

Quaker News



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



Growing a sustainable future

No. 99 – Winter/spring 2018

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Cover photo: Pine forest by Bangkit Ristant on Unsplash

Editorial

“You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?”

George Fox, 1652
(from *Quaker faith & practice* 19.07)

In his 2014 Swarthmore Lecture, Ben Pink Dandelion described Quakers as a ‘do it together’ religion. This issue of *Quaker News* illustrates that perfectly. When Quakers come together to worship and discern, amazing things happen. Not just during the meeting for worship, but when we come out of it. That inner transformation, that experience of opening ourselves to the leadings of the spirit, can take us in unexpected directions and lead us to change the world. When we listen for what we can say, we often find ourselves given ways to act.

From Quaker relief work in the 1940s (which earned us the Nobel Prize you can read about on page 6) to work on land conflict in Burundi (page 10) or supporting opportunities for higher education in Palestine (page 11), that divine inspiration continues to push Friends to act. Quaker actions on sustainability (page 8) are helping to secure a safer and more stable future for our planet; Sanctuary Meetings (page 12) are helping to

secure a safer and more stable future for people fleeing their homes; employment and training opportunities in Friends House Restaurant (page 13) are offering stability to vulnerable people.

It may take only one person’s leading or one activist (page 4) to set something off, but it often takes a whole meeting to take that concern forward. One of the great strengths of Quakers is the way we come together as a community to ‘do it together’. Sometimes that means a meeting seeking funds for a project they want to support (page 11); sometimes the meeting needs help from others nearby, or from Britain Yearly Meeting (page 9). However the work happens, it is part of what we do together; part of that wonderful shared endeavour which is Quaker witness in the world. Together, we turn divine inspiration into action.

Britain Yearly Meeting exists to support meetings with this, their worshipping life, their community and their witness, and to do work on Friends’ behalf where it is too big or too specialised to be done at a local level. Local or national, it is all Quaker work. How are you part of it? What service can you offer (page 13)? What can you contribute (page 14)? What canst thou say?

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

Quaker News

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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.

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Sharing the costs: opening access to Yearly Meeting 2018

How the support of Friends will help more Quakers in Britain take part in our annual gathering.

Ann Pfeiffer, Grants Programme Officer

Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering of Quakers in Britain, is set to take place on 4–7 May 2018 at Friends House in London. The four-day event will see Friends come together to worship, make decisions, and spend time together.

This year we will also be asking ourselves an important question: how should *Quaker faith & practice* look for the next generation of Friends? During the event Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee will be asking us all to join in the process of spiritual discernment that will “find the way forward for the book that inspires, guides and expresses our faith and our life as a community”.

Yearly Meeting is a key date in the Quaker calendar, one that shapes important decisions about our faith and work, and one all Quakers in Britain have a stake in. We are determined to remove as many obstacles to attending as possible, including lack of money, so this year we will again be setting aside

funding to help Friends attend who might otherwise be prevented for financial reasons.

This has proved very popular and is only made possible each year thanks to donations from fellow Friends. Last year participants at the week-long residential Yearly Meeting Gathering were given the opportunity to make a donation to the bursary fund when they booked. Thanks to the generosity of nearly 300 donors we raised over £7,000 and made 28 grants to individuals, families and carers who would not otherwise have been able to take part in person.

In the run-up to Yearly Meeting Gathering, Recording Clerk Paul Parker and Deputy Recording Clerk Juliet Prager organised and took part in a four-day sponsored cycle ride from Friends House in London to the site of the gathering at Warwick University. They did it to raise money for bursaries for young Quakers, as well as demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, and

managed to raise over £1,200. It meant that for the first time ever we were able to specifically help young adult Quakers with these funds. If you'd like to raise money for Quaker work through a sponsored activity, you can do this through Just Giving – see www.justgiving.com/quakers.

Younger Quakers will again be able to apply for funding to support their attendance at Yearly Meeting 2018. To make it easier for them to do this we have changed the application process so that they no longer need the support of a local meeting to apply. Because many young adults frequently move area, making it harder to connect to a local meeting, they risk missing out on local support. Hopefully this new system will mean that they too can participate as fully as possible.

In addition to all this, Yearly Meeting 2018 will again see local Friends offering low-cost accommodation in their homes.

Of course we realise that there will always be reasons why people can't, or prefer not to, attend Yearly Meeting, and we are continuing to work on ways to enable those who aren't there physically to better participate in the proceedings. But for anyone finding finances difficult, this way of sharing the costs may help make it that bit easier to attend in person. Please do spread the word.

For more information on Yearly Meeting 2018 see www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

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Children playing at Yearly Meeting 2016. Photo: Mike Pinches for BYM

Turning energy and ideas into action

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The Quaker Activist Gathering continues to inspire and rejuvenate Friends from across Britain.

Hannah Smith, Turning the Tide Programme Coordinator

The 2017 Quaker Activist Gathering was always going to be a special event thanks to the scale and range of witness work, or faith-based activism, currently being planned and undertaken by Quakers across Britain.

Held in London over a day in late October, more than 60 people met to refresh their activism and make new connections. Like our previous annual events, this was a space for both Friends and the 'Quaker-curious' to come together and meet others who are passionate about getting their witness out into the world, who are encountering similar barriers to success and who would like to build their skills in this area.

This time our guest speaker and facilitator was US Friend and activist George Lakey, who featured alongside workshops on everything from managing burnout to moving beyond vigils as a means of protest. Attendees also had some fun with craftivism: anyone could come and paint a banner,

sew a message, build props for their upcoming actions, and get stuck in to some good old mess-making. As usual there was a fair bit of organised chaos built into the agenda, and lots of scope for people to get to know each other and form their own interest groups.

It was the fourth gathering we've held. The original idea of creating a space like this emerged in 2014. Following discussions between staff at Britain Yearly Meeting and Quakers involved in various struggles – from achieving climate justice to confronting militarism – we decided a one-day event would be a good place to start. Since then more than 250 people have participated in the gatherings, travelling from places as far afield as Edinburgh, Cornwall, Cambridgeshire, Leeds, the Southern Marches, and Brighton.

A key aim for the events is to galvanise energy and ideas into action, and I'm pleased to say the gatherings have proved a

On the blog



Find out eight things we learned from attending Quaker Activist Gathering 2017:

www.quaker.org.uk/qag2017

spur for much activity. One of the most inspiring examples for me was in 2016, when Friends at the gathering in York heard a call to action against fracking and grouped together to plan and hold a meeting for worship at the top of Pendle Hill, Lancashire – a site at the heart of the land licensed to be fracked, and a key location in the history of Quakerism. Many other connections have been forged and plans made, and several Friends have since gone on to join QPSW committees to support action for social and environmental justice.

If all this has whet your appetite we are now looking at the possibility of both a one-day gathering and a residential gathering in 2018. If you are interested in finding out more or attending be sure to email BYMevents@quaker.org.uk and we'll let you know when bookings go live.

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Sharing ideas: US Friend and activist George Lakey (left) participates in a group discussion at Quaker Activist Gathering 2017. Photo: Suki Ferguson for BYM

Mental health in meetings: continuing the conversation

Early 2018 sees the launch of three new initiatives to help meetings better understand and support individuals who are encountering mental distress.

Oliver Waterhouse, Assistant Head of Ministry & Outreach

Do you know someone who is living with mental distress? With around one in four people in the UK experiencing a mental health problem each year, the chances are that you do – and that it could be someone in your meeting.

Over the past five years we have been gathering information from individual Quakers, meetings and carers about their experience of living with – or supporting other people who are living with – instances of mental distress.

Their stories have often been moving, at times inspiring, and always thought-provoking. They underline the many challenges of both dealing with mental distress and balancing the needs of individuals with the needs of the wider community.

One way we have tried to help meetings find that balance is by publishing the book *Encounters with mental distress: Quaker stories*. It shares candid experiences, responses and

insights from individual carers and meetings on this theme, and – along with an accompanying leaflet – aims to help people start talking about some of the issues raised in the book that feel most relevant.

It is hopefully encouraging meetings to do something very important: have open and non-judgmental conversations on the subject of mental health. These conversations are an opportunity

These new initiatives will work to further deepen and strengthen a dialogue that is already happening at Quaker meetings.

to ask questions that may be challenging but that can help us to understand both other people's actions and behaviours and our own responses to them.

To help continue this conversation I'm pleased to say that three more exciting initiatives will be launching early this year.

The first is a new workshop for meetings, titled 'Opening the door to talking about mental health'. It lasts two hours and has been designed to be accessible to people with little or no experience or understanding of mental distress. It will be facilitated by trained members of the Mental Health in Meetings Cluster of the Quaker Life Network and follows on from several successful pilot workshops held in 2017, which helped to hone the approach and content.

Next is a leaflet, *Mental health in our meetings*, that offers more detailed advice and guidance for meetings. A copy is being sent to

every Quaker meeting and they will be freely available to order from the Quaker Centre at Friends House.

Then there's the creation of a three-year post for a Mental Health Development Worker, who will be a voice for Quaker mental health and work with Quaker groups and individuals to develop a Quaker witness around mental health. This is being funded and run by The Retreat York Benevolent Fund, which also offers Quakers funds for mental health care.

Looking further into 2018 we will continue to develop our work in these areas: for example, expanding the workshop into something to help Quaker role-holders, and working with Woodbrooke on the mental health training that's being offered. If you'd like to get involved you can subscribe to the Mental Health Cluster's email news (<http://eepurl.com/dbR2ff>) to keep up-to-date with all Quaker ministry and witness on mental health. Or if you'd like to find out more, tell us about something your local or area meeting is doing, or ask for support for your meeting, do feel free to contact me directly.

Hopefully these new initiatives will work to further deepen and strengthen a dialogue that is already happening as Quaker meetings seek to develop their understanding of mental health and of how we can support members of our Quaker communities who live with mental distress.

Let's keep talking.

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The Nobel Prize inspiring a new generation

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December 2017 marked 70 years since Friends in Britain and in the USA were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Lisa McQuillan, Archivist and Records Manager

There are many treasures to be found in the Library at Friends House in London. Collections spanning a 344-year history run the gamut of Quaker concerns and provide a fascinating record of our history as a religious society. But amid the pamphlets, posters and books there is something altogether shinier: a Nobel Peace Prize gold medal and accompanying scroll.

December 2017 marked 70 years since the prize was awarded to two campaigning Quaker organisations on behalf of all British and American Quakers. It was a defining moment for Quakers to be so publicly recognised on the world stage, but also one that left many Friends feeling ambivalent.

At the time of the award in 1947, Quakers in Britain, the USA and other countries were still heavily involved with relief work for one of the worst humanitarian crises of the twentieth century: the hundreds of thousands of 'displaced persons' created in the aftermath of World War II. Friends had been equally involved during the war itself. Their far-reaching humanitarian activities



Quaker relief work was motivated by deep spiritual concern. Photo: BYM

included ambulance and medical work, assisting refugees to escape from Nazi Europe and establish new lives, and providing aid to prisoners and internees.

Representatives from Friends Service Council (the precursor to Quaker Peace & Social Witness) and American Friends Service Committee accepted the award, which also recognised the wider Quaker commitment to nonviolence. The recipients said it was being accepted on behalf of all Quakers worldwide as well as other peace churches and non-Quakers who had worked in Quaker relief schemes or had donated money.

For many Friends the prize provoked mixed feelings. Margaret Backhouse – the British representative who received the award – mentions in several letters that Friends, including herself, were somewhat embarrassed by it, while others thought it should not be accepted at all. This was because many Quakers did not feel it necessary or appropriate to seek glory or prizes for actions that were

motivated by religious belief and deep spiritual concern. But she and others also recognised that it could prove a spur to further action in this area.

Today the prize and our associated collections continue to inspire visitors to the Library. Objects like the gold medal are a great way to start conversations and fire the imagination in a way that documents and books sometimes fail to do. It has also proved popular with the school groups who have visited the Library as part of the work of Britain Yearly Meeting's peace education team.

The medal itself is fragile and is only available to view at special events. However, we have several collections that reference the prize and many relating to the work it recognised. If you'd like to find out more, do pay us a visit.

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The peace prize today

As Nobel laureates, Quakers can nominate individuals or organisations for the peace prize. In 2017 it was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons – a coalition that includes Quaker Peace & Social Witness – for its work towards the historic 2017 vote that saw the majority of UN member states agreed to outlaw nuclear weapons.

Telling our story to local communities

Quaker Week 2017 was perhaps the biggest ever – and plans are already afoot for this year's celebration.

Gill Sewell, Ministry & Outreach Officer

Quaker Week is an annual celebration, held in the first week of October, that provides an opportunity for meetings across Britain to tell the Quaker story to their local communities. The aim is to ensure that Quakers are well known and widely understood. During the week many local meetings hold at least one event that invites local people to find out more about Quakers – both our rich history and our vibrant faith today.

The most recent, Quaker Week 2017, was perhaps the biggest yet, with at least 161 events taking place across the country. To mention just a few, these included talks about supporting refugees, meeting house open days and history sessions, family craft events, open-air witness with Quaker Week banners, film showings, drop-in discussion cafés, and shared meals.

Events were supported with optional resources from Britain Yearly Meeting and for the first time ever there was an interactive digital timeline of Quaker history. Meetings

also upped their presence on social media to promote their events, and we had coverage on local radio, in local newspapers and in several faith-based magazines.

Of course, this kind of activity isn't limited to Quaker Week: for many meetings it forms their sole outreach but for others it is one part of wider efforts taking place across the year. Either way, it's clear that if we want vibrant, growing meetings we need to find new ways to encourage and welcome newcomers to them.

We are now planning for Quaker Week 2018. This will be informed both by your feedback on 2017 and our new theme of 'inclusivity', which aims to further encourage families, young people and young adults to attend our meetings.

To sign up to our Outreach Cluster newsletter – where we'll be sharing our ideas for 2018 – or if you have any questions, email us at outreach@quaker.org.uk. We'll do our best to help your meeting have as vibrant and visible a presence as possible during the week.



Manchester Quakers hold a vigil outside their meeting house, near the Conservative Party Conference, during Quaker Week 2017. Photo: Jessica Metherringham for BYM

Quaker Week in numbers



A map of all Quaker Week events known to Britain Yearly Meeting. Map: Google, BatchGeo

- At least **161 events** run by local meetings.
- Almost a **quarter of meetings** – 111 of 462 – involved.
- More than **50 peace kites** flown.
- Print adverts in publications with a total **877,500 circulation**.
- **2,011 views** of the interactive timeline during the week.
- **1,587 copies** of *Quakers: a guide for young people* requested by meetings.
- **1,358 worship leaflets** ordered by meetings.
- **8,000 likes or shares** of Quaker Week content on Facebook.

Next steps toward a greener future

8

A new sustainability strategy will support Quaker work to tackle the looming climate crisis.

Helen Drewery, Head of Witness and Worship

From simple moves to reduce carbon consumption to more difficult lifestyle changes, Quakers across Britain and beyond continue to take steps to mitigate the climate crisis threatening our planet.

While we are led to make these changes for many reasons, this work has strong spiritual foundations. This was reaffirmed in 2011 via the Canterbury Commitment, which called for Quakers to act in new ways to tackle environmental issues and recognised the link between global inequality and climate change.

Since then many meetings and individuals have moved further along the path towards sustainability. Now, to better plan, budget and coordinate our activities, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees have agreed a new overarching strategy to join up the plans of different staff teams and committees. It outlines three key outcomes that we hope will result from our work:

- Quaker meetings and their members are equipped and encouraged to play their part in becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community.
- Governments, and all institutions – in the private, public and voluntary sectors – are taking swifter and more radical carbon-cutting and other sustainability measures.
- We can demonstrate that ‘our own house is in order’ and, beyond that, we are seen to model excellence.

These are big goals, but ones that are necessary to meet the challenges we all face. In 2017 we



Delegates at COP23, the latest round of UN climate change talks in Bonn, Germany.
Photo: Sean Hawkey/WCC

took several steps towards their realisation.

On a global perspective, our trustees recently agreed further funding for the climate change work being undertaken by the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva. Little-publicised due to its confidential nature, QUNO’s ‘quiet diplomacy’ behind the scenes remains unique. It will now continue its work during negotiations on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which run until 2020.

Funding was also agreed for a new post based with Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) that aims to further connect up Quakers across the world in this work. A major focus is to tell the story of Friends’ concerns and actions on sustainability, and how these are shaped by the spiritual imperative to make the world a better place.

Both these examples have been funded from legacies generously donated to BYM.

Closer to home, our hospitality

company (wholly owned by BYM) has been setting an example: in seven years it reduced the carbon footprint of Friends House in London by 29%, it maintains a zero-waste-to-landfill policy and buys 100% renewable energy.

On the campaigning front, Quaker Peace & Social Witness continues its work in this area. This often involves working with and on behalf of Friends to seek urgent political action on climate issues – most recently, calling on the government to commit to urgent action to cut the UK’s carbon emissions. We are also supporting Friends to divest their money from fossil fuel companies: something a quarter of area meetings have already done.

Much has been achieved, but we cannot afford to rest – all of us need to look for the next challenging steps to take.

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Assisting action on sustainability:

Q&A with Maya Williams

The impulse to take action on an issue can come from many places. It might emerge as a piece of ministry during a meeting for worship. It could be the result of a long process of discernment. Or it might just be a quiet sense that something needs to be done. Taking the next step may or may not be obvious – whether it's working out how to get started or motivating other Quaker meetings or groups to become involved in the cause.

If you want to take action on an economics or sustainability issue, Maya Williams is here to help. She has worked for three years to support meetings in planning and taking action in these areas, corresponding via phone, email or in-person visits.

The ways she supports meetings vary but key to her work is upholding the Quaker practice of living out our faith in the world. *Quaker News* caught up with her to find out more.

Q: What questions do people have when they get in touch?

A: Most of the time I hear from people once they have a clear idea of action they want to take, and we then work together to think through

how that idea can be realised, and as effectively as possible.

Some are keen to communicate their message and want to find out the best way to do this. Others are feeling isolated, not knowing how to find a community of people to take action with – they need help connecting up with others. One way this has happened is through the community carbon reduction work, which has linked up like-minded Friends across the country.

Q: How long will you typically work with a meeting?

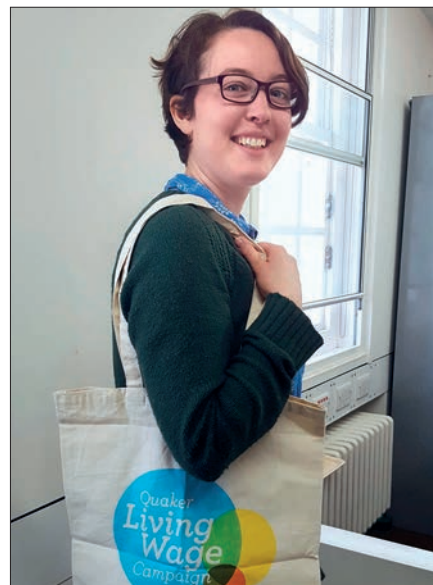
A: It varies. With some individuals or meetings I may only be in touch for a couple of emails, while I have accompanied others, such as the Quaker Living Wage Campaign, for a couple of years now.

The kind of support I give can also change over time. In the North West of England there is a group of Friends who regularly hold meeting for worship at a fracking site on Preston New Road. I began by helping the group connect with other interested individuals in the area, and then we explored how to make the Quaker witness on fracking more effective. I have since been supporting them to find other faith groups to join in with the 'No Faith in Fracking' protest days.

Q: How do you fit into the other support offered by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)?

A: I work closely with others at BYM who offer support. I'm in touch with Vibrancy workers – who have local knowledge of areas and the meetings involved – as well as other staff who work in areas like parliamentary engagement and communications. Generally this works well and allows meetings to draw on the expertise of different of staff while retaining a single point of contact.

Q: What has been one of the most satisfying projects to work on?



Maya Williams. Photo: BYM

A: I really enjoyed working with Manchester & Warrington Quaker Social Justice Group for its 'Quaker Equality Week' idea back in 2015. It was one of the first pieces of locally discerned work that our team had supported other Friends to get involved with and really helped us learn how best to offer support to meetings.

The week itself was really successful, with over 60 local meetings getting involved with a range of vigils, talks, discussions, events and other creative ways to engage their communities around economic equality. It was so exciting to see so many meetings get involved, and showed there is a real desire for this kind of work.

Q: What would you say to a Friend who wanted to take action on an economics or sustainability issue but didn't know where to start?

A: Send me an email, or give me a call. We can explore what you want to do and what support you may need around you, and then take it from there.

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A demonstration against fracking at Preston New Road. Photo: Lyndy Raine

Bringing a peaceful resolution to land conflicts in Burundi

10

One woman's example shows how nonviolent conflict resolution inspired an East African community.

Tobias Wellner, East Africa Programme Manager

Asha fled Burundi for neighbouring Tanzania in the early 1990s, forced to abandon her home and land by the political unrest that is still prevalent in this small East African country. In 2017, following the death of her husband, she decided to return to her former home.

Land is a precious resource in Burundi – one which millions rely on as their sole source of income and food. By Burundian standards Asha had been a well-off woman before she became a refugee and had owned a relatively large patch of land. After living in a Tanzanian refugee camp for 26 years, Asha was eager to return to this plot, located in the region of Nyanza-Lac. She arrived to find that 28 different families had since settled there.

Despite having lost her land-ownership documents when she fled the country, Asha found a community elder who could identify her, and whose voice allowed her case to be raised with the local authorities. It turned

out that the plot had been sold to the families by the Burundian government in the 1990s after her sudden departure. But Asha had never agreed to sell her property, nor had she received any compensation for the sale.

Situations like Asha's are common in Burundi, a place where hundreds of thousands have been forced to abandon their homes over the years by episodes of political turmoil – most recently in 2015. Those eventually returning often find that the land is no longer considered to be their own. Land-owners may try to force newcomers off their properties, and those who are forced to leave retaliate. A spiral of violence is the common result, one that can often end in killings and displacements.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness supports a Turning the Tide (TTT) team that has been working in Nyanza-Lac – a particular hotspot for these kinds of land conflicts – for two years. Grounded in the Quaker commitment to peace,

TTT is a social action training programme that works in the UK and East Africa to support nonviolent social change at the grassroots via campaigning, analysis, organisation and mediation.

With the local authorities overwhelmed by the complexity of Asha's situation, the local TTT team was asked by local leaders and community members to take on her case. The team was determined to find a peaceful and fair solution for all, but it was a difficult process that took courage and used all their skills and experience. After weeks of discussions the conflict was resolved: the families could stay on the land, but would all come together to give Asha enough money to buy a new plot in the neighbourhood.

While the result was a happy one for Asha herself, the team reports that solving this case has also had a positive impact on the wider community. The process of coming together to find a peaceful solution and the new bonds between community members that ensued have proved inspiring to many.

"Since Asha's case was resolved, 13 other people have approached our team with similar land conflicts," says John, who leads the TTT team in Nyanza-Lac.

"Some of the family members that lived on Asha's land now want to join the TTT team, because they realise that nonviolence is the only way."

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Members of the 28 families gather together to discuss Asha's case during the Turning the Tide mediation process. Photo: Turning the Tide East Africa for BYM

Relief grant offers Palestinian refugees a chance at university

How a project identified by Aylsham Quaker Meeting is supporting the education of young people in the West Bank.

Ann Pfeiffer, Grants Programme Officer

11

The Relief Grants offered by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) are awarded to organisations to help support a wide range of activities. These range from peacebuilding to supporting people who are suffering as a result of social and economic deprivation, natural disasters, climate change, war or conflict.

Each year we receive a variety of applications from projects working in these areas, based in the UK and overseas. The projects themselves do not need to be Quaker-led, but each has to be put forward by a Quaker link person and has to be a tested concern of a local meeting.

In early 2017 we received an application from the John Aves Education Project (JAEP) that was supported by Aylsham Meeting.

The project helps young people from the Dheisheh Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank who want to study for a university degree. The camp was created in 1948 to house refugees from 45 villages west of Jerusalem and Hebron, and was originally built to serve 3,000 refugees. Today the number of residents has reached roughly 15,000. Youth unemployment in Palestine is at 44%, so gaining a degree greatly improves these young people's future employment prospects.

JAEP forged links with Al Quds University in East Jerusalem and together they set up a formal selection process to award a number of undergraduate scholarships each year. To date the project has provided assistance to 26 young people. Most of these are young women, as young men are often the sole earners for their families and can't be spared to go to university.

During the selection process JAEP checks whether students have a clear plan for employment after achieving their degree. Most of the current students are studying medicine, dentistry and nursing, all of which provide a direct path into work. These are also extremely useful skills for the communities in which the students will work. QPSW Grants Group therefore awarded a three-year grant to help support some of these students through their studies.

What is even more remarkable about this project is the way it came into existence. John Aves, then a priest at St. Giles Church in Norwich, was an ecumenical companioner in Palestine who was reaching the end of his stay when

QPSW Relief Grants

Relief Grants are given to projects for the alleviation of suffering as a result of war, conflict, natural disasters and climate change, but not for immediate crisis relief.

Up to £4,000 can be applied for by individual Quakers with the backing of at least one Quaker meeting. Application packs are available between 1 October and 31 January at www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-grants.

Grants Group will meet again in April 2018 to consider the next round of funding for projects.

he suffered a fatal heart attack in January 2004. John's writings on his time in the region mention the similarities between the local young men and his sons back home in England, and how their different circumstances meant that very different futures lay ahead.

Yet John's message was one of hope, of how education offered an alternative to violence and presented an effective and positive way of responding to the Israeli occupation. He came across numerous examples of courage and dignity, which convinced him that death and oppression can never have the last word.

Through his family's work in setting up the education project, and now through the funding provided by the QPSW Relief Grant, his vision of a better future for at least a few Palestinians in the region is becoming a reality.



Students attending Al Quds University in East Jerusalem. Photo: JAEP

New monthly email update

Quake! is the new monthly email update on the work of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and Quakers in Britain. It will include discussion and exploration of Quaker life and worship, insights into faith-based activism, links to new publications and resources and incisive video content. All this and the latest news, events and public statements from BYM.

This newsletter replaces the Quaker Life Network monthly email and aims to provide an essential digest of the best of our digital content. Sign up at <http://bit.ly/quakemail>.

Yearly Meeting young people's programmes open

Bookings are now open for the Young People's Programme (YPP) and Children's Programme taking place during Yearly Meeting 2018.

YPP is aimed at young Quakers aged 11–15 and the Children's Programme is for 0- to 11-year-olds. Junior Yearly Meeting, for ages 15–18, is also currently receiving applications.

All three will encourage children and young people to engage with Yearly Meeting while also spending time with their peers. For information on the different programmes see www.quaker.org.uk/events/ym2018.



Photo: CYP for BYM

Library completes cataloguing project

The end of 2017 marked a milestone for the Library at Friends House in London: the completion of a decade-long project to create an online catalogue of (practically) the entire collection of printed materials.

The unique nature of the collection meant that this work couldn't simply be done by copying the existing card catalogue. Each individual book or pamphlet had to be looked at – and there are over 100,000 of them, going back to the 17th century.

The project received grants from funders recognising the national and international significance of the Library's printed collections. A key aim was to make the collection accessible to a wider audience. The online search is more effective for library users who had to previously use a card-based system, and also means the collection is now being shared with national and international 'mega catalogues', reaching new audiences. It has also made the collection easier to manage and develop, and paves the way for digitisation.

During the course of the project the Library produced a range of related subject guides, displays and events including a magic lantern show with temperance cocktails. You can read about some of our recent discoveries and the work of our volunteers on the Quaker Strongrooms blog, and search the full catalogue at www.quaker.org.uk/cat.

Support for activism

The Quaker Peace & Social Witness annual conference is taking place in Alfreton on 23–25 March. Attendees can take part in workshops, listen to speakers, and find out about support for Quakers who wish to take action for change. See www.quaker.org.uk/events.

Quakers campaign for Sanctuary Everywhere

The Quaker national decision-making body Meeting for Sufferings has agreed a manifesto for a more welcoming Britain, in response to worsening conditions for migrants.

The Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto calls for an end to indefinite immigration detention, pledges support for "new, peaceful, safer routes of migration", and stands against unjust deportations.

In order to work for such change, more than 40 Quaker meetings have committed to become Sanctuary Meetings, supporting community welcome projects, working against racism and building alliances with migrant-led groups to change violent laws. See www.quaker.org.uk/sanctuary.



Gatherings for role-holders

Quaker Life and Woodbrooke are holding three 'Quaker roles' gatherings in 2018 in Edinburgh (17 February), Ashford, Kent (24 March) and Liverpool (26 May).

Everyone who holds a role within their Quaker meeting is invited to this day of inspiration, support, and refreshment. Book via <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/patterns-and-examples> or for more information contact Oliver Waterhouse at oliverw@quaker.org.uk.

Exploring ways to speak about religious experience

Do we use different language to describe similar religious and spiritual experiences, or does each of us have fundamentally different experiences that lead us to identify as Quaker? What are the implications of this for the unity and diversity of our meetings?

God, words and us is a new book that has been produced to help Friends explore these questions. It offers material and ideas to consider, as well as modelling a process for further exploration. It will form useful spiritual preparation for Yearly Meeting 2018 and the discussions around the revision of *Quaker faith & practice*.

A copy has been sent to every Quaker meeting. If you would like additional copies, contact the Quaker Centre Bookshop: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk.



A call for new committee members

Britain Yearly Meeting is looking to increase the diversity of Friends who are taking on roles in our committees.

"Committees allow Britain Yearly Meeting to think, function and act in the light of our faith and the divine. Yet we struggle to accurately reflect the diversity of our society within our central committees," says Gill Reid, Co-Clerk of Central Nominations Committee.

Nominating committees find names for roles in two ways. The first is by names occurring during a process of discernment, the second by looking at offers of service made through Quaker Service Information Forms (QSIFs) for appropriately experienced individuals.

There are 550 Quaker Service Information Forms on our database – a fraction of the number of Friends in our society. When new names are suggested via discernment they are often of Friends who have been seen doing similar roles. The limited pool of QSIFs and reoccurring names brought to nominations committees can lead Friends to feel that central work is only for a 'chosen few'.

The only way to challenge this is to sign up yourself. Go to www.quaker.org.uk/givetime to look at the various ways you can register your interest. If you would like support from staff at Friends House there is a simple online form to complete, or you could jump straight in and fill out a QSIF.

The sound of silence

Friends will have plenty of potential listening material in 2018 with the new Young Quaker Podcast and a relaunched podcast from Britain Yearly Meeting.

January marks the third episode of the Young Quaker Podcast, which is made by and for young Quakers. The series explores a range of topics from faith and spirituality to Quaker history, and has been supported with funding from the Engaging Young Adult Quakers project. Listen at: <http://youngquakerpodcast.libsyn.com>.

Since launching a year ago the podcast from Britain Yearly Meeting has welcomed a range of guests to explore issues happening in Britain and internationally. They have spoken on varied topics, from challenging militarism to building a new economy.

After trialing different approaches, the podcast returns in early 2018 with a new name and focus. Keep an eye on the website to find out more: www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/podcast.

Community award for Friends House Restaurant

Friends House Restaurant won the Support the Community award at the Sustainable Restaurant Association's annual Food Made Good Awards for its work setting up a bakery for men with personality disorders and offering them employment opportunities.

The restaurant worked with residential facility and outreach service Douglas House Project (DHP) to establish a social enterprise bakery. It gives men recently released from prison or hospital a chance to learn how to create, bake, sell and deliver cakes and sweets. Many have gained a food hygiene qualification and four have been given paid apprenticeships at Friends House. Customers can enjoy their baked goods in the Quaker Centre Café.



Photo: Susannah Fields for BYM

Raise money for Quaker work by shopping online

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) works on behalf of all Quakers in Britain to strengthen the Quaker community, speak out in the world and promote peace, justice, equality and sustainability.

The website Give as you Live is offering a way to support this work by raising free funds through online shopping. People can shop online at over 4,200 leading stores via the site, and 50 per cent of the commission earned will go directly to BYM.

So far over £630 has been raised by 76 supporters. If you'd like to join them, simply sign up and start shopping www.giveasyoulive.com/join/quakers.

Your connection to Quaker work in the world

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Young people learn about peace and human rights in a London school.
Photo: Di Tatham for BYM

As Quakers we strive to live out our values in our everyday lives, and this has led us to do some amazing things – as individuals, and as local or area meetings. But some things are best tackled at a national level, and this is where Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) comes in.

BYM works with and on behalf of all Quakers in Britain to support the Quaker community, speak out in the world and take action to promote peace, justice, equality and sustainability. BYM helps give Quakers a collective national voice and allows each one of us to own the work done in our name. As one Friend put it, “I love to feel that I am part of the great Quaker movement, and that I am supporting a great deal of work in the world which I am not able to do myself.”

How can you connect with all of this? Perhaps the most meaningful way is through offering your time to serve on one of the committees that help to discern and govern the work. You can find out more about doing this at www.quaker.org.uk/givetime. But not everybody has enough time in their life to make this offer. Another way of connecting is by supporting the work financially.

Around half of the cost of BYM's work is met by contributions

and legacies from Friends and meetings. Without these, it would simply not be possible to continue. In 2017 Friends gave £2.2m to support the work. A huge thank you to every single Friend, for every single penny.

However, the level of giving from Friends has been fairly stagnant for many years now, and the challenge remains to work towards an annual income from Friends and meetings of £3m in the short term. If together we can achieve an average of £225 per member (or £15 per month plus GiftAid), we will meet this target.

Though BYM holds substantial reserves to enable long-term planning, there are challenges on the horizon. Costs, inevitably, continue to increase. Membership is in decline. Income from legacies is hard to predict. The growth of our hospitality business has been strong over the last few years but is set to slow as our buildings reach capacity. In 2018 we expect to carry a deficit of around £700,000 – almost exactly the gap between current levels of giving and our £3m target. Friends, can you make your connection to Quaker work and help bridge this gap?

Peter Ullathorne
Britain Yearly Meeting Treasurer

Contribute to Quaker work

Serve on a Quaker committee: phone 020 7663 1121, email nominations@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/givetime.

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

Subscribe to Quaker News

Subscribe to Quaker News by email, access electronic back issues or read online at www.quaker.org.uk/qn.

Subscribe to Quaker News by post, make changes to your subscription or request paper back issues by contacting Bex Gerrard on 020 7663 1157 or at qn@quaker.org.uk.

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’.



Can you help raise £3m for Quaker work?

Quaker work is your work, and you are a vital part of it. Without your generous gifts – whether of time, money or prayerful support – none of it would be possible. Of the £12.1m needed to fund Quaker work in 2018, the Yearly Meeting Treasurer would like to raise £3m from Friends and meetings. Can you help?



Your faith

When you give to Quaker work you are upholding the structures that ensure our church and our work is spirit led, keeping our distinctive form of worship at the heart of who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

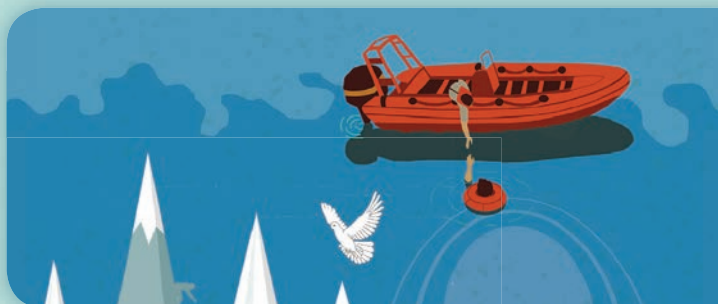


Your community

When you give to Quaker work you are providing advice, resources, training and events to strengthen and empower Quaker meetings, so that Quakers can be a vibrant, growing and inclusive all age community.

Your voice

When you give to Quaker work you are supporting outreach, media and advocacy work that helps to make Quakers well known and widely understood, offering patterns and examples in turbulent times.



Your action

When you give to Quaker work you are funding a range of programmes in Britain and overseas that translate our faith into action, so that Quaker values are active in the world, making it a more peaceful, just, equal and sustainable place.

Your contribution

Central Quaker work is carried out by the charity Britain Yearly Meeting on behalf of all Quakers in Britain. You can give to Britain Yearly Meeting directly or through your local or area meeting. You can give online at www.quaker.org.uk/give or phone Maisa Monteiro on 020 7663 1015 to find out more about giving.

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 Heather Rowlands



Heather Rowlands is a member of Central England Area Meeting. She spent the past six years on Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and is now becoming assistant clerk of her local meeting.

I have been a Quaker all my life. My parents were both brought up as Quakers and as children we went to the local meeting – which was easy as it was held in our front room.

I now live in Birmingham with my husband and our two daughters, aged five and eight, and attend our local Quaker meeting, Cotteridge. It has a lively children's meeting that the girls really enjoy being part of.

I work full-time as an assistant head teacher in a primary school in south Birmingham. My Quaker faith helps root my work – serving my local community is a strong part of my Quaker identity. Meeting for worship on a Sunday morning is an important opportunity to stop and pause in the busy week. It is important to me to have a Quaker community to both give to and to take nourishment from.

Six years ago I was asked to serve on the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC). The work of the committee suited me as there were short deadlines and clear tasks. I was not expected to think deep theological thoughts which required a lot of time! I found it was great to be able to

use my organisational skills and to work with others to make an event that many Friends really value.

I have learnt to be clear with nominations committees about my time availabilities, and they have been very accommodating about this. However, there have certainly been times when the demands of a full-time job, a young family and Quaker service have been excessive. Then it helps to take support from my family and my meeting. During my weekends away with YMAC we sometimes called on extended family to look after the girls as my husband also has a number of other Quaker commitments which often seemed to clash with mine!

I have found that opportunities to give Quaker service are a valuable way to deepen my faith in new and exciting ways. This year I will be taking on the role of assistant clerk of my local meeting. I am sure this service will help me grow.

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.