



Epping
Local Meeting

Epping Meeting

Newsletter October 2017

Editorial by Rebecca Fricker

“In turbulent times be a Quaker”

While we are certainly living in turbulent times – with the combined effects of Brexit, the actions of the US President, frequent extreme weather occurrences and disturbing ecological news making us fearful for the future – our little Meeting has certainly been Quaker this year.

In showing Friendship to other faiths and members of our local community with our interfaith work, offering a “Great Get Together”, and opportunities to visit our historic Meeting House and garden we have been “...a society of friends, prizing friendship highly and recognising its value for the religious life” (22.02 Quaker Faith & Practice).

We have also lived the spirit of 23.01 with our local political activism and in our hosting of the ice&fire theatre group’s “Asylum Monologues”.

“Remember your responsibility as citizens for the government of your town and country, and do not shirk the effort and time this may demand. Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind. Seek to discover the causes of social unrest, injustice and fear; try to discern the new growing-points in social and economic life.” (Advices, 1964, QF&P)

While they perhaps asked time and energy of us we felt we might not have – our small actions in asking politician’s to rethink discriminatory policies, to draw attention to local issues, and to raise awareness of what lies behind some of the UK media’s most damaging narratives are part of what I believe are growing-points. When you hear the most unlikely people talking about tax justice, citizen’s incomes, energy caps, open borders and environmental protections you sense that change is a possibility. But in order to do this we need more dialogue and relationships with those unlikely people – we need to open our hearts and community further, be more Quaker and remember:

“In a true community we will not choose our companions, for our choices are so often limited by self-serving motives. Instead, our companions will be given to us by grace.

Often they will be persons who will upset our settled view of self and world. In fact, we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!” (10.19 Parker J Palmer, 197 QF&P)

Asylum Monologues by ice&fire theatre group (Sunday 1st October)

What do Lilian's desire for education, Rose's funeral costs, and Adam's displacement by the war in Darfur have in common? This is what a hushed Meeting Room full of people spent a sometimes harrowing but moving Sunday afternoon finding out as Epping's offering to the local community during Quaker Week.



ice&fire explore human rights stories through performance. "Asylum Monologues" involves volunteer actors, part of the Actors for Human Rights network, performing the stories of asylum seekers living in the UK. The interwoven narratives explain, in the asylum seeker's own words, the circumstances which forced these very different individuals to leave their home countries and their personal experiences of living, and claiming asylum, in the UK.

We heard how the promise of education or work can trick people into leaving loved ones, and the need to escape a violent war can lead to a desperate journey and further violence. How women's bodies are exploited for monetary gain, sometimes with complicity from those they thought they could trust, for the gratification of men seemingly oblivious to the horror they are enabling. How asylum seekers, rarely aware of the rights they have, are dependent on "good Samaritans", who sometimes perpetuate further violence, in lieu of assistance from a state system which veers from inhuman indifference to active hostility. Following the lives of these young people we learnt about a job market abusing undocumented workers, the cruelties of detention, and the hopelessness and boredom of waiting for Home Office decisions. Small slivers of hope came with an encounter with a charity specialising in assisting female victims of modern day slavery but it was horribly clear how much more work needs to be done.

Discovering that to date only Lilian has been granted asylum was heartbreaking – and emphasised how important the work of the Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL), explained to us by a volunteer / trustee who attended the performance, is in supporting asylum seekers in our local area. We collected £163 for RAMFEL and further information regarding donations and volunteering can be found on their website. <http://www.ramfel.org.uk/wordpress/>

We welcomed Friends from Harlow and Wanstead, people from our local interfaith communities, and members of the public to the well-received performance.

“I thought they were very good at getting us to feel what other people's lives might be like.”

“I thought it was well organised and a very powerful performance. The content was in parts quite shocking due to the suffering so many have to go through. I thought the method of delivery was very powerful.”

“I thought it was a moving performance; it was good to be opening our minds and hearts to the lives and suffering and joys of our fellow humans; and it was good to have 3 stories for variety and interest.”

Epping Town Show by Freddie Fricker (Sunday 2nd July)

It was a lovely, sunny day. Beautiful for any town show. We were in a good spot and funnily enough we were next to the British Legion again!

Beforehand, in children's meeting, me, Iris and Christine were making “thoughts for the day” which we would give out later with origami cranes made by Christine. After that, I took the board up, which had two of the “thoughts” written on it. Next, a bit of exploring, then I was handing out cake, paper peace cranes and thoughtful sayings. I also did a bit later on as well.

After a while, a man came over to tell us an interesting story. He said that he was brought up around Quakers and, very unluckily, WWII broke out when he was on Canvey island. He went on to say that he was stuck there for a quite a long time. After being rescued, he went back to London and had to be educated by Quakers because the school was evacuated.



Here is a list of what else I did at the fair:

- Waltzers – me and my dad took about 50 minutes to recover!
- Dodgems – awesome!
- Mini farm – fluffiest bunny and cutest chicks ever!
- Birds of prey – really cool

And that is it, the end of the day. An absolutely amazing one.

Great Get Together (Saturday 17th June 2017)

Following the tragic terrorist attacks in Manchester and London earlier this year, we took inspiration from murdered MP's Jo Cox's maiden speech to the House of Commons:

"we have more in common than that which divides us"

and offered the local community a place they could come and meet their neighbours as part of the Great Get Together weekend.

It was a beautiful afternoon and we welcomed over fifteen people from our neighbourhood (one person literally came from over the wall) and wider faith community for a pleasant afternoon of conversation, cake, and coffee!



Heritage Open Day (Saturday 9th September)

Although the quietest of all the events we have held so far this year, Heritage Open Day (HOD) enabled Friends to spend a lovely day pottering in the garden, catching up with each other's lives and talking about the history of Epping Meeting House to the few visitors we had. The morning saw two visitors from Romford who found out about us from the HOD website, while the afternoon found two Friends of Epping Churches "Ride and Striders" very much enjoying tea and cake in the sunny garden, two more HOD visitors who are also interested in renting the building, and a former pupil of a Quaker school dropping in to learn about the building and Quakers.



Being Friends Together Study Session 18: Quaker Faith & Practice, Introduction & Notes on the History of the Text – July 2017

Eight Friends were present.

Brian led us through the many editions of the books he has from the 1861 “Doctrine and Discipline” to our current “red book” via the different volumes and blue, black versions including the yellow draft revision from the 1990’s!

It was fascinating to see the differences which reflect our differing ways of practicing Quakerism. In 1861 it was expected that you would have to answer a different Advice and Query each month, reporting responses to the Monthly Meeting each quarter which in turn reported to Britain Yearly Meeting. Some of us felt that this could be something that would still be useful today.

We looked at George Fox’s 1671 letter to the Governor of Barbados, it was noted that the beginning of it reads like the Nicene Creed and that it would be very unusual for a Quaker to start a letter like that today. However, the nods to social responsibility are still very applicable to today. We considered that Quakers have always looked at our historical writings and picked out sections which chime with current thinking, ignoring the parts they don’t like (eg exhortations against listening to music and reading novels) – making the case for keeping many of the older passages in future versions of our book even if women are regularly ignored in appeals to the “brotherly”.

A discussion about what constitutes normal brought us to the end of the study session – with the sense of those present being that they were happy to being considered “peculiar people”.



New additions to the library

Barnett, Craig	Quaker Renewal
Gillman, Harvey	Words
Kindlers	What does Love Require of Us?
Quaker Quest	Twelve Quakers and Death
West, Catherine	Faith in Politics? (2017 Swarthmore Lecture)
Williams, Rowan	Being Disciples

Dates for the Diary October – December 2017

Study Sessions:

Sunday 12th November

Shared lunch:

Sunday 29th October

Sunday 26th November

Sunday 31st December – to be confirmed

Next Local Business Meeting:

Sunday 5th November

Area Meetings:

Wanstead Saturday 18th November 1.30pm (with bonfire)

Finally, do get in touch if there are any errors, or you have any contributions or suggestions!

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