

Quaker News



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



Learning to build a better world

No. 104 – Autumn 2019

All change at Britain Yearly Meeting

Quaker News

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

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

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

Also available in large print

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What is Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) really for? Why have a national Quaker organisation, and what should it do? Over the last two years, BYM's Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings (our national representative body) have worked together on this. The result: Quakers should be 'a simple church, supported by a simple charity, to reinvigorate Quakerism'.

But how to get there from here? We'll be focusing on three strands of activity: thriving Quaker communities; a sustainable and peaceful world; and simplifying structures and practices. In all of these we are aiming for work that is distinctively Quaker, well integrated between local, national and international structures, and well governed, meaning that it is impactful, properly resourced and clearly communicated.

The next few years will mean changes to how BYM works. We'll be employing some staff closer to where Quaker meetings are, not just in London. We'll be working more closely with Woodbrooke to make sure meetings have the support they need to thrive. We'll be strengthening BYM's response to the twin planetary emergencies of climate crisis and violent conflict. And we'll be working with Friends to explore simplifying Quaker structures, at local as well as national level.

Working for a sustainable and peaceful world

In 2011 Quakers in Britain committed to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. Since then, meetings have been reducing their carbon footprint and BYM has been lobbying government and working with other faith groups to press for policy change. Young Quakers have participated in climate strikes, and many Friends have engaged in civil disobedience.

The UK will be hosting the COP26 summit in 2020 – a key opportunity for our aim of a just transition to a net-zero carbon economy. We'll be working with the Quaker UN Office in Geneva and Friends World Committee for Consultation to play our part in a global Quaker climate justice movement.

Peace and sustainability go hand in hand. War contributes to the climate crisis and is a major driver of migration. BYM will continue to be an important part of the UK peace movement, maintaining pressure on policy-makers, spreading the skills needed to build a culture of peace, and remaining vigilant about the military's place in our society.

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Cover image: Quaker stitching against the DSEI arms fair. Image: BYM (see page 12)



The priorities underlying upcoming changes in the way Britain Yearly Meeting works. Image: BYM

Supporting thriving Quaker communities

We want Quaker meetings and communities to be welcoming, inclusive, diverse and all-age. We know that some meetings are struggling with this and we want to help. Our recent Vibrancy in Meetings pilot project has shown that we can do this best if we have staff nearby who can work with meetings on whatever they discern will help them to thrive. This could range from help organising a learning event, support with Quaker processes, or guidance on outreach.

When the Vibrancy pilot ends in December 2019 we're planning to place local development workers within reach of every meeting in BYM within five years. We'll also be experimenting with hubs for staff outside London and Birmingham. We also know that meetings need more specialist support on certain topics, such as property or mental health. Alongside Woodbrooke, we'll be making sure we have the right resources available for Quaker communities across Britain. Our new local development workers will work closely with staff providing these services to give meetings the support they need when they need it.

Making Britain Yearly Meeting simpler

We're a do-it-together community. Over the last ten years the median number of members per local meeting has fallen from 24 to 18; that's not many people to do all the jobs. Our Simpler Meetings project is helping Quakers declutter our structures and simplify local and area meetings.

BYM will also review its own structures, making sure every committee is needed and that we use Friends' gifts and time well. We'll consider whether we can get by with fewer than the 419 Friends who currently serve on BYM's committees, releasing Quakers to serve in other ways, locally and nationally. We'll look at removing barriers that prevent Friends from participating, so that our governance fully reflects the diversity and energy of our community.

In 2018, Yearly Meeting agreed to revise our central text *Quaker faith & practice*, a once-in-a-generation chance to recapture the essence of Quakerism in Britain today. We'll support the revision committee with the resources it needs, and create opportunities for Quakers to engage in the process (see page 13).

What next?

We have started asking Quakers if their local or area meeting would be interested in hosting a local development worker or even a hub for BYM and Woodbrooke staff. We don't need detailed proposals at this stage, but want to start a conversation, learn about Friends' needs, and explore how they can support this work.

You'll find an expression of interest form at www.quaker.org.uk/mcs or you can email mcs@quaker.org.uk with any questions before completing it. The form will close on 1 December 2019 and we expect to open discussions with those expressing interest in the first half of 2020.

You can get involved with Quaker work on climate justice and peace by signing up to our newsletters at www.quaker.org.uk/newsletters or by following Quakers in Britain on social media.

Quaker work only happens when Quakers support it with energy, enthusiasm, ideas, and discernment. You can give time or money to support BYM's work at www.quaker.org.uk/giving.

I'm excited by our plans for the next few years. I hope you are too. Here at BYM, we're looking forward to working with Quakers across Britain to make them a reality.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk

Climate emergency: how Quakers are taking action

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When it comes to climate action, there's no time like the present. Friends have been part of a groundswell demanding political leadership this summer. In September citizens young and old, including Friends and Britain Yearly Meeting staff, joined the youth strikers for a global day of climate action. In July Quakers joined Power Beyond Borders, a series of direct actions highlighting the connected injustices of climate change and UK's hostile environment for migrants. Meeting for Sufferings, our national representative body, has so far heard of 13 Friends who have been arrested as part of ongoing actions by Extinction Rebellion in the UK.

Quakers are engaging with politicians too, with over 120 heading to Westminster on 26 June for a mass lobby on climate action. "It was interesting to hear from others on the day, 'We are so pleased to see so many Quakers here – you add weight to the lobby'", said Christine Habgood from Lewes Meeting. Earlier that day 17-year-old Quaker Anya Nanning Ramamurthy was a speaker at an interfaith event also featuring former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. Beyond Westminster, Quakers in Scotland and Wales are lobbying their national parliaments. "There are some exciting opportunities coming up in Scotland later this year, including the Climate Change Bill," said BYM's Mairi Campbell-Jack. Quakers have also engaged with their local councils.

In 2020 the annual UN climate negotiations will come to the UK. It's a unique opportunity to demand leadership. Over the coming year we need to work with others to demand change, support our growing climate movement and demand action like never before.

Chris Walker, Programme Manager: Sustainability & Peace

The school striker: Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Tottenham Local Meeting



Above: Anya Nanning Ramamurthy taking action for climate justice. Below: On a panel at an interfaith event lobbying the government on climate. Photos: BYM

"From a young age I have always been aware of the necessity to look after our planet. For me it is connected to the Quaker testimony of equality: we are not superior to other animals, plants and organisms and therefore we need to share the earth equally with them.

Over the years I have been on many protests and demonstrations demanding climate justice. When I heard about the international school strike in February 2019, I felt I had to attend. This fight needed students to get involved; we will be most affected by the climate breakdown and we need to show the world and the system that we care and are scared of potential climate catastrophe.

I and many others encouraged people at our schools and colleges, young Quakers, and other young people to join this important action. Thousands took to the streets on the day and worldwide – it was a truly powerful experience to be part of this huge global community.

Being part of something that was started and led by young people, especially Greta Thunberg, furthered this sense of community and hope that things could change. It's inspiring that it took one person (younger than me) to start these strikes!

I have since joined the UK Student Climate Network, which hosts the student climate strikes in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and have continued to strike. I hope that we are able to make significant changes before it is too late."



The fossil fuels campaigner: Alan Allport, Oxford Local Quaker Meeting



"Fossil Free Oxfordshire began campaigning in 2014. Our aim is to persuade the big institutions in Oxfordshire to stop investing in fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) and shift their money to renewables. Quakers have been involved from early on. The group meets every fortnight at Oxford Quaker Meeting House.

We had an early success, convincing Oxford City Council to reject all investments in fossil fuels. Oxford was the first local authority in England to adopt such a policy. However, its significance was largely symbolic, since the city

council's investment portfolio is slim. We then turned our attention to the county council's £2.1 billion pension fund, with more than £150 million invested directly in fossil fuels. As Bill McKibben, co-founder of renewable energy movement 350.org, said, 'It makes no sense to pay for one's pension by investing in companies that make sure we won't have a planet to retire on.'

For over four years we regularly addressed various council bodies and individual councillors; we organised public meetings, marches, rallies, a petition; all with little movement in response.

Early in 2019 things began to change. Thanks to protests, school strikes and scientific studies, climate and ecological breakdown began to make it into widespread public awareness, if not yet into political action.

The UK government, along with 70 UK local authorities, including Oxford City and two of the four other district councils in Oxfordshire, has now declared a climate emergency. Even Oxfordshire County Council has voted, unanimously, to 'acknowledge' one.

In October 2019 the city council's pension fund committee is holding an all-day workshop on fossil-fuel divestment, with Fossil Free Oxfordshire involved. There is movement. At last."



Top and above: Members of Fossil Free Oxfordshire take part in protests to urge big Oxfordshire institutions to stop investing in fossil fuels. Photos: Alan Allport

The Extinction Rebellion Quaker: Kay Flatten, Newport Quaker Meeting



Kay Flatten with her homemade Quaker/XR flags. Photo: Kay Flatten

"Sustainability has been a concern of my Quaker meeting for some time, but my first contact with Extinction Rebellion (XR) was when I joined the XR Newport and XR Quakers groups on Facebook.

As a 73-year-old who grew up in America, I stepped away from the Black Freedom Marches of the 1960s and Vietnam War protests of the 1970s. Now retired, I regret my previous apathy. When the XR Summer Uprising request for volunteers to disrupt Cardiff came, I knew this was my chance to step forward. I was assigned a role as part of a team supporting XR volunteers in their civil disobedience, and also camped out on the lawn of the city hall with XR people from all over Wales.

After working with members of XR and witnessing how they supported and regenerated the energies of fellow volunteers, I felt ready to join a call for regional teams of 'Post-Arrest Liaisons' who support people arrested in XR actions. I will be trained via video conferencing and hopefully be assigned an XR volunteer awaiting trial to whom I can listen and offer encouragement. I hope to visit other Quaker meetings in Wales and recruit more liaisons until we have enough to form a regional team."

Connecting with community

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How a Quaker group reached out to children in the local community to share a message of peace.

Mel Cook, Children's Work Officer

Connecting with our local communities is a feature of the life of many Quaker meetings and groups, whether it's in our annual Quaker Week each October or with events throughout the year. In my work at Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) I'm particularly interested in how to better connect with children and families in the local community. This is also a long-term aim of Hertford & Hitchin Area Meeting's Peace Group. It has long been keen to engage local schools with Quaker peace education materials and share an approach that helps children develop the skills and understanding we need to be peacemakers in our lives.

But getting started in this area can be difficult – teachers are busy people, with many conflicting demands. Making in-roads to schools was slow going. From the silence of Quaker worship came the idea to do it the other way around. Rather than going into schools, the group could invite children to a

holiday club on the theme of peace.

The week-long event would be based on the Peace Week pack produced by BYM's peace education team, which provides a wide selection of activities for children and young people. After much planning a team of volunteers was gathered, a date set, and publicity sent to local schools.

Children were keen to share what they had learned with their grown-ups and even teach them some new skills.

Then, on the morning of the first week of the summer holidays, nearly 30 excited children aged between 3 and 12 gathered in Welwyn Garden City Meeting House to start their peace adventure.

Each day began with movement and stillness. Afterwards the children broke into age groups to explore different topics in fun and age-appropriate ways, from

standing up for peace to feeling peaceful inside. Guest visitors led special sessions, including a very touching one that used movement as a way to explore conflict and teamwork.

Children were engaged and excited by all that went on in the week and were keen to share what they had learned with their grown-ups – and even teach them some new skills. Co-organiser Lucy Ann Holmes told me that she'd been "blown away" by the response from parents, with many telling her that their children "have been talking to them about peace and teaching them mindfulness practice".

Putting on the week took a significant commitment from Friends. It required planning meetings, budget from area meeting, commitment from a wide range of volunteers, and measures taken to make sure all involved were safe and protected. These efforts ensured that the event will have a positive and lasting effect on the lives of all involved.

If this sort of event sounds familiar, then I'd like to hear from you. My team is working on a new resource for Quaker meetings and groups on how to engage with children and families in the local community. It will be available next year and full of useful ideas and tips from Friends. To contribute, please get in touch.

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Participants and volunteers exploring peace. Photo: Mel Cook for BYM

Promoting peace in Europe

How two Quaker organisations are joining up to bring peace education into focus across the EU.

Isabel Cartwright, Programme Manager: Peace Education

Creating peace is an explicit aim in the EU's founding treaty, and in 2012 the EU won a Nobel Peace Prize for the "advancement of peace and reconciliation". Yet in recent years the EU has become more militarised, committing for the first time to a 'European Defence Fund' and planning to spend €13bn on this between 2021 and 2027.

Despite these troubling developments, two Quaker organisations are coming together for a new legacy-funded project to promote peace education as a crucial tool to help prevent violent conflict. It will see Quaker Peace & Social Witness combine its peace education expertise with the European advocacy and research skills of Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) to promote what Quakers have understood for centuries – that peace is built in the classroom, as well as at the negotiating table.

Peace education offers children and young people the chance to engage with peace and justice issues and is a key conflict



Secondary school pupils in a peace education lesson. Photo: Michael Preston for BYM

prevention tool. Current provision for it across Europe is patchy at best, as shown in QCEA's recent report *Peace education: making the case* (<http://bit.ly/QCEApewn>). The time is right to prioritise peace education within the European Union and lay the foundations for it to become mainstream.

While this may sound ambitious, it's clear there is an appetite for this kind of approach at the EU. At a recent seminar in Brussels, QCEA's Peace Programme Director Olivia Caeymaex made the case for peace education, and several senior officials lent their support to the idea. As a key actor in social policy, development and conflict resolution, the EU is ideally placed to support and promote the use of peace education around the world.

To help make this happen, the two-year project aims to take both a 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach to change. This means influencing and connecting people

within the EU's structure as well as those, like many Quakers, engaged with grassroots peace education across Europe.

There will be training for EU policymakers, academics and teachers, and exciting new resources including short animations inspired by the peace issues children are interested in and affected by. Current peace educators will get opportunities to share their experiences and strengthen their political advocacy – not least at our joint conference taking place next year in Belgium.

How Brexit plays into this remains to be seen, but it's clear that the need for peace education will remain as strong as ever.

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What is QCEA?

Quaker Council for European Affairs brings a vision of peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. It advocates a new approach to security, focusing on nonviolent approaches to conflict and policies that recognise the equality of all people. In addition to staff in Brussels, it is governed and supported by Quaker communities from across Europe. Find out more at www.qcea.org.

A tasty way to make a difference

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A baking project at Friends House in London has helped to change the lives of some of society's most marginalised individuals.

Cecilia Bouenissa, Marketing and Media Officer, Quiet Company

In September 2018 a group of men stepped into the restaurant kitchen at Friends House in London for the first time. They had two things in common: a history of breaking the law or antisocial behaviour and a diagnosis of personality disorder.

People in circumstances like these can often find themselves excluded by society, finding it difficult to get a job or even secure accommodation due to their past. Too often a lack of stability in their lives can result in a return to prison. But these men also had something else uniting them: they were all here to learn to bake.

This was the beginning of Bake the Difference, a project taking place at Friends House thanks to a collaboration between Quiet Company (the new name for the Friends House hospitality company) and the organisation London Pathways Partnership

(LPP). It aims to help ex-offenders like these reintegrate into society by teaching them cooking and baking skills.

Over the year-long programme trainees spent nine hours a week (the maximum allowed without affecting their benefits) at Friends House and were paid above the London Living Wage. Baked goods produced on the course were regularly sold on-site in the café and restaurant. Trainees even prepared a buffet of desserts for the food fair at Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering of Quakers, where more than 400 Friends could taste their handiwork.

Of course it wasn't always easy, particularly due to the many challenges the trainees faced in their lives outside Friends House. Several trainees were recalled to prison during the course (though none of them re-offended). As Paul Grey, CEO of Quiet Company, explained, it made for an "inspiring and challenging journey both for our trainees and our dedicated staff who support this programme".

Trainees were presented with their certificates of achievement in a formal ceremony in July. Bake the Difference returns later this year with a new six-month programme informed by the experience of the first year. As well as baking, this time trainees will gain experience of other areas of work including being a barista and kitchen porter. Hopefully this will broaden the range of skills they finish with and further increase their employment prospects.

Here are some reflections from project participants, covering the highs and lows of what's ultimately been an amazing year.



Baking a difference: Mauro Calheiros.
Photo: BYM

Mauro Calheiros, Development Chef at Friends House:

"As the weeks progressed, we explored and broadened the trainees' capacities. Production became easier, and questions and ideas started flowing.

We were able to produce tasty cakes and sell them in the café. A project to make Christmas stollen cake beat all our expectations. But the trainees still faced many challenges. They had to overcome chaotic lifestyles and a past that still haunts them. Adapting to life outside of prison is hard, which is why some of them were recalled.

However, the remaining trainees on the programme grew their confidence and now have a strong desire to gain employment. They feel a greater sense of inclusion in society. In comparison to where they were when they started, this is a great change."



A tempting selection on offer at Yearly Meeting 2019. Photo: BYM

**Amy Wollny,
LPP Social Inclusion Lead:**

“Being part of this project has been incredibly uplifting and hopeful. I saw our trainees come into the project feeling that they are not part of society, that they have low confidence and have little hope for the future.

The experience of working in such a loving environment, where they are not held up for judgement and they are allowed to be the best versions of themselves, has had the most incredible impact. It has been a joy to see the most marginalised group in our society realise their own potential, nurture the best parts of their personalities and skill-sets and be so much more than the worst thing they have done.

Everyone who has been involved speaks so highly of their time with the Quakers – many have brought family, probation or NHS staff along to meet for lunch and see their achievements.”

Trainee A:

“It has been amazing, really. To be honest, before I started I didn’t really have much hope for it. I was quite grumpy and didn’t have much trust or faith in any doors opening for me. But when it began, we were straight into the work. I have not stopped learning from that day to this. I love the cooking and have learnt so much from Mauro – my family can see how much I have changed.

Previously I was really isolated and had no structure to my day and was pretty depressed. This has given me purpose. I know I



Above and below: Trainees learnt practical and theoretical baking skills in their time at Friends House. Photos: BYM

have to leave, but I believe I can get a job now. I would happily carry on working voluntarily at Friends House if I can. I really appreciate everything from this year.”

Trainee B:

“Bake the Difference has done so much for my self-esteem, as well as respect in my household. My daughter’s respect most importantly. As soon as I am back out, I’ll bring all my family to Friends House to meet everyone.

Although I am in hell being back here [in prison], I am glad I have managed to leave a good impression and reputation at Friends House. I have not had that experience before and it means a lot to me.”

Trainee C:

“I have loved every minute of it. I was just going to retire, but now my family and I can see more for me than that. We are looking at doing a market or a pop-up stall somewhere.

I love cooking and seeing people eat what I have made. I was too embarrassed about the long gap in my CV to ever put myself out there, but now I feel like I can really do something with this. I can’t fault any of it.”



Five facts about Quiet Company



- Quiet Company is the new trading name of Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd. The team needed to find a new trading name that would reflect the scope of its activities (Friends House in London and Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria), connect to Quaker values and be shorter to write!
- In 2018 the company gifted £1.27m in income to Quaker work. The Bake the Difference programme is primarily funded by Quiet Company together with a grant from London Pathways Partnership.
- The company is continually reducing its carbon footprint (-29% since 2009) and has pledged to reduce its use of single-use plastic by 20% by 2025.
- This autumn will see the launch of Seed Kitchen, a vegetarian and vegan restaurant, at Friends House in London. It will replace the existing Friends House restaurant, which has been refurbished to create the new offering.
- Quiet Company is trying to be an example of an ethical business based on Quaker principles. The team believe that to be successful they need to focus on the three ‘p’s: planet, people and profit.

Space to be who I am: supporting young people

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From planting poppies to creative solutions to the climate crisis, young Quakers have been getting inspired thanks to the support of locally based youth workers.

Jude Acton, Children & Young People's Officer

For Quaker meetings to not just survive but also thrive long into the future, it's vital that we look at how they connect with young people. Key to this are two questions: how do we better integrate young people into our existing worshipping communities, and how can we reach out to other local young people who may be interested in what we have to offer?

Britain Yearly Meeting's legacy-funded Youth Work Development Pilot Project is looking at how locally based youth workers can help answer these questions.

We are now one year into the three-year pilot, which is being independently evaluated. It has seen a Quaker Youth Worker placed in both Bristol and Sheffield to support Quaker meetings in these locations and surrounding areas. They are centrally managed and employed by Britain Yearly Meeting, and are working closely with local Quakers on all aspects of the work – including offering training to adults who work with young people.

Of course, the most important part of the picture are the local young people (the focus being ages 11–18) themselves – this work is for them. They have a big say in what our youth workers are doing to support their lives as young Quakers in the community, and are helping shape the many new opportunities and events being developed.

Read on to find out more from our two youth workers about what they've been up to so far.

Lee Lester: Sheffield

"My work is varied and includes helping to build all-age communities in meetings as well as working with young Quakers.

Early on I consulted the young people at Sheffield Meeting House about their needs and interests, and developed a programme based on that. This involved setting up a new social action group which has become known as SYFAN (Sheffield Young Friends Action Network).

SYFAN meets on a Sunday

evening every three weeks. The sessions mix games, team-building and planning for social action.

Even in the space of a year SYFAN has really developed. The group has designed a logo, ordered branded hoodies and has created a space on the meeting house noticeboard to showcase its work, as well as creating social media accounts.

It's been exciting to see where the young people want to go with SYFAN, and we have a lot in the pipeline. Projects so far include:

- **Planting4Peace** – A campaign encouraging people to plant white poppy seeds in areas of the city where violence and conflict are prevalent. We hope they bloom by the UN's International Day of Peace on 21 September, serving as a symbol of our community's desire to reduce violence across the city.
- **Working with Archer Project** – SYFAN made Christmas gift packages for the homeless community in Sheffield. Two members of the group now volunteer at the community soup kitchen once a month.
- **Sheffield Pride** – A stall with activities including an 'Affirmation Station' where people could take positive words and share their own. Over 120 young people engaged with us at the event. We got some really positive feedback and hope that some may get involved in our future activities."



A shared lunch before going to see Greta Thunberg. Photo: Pearl Johns



Left: SYFAN hoodies in action. Right: Quaker stall at Sheffield Pride. Photos: BYM

Kirsty Philbrick: Bristol

"As a Quaker youth worker I'm keen to explore what young people want, to learn how Quakerism can be relevant to them, and to create engaging opportunities.

Monthly 'Young Friends Fridays' have grown into a mainstay of this work and the local young Quaker community. They offer a chance for young people to get to know each other, have fun and unwind on a Friday evening.

We share food, activities, reflective space and important conversations. Themes we're interested in include creative solutions to the environmental crisis and thinking about how Bristol welcomes refugees.

We also held a longer event where we camped out under the

stars, played games and explored Quaker worship outdoors.

We're always seeking out interesting and fun activities to expand our horizons, and connect young Quakers with the wider community. These have included everything from doing a litter pick on Bristol's Harbourside to going to the local theatre to see a play about community empowerment and activism.

A big highlight was in April, when 10 young Friends journeyed to London to hear young climate activist Greta Thunberg talk at a major event in Friends House. Two introduced her on stage.

I'm excited to say that our activities have been building up a bit of a buzz in the local young Quaker community. This follows a lot of hard work consulting young people to find out what they want and figuring out how the project could be properly supported and relevant to everyone involved.

We are now ready to explore whether we can also be relevant to young people who are not already aware of Quakers, and are in the process of working out what this might look like."

How does your meeting engage with young people? If you're a young person, how are you connected to Quakers locally? Get in touch and tell us what you're up to: email judea@quaker.org.uk.

For resources and ideas see www.quaker.org.uk/cyp.



Sheffield young Quakers prepare to plant poppies to promote peace. Photo: BYM

Young people in their own words

On visiting the young Quakers' stall at Sheffield Pride:

- "Quakers do so many nice things and I love the ethos. I am really interested in finding out more."

On being a part of the local Young Friends Action Network:

- "I love being with my friends in a safe space where we can have fun and make a difference to our community."

On taking part in group events for young Quakers:

- "It's an escape from the pressures of school and space to be who I am, with no 'fronts'."
- "I enjoy just being with my friends in a chilled way. I have exams at the moment and this gave me a break from being way too stressed out."
- "Being a Quaker is really important to me but I don't have the time to go to meeting for worship so this group has helped me get back into Quakers and reconnect with my Quaker friends. I love that we do social action as I am passionate about that."
- "I am not a Quaker so I sometimes feel like I am the odd one out but this week there were two other young people who weren't Quakers either, which was cool. I don't think you have to be a Quaker to go to the group but some of the stuff we talk about is new to me."
- "I've learned that we don't have to go to Sunday morning meetings to be part of Quaker stuff."

Resisting the arms fair

Hundreds of Quakers played a part in bringing the set-up of one of the world's largest arms fairs, Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), to a halt for nine hours.

The 'No Faith in War' day of nonviolent resistance on 3 September saw around 700 people of faith kneeling, standing or sitting in the road leading to the Excel Centre in London. During the stillness of meeting for worship, part of the Quaker action organised by the community Roots of Resistance, a police officer ordered the group to move. Around 50 people were subsequently arrested.

"Quakers spoke to police officers, explaining that this was not just 'quiet time' but a holy gathering and should be treated as such," said Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship at BYM. "To their credit, the inspector apologised and offered to take it as a learning point for the future."

Resistance to the arms fair continued throughout the week with a silent candle-lit vigil taking place on the evening before the arms fair opened. Many Quakers were also stirred to stitch handmade 'mini-banners' for peace in advance of the fair (see cover), and then join some together to create a collaborative tapestry.



Meeting for worship outside DSEI arms fair. Photo: Michael Preston for BYM

Building up a new book of discipline

Britain Yearly Meeting is at the beginning of the once-in-a-generation process of revising *Quaker faith & practice*, the central text and 'book of discipline' for Quakers in Britain.

This work is being led by the newly formed Book of Discipline Revision Committee, which met for the second time in July. The committee is keen to be creative about how to move forward with the revision and wants to develop a community where Quakers can be open with each other about their spiritual experiences and understandings.

As part of this work the committee is holding an event for representatives from area meetings and other interested Quakers, called 'Why have a book of discipline'. Taking place at Woodbrooke on 8–10 November 2019, it will be an opportunity to join with members of the committee to explore the continuing importance of having a book of discipline and consider what it will do for us in the future. Find out more at www.woodbrooke.org.uk/book-of-discipline.

The committee is keen to keep connected with Friends and is now online at www.facebook.com/revisingqfp and www.twitter.com/revisingqfp.

If you'd like to suggest material for inclusion in the revised book (typically existing Quaker minutes or published writings, but new writing or other media can also be submitted), or have more general suggestions, you can do so via:

- online form: <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea>
- email: qfp@quaker.org.uk
- writing to Michael Booth at Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ. Michael can also supply paper copies of the submissions form.



Photo: Suki Ferguson for BYM

Gathering for activists

Whether you are an experienced activist or new to Quakerism and putting your faith into action, there's a space for you at this year's Quaker Activist Gathering.

Taking place at Friends House in London on Saturday 2 November, the event is a space for Quakers and Quaker-curious people to get together for an intergenerational, restorative and invigorating day focusing on how social action is done. It's a chance to explore shared lives of worship, witness, and activism, to share stories and bring faith deeper into practice.

The gathering welcomes aspiring activists, those wanting to learn about organising, and anyone who is simply tired and looking for the spiritual nourishment of being with others who also care deeply. Youth climate strikers, caseworkers working with the impact of cuts, or people resisting the arms trade are also welcome. There will be a crèche, appropriate adults to accompany young people under 18, and travel bursaries are available if needed.

This is a free event facilitated by Quakers and Quaker Peace & Social Witness staff. Book a place by 15 October and look out for announcements about signing up for specific workshops: <http://bit.ly/QuakerActivistGathering2019>.



Photo: Blake Humphries for BYM

Send us your stamps

Activism takes place in all shapes and sizes. For over 50 years the Quaker Peace & Social Witness Stamp Club has raised tens of thousands of pounds to fund crucial Quaker work, from exploring a more sustainable economic system to supporting peacebuilders internationally.

Can you help by donating stamps or time? When donating stamps, please keep the stamps attached to the paper or envelopes, leaving a 1 cm margin, and send them to the address below. Sadly, not all stamps are valued equally and the club is not looking for UK first class, second class or Christmas stamps. However, commemorative stamps, Chinese stamps and old commonwealth stamps can raise a lot of money.

Volunteers are also needed to help sort and identify stamps. Stamp Club meets once a month at Friends House, London, and particularly invites new members with specialist knowledge who can help prepare stamps for auctions. People with a general interest are also very welcome.

On occasion, full collections are left to Stamp Club in legacies or by those who don't know what to do with their collections. Stamps are received from all over the world and are gratefully appreciated.

If you would like to help, please send your stamps to: QPSW Stamp Club, c/o Philip Wood, Friends House, London, NW1 2BJ. Or contact Philip Wood at philipw@quaker.org.uk if you have any questions or would like to volunteer.

Support Sanctuary Everywhere for another year

The Sanctuary Everywhere programme supports Quaker meetings to create a culture of welcome in their communities for people seeking refuge in Britain. This work is due to end in December 2019, but – with almost 100 meetings now signed up – we want to keep it going throughout 2020. We have already found over £46,000 of the £76,000 needed for the extension to this project – can you help to make the difference?

You can give online at <http://bit.ly/sanctuary2020> or send cheques made out to 'Britain Yearly Meeting' to our freepost address (no stamp required): 'Sanctuary 2020, FREEPOST QUAKERS'.

For more information see www.quaker.org.uk/sanctuary or contact Tatiana Garavito at tatianag@quaker.org.uk.



Image: Kate Deciccio for BYM

Renewable energy deal

In 2011 Quakers in Britain committed to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall, together with over 120 meeting houses have switched to Good Energy, which provides locally sourced and traceable renewable energy. If your meeting is not on a green tariff, you could consider Good Energy's 'Quaker Energy Scheme', which offers preferential terms/prices for Quaker meetings. Contact Good Energy on 0800 254 0003.



Learn about the history of Quakers in banking on the blog. Photo: BYM

On the blog...

The Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) blog is a place for insight, analysis and action. On it staff explain more about their current work, explore how it relates to current events, and take a look at Quakerism more widely. Here are just a few blogs from recent weeks:

- Curious about what it's like to be a Quaker chaplain? From exploring worship with university students to dealing with difficult moments in a hospital, we spoke to two Quaker chaplains to find out more about their work.
- Explore some reader-recommended novels that feature the Quaker faith in our second round-up of Quakers in fiction.
- How many Quakers does it take to change a light bulb? Find out six ways to lessen the environmental impact of our meetings and meeting houses, ranging from simple steps to big ideas.
- From founding Barclays to backing credit unions, we take a look at the history of Quakers in banking.

See the blogs at www.quaker.org.uk/blog. To receive a monthly update on blogs, plus other news, events and Quaker content, sign up to BYM's monthly newsletter *Quake!* at www.quaker.org.uk/quake – you can unsubscribe at any time.

Breaking down barriers

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A Quaker presence at the biggest music festival in Britain was thanks to a three-year project helping young adults to connect and engage with Quakerism.

Oliver Waterhouse, Assistant Head: Ministry & Outreach

Attendees at this year's Glastonbury Festival got to experience something new among the usual music and mayhem: a dedicated Quaker tent run by young adult Quaker volunteers (see box, right) alongside Quaker staff.

It was one of the latest activities coordinated by our Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project (EYAQ), which is looking at the experiences of young adult Quakers (aged 18–35) and working to help them feel integrated and valued as part of the Quaker community in Britain.

From not having any other Quakers nearby of a similar age, to the many time-consuming demands of young adult life, it's fair to say there can be challenges to staying part of Quakerism at this time of life. This three-year project is trying to bring down these and other barriers so that younger Quakers can feel more connected to meetings, each other, and the centrally managed work of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM).

The project has brought together BYM's first committee made up entirely of young adults to guide its work. Over the past two years it has been helping young adults to:

- become part of BYM's decision-making by making central Quaker service more appealing and accessible
- participate in Quaker events and activities thanks to a new bursary fund
- feel more connected with each other and the wider gathering at Yearly Meeting, our annual Quaker event
- explore their faith with peers at retreats and activities together with Woodbrooke.

These are just some of the areas EYAQ has been engaging with. If you're interested to know more or get involved, please get in touch with Project Officer Naomi Major at youngadults@quaker.org.uk.

Volunteering at Glastonbury: Hirad Babakhani



"Glastonbury was one of the best experiences of my life and made me so proud to be a Quaker. Our team of volunteers provided a calm, shady (the heat was unbearable at times) environment for hundreds of festivalgoers.

One of my highlights was experiencing the community we created. I was surprised by how many Quakers, or people who had an association with Quakerism, we met. All sorts of people attended our daily meeting for worship and evening epilogue. We talked to visitors who thought we were quack doctors, who needed a retreat, who had been helped by meetings previously.

In Britain I had been feeling quite a negative atmosphere towards anything foreign and any alternative cultures, especially with Brexit in the news. Glastonbury showed me so many like-minded people who share our values. It was such a positive experience and gave me hope."



A space for stillness: Quaker tents at Glastonbury Festival. Photo: Jon Martin for BYM

Ways of giving



The profile of peace education in the EU will get a boost over the next two years thanks to a new legacy-funded project. Photo: Michael Preston for BYM

From peace education in Europe to local youth workers, so many of the projects featured in this issue of Quaker News have been funded by gifts left by Friends in their wills. Each year legacies make up about a fifth of our charitable income, and this year 15 projects are being directly funded by legacies. This includes the Vibrancy in Meetings pilot project, which has been instrumental in helping to shape the way that Britain Yearly Meeting as a central organisation will go about supporting local and area Quaker meetings in the future (see pages 2 and 3). Gifts left in wills are already having a huge impact on Quaker work today – it is exciting to think about what impact Friends' generosity might have in the future.

But gifts left in wills can only do so much. In order to try to make the difference in the world that we know Friends wish to see, we also need regular contributions from individual Friends and from meetings. We have been very fortunate to benefit from the growth of our hospitality company's income, but this growth cannot go on forever and our buildings are nearing capacity for conference bookings.

Please help us to keep the vital work that Friends have asked for

going by contributing whatever you can now. This could be a financial gift, it could be a gift of time volunteering or serving on a central committee, or it could be by simply upholding the work as you sit in quiet worship.

Of course, we know that not everybody has the same opportunity to contribute. As we heard at Yearly Meeting in May, we all experience different types of privilege, and not all of us are have the money or the time to give to the Society. But any and every contribution is valuable. And if giving today is not possible, remembering Britain Yearly Meeting in your will could be a way of leaving a gift in the future.

We have been extremely fortunate in the last year to be contacted by a number of meetings that have themselves been left a generous legacy and, not having an obvious need or use for it, have wanted to explore how it could be used to support central work. If your meeting is in a similar situation, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Lisa Kiew on 020 7663 1084 or at lisak@quaker.org.uk to start the conversation. To find out more about giving as an individual visit www.quaker.org.uk/give or phone 020 7663 1015.

Contribute to Quaker work

Serve on a Quaker committee: phone 020 7663 1115, 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 social media: click the icons at www.quaker.org.uk or search for 'Quakers in Britain'.



Quakers: committed to caring for peace and planet

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Request a free information pack:

Name _____
Address _____

Postcode _____
Email _____

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

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

Meet Nuala Watt



Nuala Watt is a member of Glasgow Quaker Meeting. She is currently serving on the committee revising our central Quaker text for a new generation.

Six years ago I saw an advert on the back of *History Today* magazine. It said “Oscar and Annette are Quakers; they believe that peace begins in our relationships and is the work of a lifetime”. I thought “What a good idea”. So I went to Glasgow Quaker Meeting and I never left, because I was at home. I became a member in 2014. I married Alastair, who I met at meeting, in 2015. Isabelle was born in 2017 and we took her to meeting when she was six days old.

I don’t know if there is a God. I hope so, but it often seems impossible. I was glad to find a religious community that values diversity of belief. The introduction to our central text and ‘book of discipline’ *Quaker faith & practice* (Qf&p) says that “our vision of the truth will again and again be amended”. As a partially sighted person this speaks to my condition. Equally, as an activist I have found it helpful to situate myself in a long tradition of Quakers working for social justice.

I was delighted to be asked to serve on the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, the group guiding the revision of Qf&p for a new generation. I feel that this form of service best suits my

abilities. As a poet and academic I aim to express complex thoughts concisely. As a disabled person and benefits claimant I have experienced government policy that contravenes Quaker testimonies and have worked with others for change. I am also intrigued to see how the revised book will be influenced by the current climate emergency.

The committee is made up of 24 people with a diverse range of backgrounds and experience who are working on behalf of all Quakers in Britain. I am looking forward to our ‘Why have a book of discipline?’ weekend taking place at Woodbrooke in November, when we will join with the wider community of Friends for a three-day event.

We are currently taking a playful approach to what a book of discipline might be. Exercises have included ‘Make a book of discipline in an hour’ and ‘What words do we use for God?’

It is a challenge to combine early motherhood with committee service, but this will become easier as my daughter grows.

Interested in serving on a national Quaker committee? Find out more: www.quaker.org.uk/service.