

Quaker News



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



Finding the joy in Quaker meetings

No. 105 – Winter/spring 2020

Contents

Be a part of it: Yearly Meeting Gathering	4–5
What next for Quaker conciliation work?	7
Faith in action: being a Quaker activist	8–9
Making meetings simpler	10–11
Standing up for the science on climate	12
News in brief	13

Cover photo: Quaker meetings are exploring ways to make it simpler for children and families to participate (see pages 10–11). Photo: Mike Pinches

Editorial

“Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove.”

James 2:18,
The Message translation

Quakerism is about being a community of faith and of action. It is about coming together with others in worship and witness.

We gather in meetings for worship. Many Quaker communities are exploring ways to do this more simply, to focus more on the best bits of being and worshipping together, the core of what it is to be Quakers (pages 10–11). Our meetings need the best support possible so that our Quaker community thrives; the plans for more local development workers and a new hub for staff outside London (page 3) will support this.

We gather in different groups with specific interests, to share experiences and find mutual support and new ideas for the future.

There are those called to Quakerism who are also activists, working to make change happen as part of our core testimonies to equality, peace, truth, simplicity and sustainability (pages 8–9).

There are Quaker conciliators who for many decades have quietly worked for peace where there is violence across the world. This is vital work, necessarily little talked about, and it seems this work will continue thanks to a new generation of conciliators (page 7).

We gather with others to bring the Quaker point of view and use our distinctive methodology, as in the work of Quaker United Nations Office at the UN climate talks in Madrid last November. The next COP summit in Glasgow this November will be a great opportunity for British Quakers to support this work.

And then there’s all of us. Every year we gather to worship together and make collective decisions as part of our Yearly Meeting. The theme of ‘Allyship in a climate emergency’ will form the heart of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020, our all-age event that happens every three years and brings Quakers in Britain together for a week of fun, friendship, work, and worship (pages 4–5). Hope to see you there.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk

Quaker News

© 2019

A magazine about work supported by Britain Yearly Meeting.

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

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

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

Also available in large print

Quaker News, Friends House,
173 Euston Road, London
NW1 2BJ
qn@quaker.org.uk
020 7663 1157



Printed by Treetop Design & Print on paper from sustainably managed forests.



Please don't throw this magazine away – pass it on to others to read or recycle it.

Bringing Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke closer to Friends

Find out about two new projects that will further connect Quakers in Britain and help our communities to thrive.

By Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking & Engagement

If you haven't yet heard about the plans for more local development workers and a new pilot hub, you will do soon. Here we take a look at how these projects have developed so far, and what's coming next.

What is happening?

For some time, Quaker communities have been sharing ideas and reflections about what they need to be able to thrive. Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke trustees have agreed to work more closely together to respond.

One result will be that the number of local development workers will increase. These are staff who are based in different parts of the yearly meeting, working to support Friends in those locations. The aim is to have a local development worker in reach of every Quaker community within five years.

A pilot hub will also be set up as a base for BYM and Woodbrooke staff outside London and Birmingham. The new hub will be an experiment and will be in place in autumn 2020.

Why is it happening?

BYM and Woodbrooke want to help Quaker communities to thrive. The recent Vibrancy in Meetings pilot project has shown this happens when we have staff walking alongside Friends, working with them to tailor help to whatever Friends discern they need.

Friends House in London, where the majority of Britain Yearly Meeting staff are currently based, can also seem very far away. While we plan to maintain a substantial staff presence here, providing centralised expertise,

a pilot hub will bring other staff closer to Quaker communities in different locations. And it will test whether this model can provide a better working experience for those based outside London or, in Woodbrooke's case, Birmingham.

How will it change things?

Some changes have already started to happen. The Vibrancy pilot has shown different ways of working are needed to respond to what Quaker communities need. That might mean local development workers helping to organise a learning event, supporting Quaker processes, or offering guidance on outreach.

A new head of local development has been recruited, and we're thrilled that Rachel Matthews, formerly the programme coordinator for the Vibrancy in Meetings project, will be leading this work.

What's next?

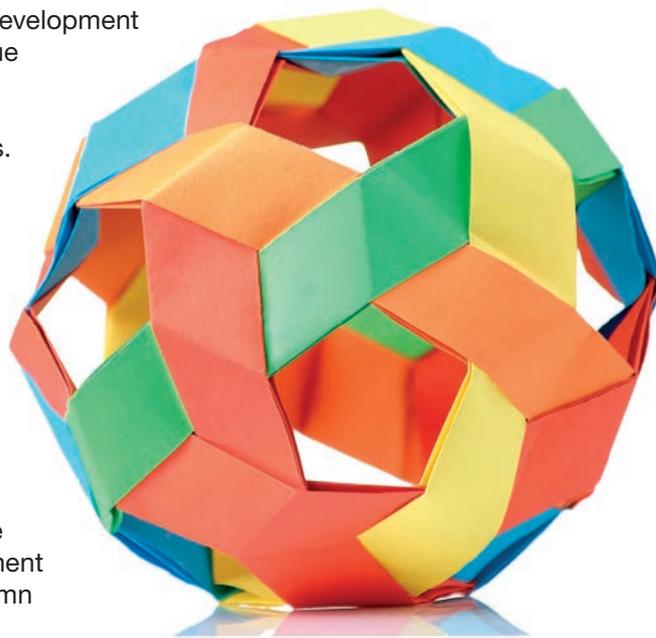
The existing local development workers will continue to support Quaker communities in the Vibrancy pilot areas. From January, they will become part of a new Local Development Team. The first new group of local development workers will be in place by autumn 2020. After that, there'll be one new group of four or five new local development workers every autumn until 2024.

Expressions of interest have been sought from Quakers around Britain to host the new staff or to be the location for a hub. There's been a great response, and staff are now following up with conversations with Friends.

Decisions on the location of the pilot hub and new local development workers will be made by the end of March.

How can I get involved?

Keep thinking about how a local development worker could support your Quaker community. And look out for news on the location of the hub and next cohort of local development workers in the spring. In the meantime, if you'd like more information on local development workers, contact Rachel Matthews (rachelm@quaker.org.uk). Or for more on the pilot hub, drop me a line (suzannei@quaker.org.uk).



Be a part of it: Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020

4

Find out what to expect at this year's week-long residential gathering for all Quakers in Britain.

By Liz Brooks, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

What is Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG)?

It's a week of worship, fun, conversations, sharing, hope, games, learning, building community and above all challenge.

It's happening from 1–7 August in Bath and is mainly residential, though you can come for individual days if you prefer.

It's a key date in the Quaker calendar where we can consider the wider themes that concern us as Quakers.

It's an all-age event that happens once every three years – and at the heart of it is our annual Yearly Meeting.

Why should I go?

Yearly Meeting Gathering is for all Quakers, members and attenders. Family and friends are also welcome. What makes it so special is the length of time we have to spend together in worship and in community, with many opportunities for getting to know one another and deepening our spiritual life together. We will collectively create an inclusive community, a loving container to hold us in our urgent concerns and provide strength as we move forward.

There will be a variety of activities that you can take part in, from early morning yoga to special interest meetings, group discussions, art activities and evening film shows. We will have places to meet and talk, and for quiet reflection.

At the heart of the Gathering will be the Yearly Meeting sessions, when we will engage with collective decision-making as Quakers and address this year's theme.



Take part in a range of activities provided by fellow Quakers, from yoga to art. Photo: Mike Pinches

What is the theme this year?

Our title is 'Listening, prophecy and reconciliation: allyship in a climate emergency'.

We're meeting at the intersection of two crises: the climate crisis and the crisis of exclusion in our society. The two are interconnected: both require us to speak truth to power (including the power we hold within ourselves) and to implement reform.

Quakers in Britain have been sitting with the questions that arose from our consideration of privilege at Yearly Meeting 2019, and we continue to discuss our concerns in local and area meetings and other settings. We plan to come together at Yearly Meeting Gathering with hearts and minds prepared, to take our corporate discernment forward.

How can we practise allyship in a climate emergency? What can we contribute as Quakers to the work already being done? These are two of the important considerations we will enter into together in worship.

What are the best things about YMG?

I recently asked a selection of Friends for their answers to this. For some it was the chance to witness, and be a part of, Quaker worshipful decision-making on a large scale. The opportunity to reflect in depth, with integrity and in community – and to make significant changes – was really appreciated. As one put it:

All-age community

Our three Children & Young People's programmes are a central part of YMG, encouraging spiritual and personal growth in age-appropriate ways. Participants aged 0–17 will be automatically booked onto them.

There is also a programme for people aged 18–35, with a variety of events and support on offer. You can indicate your interest in it when booking.



There will be many opportunities to share ideas and experiences at YMG 2020. Photo: Mike Pinches

“Worship in the main sessions, with 1,500 or more Quakers, is not an experience to be found anywhere else. Totally uplifting.”

Then there’s the social aspect. “Every evening I went back to share a meal with my lovely family of old Friends and new,” one Quaker told me. “I was at the heart of a vibrant, caring community.”

What if I’m not sure I’ll know anyone there?

There are so many opportunities

to make new Friends. Visit the Community Hub to sign up for facilitated leisure activities, the Groups Fair to develop new interests and meet new people, or seek out worship opportunities happening throughout the week, where you can share your experiences afterwards – a wonderful way to connect with others. You might also find yourself sharing living space and meals in the accommodation blocks.

One of the best ways to get to know people is to volunteer your time. Opportunities range from microphone stewarding to door keeping to helping the pastoral care team. If you can spare two hours or more, please consider making an offer. You can let us know when you book to attend.

How can I prepare?

Think about your needs in advance. It is a big event and can be very busy. Remember to pace yourself, and don’t try to do everything in the programme.

Materials sent in advance of the event and posted online will include questions for reflection and study, suggested reading and further resources. All are aimed at encouraging us to engage with the big questions as we move forward

Increasing access

Want to attend Yearly Meeting Gathering but would be prevented for financial reasons? A number of bursaries for accommodation and travel costs are available, made possible thanks to the donations of fellow Quakers.

We are working to make these bursaries as accessible as possible, so this year if you intend to apply you will be able to hold a place without needing to pay a deposit for your accommodation. You can request a bursary application form by ticking a box on the event booking form.

in our discernment around inclusion and climate justice.

Most importantly, please feel welcome to attend. Ours is a thriving, engaged community of Quakers, and without you we are less. So do think about joining us even if you haven’t done so before. Finally, if you cannot attend in person, please uphold us in the spirit as we prepare to gather in August 2020.

Find out more and book your place at www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

“A haven for young people”: planning Junior Yearly Meeting



Matthew Bittle is a member of the committee organising Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM), the programme for and by 14- to 17-year-olds running alongside Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG). Input from JYM has been instrumental in discerning the theme and title of this year’s Gathering.

“I’ve been attending young Quaker events for as long as I can remember. They have facilitated some of my fondest childhood memories. JYM is no exception: I went to my first last year and it was fantastic. This year I wanted to be on the JYM committee, to give back to the event that brought me so much joy and personal growth and hopefully create the same feelings in this year’s participants.

Part of our role as a committee is to feed into the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee’s planning for YMG itself, representing the thoughts of young people and ensuring they are listened to. This integration has been positive for both groups. One outcome was our help in guiding the theme

of YMG this year. Our theme, focusing on allyship in a climate emergency, was born from our perspective on British Quakerism and our society as a whole. We tried to create something that would spur thoughtful discussions and support the positive change we want to see in the world, while remaining sensitive to people’s individual experiences.

My hope for JYM this year is that we create a fully integrated programme, one that’s at the heart of YMG so that young people can have their voices heard. There are few places I have been where truly everyone is accepted and included, and JYM is one of them. It’s a haven for young people to engage in discussions and grow on a personal level.”

Smacking ban a historic first for Scotland's children

6

How Quakers in Scotland were involved in the passing of a new bill that makes it a criminal offence for parents to strike their children.

By Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer

Late last year Scotland became the first country in the UK to make it a criminal offence for parents to smack their children.

The so-called 'smacking ban' gives children in Scotland the same protection from assault as adults, removing the defence of "reasonable chastisement" for a parent or carer using physical punishment as discipline.

Quakers in Britain welcomed the passing of the Equal Protection from Assault Bill as a historic moment for Scotland's children.

The Quaker commitment to nonviolence is something that needs practice throughout a lifetime, and the grounding for a nonviolent life starts in childhood.

Quakers in Scotland were involved in the work leading up to the bill. As Parliamentary Engagement Officer I gathered views from young Quakers and local and area meetings, and looked at similar work Quakers did in Wales (where a similar bill was passed in March 2019) and Canada

to formulate our response to the lead committee's work on the bill.

Not all faith groups were supportive of the ban, and there were newspaper headlines in Scotland saying "God wants us to smack our children". While this

Quakers hope that enshrining children's rights and a more child centered approach in Scottish law may strengthen movements across Britain

headline was unfortunate, it did lead to some successful media work between Quakers in Scotland and the charity Children First, which presented a different view from a faith group. This resulted in coverage in local, Scottish and UK papers, including a long quote from myself about nonviolence in the *Daily Mail* (a career first!).

As a result of the raised profile of Quaker work in this area, I was asked to represent Quakers

in Scotland at a meeting of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee of the Scottish Parliament. On the day of giving evidence some audience members were aggressive when addressing the committee, and some faith groups unequivocal in their rejection of the bill.

I was on a panel with the supportive Church of Scotland and Humanists explaining Quakers in Scotland's position and why Quakers feel strongly about nonviolence and putting forward the idea, rooted in the Quaker value of equality, that instead of looking at parents' rights and children's rights as being separate, it might be better to include them all in the one group – that of human rights. All humans deserve to be free from violence.

The committee congratulated me on Quakers in Scotland's evidence, and also appreciated that we were able to present a different view that was still firmly rooted in faith.

This work has led Quakers in Britain to call on the UK government to shelve plans for more punitive punishment in schools in the rest of Britain. Quakers hope that enshrining children's rights and a more child-centered approach in Scottish law may strengthen movements across Britain that are also working for similar aims.

However, it's important to remember that introducing a 'smacking ban' is not enough. To create lasting cultural change, education, training, support and compassion need to be offered to those who struggle to avoid using punishment to discipline their children.



Mairi Campbell-Jack representing Quakers in Scotland at a meeting of the Scottish Parliament. Photo: Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament

What next for Quaker conciliation work?

Quakers have been involved in conciliation efforts for decades. An intergenerational exchange looked at the future of this often-confidential and little-discussed work.

By Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship

When should you intervene to try to bring peace to a situation of lethal violence? How do you speak to people who want to kill each other, and might want to kill you because you're listening to their enemies too? And how long after the shooting stops should you continue working and walking alongside people, helping to embed peace?

These were just some of the issues raised over four days last September, at an intergenerational exchange on Quaker conciliation work at Woodbrooke, Birmingham.

Quakers have been involved in conciliation and mediation efforts in conflict for decades, but the confidential nature of the work means that it is rarely talked about. Quakers were involved in helping to mediate in the Biafran war in Nigeria in the 1960s, and providing spaces where all sides could meet during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as well as some lesser-known conflicts. Conciliation work continues today, with skilled Quaker volunteers assisting, by invitation, to build trust among different parties.

However, when Quakers were asked a few years ago to help support local peacebuilders in another conflict, the group that was asked didn't have the capacity to say yes. The Woodbrooke event, enabled through legacies from Quakers, was in part an effort to see if a new wave of Quakers would be keen to do conciliation work, so it could continue in the future. It was also a chance to take stock of how we should do this work in the future and to explore whether there are other ways of empowering communities to create peace and justice for themselves. The answer

to both questions was 'yes'.

In recent decades, many other groups have also taken up conciliation work. This should be celebrated, but the faith-based Quaker approach – with its

Throughout the event, participants questioned whether British Quakers should still travel to help 'fix' things in other parts of the world

emphasis on seeing the humanity in everyone, as well as changing not just policy but relationships – still brings something different. As one participant put it, "Quakers do not rush" – we stay involved for the longterm, supporting parties until they don't need us anymore. Moreover, Quaker conciliators get involved only when invited by someone involved in the conflict.

Participants at the event were mostly Quakers, a mix of longstanding conciliators, younger adults and two international guests

with lived experience of working with Quakers to address violence in their countries. Throughout the event, some participants questioned whether British Quakers should still travel to help 'fix' things in other parts of the world, many with links to the former British Empire; it has an element of colonialism about it. There was strong support for enabling more local Quakers and others to do conciliation work at home. Yet we also heard that an outsider with no personal stake in the conflict can be more acceptable as a conciliator, and their mere presence can encourage positive behaviour, just as you behave differently when there are guests in your house.

The event will help shape future Quaker work, and learning from it will be shared through a book and short video, due out in March 2020. Alongside this, the work continues, quietly. As one participant said, "Respectful listening, impartiality, and friendliness to all are the hallmarks of Quaker conciliation".



Participants at the 2019 conciliation event at Woodbrooke, Birmingham. Photo: BYM

Faith in action: being a Quaker activist

The Quaker Activist Gathering brought together activists from across Britain. We asked three of them how they connect their beliefs and activism.

By Lyndsay Burtonshaw, Turning the Tide Programme Coordinator

There are countless ways to live out Quaker values in the world and work towards a more just, peaceful and sustainable society.

For some Quakers this means activism, including taking part in advocacy, protests and nonviolent direct action.

Late last year we held the annual Quaker Activist Gathering (QAG) – an event where Quakers and people new to Quakerism who are connected to activism in some way come together and experience a day of connection, reflection and rejuvenation.

Afterwards we caught up with three participants to find out more about how they connect Quakerism and activism, and how they found being part of the Gathering.

Sam Dodd

“I have been involved in anti-Islamophobia allyship, queer liberation campaigns, and local small-scale activism for the last 14 years. It’s been hard to find a faith community that matches my politics and activism and that I knew would accept me fully as a queer woman. Quakerism stood out for me in this regard.

I had been to Quaker Quest a few times in previous years but



hadn’t committed to attending my local meeting. When I stumbled across the Activist Gathering on the Quaker website I knew it would be a perfect fit. There was a focus, though not too overt, on putting faith into practice and exploring

“The Quaker community has consistently provided support for members who find themselves driven to take action.”

how spiritual principles transfer into activism, which I appreciated so much. For me the two things are indivisible and each informs the other. It was also a lot gentler than some activist spaces I’ve been a part of in the past.

Since the Gathering I have attended my local meeting in Bethnal Green. I really loved it. Everyone was very welcoming and kind, and the communal worship felt necessary and long-needed.”

Brian Wardrop

“Before I came to Quakers I had never participated in any activist actions, not even signing petitions! Following the death of my first wife, I married Jean, who is a Quaker and has a strong social conscience, and I started attending Quaker meetings.

I then became aware of the ecumenical accompaniment programme, and researched the history of the conflict in Palestine. There was a march planned in London in support of the Palestinian cause, and I found that I was unexpectedly driven to participate in it – something I had never done before. I think that was my watershed moment in

embracing nonviolent activism.

I suppose that my involvement is driven by concern at intentional mistreatment of people and the environment. Looking back over our history, it seems to me that the British Quaker community has consistently provided support for members who find themselves driven to take action. This respect and support for actions taken arising from tested concerns, even if not universally supported, seems to permeate Quakers like letters through a stick of rock.

For me, taking action seems to be a slow-burn thing, in that it takes me some time to get to a point on a matter where I decide that I do



Participants at the Quaker Activist Gathering explored of war, inequality and climate change. Illustration: Tan Photos (L to R): Sam Dodd (and Bluebottle), Brian Wardrop

Reducing the burden, releasing the joy

10

Finding simpler ways to do things can help meetings focus more on the best bits about being a Quaker.

By Jonathan Carmichael, *Simpler Meetings Project Manager*

The Simpler Meetings project is all about finding and sharing ways we can run Quaker meetings more simply, to reduce the burdens on the small number of Friends doing a large number of roles. It's legacy-funded and will run until June 2021. The aim is to release the joy of being a Quaker, with more time for spiritual growth, witness, outreach and building Quaker communities.

But first, a bit of background. Life in Britain has changed considerably compared with a generation ago, and that has had an impact on Quakerism. More of us are the only Quaker in our families, more Friends are joining later in life, and we have fewer younger people. Overall, in the last ten years the number of Quaker members and attenders has fallen by 14 per cent. Around us, society is more secular and regulated, lives are busier, and technology is changing. More women are in paid work, while people are retiring later with more childcare responsibilities.

All this means we may need to

find new, and less time-consuming, ways to sustain our meetings. Fortunately, Quakers are good at questioning the status quo, and finding new light.

Working with meetings across Britain, I've been discovering huge variety in the way Quakers do things, a wealth of possibilities for

It seems that there is not one Quaker way, but there are many Quaker principles. It is the principles we should focus on.

how they can make things simpler, and plenty of permission to give things a try.

While some local meetings are large, half the local meetings in Britain typically have fewer than 15 people on a Sunday. Do we need to adapt to this? A quarter of local meetings do not have a meeting house at all, which can simplify things immensely. Can we learn from them? Some meetings pay a small amount to get some tasks

done, releasing time for what only Quakers can do.

I also found a paradox. Some Quakers seem very sure their way of doing things is the right way, the only Quaker way, and say it has always been done this way. Yet in the next meeting or area, other people are sure their different way is right, and how it has always been done.

The answer seems to be that there is not one Quaker way, but there are many Quaker principles. It is the principles we should focus on. It is not about finding one-size-fits-all solutions, but multiple possibilities for different circumstances.

Our central text, *Quaker faith & practice*, is full of permissions, not prohibitions. It rarely says "do it just like this". Instead we are encouraged to consider how we might do things.

From my discussions I've gathered a wealth of possibilities for change. They're now available on our website in the form of videos and documents. Topics range from making life simpler for role-holders to simpler property management and alternatives to having a meeting house, and both local and area meetings are covered. You can see a taster on the next page, and also find out how two meetings are putting things into practice.

I look forward to exploring more ideas and experiences of doing things simply – if you have any to share, please get in touch.

Contact:

Jonathan Carmichael
jonathanc@quaker.org.uk
www.quaker.org.uk/simplermeetings



Simplifying meetings can help make space for the things that really matter.
Photo: Mike Pinches

Some simple ideas for simpler meetings

Being more flexible about Quaker roles has emerged as a key component of simplification. That's whether it's the nature of the role, its length, sharing it (between people or areas), or combining roles. Other insights that have emerged when working with Friends include:

Smaller local meetings:

- Focus on the Quaker essentials
- Place finances within another meeting's accounts
- Business meetings: do all decisions need them? Could they be less frequent? Could we have one for two different meetings for worship?

- Try worship at different places and times.

Area meetings:

- Ask how neighbours do things
- Have a little paid support, such as a bookkeeper and a maintenance company
- Consider reducing the number of meeting houses to better focus on Quaker activities rather than property issues.
- Consider merging area meetings or having a single charity for several area meetings.
- Invest in learning together.

To find more ideas, search online for "simpler Quaker meetings".



Recruiting a children's worker is one way Quaker meetings are simplifying how they welcome children and families. Photo: BYM

Simpler meeting stories: Hope Valley Local Meeting

"Our meeting attracts 10–15 people each week. We've struggled to find sufficient people for roles in the meeting for many years, and the co-clerks were shouldering a lot of the burden.

Now the necessary functions of the meeting have been taken over by a convening team of three people who oversee clerking, eldership, oversight, and finances. Individuals in this core team will initially serve for three, two and one years. The former co-clerk and elder was appointed

for three years and two attenders agreed to join her.

An informal arrangement each week of greeters, door keepers and refreshment providers has encouraged more people to share responsibilities. Oversight by all Friends is encouraged, and news of absent Friends is shared every week in notices.

Due to these and other changes, including streamlined financial arrangements, Friends at Hope Valley Meeting have felt a new energy in the meeting."

Simpler meeting stories: recruiting a paid children's worker

"At Friends House Local Meeting we wanted to increase the numbers of children coming to our meeting, and we wanted to make the children's meeting worth finding. Although a large meeting (we typically have 40 or so on a Sunday), we only had one child who came about once a month. We had a couple of Friends who were DBS-checked but our most faithful children's volunteer was about to move and leave our meeting. We wanted someone to run the children's meeting who could come every week and help us build it up through some local outreach.

We had a small amount of reserves and so could afford to pay someone for a year or two. In that time, we hope our children's meeting grows and that in turn helps to sustain it.

We were lucky to find someone with the right experience and skills, and who had also grown up a Quaker. She has quickly become part of our community, and our children's group has begun to grow a little – although it's still early days! Friends sometimes bring grandchildren, and occasionally we have babies, which is wonderful. We doubt these children would have come without our new children's worker. It's a great joy to the meeting when the children join us for the last ten minutes of our worship.

We do still have work to do with improving our outreach to make our children's meeting more widely known. In the past, if a family turned up unexpectedly we found they didn't return as we weren't fully prepared for them. Now, every week, the doors are open, the children's room is set up and our children's worker and a volunteer are ready and waiting."

Standing up for the science on climate

12

What it's like to be an official Quaker presence at two of the world's most influential ongoing climate negotiations.

By Lindsey Fielder Cook, Representative for Climate Change, Quaker United Nations Office

It was four in the morning, and an oil-rich country was delaying adoption of a Special Report on Global Warming. The report, by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), outlined the urgent action necessary to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Action that would save humans and nature from the profound suffering, loss of life, and irreversible ecosystem destruction expected under higher temperatures.

The tired IPCC co-chair looked over the assembled delegations from countries across the world, and said, "I have two last interventions: Poland, and the Quakers." Following my intervention, the co-chair and IPCC scientists began an intense muted discussion, revising the text to clarify how diet change could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the use of more destructive measures.

The IPCC was founded in 1988 to collate the latest climate science and inform governments worldwide of what is happening, and why. Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has been an accredited observer of the IPCC since 2016. To our knowledge, we are the only accredited faith-based observer there. As observers we advocate for research into the role of human behaviour change in reducing environmental degradation driven by human activities.

Because governments can influence the language used in the summaries of these massive reports before they adopt them, we support scientists and help ensure their critical messages remain, so policy-makers worldwide are



Lindsey Fielder Cook at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Photo: IISD/Sean Wu

properly informed.

At QUNO, we see climate change as a peace and justice concern. In 2013, we initiated 'quiet diplomacy' at the UN climate change negotiations to help build communication and understanding between a diverse group of countries. We offer off-the-record dinners: a safe space where negotiators can speak more openly and personally with opposing delegations. This work continues, as do our publications, our side events on courage and solidarity, and work on human rights-based approaches to climate policy.

In the last seven years, we have ridden many emotional rollercoasters at the negotiations. The most recent event (COP25, in Madrid) was as harsh and weird as we have experienced, with fractured world politics reflected in avoidably sharp interventions between countries.

While happening too slowly, these global efforts are critical

in addressing a global problem. And an awakening is occurring: the COP25, for all its turmoil, was evidence that it is getting harder for high-emission countries to avoid action – both in these negotiations and in their own countries.

I am humbled by the extent of the Quaker presence at the UN, in human rights, peace and disarmament, sustainable and just economic systems, and climate change. It is largely thanks to British Quakers that we are here. Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) funds the majority of QUNO work, and a BYM legacy grant has enabled our climate work to continue until December 2020.

As I walk into these often-overwhelming negotiations, I feel the presence of Quakers past and present with me. Why are Quakers here, diplomats sometimes ask? "To support peace and justice efforts at the UN", we say. Past, present and future, thank you British Quakers.

Opening access to Quaker committees and groups

Would you like to serve on a Britain Yearly Meeting committee or group? Do you know someone who would be perfect for a particular role? Committee service is now becoming more accessible thanks to an online form where you can indicate yourself as interested in serving, or suggest another Quaker as a good fit for a group or role.

A full list of opportunities on offer can now be found at www.quaker.org.uk/committees-and-groups. They range from making sure our work is in line with Quaker faith and values to reaching out and making connections with other groups, including other Quaker meetings across the world, or other faith groups.

Quaker Life, which works to support and strengthen Quaker life throughout the yearly meeting, has many opportunities available, as does Quaker Peace & Social Witness, which works to translate our faith into action.

The uniquely Quaker part of the process is that the nominating committee will consider a list of names of Friends who have indicated an interest in various ways, and discern who would be the best fit for each group or role. This does mean that while all applications are welcomed, there is no guarantee that those indicating an interest in a role (for themselves or others) will end up in that particular role.

The increased accessibility, including now being able to nominate others, means the nominating committee is able to connect further with meetings across Britain, and be able to consider a wider range of people than previously.

To find out more, head to the webpage above or contact Zoe Prosser at zoep@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1115.



Workshops in action at the QPSW Spring Conference. Photo: Suki Ferguson

Exploring faith and witness

Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) seeks to support Quakers to translate faith into action and to be part of a movement for positive social change.

This year QPSW is holding its spring conference on 20–22 March in Swanwick, Derbyshire. The residential event is an opportunity to hear about QPSW's work, meet Friends from all over the country and spend time together exploring Quaker faith and witness.

Workshops confirmed so far include sessions on supporting the climate movement, exploring what we can learn from East African peace activists and sharing experiences from Palestine and Israel.

Keynote speakers are Esther Leighton, who will talk about how Quakerism drives her work using law to create social change, and Sam Donaldson, a community worker and organisational coach involved in establishing the Quaker movement Roots of Resistance.

The event is open to all, and participants are being nominated to attend through their area and local meetings. We aim to be fully inclusive, and we are happy to discuss your needs.

The cost is £200 including accommodation and food. For more information see www.quaker.org.uk/events or contact 020 7663 1142 or bymevents@quaker.org.uk.

Education grants available

Adult education grants for 2020–2021 are available from Britain Yearly Meeting for Quaker members and attenders who are taking a further or higher education course to equip themselves to serve society and/or Quakers in Britain. To apply you should be a mature student or graduate, either in membership of Britain Yearly Meeting or an attender of at least five years. You should be in need of financial support to take the course, and the course should be offered at a reputable institution within the UK. Applications close on 30 April 2020. See www.quaker.org.uk/adult-education-grants or contact grants@quaker.org.uk.

Online conference: How does God call us to act?

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is inviting Quakers around the world to join an online conference on sustainability.

Taking place on 22 February, the conference will create space for deep discussion of matters relating to sustainability and explore how Quakers feel they are being called to act.

Participants in sessions during the day will have the chance to hear from five different speakers for 45 minutes, and then take part in two hours of live worship sharing.

Find out more on the FWCC website at <http://fwcc.world>.



Funds and grants to help enhance your meeting house



The previously derelict workshop that is now part of Ludlow Quaker Meeting House thanks to grants from Britain Yearly Meeting. Photo: Jamie Wrench

In 2019 Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) made grants and loans totalling nearly £200,000 to meetings for their buildings. This money has supported Quakers to develop and enhance their meeting houses and so better serve their meeting's witness, worship and the local community.

Two schemes are currently running. The Sawell Family Fund makes grants to local and area meetings that are considering developments of their meeting houses. It helps meetings pay for advice and obtain useful information for the threshing and discernment process involved in making big decisions about a meeting house. BYM Meeting Houses Funds help with the costs of actual physical works.

The Quaker community in Ludlow, Shropshire, is one of 16 benefitting from these funds this year. Friends there had purchased a two-storey, derelict, Grade II listed workshop next to their existing meeting house. A Sawell Family Fund grant helped with this process, including all planning, architects', quantity surveyors' and engineers' fees.

Having decided to refurbish the workshop rather than knock

it down, many sewage pipes were replaced. Extra insulation and damp proofing was added. Time-set lighting and heating systems were installed.

Friends now have a children's room and library, a small meeting room for use by local community groups and their own meeting groups, and importantly, two inside toilets. There has been a lot of interest from the local community and a big increase in lettings.

Ludlow Friends have now turned their attention to the meeting house itself. Built between 1886 and 1903, and originally a farm outbuilding, it has no facilities for people with disabilities, and one corner is sinking. Meetings Houses Funds will support the next phase with a loan and a grant. Local Quakers are fundraising for the balance.

These are just two examples of how these schemes have been put to use by Quakers in Britain. For more information about how to apply for a property grant or loan, go to the BYM website's property or grants pages or email finance@quaker.org.uk. BYM is able to provide these grants and loans through the generosity of Friends, both past and present. To donate, go to www.quaker.org.uk/give.

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.

Get more Quaker news

Sign up to *Quake!* our monthly email newsletter for news and views for all Quakers in Britain: www.quaker.org.uk/quake.

Access digital back issues of Quaker News at www.quaker.org.uk/qn. To make changes to your subscription or request paper back issues contact 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'.



Your Faith Your Action



Supporting peacebuilders in East Africa



Support for meetings



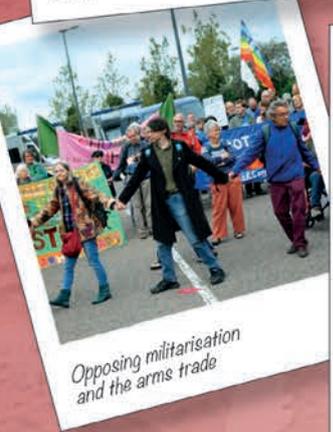
Yearly Meeting



Outreach



Working collaboratively on peace education



Opposing militarisation and the arms trade



Working with children and young people



Responding to forced migration



Campaigning for a more sustainable future



Engaging young adult Friends

Your Contribution

Can you help raise £3m for Quaker work in 2020?

Quakers live adventurously and give generously in support of Quaker faith and Quaker work. The financial contribution made towards this shared work helps us promote Quaker values in the world, sustain the church and faith, support meetings and raise awareness of Quakerism. Of the £12.8m needed to fund Quaker work in 2020, we aim to raise £3m from Friends and meetings. Can you help?

You can give to Britain Yearly Meeting directly or through your local or area meeting. Speak to your treasurer, visit www.quaker.org.uk/give or phone Maisa Monteiro on 020 7663 1015 to find out more.



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

P: 020 7663 1123
E: outreach@quaker.org.uk

Meet Max Kirk



Photo: Bryan Fitness

Max Kirk is a member of York Area Meeting. They are currently serving on Quaker Life Central Committee.

Being a Quaker is such a fundamental part of my life that I don't know where I'd be without it. I'm now 21 and I've been a member since I turned 16. I've been going to Quaker meetings with my parents and two older brothers since I was about two years old. Growing up, there weren't many people there my age but when I was old enough, I started going to regional young people's events. I often say that if I hadn't been to Northern Young Friends' Summer Shindig or Yorkshire Friends' Holiday School, I wouldn't be the person I am now.

Both of those events, alongside the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) I clerked, shaped my life in a fundamental way. In the safety and openness of these communities I began to consider honestly who I am. It was at JYM that I first felt accepted to be who I knew myself to be and to begin coming out as non-binary masculine (so my pronouns are they/them) and bisexual.

One of the most wonderful things about being a young Quaker is that the residential youth events (regional and national) forge so many strong friendships with Friends from

all over the country and a range of backgrounds. It gives a solid sense of Quaker community, but one that is different to the more traditional Quaker structures based around local communities. By contrast, many younger Quaker communities are virtual and/or span large areas.

I haven't regularly attended meeting for worship since going to uni, simply because I struggle to find the time, but my Quaker faith feels as strong as ever.

Just over a year ago I was nominated to serve on Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC). The busyness of university means that being on QLCC can be hard, as it requires weekends and travel time, but we're working as a committee to reduce such barriers (I attended our May meeting virtually, via Skype, since I was about to sit exams).

I am really enjoying being on a central committee because it helps demystify how Quakerism works. It's definitely a learning curve and can be trying and frustrating, but overall it is a positive experience, and I really hope that more Quakers will realise that national committees are for *all* Friends.