



THE DORKING GRAPEVINE

Dorking Friends' Meeting

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 No. 463

Quote for the month is from Rumi, a 13th-century Persian, Muslim poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic, and was quoted in *Towards Wholeness*, the journal of the Friends Fellowship of Healing (Autumn 2012).

This silence, this moment, every moment, if it's genuinely inside you, brings what you need.

Dates for your Diary

Midweek Meeting	12.45-1.15pm	Every Wednesday (except December 26) followed by simple lunch
Friday 7 December	7.30pm	Study Group at Meeting House
Sunday 9 December		Traidcraft after Meeting for Worship
Sunday 9 December	6.30pm	Meeting for Worship at Park House, Leatherhead
Friday 14 December	7.30pm	Meditation Meeting at Meeting House
Sunday 23 December		Carols and mince pies after Meeting for Worship
Tuesday 25 December	10.30-11.00am	Christmas Day Meeting for Worship
Saturday 5 January	3.00-5.00pm	All-age party at Meeting House
Sunday 6 January	9am	Preparative Meeting at Meeting House
Sunday 13 January	6.30pm	Meeting for Worship at Park House, Leatherhead

Moving with the times

There will be a lot of changes in our West Weald Area Meeting from 1st January. There won't be a Clerk or an Assistant Clerk, as the administration will be handled by a small Clerking Team. So what will that mean in practice? One of the most important things is that there should be good communications between the Clerking Team and all Friends in our Local Meetings, so that all of us will be able to receive information promptly and efficiently. The Team has decided that the prime means of contacting us will be by e-mail, and it will use the annual contact list to find our e-mail addresses. Once the Team has found all those addresses, it is fairly quick and cheap to send all necessary documents out by e-mail. It would be far too much work for the Team, and too expensive, to take paper copies and post or deliver to Friends, as well as being very much slower and less environmentally friendly.



So what do you need to do?

* Check that your e-mail address is in the contact list booklet: the next one will be produced early in 2013. If you have e-mail and your address is not recorded in the contact list, please speak to Anne Brewer, who is dealing with it on behalf of Dorking Meeting.

* If you don't have e-mail, try to find a Friend who lives near you or who you see frequently, and ask if they will take copies of e-mails to pass on to you.

We hope that things will work out well so that we really do have a Happy New Year!

Colin Hope, Clerk, Dorking LM

Sharing our Quaker stories

For our new series, Anne Brewer shares her thoughts on Christianity.*

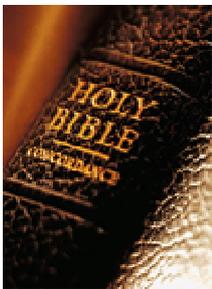
Like the Quaker movement, I have Christian roots. My parents were Quakers, and as a child I was encouraged to say the Lord's Prayer every night, and I have always found inspiration in much of Jesus' teaching. However, whether I am a Christian now is very much an open question – depending on how you define a Christian!



Quite early on in life I realised I was not comfortable with the Christian creedal teachings on the virgin birth, the trinity, the resurrection and, especially, I could not accept the idea that Jesus was the son of God who had to be crucified before God could forgive our sins. Also the central Christian sacrament of the Eucharist I find off-putting rather than inspiring. I realise that some people do find deep significance in these Christian beliefs, and find taking Holy Communion deeply enriching for their spiritual lives, and that is fine – we are all different!

My other problem with conventional Christianity is the tendency for Christians to claim that it is superior to the other world faiths, and, indeed, for various sects within Christianity to claim that they have The Truth, and are the only way to God. An experience when I was in my twenties led to my firm belief that no particular Christian denomination, or any one of the world faiths, is the only 'right' one.

Training as a scientist, I had more or less jettisoned religion, and rarely attended Quaker Meeting. Then an amazing experience, at a very low point in my life, convinced me that something 'other' really did exist. I explored widely, from Christian Science, through Catholicism, to Buddhism and beyond, trying to understand what this 'other' was. I ended up thoroughly confused! In despair I went to my local Quaker Meeting. Four Quakers spoke during the silent worship and, although none of them knew what I had been going through, they all spoke directly to my condition, saying, in effect, 'God doesn't mind what notions you wrap your religion up in; all God wants is your love.' Relieved, I went back to being an active Quaker.



I think I am a sort of Christian because, having studied other world faiths, I find Jesus' teaching most helpful in providing guidance on the issues that matter to me. Also I find I usually need to have an image of a personal God I can talk to, who will totally understand both my good intentions and my human failings, and the picture Jesus paints of God supports this image, although beyond it I sense a deeper mysterious reality that I can't put into words. I have found again and again that if I try my best to do what I feel is the right thing, but am failing, recognise my need for help, and ask God for it – somehow help comes. This has strengthened my 'knowing' that, however mysterious it may be,

something is there with us and for us. Loving us and upholding us whatever we are doing. I see Christianity as just one of the ways to approach this mystery.

I have remained a Quaker because, within this Religious Society, I have found the freedom to be true to my inner 'knowing'; I have found nourishment from the Quaker way of silent worship; and I have found a community which supports and encourages the work for peace, justice and care of the planet that I do, as part of my understanding of the call to me from the divine mystery.



I have felt slight unease over the recent arrival of Quakers who call themselves 'non-theists'. I gather, from a recent article, that some of them believe God has no reality except as a human invention. However, I am keeping an open mind, and tell myself that what matters is that we trust our own experience, but respect that of others. Probably, in the end, we will find that it is the limitations of our human brains that leads to apparent contradictions in our interpretations of our experience, and so in our stated beliefs. To quote from those Christian roots, what matters, according to Micah 6:8, is '*To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*' and, I would add, 'however you define your God'.

(* Your editors would warmly welcome contributions for this series.)

Dorking Meeting Annual Report for 2012

Dorking Quaker Meeting is centred round our precious Meetings for Worship. These are held on Sunday mornings and Wednesday lunchtimes, and on one Sunday evening each month at Leatherhead. We continue to welcome visitors and new attenders.



Our special joy this year has been the development of our children's work, and this is largely based on four families, with a total of eight young children. They give us great pleasure when they come in at the end of Meeting for Worship to tell us what they have been doing. There have been a few successful outings with these children, and also some activities for older children connected to our Meeting.

There have been many opportunities to learn about Quakerism and about ourselves, and these include the monthly study groups, organized by Elders on a variety of topics, often based on the Bible. The months where a meal is provided before the study group are especially popular. There were evening meditation meetings most months, including one on the International Day of Peace. Some Friends have attended courses at Woodbrooke, Charney Manor and Claridge House, and two went to the World Conference in Kenya. Our extensive library and information centre provide a wide range of books, leaflets and magazines.

It is very easy to spend our time looking inwards, so we have made efforts to let the local community know about Quakerism. For National Quaker Week we organized an event for the public, called "Who do you think we are?" Some Dorking Friends have taken assembly at a local school, and we had an evening visit from a local scout troop, which was both lively and worthwhile. Dorking has been on the route of the Olympic torch relay, two Olympic cycle races and the Tour of Britain cycle race. Friends have worked with other churches to man water stations round the town during those events, and supply breakfast to the stewards.

Our Peace & Social Witness Committee has been active with an event for the Quaker Service Memorial, and is continuing with collections of clothes for Gatwick Detainees, as part of our concern for refugees. A group of Dorking Friends made several visits to join other Quakers in Meeting for Worship on the steps of St. Paul's, in support of the Occupy movement. Our Meeting still provides meals regularly at the Leatherhead Night Hostel, now renamed Leatherhead Start, having done so for nearly twenty years.

We are always conscious of our environmental responsibilities, and our Green Team continues to prompt us by giving regular advice and help on relevant initiatives in our Meeting. The Green Team also helped run an Area Meeting sustainability day at Capel. We have a Traidcraft stall after Meeting every three months.

We hold a variety of parties, shared lunches, garden picnics and country walks. Many Dorking Friends enjoyed the Area Meeting Leith Hill walk, starting from Capel, bringing back memories of similar walks over the last thirty years.

There is always so much to do to maintain our Quaker organization and carry out our witness in the World. We appreciate all the work that Dorking Friends do, in our local meeting, our area meeting, regional meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting.

The concern of maintaining our historic Meeting House has dominated our thinking over several years, and this culminated in some major building works in 2011. Apart from absorbing the time and energy of many Friends, it also used up all the financial reserves that we had built up over many years. During 2012 our Premises & Finance Committee has been trying to deal with the most urgent needs which are within the limits that we can afford. It is still difficult to decide how we can best deal with our Meeting House and garden, because Friends have different, often conflicting, views on the way forward.

But Quakerism is not about buildings, but about our Meetings for Worship, and about being in a place where we can try to find our own spiritual path with the help of others in the Meeting. As the first of our Advices and Queries says:

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

Colin Hope, Clerk

Recycling

Janet Lewin has been helpfully taking the milk bottle tops which Friends leave in the recycling box in our information room, to recycle them through a charity. However, she points out that these tops can now be recycled simply by putting them in your green recycling bin, with the plastic bottles, tins, paper etc., so please use that option and save her a job!



Healing prayer Group

Some of us have decided to revive our Healing Prayer Group, which used to meet monthly in the home of Nancy Elias, and before that in the home of Bobbie Pitman, and before that in the home of Charles Kohler. So it has a good pedigree!



In view of the dark evenings, and the difficulties of travel during the cold weather, we decided we would each stay in our own home but set aside a specific half hour (8.30 to 9.00pm). We consulted round the Meeting and compiled a list of people feeling in need of loving upholding, and then arranged for each of us to ring someone else in the group just before 8.30pm, and again at the close of our 'meeting' at 9.00pm. We tried out this arrangement on Monday December 3rd, and found it worked well. I think most of us lit a candle, and used that as a focus for the half hour of silent upholding of the group members, and of the names on our list. Several of us commented that we felt part of a group, even though we were not physically together.

We plan to hold our 'meeting' on the first Monday of each month, and welcome anyone else who would like to join in. Also of course anyone who feels they would appreciate prayerful upholding. Just let any member of the group know – that is Anne Brewer, Nicholas Grealy, Frances Harber, Lesley Hunka, Veronica Mills and Phyllis Russell. Gill Whitman will also join the group when she is recovered.

Anne Brewer

News from Churches Together in Dorking (CTD)

20th January 2013 at 6pm – a service at St Joseph's to celebrate the week of Christian unity.
29th January 2013 at 7.30 for 8pm - the CTD AGM at the Christian Centre

At the last CTD meeting Steve Henwood gave a report on CTD initiatives in local schools, and with young people outside school. I was most impressed with the amount they are doing, which includes Bible studies in Primary Schools (St Paul's and Powell Corderoy so far); and in The Priory secondary school they are going to have Prayer Space for a week, with prayer stations around a room, where visual images will help the youngsters explore prayer. The method is known as a boiler room, where young people can let their feelings out.

In addition to this evangelical work they are also running Slum survivor - a programme of three days to experience what it is like to live in poor conditions.

Lois Lodge

Reflections ...

this month is a poem by Charles Kohler, a Dorking Quaker poet, from his book *Hedge Rose*.

Mary's Lament

I gave you all that I possess,
 my milk, my warmth, my tenderness.
 I patched your clothes, taught you my skills,
 stayed by your bed when you were ill.
 But this was not enough.

Tormented, mocked: forsaken, lost,
 I watch you broken on the cross.
 Oh God, that I might bear your pain,
 as once I did when you first came.

Rachel Hope, on behalf of Elders