

# Quaker news

A quarterly update on Quaker work in the care of Britain Yearly Meeting

N° 57 Winter 2005



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# Quaker News Winter 2005

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## Editorial

2005 has not been a comfortable year. The world seems governed by those so certain they are right that they have little room for questioning, reflection and reconsideration.

The gulfstream appears to be cooling down. Bombs have exploded within a few metres of Friends House. As I write, four peace activists continue to be held hostage in Iraq.

In this climate, it would be comforting, perhaps, to join the ranks of the certain. But Quakers continue to question themselves and perhaps have a unique value in helping others to do the same.

Mike Hoyle's pictures (p 8) challenge us to look again at Quaker faith and practice. We have a challenge in our meetings to look at our own work for peacemaking within our communities, asking how well we reach out to those of other faiths (p 11). A younger Friend tells us of his experience as a decision maker on Meeting for Sufferings (p 13) and JYM members tell us of their plans to address big questions in 2006 (p 6).

We wish readers a joyful 2006, full of questions and the new discoveries they bring.

Rachel Rees

Head of Communications and Fundraising

### Cover image:

From Mike Hoyle's new book, *Wider Visions*.

'Take heed, dear Friends, to the prompting of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us new life.'

*Advices and queries 1*

Quaker News, ©MMV The Religious Society of Friends, publishes news of the centrally-managed work of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. This work is one outward expression of the Society's religious beliefs. Central to Quaker work and life is the quiet meeting for worship, which takes place in almost 500 centres in England, Scotland and Wales every week.

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# In brief

# QPSW visit Nagaland

## Warden from Stockholm

Margareta McKenna, Warden of Stockholm meeting, attended the Quaker Life Wardenship Training day at Woodbrooke in October.

She feels that she gained a lot from meeting others in a similar situation. "I'm pretty much the only

Photo: Martin McKenna



Margareta McKenna, warden at Stockholm

warden in Northern Europe, so it can get quite lonely... It was good to talk to others about boundaries - how to maintain a private life when being a resident warden. This requires a balancing act. It was delightful to meet others who had found strategies for coping with this situation."

"It's great to have a Wardenship Committee to organise these kinds of things."

For more information, contact Suze Lidbury, phone: 020 7663 1140, email: [wardenship@quaker.org.uk](mailto:wardenship@quaker.org.uk)

## Christian response to Trident

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland meeting of Church representatives are discussing how Christians of all denominations can offer a collective response to the proposed replacement of Trident, Britain's nuclear weapons system.

QPSW is working with others in the peace movement to ensure that this important issue is subject to a full and open public debate, and that the arguments in favour of disarmament and non-proliferation are heard loud and clear.

Contact: Kat Barton email: [katb@quaker.org.uk](mailto:katb@quaker.org.uk) phone: 020 7663 1067

In November this year the Naga Conciliation Group travelled to Nagaland, a state in the far north-east of India. They are helping its people work towards a peaceful settlement of their demand for independence through a nonviolent approach and to help continue to observe a ceasefire as long as is needed.

This was our fifth visit as a team of four. After listening to many individuals and groups, we feel that we are now accepted and valued by many of those involved in the ongoing situation in Nagaland. We have established relationships with the differing groups and parties and we use these to develop moves towards peace.

In order to bring the various groups together we ran a workshop for 25 people, mainly from church and education backgrounds. The main activity was to envision some aspects of a future Nagaland; a topic of importance and concern to

## Tell us your story

Quaker Life Central Committee is responsible for monitoring and supporting the exercise of Quaker faith and practice in our local Meetings. We want to learn more about the joys and difficulties you experience with worship, with exercising Quaker business method, and with maintaining the structures which enable these to be practised and developed in healthy ways.

We are doing this in the first instance through your representatives on Quaker Life Representative Council, but we do not wish to leave out meetings for which this mechanism may not work. If your meeting (local or monthly) would like to share your success stories and/or your tribulations with a member of Central Committee, your clerk or elders should contact:

Michael Hutchinson, General Secretary of Quaker Life phone: 020 7663 1124, email: [michaelh@quaker.org.uk](mailto:michaelh@quaker.org.uk)

all.

Though it is often hard to assess the effectiveness of this kind of work, we had enough positive feedback to encourage us to prepare for another workshop for later next year. This will include greater numbers of participants and perhaps some discussion of more controversial issues.

For more information on the work of the QPSW Naga Conciliation Group please contact Stuart Morton, QPSW, phone: 020 7663 1072, email: [stuartm@quaker.org.uk](mailto:stuartm@quaker.org.uk)

## and India...

Stuart Morton (South Asia) and Steve Whiting (Turning The Tide nonviolence training programme) of QPSW travelled to urban and rural India in November. They helped run a 25 day training event "Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation in South Asia".

This was the longest ever QPSW training event in South Asia. It was run in partnership with the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the people's movement, Ekta Parishad. Stuart and Steve travelled to Delhi, Chhattisgarh State and Bhopal.

Stuart said "we saw a deepened



understanding of nonviolence and a real desire to commit to it - there was a very strong feeling that non-violence had to be the way to find lasting solutions to the problems of social injustice and violence in the region."

A full report will be in the next issue of Quaker News.

For more information, please contact Stuart Morton, QPSW, phone: 020 7663 1072, email: [stuartm@quaker.org.uk](mailto:stuartm@quaker.org.uk)

# MPs visit Uganda

4 Quakers have been part of the driving force behind the visit of four British MPs to northern Uganda to learn about the protracted conflict there. Mark Simmonds, Bob Blizzard, David Drew and Paul Rowen, all members of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes, travelled to Uganda in October.

However, the ICC has no power to enforce its warrants of arrest, and as the rebels have already eluded Government forces for 19 years, the indictments do not yet mean an end to the conflict. Instead traditional and religious leaders in Uganda are worried that the indictments have removed any chance for a peaceful end to the war.

Photo: Bob Blizzard MP



UK MPs meet President Museveni

Following their visit, the MPs say they are shocked at the scale of the humanitarian crisis and are committed to ensuring the British Government makes greater efforts to support an end to the 19-year conflict.

The trip was organised by the Northern Uganda Advocacy Partnership for Peace, a UK-based coalition of six non-governmental organisations, including QPSW. The MPs spent time in the town of Gulu, where QPSW's work is based, and visited some of QPSW's local partners People's Voice for Peace, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative and the Acholi traditional leaders to find out about local perceptions of the conflict. The group also met internally displaced people at Koch Goma camp, learning about the conditions of poverty and fear in which over 1.5 million people live.

The dynamics of this brutal conflict recently changed following the International Criminal Court's indictment of five leaders of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army. There are hopes that this will ensure the LRA is called to account.

The visiting MPs have been able to explore these views for themselves and have pledged to work with determination to ensure the British Government works to the best of its ability to help secure a sustainable peace in Uganda.

For more information on QPSW work in northern Uganda, please contact Joanna Wright, QPSW, phone: 020 7663 1075, email:joannaw@quaker.org.uk

## A new under 19s co-ordinator

Simon Best will soon be starting as the new Yearly Meeting Under 19s programme co-ordinator. He follows on from Jane Dawson, who is leaving after 7 years in this post.

Jane said "I'm delighted with the appointment, and I feel the programme will go from strength to strength. We've already started planning an exciting weekend for Yearly Meeting 2006."

Read more on page 14

## Quakers at the WTO

QPSW and Quaker United Nations Office Geneva (QUNO) are at the 6th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation from 12th - 16th December 2005 in Hong Kong to promote a fairer negotiation process.

They are providing the delegates of developing countries with expert assistance and facilitation services on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement and aspects of the General Agreement on Trade in Services covering the temporary migration of workers.

For the latest updates as the conference progresses go to: <http://qpsw.blogspot.com/>

## Work on trusteeship

Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC) are working hard to prepare draft governing documents for Britain Yearly Meeting. They have met on seven days since Yearly Meeting, and will meet for another three days in January. Their proposals will be considered at Yearly Meeting in 2006.

They are also working out the relationships which would exist in any new arrangements, with a small trustee body, Meeting for Sufferings (the representative body) and Yearly Meeting as a whole.

Christine Davis of QSC highlighted the key issue of building trust and support for any new small trustee body "we need to be open about any doubts, and ensure there are good information flows which are crucial to building trust and accountability."

The committee presented draft governing documents to Meeting for Sufferings on 2 December. You can get a copy of these from your Meeting for Sufferings representative. Please send your comments, in time to be considered at QSC's meeting on 6 January, to:

QSC, c/o Helen Griffith, Recording Clerk's Office. You can also use email: [heleng@quaker.org.uk](mailto:heleng@quaker.org.uk), or phone: 020 7663 1161

# Travelling Team 'Gather and Grow'

The children and young people's travelling team recently held their annual weekend at Barmoor. They came together to think about their work, receive training and make plans for the future. Howard Nurden was there.

There are currently twenty Travelling Team members, and about half of them were at the training weekend. They were joined by two of the Youth and Children's Work Officers from Friends House, Howard Nurden and Chris Nickolay.

Our theme was 'Gathering, growing and taking the work forwards'.

We gathered with time to catch up and introduce each other. This was especially important for me as it

## What is the Travelling Team?

The Travelling Team is a team of volunteers and staff trainers with experience in youth work. They are available to give support, advice and training to meetings and other Quaker groups on all aspects of children's and youth work.

was the first time that I had met most of the team. We spent time in worship together and there was space in the programme for games, fun and conversation. We heard stories from Travellers their year and had an update about the current and future work of the children and young people's staff team.

We grew with a session exploring the spiritual basis of the work, particularly about how the travellers' work can enable those working with children and young people to recognise how they are facilitating spiritual development. We also considered how themed workshops might be offered in future.

We thought about what individual team members need in order to work effectively, both from each other, the children and young people's staff team, those they are training and resources and training for themselves.

We considered the paperwork used for travelling events and on designing a new leaflet to promote the team. We recognised that in order to facilitate these new approaches personal agreements would be required for all travelling team members and initial work was done on the shape of these.

The Travelling Team is essential to future work with children and

young people as recommended in the recent consultation report on our work with children and young people. An effective team is vital in order to offer support, encouragement, challenge, training and



Gathering and Growing during the weekend

advice to those working with children and young people throughout the Religious Society of Friends.

Weekends such as this are crucial as they provide the team with a chance to be supported, revitalised and inspired. At the Barmoor weekend this year we took the opportunity to gather, grow as a team and think about how the work will be taken forward.

To find out more about the Travelling Team, or any aspect of Children and Young People's work, email:

[bevelies@quaker.org.uk](mailto:bevelies@quaker.org.uk)  
or phone: 020 7663 1013

## The ever-expanding Circles project

The Circles of Support and Accountability project of QPSW is now in its fourth year and doing well. The work is expanding beyond the Thames Valley area into Hampshire and we now have an increased team of five locally based staff. This equips us to work with more released high-risk sex offenders, reducing their likelihood of re-offending by providing each with a small group of trained volunteers who hold them to account as well as offering support. Among the volunteers are dozens of individual Friends, and others elsewhere in Britain are working to get local Circles projects started.

The Home Office is also funding

QPSW to do some intensive work (using a consultant) on how Circles can best be organised, locally and nationally, when Quakers are ready to hand it on. QPSW Central Committee in November agreed with proposals to create a new, independent charity to take over the work in Thames Valley and Hampshire. They also agreed that the best way to support and oversee the various emerging Circles projects around the country would be to set up another independent charity. Both processes will take some time, and QPSW will need to continue to take responsibility for the work for one more year.

Just before Yearly Meeting, a 48

page report, *Circles of Support and Accountability in the Thames Valley - The First Three Years, April 2002 to March 2005*, was published, a 'sequel' to our Interim Report. Copies are available free on request - for you, for your Meeting library, or for any useful contacts you may have in the criminal justice system.

For more information on the QPSW Circles of Support and Accountability project, please contact Helen Drewery, QPSW, phone: 020 7663 1022, email:[helend@quaker.org.uk](mailto:helend@quaker.org.uk)

# Planning gets going for JYM 2006

At their meeting in September, the planners had the tough task of choosing a theme for Junior Yearly Meeting 2006.

6 Helen Sladen, a JYM planner, reports on their process of discernment.

We needed something that wasn't bland and insignificant, but not so controversial that it would make people uncomfortable. We had to strike this balance between interest and inclusivity, and also find something that could be explored from a range of angles and points of view.

We got started with a simple brainstorm as a whole group. We organised our initial ideas into two or three broad areas, then split into smaller groups to consider these. I worked with the group considering fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. We considered problems and causes which might lead to these outcomes, for example poverty and the global balance of power.

The other group discussed 'the self' - exploring issues such as health problems, peer pressure and mental disabilities, and also how individuals view and cope with the world around them.

Once each group had presented their ideas to the committee as a whole, we had to discern which idea we should go for. However, there was no clear outcome for one or the other. Both theme ideas had serious downsides, particularly since some members of the arrangements committee felt uncomfortable with some areas of both ideas. If committee



Photo: Cat Burgess

The JYM planners at their planning day

members didn't feel totally comfortable with the theme, there was no way we would be able to present it to the whole of JYM.

Inspiration was found, however, when someone suggested that the two ideas could actually be closely linked with each other. The word 'identity' became the key word, as virtually all the individual ideas suggested are causes or things that affect one's identity, and some of them, such as terrorism or fundamentalism, appeared to be influenced by impacts on people's identities. As a team, we gradually shaped and formed a theme around this, cutting out some of the more

controversial areas of each of the smaller groups' ideas, until everyone in the room had a strong, clear idea of what we wanted to have. Out of the later discussions also came possible wording for the theme, which eventually came to:

Who am I?

Exploring the self in an unselfish way, living truthfully in challenging times and developing our identity.

For more information on Junior Yearly Meeting, please contact Cat Burgess, CYPS, phone: 020 7663 1011, email: [catb@quaker.org.uk](mailto:catb@quaker.org.uk)

## What is JYM?

Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) is a spiritual gathering of about 140 16-19 year olds from around the country and a few Friends from European Yearly Meetings. The event is organised, clerked and facilitated by 16-19 year olds in partnership with over 20's. At JYM participants reflect on the theme through a variety of activities, including main speaker sessions, base groups and small group sessions. There are also a wide range of topical workshops.



# More bread and fewer bombs

Over the past year two issues have made headlines in new ways: poverty as a result of the Make Poverty History Campaign; and security needs as a result of international terrorism and other new security threats which have continued to trouble the world. Alison Prout of QPSW reports.

What are the links between violence and poverty, and why aren't they considered together? At the end of 2004 Quaker Peace and Social Witness embarked upon a project to do just that.

Many people feel instinctively that poverty and violence are connected: poverty can both cause and be caused by conflict. However, few connections are being made between development policy and our security strategy. As our post-cold war security strategy struggles to emerge it is important to understand the way in which trade, development aid and global economic policy can affect violent conflict.

This short-term piece of work by QPSW aims to explore the links between economics, militarism and aid and has been designed to incorporate existing technical expertise within QPSW on peace and disarmament and economic issues as well as using our experience of both grassroots and policy work.

The project aims to help Friends and others consider how global economic policy and development assistance can and should replace militarism as one of a number of components of our security strategy.

Current security thinking is confined to the military protection of state boundaries and the institutions of that state. It relies on the belief that security is attainable through the ability to defend oneself or to pre-emptively strike against potential aggressors.

This myth of invulnerability is the basis of arms escalation and the reason why we choose to spend an estimated £18,000 per second globally on arms in pursuit of security.

This project explores why these

Photo: www.sxc.hu



What future do bombs offer?

resources would be better used in meeting individual human needs in whatever form those needs may come. These most basic of requirements would be the focus of a new security strategy.

This new approach is known as human security. There are a num-

**Globally aid spending is between US\$50 and US\$60 billion.**

**Globally spending on defence is \$900 billion.**

**If we spent \$900 billion on aid, we would not need to spend more than \$50 billion on defence.**

*James D Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, Financial Times, 26 April 2004*

ber of reasons why Quakers are well placed to understand and advocate this approach as we collectively search for a nonviolent response to our security needs.

Human security is based around the proactive protection of the vital core of humanity, ensuring access to food, shelter, a livelihood, health-care and protection from attack. It relies upon an appreciation of the immense and infinite value of the other as a fellow human being. This idea resonates particularly well with the much-loved Quaker phrase of 'that of God in everyone'. Human security is based around the open acceptance of human vulnerability and our shared responsibility for systematic, proactive protection. This is in contrast to the currently prevalent military concept of security.

In spring 2006 we will publish a booklet exploring these issues in greater detail. There will also be day conferences for Friends to explore these issues through talks, workshops and discussion. We are also working with policy makers on this subject together with QUNO New York.

**For more information on Economics, Militarism and Aid, please contact Alison Prout, QPSW, phone: 020 7663 1035, email: [alisonp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:alisonp@quaker.org.uk)**

# Mike Hoyle and 'Wider Visions'- a r

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One of the joys of Quaker faith & practice is the range of meanings it can have for those who read it. Someone with a clear vision of this is Mike Hoyle, who has just finished a photo book illustrating extracts from Quaker faith & practice. Working with designer Roger Holloway, his stunning photographs shed new light on well-known Quaker writings. John Fitzgerald spoke to Mike about his work and his Quakerism.

Mike's images have already been used in a Quaker Life outreach exhibition that is now touring the country. Peter Daniels, publications manager at Friends House, explains: "People would say 'are you going to do a book of them?' - it was a natural project for us to do."

Wider Visions follows in the footsteps of Harvey Gillman's Paths of the Spirit, an earlier book that paired Quaker writings with photos. However, Mike's unique style makes his book quite different. As Peter Daniels says: "It feels quite liberating to pair Mike's images with Quaker faith & practice and Advices and Queries - with their more traditional means of expression, it creates quite a contrast."

Mike initially thought of "purely visual, contemplative images", with a range of possible meanings on broad subjects, such as peace and tranquillity. But he was also "Moved to witness in the Quaker way at the time of the Iraq war." The finished book conveys tranquillity and turmoil, an authentic account of faith in a troubled world.

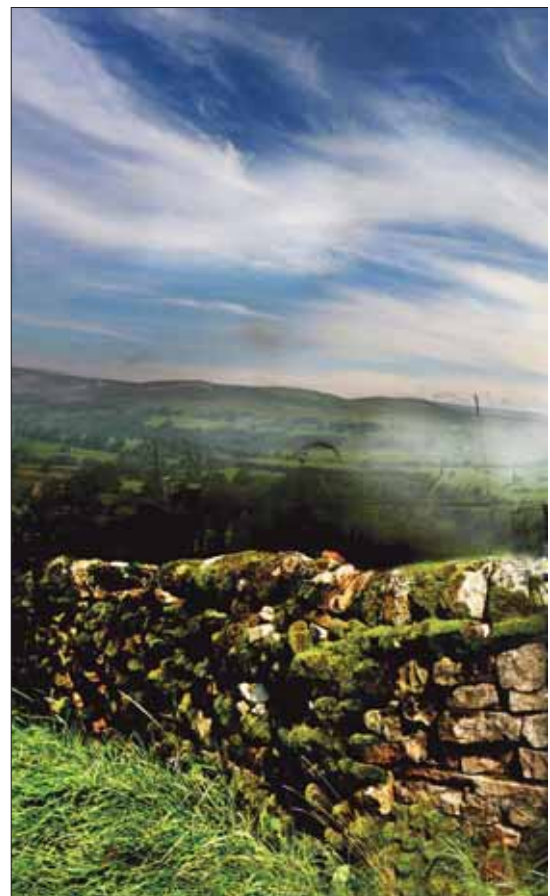
This balance is very important to Mike: "Quakerism understands and accepts that we all have good and bad inside us...when you can accept both you can begin to love yourself and others." Wider Visions shows that stillness and meaning can exist within a busy world, not just outside it. Many of his most hectic urban tableaux have a still centre.

Mike feels a clear calling to use his art to serve the community. He discounts the "romantic humanist

**"Quakerism understands and accepts that we all have good and bad inside us..."**

view of artist as an autonomous ego up in their garret", instead seeing himself as a "social producer, working within and for the community."

He was educated "in a Postmodern, Marxist way - against



humanism and religion." Although he is now much more humanist in approach, he still uses the Marxist tool of "colliding text with image to give meaning."

Mike sets out to create a meaning for the viewer to understand, but he is ready for people to bring their own experiences to the work: "These are slices of experience. Some people have criticised - 'how can you say that life is just a selection of events?' But it's great to see people look at the work and see them bring their own experience to it, finding a new meaning."

Many of the images show the contrast between the Yorkshire Dales, where Mike originally comes from, and central London. For him, the two places have a very different perspective on life: "Solitude in the Yorkshire Dales can lead to openness. In London, there are many people but there is more mistrust and less time for friendliness. Relationships are felt more strongly



# new look at Quaker faith & practice

All photos © Mike Hoyle fotografix 2005



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in the countryside."

The broad scope of Mike's work echoes his feeling that life has many paths: "There's no specific route - there are many journeys, many religious and mental journeys. Images



affect different people in different ways."

Mike's own journey has been difficult at times: "I've been a loner all my life, and I had a motorcycle accident which really accentuated this feeling of being different. I stand out in a crowd, being 'slow' as a result of a brain injury. I was doing exhibitions after my accident to prove that

I wasn't disabled, that I had a vision that I could share."

He has found Quakers in London to be a welcoming community. "When I went to Quaker Quest, I really felt this power - this humanness, and togetherness. The Quaker acceptance of difference was a real help." For Mike, becoming a member of his meeting means "I'm now part of a greater thing."

He sees his book as a contribution to the Quaker community, "repaying the immense pleasure I've got from the Quakers". He is excited to see how others might respond to his

work.

"We all come with questions. We're different but connected. When I produce a body of work, this is my experience. You derive your meaning from your journey, what you find along the way."

**Wider Visions is on sale in Friends House bookshop for £10. To order, please contact MPH on 01733 325 002, [sales@mph.org.uk](mailto:sales@mph.org.uk).**

**Quaker Life has 22 of Mike's pictures mounted into a travelling exhibition that you can book for free (postage is payable). Contact: Carmel Keogh Tel: 020 7663 1017 or e-mail [carmelk@quaker.org.uk](mailto:carmelk@quaker.org.uk)**

**" ...it's great to see people bring their own experience to it, finding a new meaning..."**

# A close encounter with the UN

This year's Geneva Summer School ran from 26th June to 8th July. It was organised and funded by Quaker Peace & Social Witness. Helen Bradford reports.

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The Summer School is for young people aged 20 to 26 who have an interest in international affairs and want to learn more about the work of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and the organisations of the UN. Participants pay a small fee - the remaining costs are subsidised by QPSW.

There were 25 participants from all over the world, including the UK, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, Guatemala, Nepal, Norway, USA, Zambia and one participant with dual UK/French nationality. Fifteen of the 25 were Friends or attenders, and ten had had some or no contact with Friends.

The Summer School began with a tour of the UN building and this year participants were fortunate to be able to attend and listen in to the plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament at the UN on the Weaponisation of Outer Space.

Rachel Barker, an intern at QUNO, arranged for speakers to come and talk on topics related to peace and disarmament, trade and

development, and human rights issues. Some of these sessions were held at Quaker House in Geneva, where participants heard about the work of the World Trade Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Commission on Trade and Disarmament. The participants themselves usually chaired the meetings and there was time for discussion afterwards.



Pranav Budhathoki, from Nepal, wrote of his experience: "The prime asset of the Summer School was the location where it was conducted. As Geneva hosts numerous international NGOs it gave me the practical and hands on understanding of today's development issues that have long been dominated by theoretical orientation in my case."

All felt they had learnt a lot about the work of the UN and of QUNO. Suzie Wright, an attender at Swanage Meeting, summed up her

experience: "Although it was a very intense and busy schedule I really enjoyed every minute of the Summer School... it is inspiring to learn how important the role of Quakers is in international affairs, both historically and currently and I am left in awe of those who work at QUNO. I hope that in my future career I too can help contribute to this work in some way."

Although the schedule was busy, there was some free time for a day trip to the Jura Mountains. On Sunday the participants attended Meeting for Worship with Geneva Friends. There was also a session on Quakerism during the Summer School, and Friends from different countries - USA, Australia, Guatemala and Norway - talked about Quakerism in their countries. The evenings were free and most of the participants went swimming in the lake after evening meals.

Everyone appreciated the time and effort put in by the Geneva staff. Kate Fiander from Canada, wrote: "I can say without hesitation that my two weeks with QUNO were immensely enriching and inspirational. I was amazed by the motivation and dedication of just a handful of people at Quaker House."

Kate Barnard, an Australian Friend, wrote: "When I first went to Meeting after I returned from Switzerland, someone mentioned Quakers 'boxing beyond their weight'. This is so true of the Quaker United Nations Office. That such a small group of people can do so much and have such a huge effect is truly amazing... Before I went, I had a lot of respect for Quakers, who we are and what we do. Having been right in the middle of Quaker faith in action, I am even more impressed. As Quakers, we have so much to be proud of."

The 2006 Summer School takes place from 9-21 July 2006 in Geneva, for people between 20 and 26 years old. Contact Helen Bradford at QPSW 020 7663 1071 [helenb@quaker.org.uk](mailto:helenb@quaker.org.uk) for details.

## Alumni say...

QUNO Geneva Committee carried out a review of the Geneva Summer School in 2004.

A number of former students mentioned benefits of attending the Geneva Summer School: continued interest in the UN and its workings and achievements, lifelong friendships, meeting other people /other young Quakers.

One said: "It was the Summer School that gave me inspiration to put my faith into action, to strive for peace and social justice. If I had not attended the summer school, I do not know what path I would have taken."

The benefits for QUNO and understanding of the United Nations are great too; as one QUNO staff member put it: "each year we add 25 people to a global pool of folk who know about Quaker work, which should inform Quaker thinking."

# Interfaith- now more than ever

Marigold Bentley of OPSW looks at why Interfaith work is becoming more important than ever

We are only five years into this century and yet we have witnessed a series of violent atrocities and counter-atrocities each attributed to interpretations of faith.

In this climate of suspicion, fear and mistrust of faith, opportunities for honest dialogue, sensitive listening, openness to challenging ideas are diminishing. So what does a small faith community such as the Religious Society of Friends in Britain have to offer?

Friends have a tradition of not only encouraging spiritually rooted listening but also of being willing to hear the unacceptable and to challenge it. The lack of dogma in our own faith enables us to open up to those who, for many, have unacceptable beliefs. Quakers have careful

necessity in all our community relations. It is no longer a choice but an absolute necessity."

Yet interfaith work is not without its difficulties. There is a sensitive line to be drawn between liberal tolerance and the apparent acceptance of extremist views which advocate violence - as Friends responsible for lettings policies will remind us. Friends House itself has been portrayed in the national press as allowing itself to be used by terrorist groups. Careful policies have been developed to ensure groups using our premises in Euston Road know about and agree to abide by our values when they use our venue.

Interfaith work invariably involves questions for all Friends about what Quakers believe. QCCIR advises Friends to be prepared. Read your *Quaker faith & practice*, have useful leaflets avail-

and if you would like advice about staging interfaith meeting or events, please contact

Marigold Bentley, Secretary  
QCCIR phone: 020 7663  
1060, email:  
marigoldb@quaker.org.uk



processes to enable delicate spiritual discussions. Quakers also have the gift of meeting houses across the country, which are ideally suited to interfaith encounters as they are unencumbered with religious artefacts. This is used to great effect by many Friends.

As members of the Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) draw towards the end of their second triennium, there has been time for reflection on the past six years. As Sylvia Stagg pointed out, "When I joined QCCIR, interfaith work was of general interest. Now in 2005 as I reflect on the past six years and everything that has happened in that time period, interfaith relations has become an over-riding

able to give away. A typical interfaith event will involve questions such as "What do Quakers think about the Bible?" or "Are Quakers Christian?" Encourage all those who want to know more to write in and ask for an enquirers pack from Quaker Life Outreach Team. If you find that you are personally challenged in your own understanding of Quakers, take your queries to your elders as a discussion point or contact the Quaker Bookshop for further reading on the subject. You will find that interfaith work develops your understanding of our own Quaker theology, as well as helping to make our communities more human and hopefully, safer.

Members of QCCIR have a great deal of experience in interfaith work

The Home Office recently issued a consultation on 'Preventing Extremism Together: Places of Worship', In our response, Quakers made the following significant points:

- Achieving a country where extremism cannot flourish requires a community, which values the good in everyone and respects the diversity of faiths.
  - This requires a long-term commitment to building good relationships.
  - Legislation and other short-term measures are not helpful.
  - Only a long-term commitment by everyone will achieve the desired goal.
  - Quakers wish to help to create and maintain a society, which lives at peace, promotes harmony, values difference and nurtures each individual.
  - Quakers strongly believe that the proposed new powers will be both unworkable and unenforceable.
  - If individuals wish to meet for a particular purpose, they will find ways of doing so. No amount of legislation will stop them. The legislation might encourage them in their views and make the perceived problem worse.
- For the full text, see [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)

# Great Myths About Outreach No 2: all enquirers automatically know about Quakerism

12 If you have taken the advice in the last issue of *Quaker News*, you will by now have a visible and inviting place to meet for Meeting for Worship, so Ingrid Greenhow of *Quaker Life* now looks at another great outreach myth: All enquirers automatically know all about Quakerism, so there's no need to tell them anything...

However, not all newcomers to our Meetings have asked for an enquirers pack and if your doorkeeper isn't on hand to offer a warm welcome and perhaps the leaflet "Your first time in a Quaker Meeting", the resulting experience may be very strange indeed. Even for those who have done their homework in advance, the reality of a Quaker Meeting may not quite match what they have read.

Does the stranger coming in off the street instinctively know when Meeting has started and how and when it will end? And what exactly are people doing in a Quaker Meeting anyway? Some sit with heads bowed, others with palms turned upwards, some are reading and inevitably someone is delving into a rustling plastic carrier bag.

**"What about the strange custom of helping the Friend in front of you take off her coat?"**

What about the strange custom of helping the Friend in front of you take off her coat?

What about the unwritten code? How are you expected to know that



A clear sign points the way at Selly Oak. But what happens next?

there is always a suitable pause between ministry and that people don't usually minister during the first and last ten minutes or so of Meeting?

How do you reconcile the idea that we don't prepare spoken ministry in advance with the fact that the Friend in the corner just happens to have a suitable poem in her hand-bag, or that a certain Weighty Friend always feels moved to minister at exactly ten past the hour every week? What about the Friend who has brought in a book to read? How are you expected to know that Meeting isn't a debating chamber and how you know when it is right to speak? If you have children, what do you do with them- are they to be seen and not heard?

Assuming you have lasted the hour and have not been too alarmed by the rush of handshaking at the end, or, horror of horrors, having to stand up and introduce yourself, there is still the peculiar Quaker custom of interminable notices, most of which are delivered in a highly confusing Quaker shorthand. "PM today has been cancelled" may lead you to assume that the end of the world is just a few hours away, while GM may well suggest that Quakers are specialists in genetics. F&P, QUNO, QPSW and RECAST must surely be code and is Meeting for Sufferings where those visitors who don't understand the unwritten

Photo: Peter Daniels rules end up? As for the study group, where you might conceivably find out a little more, it may well be at Audrey's on Wednesday but who on earth is Audrey?

Still, you may decide there is something in all this for you and come back. In fact you discover who the mysterious overseers are and say to them you want to join this wonderful Society, but when you ask, eyebrows shoot up and you are advised to wait a little longer, to find out more about "us." Or maybe you commit the unexpected faux pas of volunteering to serve on a committee, and again are asked to wait until you understand our ways a little more (how? by osmosis maybe?)

**"...is Meeting for Sufferings where those visitors who don't understand the unwritten rules end up?"**

I'd like to suggest that every Meeting provides its own leaflet "Your first time in Much Twittering Meeting", which describes your meeting, how Meeting for Worship begins and ends, what Ministry is, and who to contact for more information. Then leave the leaflets on the seats in your Meeting room. It's not only newcomers who could benefit.

For your free copy of the Outreach Resources catalogue, which lists lots of helpful welcome materials, contact: Carmel Keogh email: [carmelk@quaker.org.uk](mailto:carmelk@quaker.org.uk) phone: 020 7663 1017

# The Sufferings of Simon Best

What's it like to be a trustee for the work of Britain Yearly Meeting? Where is the reward in giving up eight Saturdays a year to sit on a very large committee? Simon Best has been a Young Friends General Meeting Representative on Meeting for Sufferings since September 2004. He spoke to John Fitzgerald about his role, and why it is important to him.

Simon, 27, has been a member of Cotteridge PM for three years. He has been going to meeting all his life, and has been actively involved since he was 16. He is currently a Joseph Rowntree fellow with Paul Levy, running workshops for meetings and other groups on 'exploring Quaker spirituality with young people and adults'.

Photo: John Fitzgerald



Simon talked about coming to Meeting for Sufferings for the first time: "I felt as though I was expected to get on with the work, but I had space to feel my way and ask questions. It's really nice for first timers to introduce themselves - this means that people come up to you over lunch to see how you're doing."

"When you arrive, there's this feeling of anticipation, as you know that everyone else has been preparing too - you're all here to do the same thing."

"The variety of business can be exciting and challenging at the same time - it's difficult to engage with every single thing with the same depth. It can be much more draining when the business concerns you deeply. Making contributions is very draining. I don't know how those who make lots of contributions can do it!"

When he made his first contribution, Simon says, he felt listened to - "I felt as if I'd contributed not just to the meeting's thinking but also to individuals. When I do feel moved to contribute, I'm testing whether it's

right to say something. Others will listen because they know that you've considered it carefully. And so you respect other contributions. This doesn't always happen! Like other meetings, we're not perfect. But being there means that you're part of the decision."

"Being on Meeting for Sufferings has made me more aware of what Quakers are doing and why. This has given me an appreciation of the centrality of Quaker testimonies and how we can respond to them. I now have a greater sense of how I can respond."

"Perhaps pride isn't the right word, but when we considered Circles of Support and Accountability, a very innovative and successful piece of work that no-one else might have taken on, I felt very good that Quakers had

## History of Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings began in October 1675, to report 'Cases of Suffering' amongst Friends and seek redress through Parliament.

- Women Friends first took seats in Sufferings in 1898.
- Funding for centrally-managed work was unified in 1988. Before then, committees ran competing financial appeals for their work.
- In 1997, Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of keeping a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.

done it. There is sometimes frustration that these occasions can be few and far between - we spend a lot of time reorganising ourselves and sending things up and down to various committees."

Simon finds that "Though we have paid staff, unpaid committees direct the work. It's important that all Friends get involved so the work can continue and reflect the priorities of Quakers in Britain. Having diversity on committees, in terms of background, theology and approaches can only help this work."

Simon will be leaving Meeting for Sufferings next year, to take up the post of Yearly Meeting Under 19s co-ordinator.

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## Yearly Meeting

The Yearly Meeting agenda committee met in late September to begin considering possible broad themes for Yearly Meeting next year. The committee are also looking at how Yearly Meeting works - how they can include people in the process more - before, during and between sessions.

They are also considering how the unity of worship and business can be better expressed in the form and content of Yearly Meeting sessions.

Michael Hutchinson, assistant recording clerk, explained why the agenda for Yearly Meeting needs such deep consideration: "They try to discern what's moving in the Yearly Meeting, and what's best dealt with by Yearly Meeting in session." He added that Yearly Meeting is much more than a routine business event: "It's not an AGM where you pass resolutions, it's a way of helping the spirit move amongst Friends."

Following on from last year, it's likely that the business will include items from the RECAST report and membership procedures. Watch out for more details in the Spring issue of Quaker News.

# Diary

## Fire Safety Advice

There has been much discussion on the wardenship e-group about fire risk assessment in our meeting houses. Wardenship Committee has prepared a short paper on this that is available on the BYM web site [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) or by post from Suze Lidbury at Friends House 020 7663 1140. The Committee recommends that meetings obtain Fire Safety and Employers Guide (ISBN 1- 11-341229 - 0) available from bookshops, or as a free download at <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/fire/>

## Publicise your Quaker Quest

Quaker Life will put your Quaker Quest event on [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) for you. Please contact Carmel Keogh on 020 7663 1017 or email [carmelk@quaker.org.uk](mailto:carmelk@quaker.org.uk)

## Under 19 Programme at Yearly Meeting

Bookings are now open for the Under 19 Programme at Yearly Meeting 26th-29th May 2006.

We offer an exciting and challenging weekend based around the themes of Yearly Meeting, and a chance for young Friends to engage fully with the national Quaker community.

- A daily Programme in Friends House for 0-11s
- A full residential Programme for 11-18s based in London Meeting Houses

The 0-11 programmes are designed for those whose parents or guardians want to attend Yearly Meeting themselves. If you are of Secondary School age you can apply to come in your own right.

All places must be booked in advance. This is a very popular event and space is limited. Please return your application as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

To obtain application forms, email: [U19prog@quaker.org.uk](mailto:U19prog@quaker.org.uk) or phone

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Jane Dawson on: 020 7663 1160

## Planning holidays/events for next year?

The Swarthmoor Hall programme for 2006 has just been published and is available at [www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk](http://www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk) or by post from the Hall - phone: 01229 583 204. Swarthmoor also welcomes visits from meetings and individual Friends wanting a quiet place to stay and bed and breakfast visitors.

Quaker Life 1652 Committee provide help, advice and tour guides for meetings visiting the historic Quaker sites in the North West of England (1652 Country). The 2006 edition of The 1652 Country - Planning Your Pilgrimage will be available in March 2006 from the Quaker Bookshop or Quaker Life. Further details are available at [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) and from Quaker Life on 020 7663 1021.

## Resources for employers

Even if you couldn't make the day for employers organized recently by Quaker Life and Woodbrooke, you can still have the resources list that was prepared for the event. It tells you how to access a full range of invaluable information and advice for employers and is available on the wardenship pages of the BYM web site ([www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)) and by post from the wardenship administrator at Friends House on 020 7663 1140.

## QPSW Annual Conference

The 2006 QPSW Annual Conference will be held from 24th-26th March at Swanwick in Derbyshire. The theme for the conference will be 'Learning from Children and Young People'. Children and young people have a positive contribution to make to our lives and it is important that we give them opportunities to do so. Next year's conference will therefore examine ways that we can and should be learning from children and young people.

For more details, contact Anne Wilkinson, phone: 020 7663 1062, or email: [annew@quaker.org.uk](mailto:annew@quaker.org.uk)

## Eldership and Oversight Introductory days

2006 is the start of a new triennium for Friends involved in pastoral care (eldership and oversight) and Quaker Life Committee on Eldership & Oversight working in partnership with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre have arranged a series of Eldership and Oversight Introductory days in different venues around the country.

The meetings are a valuable way of helping Friends new to pastoral care to prepare for their role. After the 2003 introductory days, Friends said: 'I am usually pleased to go away with two or three useful ideas - today I go away with nine.' 'I feel re-energised and encouraged!'

For further details or a booking form contact Woodbrooke on 0121 415 6779 email [off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk](mailto:off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk) or web site [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)

## Dates are as follows:

Saturday 25 February 2006: Friargate, York  
Saturday 11 March 2006: Wynard Lane, Exeter  
Saturday 25 March 2006: Ordnance Road, Southampton  
Saturday 8 April 2006: Meeting House Lane, Lancaster  
Saturday 22 April 2006: St Helens Road, Swansea  
Saturday 20 May 2006: Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh  
Saturday 10 June 2006: Friends House, London  
Saturday 24 June 2006: Jesus Lane, Cambridge  
Saturday 8 July 2006: Bull Street, Birmingham

For all other enquiries on oversight or eldership, contact Anne Hosking, Secretary of the Committee on Eldership and Oversight at Friends House (telephone 020 7663 1023, e-mail [anneh@quaker.org.uk](mailto:anneh@quaker.org.uk))

# Fundraising news

## Support Quaker work in the future

Nijiku, the little boy on the front cover of our leaflet about making wills and legacy gifts, is one of our



younger Friends. His future will be determined in some measure by the thoughtful planning and nurturing of his parents, friends and family. We need to nurture the future of the society in a similar way, giving thought to how his and future generations will come to know about and benefit by Quakerism.

Quaker work has been generously supported by Friends over many years, not least by way of legacy gifts. These make up more than a fifth of our total income and help to make possible work around the

world. Fewer than half of people in the UK ever get round to making a will, let alone deciding which charities and organisations they want to support within it. We think many more than half of Quakers will do so: after all Quakers think carefully about money and its uses for good and ill in the world.

But not many tell us of any intention they have to leave money to the Society. We want to plan confidently for the future and will be able to do this more effectively if we have more financial information on which to base those plans.

So if you have made plans to leave money to the Society, or are thinking about doing so, we would be grateful if you could let us know in confidence. Of course any information you provide to us is not legally binding, simply a statement of your current intention.

If you would like to receive a copy of our leaflet on making wills and legacy gifts, please contact:

**Kate Cargin**  
 email [katec@quaker.org.uk](mailto:katec@quaker.org.uk)  
 phone: 020 7663 1112

## Legacies

During the period of July to September we received the following legacies: (please note that many legacies come in several segments)

Kendal PM	£500	QL General
Beccles PM	£16,828	QPSW Peace
New Milton PM	£200,000	QPSW General
Banbury PM	£450	BYM General
Belfast	£2,518	QPSW Peace
Crawley	£150	BYM General
Nottingham	£50,473	QPSW Peace
London NW3	£7,000	QPSW Peace
Birkenhead PM	£1,000	QPSW General
Chester PM	£500	Village Work in India
Wolverhampton PM	£7,800	BYM General
Guildford	£2,000	BYM General
Bath	£4,440	BYM General
Morecambe PM	£28,628	BYM General
Burford PM	£777	BYM General
Oxford PM	£19,595	QL General
Oxford PM	£19,595	QPSW Peace
Oxford PM	£19,595	QPSW QSRE

## CYP Appeal

Thank you to all who contributed to our two most recent appeals. So far we have raised £19,722 for the Outreach appeal and £39,088 for the appeal for Children and Young People's work. These appeals are still running and we hope for further support.

One of the interesting things about running a special appeal for our centrally-managed work is that it highlights how very individual our meetings are. Each meeting handles an appeal differently. We reckon that it takes about two years for an appeal to be completed by the



whole of the Yearly Meeting. Sometimes it can take longer. Last month we received a donation towards an appeal we launched in April 2002. Would you like to share with us how you approach our special appeals? If so, contact:

**Kate Cargin**  
 email [katec@quaker.org.uk](mailto:katec@quaker.org.uk)  
 phone: 020 7663 1112

Our next appeal will be launched in Spring 2006 and will be to support the QPSW Uganda project. Based in Northern Uganda since 2002, this project has provided whatever was needed to strengthen local people's efforts to deal with the causes and effects of a vicious on-going war.

## Can we thank you by email?

Strong Quaker work depends on strong Quaker giving. We are very grateful for every donation you send to support the work we do in your name. We do like to thank you- we send about 1500 letters a year. Could we do this by email and save some trees?

# How to support Quaker work

Contact us to make a donation, or for more details

Kate Cargin  
Quaker Communications  
Friends House  
173 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1112  
email: [katec@quaker.org.uk](mailto:katec@quaker.org.uk)

Donate online at:  
[www.quaker.org.uk/donate](http://www.quaker.org.uk/donate)

## Just who are Quakers?

Fill in this form for a free information pack:

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

email: .....

Send completed form to:

Quaker Life Outreach Section (QN)  
Friends House  
173 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1017  
Answerphone: 020 7663 1025  
email: [carmelk@quaker.org.uk](mailto:carmelk@quaker.org.uk)  
[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)

## Can you help us?

Offer your service on a committee:

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

email: .....

We will send you a form to fill in to be registered on our nominations database. It does not guarantee that you will be appointed. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Send completed form to:

Nominations, RCO (QN)  
Friends House  
173 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1140  
email: [suzel@quaker.org.uk](mailto:suzel@quaker.org.uk)  
[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)

See our diary section on page 14 for ways to get involved in Quaker work-forthcoming events, publications and conferences.

You can find more information on  
[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)