, transferring, deploying, using and threatening to use nuclear weapons.

It also prohibits them from assisting and encouraging other states engaged in those activities, and sets up a procedure whereby countries which already have nuclear weapons can sign the treaty and eliminate their nuclear arsenals according to an agreed timetable – monitored and verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

remains in power indefinitely – this remains to be seen. The vast majority of the world's nation states, large and small, will almost certainly sign – and that in itself is going to put increasing pressure on the others.

Making the most of this pressure is key, so it is vital that Quakers in Britain contact their local MPs to urge our government to sign up too. This treaty sends a message that there is a realisable vision of security for all, one that transcends the madness of the nuclear paradigm. Let's make sure it's heard as loudly as possible.

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Tim Wallis with the treaty at the United Nations in New York. Photo: Vicki Elson

Nurturing an all-age community

A new project is exploring how young adults across Britain are finding alternative ways to engage with Quakerism.

Chris Venables, Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project Officer

Young adults have always been at the heart of Quakerism, pushing us forward at key points in our history and forging new visions for a dynamic, hopeful and active faith. George Fox was 21 when he left home to 'seek the truth'. Elizabeth Fry was 31 when she began preaching. John Woolman was 26 when he began ministering about the injustice of slavery. Bayard Rustin was 25 when he began attending 15th Street Meeting in New York.

Today, young adult Quakers across Britain are again beginning to push at the boundaries of what it means to be a Quaker. New young adult worship groups, like those in Nottingham and Westminster, are breaking the mould of the traditional meeting for worship, building in discussion, 'craftivism', music and laughter and aiming to create more dynamic, interactive and hopeful communities – often outside the four walls of the meeting house.

These groups reflect and build on the many spaces millennials are creating for themselves outside of traditional church structures. From Good Gym to Sunday Assembly, School of Life to Messy Church, young adults are reinventing communities shaped by (and for) the 21st century. Young adult Quakers are organising on digital platforms like Slack and WhatsApp, and, while keeping the spirit of the Quaker process, are reinventing roles and decision-making.

For many young adult Quakers, there's a feeling that our yearly meeting has lots to learn from millennials, and that, over the coming years, Quakers have the potential to change and grow

together to become a truly all-age community. That's the vision of the new legacy-funded Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project that I have the privilege of leading on.

A three-year initiative working across Britain, the project was commissioned as a result of in-depth research from 2016 that identified a need to recognise and support the changing ways young adults want to engage with the Quaker community. After working as a campaigner and organiser for most of my 20s – most recently for Caroline Lucas MP in Westminster as her lead on environmental issues – I'm glad to be able to now give time and energy to my faith and the (ever inspirational) Quaker community, particularly in an area I feel so passionate about.

I'll be working with the newly formed Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project Steering Group (see back page) to get views and insights from across the Quaker community and run talks and workshops with Quaker-connected

young adults. If you would like to host a workshop, get involved, or just find out about the project, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

Abi Rowse, 28, founded the Nottingham Young Adult Quaker group two years ago, and I'll leave you with her words: "I'm excited about what a more youthful Quaker movement might achieve over the coming years. For many of us, it feels like we're finding our voice, our strength, and, perhaps most importantly, our hope that Quakerism will be alive and kicking in the decades to come; a place where young adults, and, well, everyone, feels a genuine connection with the light; a community that is ready to speak truth to power."

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The Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project steering group. Photo: Oliver Waterhouse

Activist gathering

Join Quaker Peace & Social Witness and US Friend and activist George Lakey for a day of sharing, workshops, networking, and movement-building at the Quaker Activist Gathering.

Taking place on 14 October in London, the event is an action-focused day for Friends who identify as activists to learn, plan and be inspired. Register at www.quaker.org.uk/events/qag-2017.

Engaging families

Events bringing together elders, overseers and other interested Friends will mark the launch of a new resource, *All are welcome*, that explores how meetings might engage imaginatively with families and encourage them on their spiritual journeys.

Quaker Life's Children & Young People's and Ministry & Outreach teams have worked with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and Friends of all ages to develop nine advices and queries for meetings to consider.

The resource will be launched at two free events taking place on 11 November at Friends House London and 2 December at Lancaster Meeting House. Each day will include short presentations with opportunities to take part in open and creative conversations.

For details of the days and a booking form please visit www.quaker.org.uk/cyp-events or contact cypadmin@quaker.org.uk.



Photo: Jethro Jeorrett for BYM

Quaker Tapestry exhibit proves top destination

Over 1,500 visitors experienced the Quaker Tapestry when it was hosted at Friends House in London for two weeks in August.

A celebration of Quaker history and influence via embroidered panels, the tapestry made it into several prominent London events listings and proved very popular with the visitors, who ranged from tourists to embroidery enthusiasts to curious passersby.

The event was a collaboration between Friends House, North West London Quakers and the Quaker Tapestry Museum in Kendal – which hosts the tapestry in a permanent exhibition – and was supported by 40 volunteers.

Young peacemakers win award in annual ceremony

Britain Yearly Meeting sponsored an award in peer mediation at an annual ceremony hosted by the national youth charity Leap Confronting Conflict.

Peer mediators are children and young people trained to resolve conflict, and they're doing just that in schools across Britain. The 'Lighting the fire' award was judged based on the skills of the mediators, the impact on the school and the school's overall commitment to supporting peer mediation.

Of eight outstanding nominations, All Saints Primary School in Nuneaton was the winner. Despite the challenges, every child at the school is given mediation training with the support of Peacemakers, the Birmingham-based Quaker training provider.

"We live in quite a volatile area, but our children learn to deal with their conflicts in a sensible, peaceful manner," said Wendy Lusty, Learning Mentor at All Saints Primary School.

"The children then pass it on to the parents, which is great to see."

Action against the arms fair

A week of action and protest took place in the run-up to the opening of the DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International) Arms Fair in London on 12 September.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness worked with a coalition of groups, including Stop the Arms Fair and Campaign Against Arms Trade, to build resistance to the event.

This included holding a Quaker meeting for worship during the 'No faith in war day of action', when a collection of groups gathered for a day of prayer and nonviolent resistance as trucks full of equipment arrived at the venue.

A silent candle-lit vigil in solidarity with victims of the arms trade took place on the evening before the fair opened, where young Quakers were made welcome by members of Quaker Life's Children & Young People's team.



Photo: Ellis Brooks for BYM

Training placements for disenfranchised people

As part of its commitment to offer employment opportunities to local disenfranchised groups, our hospitality company is offering pilot work experience and training placements to Douglas House Project (DHP) service-users.

DHP works with men who have a diagnosis of personality disorder and a history of offending or antisocial behaviour. The new initiative aims to help service-users integrate back into the community.

Quaker Week resources

Quaker Week is taking place from 30 September to 8 October and again provides an opportunity to share our work as Quakers with our neighbours and the wider community. This year's poster, on the theme 'In turbulent times, be a Quaker', will for the first time be supported by an interactive online resource that provides a deeper insight into Quaker history.

Jon Martin, Ministry & Outreach Officer, explained: "The poster captures our faith as a calm river that turns into a waterfall flowing over a cliff made up of important Quaker dates – from the civil war to the world wars to today. It also features an all-age group of gender-neutral characters travelling up the river on a journey of discovery.

"Hopefully the campaign will bring much joy to Quakers but more importantly invite people to join with us to strengthen our movements for social change, find solace in the stillness of meeting or deepen their understanding of the Quaker faith."

The week is made possible by all the events Quakers organise for it. The Outreach team will be supporting them by providing print and digital resources for meetings to use in publicity and offering a budget to those with Facebook pages to help advertise their Quaker Week events through the platform. For more information contact outreach@quaker.org.uk.



New Quaker blog launches

Britain Yearly Meeting has launched a new blog that will provide a place for Quakers and non-Quakers to explore a wealth of perspectives relating to our work.

With the focus on insight, analysis and action, the blog aims to provide thought-provoking, informative and interesting writing that will add to the ongoing discussion of Quaker faith and witness already taking place online.

Blog writers work to serve Quakers in Britain in different roles, and will cover all kinds of topics relating to centrally managed work. Blogs will include a variety of subjects about Quaker concerns and our relationship to the wider world. Topics tackled so far range from the Kenyan elections to Yearly Meeting Gathering to supporting children in meetings.

Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, said: "The conversations we have around Quaker issues remind us of the rich diversity of belief and thought within the yearly meeting. We hope the blog will act as a spark for fruitful reflection, discussion and action, both online and off."

Find the blog online at www.quaker.org.uk/blog.

Presence at party conferences

Quakers in Britain will be represented at this year's Liberal Democrat, Labour, Conservative and Scottish National Party conferences. Members of the Britain Yearly Meeting communications team will be at the conferences acting as a Quaker presence to support and find common ground with MPs from all political parties.

Fraud warning

Nearly 1 in 5 people in the UK fall victim to scams every year, and charities and their donors are not immune. Meeting treasurers should be particularly alert to the possibility that they may be targeted, and are being asked to read the guidance note *Protect yourself from fraud* at www.quaker.org.uk/treasurers and check that they have secure systems in place.



Giving schools a new way to teach peace

Teachers will get the chance to 'unpack peace' at their school thanks to a new teaching resource that has been created by Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

Peace week will support teachers to run both lessons and whole-school off-timetable projects. It draws on inspirational peace and human rights weeks previously run in primary and secondary schools, and the delivery of over 400 peace lessons – some of which one head teacher described as "the best thing we've ever done as a whole school community."

The resource will include a suite of core primary lesson plans with English, Welsh and Scottish curriculum links as well as a set of themes and activities for secondary schools including topics such as 'Armed Drones: keeping the peace or execution without trial?' and 'Conscientious Objection: heroes or cowards?'

To pre-order the resource go to www.quaker.org.uk/peaceweek or contact the team at peaceedu@quaker.org.uk.

Illustrating the Quaker way

Author and illustrator Rebecca Price has produced a follow-up to the popular children's booklet *Quaker meeting and me*.

Let's explore the Quaker way is aimed at 3- to 8-year-olds and explores how the Quaker testimonies shape our everyday lives. It seeks to be a starting point for conversations with children about how to live well in a challenging world. To request free copies for children please contact cypadmin@quaker.org.uk or telephone 020 7663 1013.

Sharing spiritual journeys

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A presence at summer festivals allowed curious souls to learn more about Quaker faith in a new context.

Gill Sewell, Ministry & Outreach Officer

Having a presence at festivals large and small provides the opportunity for Quakers to be encountered in a relaxed and often welcoming environment. Our visibility in these places lets people know that Quakers are part of the present, as well as the past, and our radical activism in turbulent times can often provide a point of engagement. For those who are not part of a faith community this might be the next step to reflect and wonder.

This summer we worked with Friends at two big festivals to provide a Quaker presence for the curious to engage with. The most recent was Greenbelt 2017 – the arts, faith and justice festival. Here we had four young Quaker ambassadors supporting two 'Fly kites not drones' workshops (www.flykitesnotdrones.org) and attending meeting for worship organised by Friends from Northamptonshire Area Meeting. This enabled festival-goers to have a first experience of the stillness of

Quaker worship.

Being a faith-oriented festival, Greenbelt was perhaps a more likely place to find Quakers in Britain. Our other festival presence was something a little different – Hay Festival, the celebration of literature and thinking that has around 250,000 visitors each year. One of the wonderful things about outreach is talking about Quakerism and god, another delight is listening to people share the tale of their spiritual journey. Here we had the opportunity to do plenty of both.

Much of the curiosity in our stand was engendered by the talk 'A Quaker life', which featured three Quaker authors: Tracy Chevalier, Philip Gross and Sheila Hancock. In front of a sold-out audience of 720 people they generously relinquished the opportunity to promote their own literature and instead sat on the stage and spoke openly, honestly and warmly about their Quaker journey.

For the remainder of the week

visitors to our exhibition said how they had been intrigued by the discussion and wanted to know more for themselves. There were 80 people really keen to learn more to whom we gave enquirers' information packs, while others received information and the address of their nearest meeting house. We know already that two newcomers have attended worship in Oxford and Llandrindod and are confident more will follow in the weeks and months to come.

Across the week we had visits from many Quakers, and indeed at times provided a place of refuge for those who wanted a quiet moment. But the majority of our visitors were adults who wanted to discuss their spiritual journey (it's amazing and awesome what people feel comfortable sharing in a tent) and learn more about the Quaker way.

All in all it was a spectacular event for outreach (with more than 150 meaningful conversations and 1,000 drop-ins across the week) and also a chance for many of us to make new acquaintances across the wider Quaker community. We were blessed with volunteers from Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting and Meeting of Friends in Wales and hope to develop this partnership further.

We're now busy planning our presence at summer festivals in 2018. Do contact us if you'd like to find out more about the Quaker presence at local and national events.

Contact:

Gill Sewell

outreach@quaker.org.uk

020 7663 1017

www.quaker.org.uk/outreach



Quaker authors Tracy Chevalier, Philip Gross and Sheila Hancock being interviewed by Rosie Boycott onstage at Hay Festival. Photo: Sam Hardwick

From doubting to doing: the rewards of committee service



The Quaker Centre Café in Euston is part of Friends House Hospitality Limited, which is guided by the service of its board of directors. Photo: Susannah Fields

Quakerism is a do-it-together religion. Each of us shares the responsibility for upholding our community and our work in the world. Though we have many dedicated staff working on our behalf, it is committees of Quakers that discern the will of the Spirit and steer the work accordingly. This also applies to our hospitality company, which in 2016 gifted £800k to support Quaker work after a record year of conference and catering sales. We spoke to Val Brittin of Worcestershire & Shropshire Area Meeting about her service as clerk to the company's Board of Directors:

"While I am very active as a Quaker locally, it wasn't until I was asked by someone about serving on a committee that I considered it. Then the more I thought about it, the more sense it made.

"Being accepted for the role was exciting but also daunting. I didn't know what to expect, and assumed everyone else would know so much more than me. But actually everyone was so helpful, sharing their skills and experience. It made me feel a lot more comfortable.

"Being on the committee has been rewarding in many ways. There's an inner strength that comes from making a commitment

to serve and knowing that this is the gift you must bring. We've also done some very practical work on the company's standards – 'loving, heartfelt, responsible and pioneering' – that I felt really brought my Quaker faith into action. And I've had the chance to develop my existing skills while also learning a lot from others.

"If you are considering offering service, my advice is very simple: do it. Despite having doubts and worries, do it. We need to link up more – younger friends meeting with more experienced friends, and local meetings linking up nationally. We need to bring those things together, uniting new approaches with existing experience.

"When I came into the committee I was very new, but I knew I was bringing different skills and experiences. Now when I see new people arrive I'm really pleased because you can see that continuum in action again: people from different walks of life, bringing something new. This is how we can grow and adapt, how we can build the Quaker movement."

To find out more about Quaker service, you can visit www.quaker.org.uk/service, email nominations@quaker.org.uk or phone 020 7663 1121.

Contribute to Quaker work

Join the Quaker Life Network: phone 020 7663 1007, email qlnetwork@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/qlnetwork.

Make a donation or leave a gift in your will: phone Leslie Bell on 020 7663 1019, email leslieb@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/givemoney.

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Connect with Quakers in Britain

Phone us on 020 7663 1000, email enquiries@quaker.org.uk or write to Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Enter your postcode at www.quaker.org.uk/meetings to search for a Quaker meeting near you.

Find us on Facebook and Twitter: click the icons at www.quaker.org.uk or search for 'Quakers in Britain'.



Quakers: committed to caring for peace and planet

Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Their unity is based on shared understanding and a shared practice of silent worship, where they seek a communal stillness.

Quakers seek to experience God directly, within themselves and in their relationships with others and the world around them. They meet together for worship in local meetings, which are open to all who wish to attend.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity. This means speaking truth to all, including people in positions of power.

The Quaker commitment to peace arises from the conviction that love is at the heart of existence and that all human beings are unique and equal.

This leads Quakers to put their faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violence.

Quakers try to live simply. They are concerned about the excesses and unfairness of our consumer society and the unsustainable use of natural resources.

To find out more about the Quaker way visit www.quaker.org.uk or request a free information pack using the form below.



Request a free information pack:

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____

Please send completed form to:
Quaker Outreach (QN)
FREEPOST QUAKERS

FREEPHONE: 0808 109 1651
E: outreach@quaker.org.uk

Meet Haifa Rashed



Haifa Rashed is a member of West London Area Meeting. She has recently started serving as the clerk to Britain Yearly Meeting's Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project Steering Group.

I've been fascinated about how British Quakerism can better support, include and empower young adult Quakers for many years now. As someone who discovered Quakerism as a young adult, it was only when I became a programme assistant for the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva that I discovered the wider Quaker world. Quaker processes, structures and opportunities had hitherto seemed impenetrable. Until that point I had attended Quaker meetings for several years without finding out about the existence of Young Friends General Meeting or meeting another person under the age of 40!

In the last few years I've attended young Quaker meetings in the UK and the USA, helped to establish the Younger Quaker Worship Group in London and researched the impact of Quaker peacemaker schemes on the young people that participate in them. So as soon as I saw the call out for steering group members for the Engaging Young Adult Quakers (EYAQ) Project I knew I wanted to be involved.

EYAQ is an exciting three-year project aiming to support young adult Quakers to create dynamic, nourishing and sustainable faith communities by working with them and with Quaker meetings. The steering group – perhaps the first ever to be made up entirely of young adults – is very vibrant.

We still have a lot of work to do, as a religious society, to discover how best to draw on the skills, energy and passion of young people – and I would therefore encourage any young Friend who wants to get involved in Quaker structures to make it known what their interests are and where they feel their skills lie, as well as to highlight any barriers to young adults participating in meetings they may experience or witness.

Let's get involved and make our voices heard in order to ensure that Quakerism in Britain can flourish now and in years to come.

If you would like to find out more about serving on a national Quaker committee, please phone 020 7663 1121, email nominations@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/service.