If we act on the premise that there is that of God in all creatures, we stand a chance. ‘Animal hero’ Eduardo Gonçalves
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As the USA begins a new political chapter and global relationships are reframed, buy these books for yourself, as a gift or for your Meeting.

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_Evan Osnos_

‘In general, Democratic politicians fall into two camps: there are the liberal meliorists who take a long view and believe that humans can progress and improve. They stand for realism, coalition building, and practical politics. That’s where Biden fits in.’ Reg Naulty, _the Friend_. Guardian Book of the Year. £19, Hardback, Bloomsbury Publishing, October 2020.

The Truths we Hold - an American Journey

_Kamala Harris_

Kamala Harris is the first woman and woman of colour to be elected vice president. In her career she has worked to reform the American criminal justice system, raise the minimum wage, make higher education tuition free for the majority of Americans, and protect the legal rights of refugees and immigrants. ‘Personal integrity shines through every page’ Observer. £9.99, Paperback, Vintage Publishing, November 2020.

A Promised Land

_Barack Obama_

A riveting, deeply personal account of history in the making from the president who inspired us to believe in the power of democracy. _A Promised Land_ is extraordinarily intimate and introspective. ‘What is unexpected in _A Promised Land_ is the former president’s candour’ David Olusoga, Observer. £35, Hardback, Penguin Books (Viking), November 2020.

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‘To say we love God… and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature… was a contradiction in itself.’

John Woolman, 1772

From Quaker faith & practice 25.05

(Cover photo by Prince David on Unsplash)
Friends campaign for anti-nuclear treaty
Quaker Meetings in Hexham, Sheffield, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Brighton are planning to display banners to mark the historic deadline of 22 January when the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is ratified. Honduras became the fifteenth state to sign the treaty in October 2020, meaning that it now comes into force as international law. The UK government is still refusing to engage with the treaty. On 22 January, Quakers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will hold a special online celebration to mark the occasion. Hannah Morrow, one of the organisers, said: ‘This Treaty is an amazing breakthrough but unfortunately it will only apply in those countries that have signed up to it. This is the majority of the world’s nations, but does not include those who already own or have access to nuclear weapons, including the United Kingdom. We hope the celebration will provide encouragement for all who wish to see the Treaty applied in Britain, ending the vast waste of money spent on preparations for nuclear war.’

According to Scottish Friend Janet Fenton, who is coordinating a Quaker response for the day, ‘momentum is building. ’I’m attempting to keep on top of it in general on [the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) website] www.nuclearban.org/resources/doiyourbit.’

Polmont Friends have also planned to campaign, with ideas including ‘writing a piece for the local paper and maybe holding an outdoor public Meeting for Worship’, they tweeted on 6 December.

Kate Arnot, from Polmont Meeting, told the Friend, ‘We wrote to the local council to ask if we could hold something, but we were told no because of the current Covid situation.’

Local Quaker Cath Dyer said that she and her husband plan to hold an ICAN banner in Falkirk centre on 22 January. ‘Scotland is an anti-nuclear country and, if we were independent, we probably would have signed up to the Treaty, so [the campaigning] is probably more needed in other parts of the country.’

There will also be a Thanksgiving Service to mark the day on 22 January, hosted by the Network of Christian Peace Organisations, of which Quaker Peace & Social Witness is a member.

Migrants Day plea for justice
York Quakers created textile butterflies to send to their local MPs, with letters urging them to back changes to the government’s migration policies. The move was to mark International Migrants Day on 18 December, for which staff from Friends House delivered a statement to the Home Office.

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM), American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee for National Legislation, Quaker Council for European Affairs, and Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) developed the statement, which was handed over by BYM staff members Tatiana Garavito and Philip Wood, marked for the attention of the home secretary, Priti Patel. The statement says: ‘Rooted in our belief that there is that of the sacred in everyone… we are heartbroken by migration policy that dehumanises some members of our human family on the basis of where they come from.’

The statement can be read on QUNO’s website.

Ruth Dance, from Friargate Meeting, told the Friend: ‘The butterflies were sent to our local MPs with letters about the immigration bill. One of our group sent a more personal letter about her experience of immigration to the UK and how her family have added to the community here in York.’

‘She would not have been allowed into the country under the proposed immigration rules because she and her English husband did not earn enough money at the time. York Central Labour MP Rachael Maskell has been very supportive of our concerns about immigration and I had a comprehensive reply from her back in June.’

The ‘craftivism’ activity was in part inspired by Quakers in Scotland who, according to BYM, were ‘shocked and numbed’ when, in response to the pandemic, many migrants in Glasgow during the summer were moved out of their accommodation and into hotels. ‘They wrote to their MP about migrant justice and

WORDS

‘Are you building bridges?’

New Year message from Paul Parker, Britain Yearly Meeting’s recording clerk.
sent heartfelt butterfly messages to board members of companies involved and to members of Glasgow City Council.’

BYM is encouraging Friends to write to MPs outlining urgent issues, such as a time limit for detention, family reunion, right to work, burden of proof, and current and historic responsibilities.

QSA gives £10k to homeless taskforce
Quaker Social Action (QSA) provided a £10k grant to the Covid-19 Homeless Taskforce last month to help people in London affected by homelessness.

The grant is contributing towards 200 winter-grade sleeping bags, 200 hot water bottles, food and festive treats, and emergency accommodation by The Outside Project for people from the LGBTIQ+ community who are homeless.

According to QSA, the grant is ‘putting into immediate action some of the donations which were made by supporters to QHA (Quaker Homeless Action) prior to the merger [with QSA last year].’ The annual Quaker Open Christmas organised by QHA did not take place in 2020 as QSA said it was ‘unfeasible… to plan a Christmas shelter activity in a matter of weeks.’

The charities merged on 1 December. QSA is in the process of writing to people who have previously supported QHA.

The Covid-19 Homeless Taskforce is a group of small, independent, community organisations and charities including: Streets Kitchen, The Simon Community, The Outside Project, and Museum of Homelessness. Examples of interactions with these experiencing homelessness include: a conversation at bedding down time; a cup of tea and a meal; a breakfast; or a bed at The Outside Project.

QSA also raised £23,947 in donations for its annual ‘The Big Give’ Christmas Challenge. This unlocked £10,000 of match funding by QSA’s project partner Commonweal Housing.

Caution over places of worship exemption
Quaker Meetings can choose to open their Meetings during the UK’s third national lockdown, but several faith leaders have expressed unease over the exemption of places of worship.

Paul Parker, recording clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, emailed all Area Meeting clerks on 5 January, a day after the lockdown was announced. Under the new restrictions, places of worship can remain open over the next six weeks.

Quakers in Britain tweeted: ‘Where in-person meetings are allowed, many may choose not to open premises for worship so as not to encourage people to risk their own and others’ health.’

‘Most meetings have moved online and Quakers continue to worship together and support each other during these challenging times,’ it added.

Several faith leaders have urged caution. ‘The Church of England said some people may feel that it is currently better not to attend in person’ and that clergy who had concerns or were shielding should ‘take particular care and stay at home’. Others expressed more open anxiety. One vicar from north London tweeted: ‘There’s a part of me that wishes we had been closed so as not to be going to bed with what feels like an impossible decision.’

New Year message
The challenges facing Quakerism in 2021 were set out in a New Year blog written by Britain Yearly Meeting’s recording clerk Paul Parker.

‘Quakers are invisible,’ he says on the Quakers in Britain website. He likens the Covid-19 pandemic to ‘a powerful lens’ illuminating ‘many of the challenges we already knew we faced – both inside our Quaker community and in the world around us’. ‘Are you and your Meeting ready to make your Quakerism visible in 2021? Is your public face on display?’ he asks. ‘What will you do to invite people to experience Quaker worship in 2021?’

In a piece that highlights the challenges of Quaker visibility and its ability to connect with a wide range of society, including children and young people, Paul Parker speaks of both the fragility and resilience of Meetings. ‘The median Quaker Meeting has 21 members, down from 24 in 2009,’ he says. ‘That probably equates to around 12 worshippers on a typical Sunday. That means there are around 250 Quaker communities relying on small numbers of people to keep everything going.’

‘We still don’t know the impact of the pandemic on our numbers in 2020,’ he adds, and while many have savoured the chance to connect online, with far flung Friends more able to take part, ‘Our children and young people have – in many Meetings, not all – disappeared from view… Will you find ways to ensure that all Friends in our communities can feel engaged and valued? Are you listening to the needs of our children and young people?’

The pandemic has also underlined that Quakers’ ‘silent, waiting worship’ can happen anywhere, he said, offering an opportunity to reconsider new ways and times of gathering. There were also words calling for tolerance. ‘We too get drawn into toxic debates, sometimes forgetting the power of listening and human connection in a time of mistrust of institutions and opposing tribes… Are you building bridges – personally, locally, nationally and internationally – which will help the world recover?’

NUMBERS

21

The number of members in the median Quaker Meeting, down from 24 in 2009.

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**NUMBERS**

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Letters

The Friend welcomes your views, to letters@thefriend.org. Please keep letters short. We particularly welcome contributions from children, written or illustrated.

Please include your full postal address, even when sending emails, along with your Meeting name or other Quaker affiliation.

In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.

Homelessness

The St Martin-in-the-Fields appeal has become a familiar part of the approach to Christmas. The work done by that charity for the support of people who have lost their homes is admirable and the sheer persistence of those who want to help others is inspiring.

However, I was profoundly shocked to hear that the appeal has been going out for ninety-four years. It began during the interwar depression when my mother was a small child. Life was very different from ours now and the country was much less wealthy. It is a terrible indictment of our society today that we still have such a large problem of poverty and homelessness.

Why do we still need to rely on charitable action to relieve homelessness? This is not a poor country. Individuals lose their home for many reasons, some through their own actions and some through the actions of others. For many there is a mixture of causes. The one thing they all need is a home where they can feel safe and secure, an address that gives access to work, and interaction with the wider world. The other thing that a home gives is status, a place in the world, and self-respect. A person who has been homeless for any length of time is likely to need additional support, but a home is the basic need.

I recently read a book called Utopia for Realists by Rutger Bregman. It describes experiments with schemes giving money and housing to homeless people to help them and reduce civic problems. They all actually saved money for the authorities concerned from reduced policing, social work and legal expenses. I was also interested to learn more about the ideas around universal basic income, which is gaining support.

I was pleased when support was given to get rough sleepers off the streets during this pandemic, but we need to ensure they are enabled to use this as an opportunity to make a new start. The past year has been very hard for everyone and terrible for many. It would be wonderful to take some positive good from this time.

The problem of poverty and homelessness is one for the whole of society. It speaks to the kind of people we are. My dream is to live in a country that cares adequately for its more vulnerable citizens. We have a generous and caring population but they need the assistance of government to eradicate need. Poverty and homelessness are a disgrace for our country.

Jacky Thomas
Devizes Meeting, Wiltshire

‘Overseer’ and ‘oversight’

In response to Celia Waterhouse’s article (1 January 2021), might I suggest that we give up trying to find a word to replace the title ‘overseer’, which many people find inappropriate, and opt for describing members who hold that position, quite simply, as what they are: members of the Meeting pastoral team?

Do they need a fancy name? Personally I think not. Those folk who are asked to take on
the important role of ‘oversight’ are carrying out valuable and sometimes challenging pastoral work, usually as part of a team. It should be enough, surely, to refer to them as just that.

Besides, the rate at which some words in the English language change their meaning can be quite alarming, as words mutate and carry different connotations. So, just as words such as ‘overser’ can be acceptable to one generation and offensive to another, I would caution against opting for a new word to replace ‘overser’.

Ann Barnes
Cambridgeshire Area Meeting

Crossing your legs

With respect to Brighid Simpkin’s letter (11 December 2020), I would like to say that as a teacher of the Alexander Technique the crossing of legs is far more nuanced than being a simple defence. As many Alexander Technique teachers would say: it’s not what you do, but the way that you do it – that’s what gets results.

As a person with autism, the crossing of my legs is not so much about being insecure, for it offers a soothing and comforting sensation and helps me settle into Meeting for Worship. Slowly, ever so slowly, I gently uncross them just before I stand up. It is a simple postures of ‘non doing’. Posture is like to say that as a teacher of the Alexander Technique the crossing of legs is far more nuanced than being a simple defence. As many Alexander Technique teachers would say: it’s not what you do, but the way that you do it – that’s what gets results.

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Chris Goodchild
Westminster Meeting, London

Living alone

I found Louise Rendle’s article (1 January 2021) about being isolated during bereavement deeply moving and very courageous, and want to emphasise that the point I seek to make is not in any way meant to distract from, or diminish, her main theme.

She writes ‘anyone living on their own during lockdown will have had to cope with isolation – the lack of human contact’.

Is this true? We must be careful not to use ‘absolutes’ or make assumptions that what we experience is the same for everyone. I live alone, but Louise’s claims do not stand for me. During lockdown I continue to have plenty of human contact in the course of my work, which involves being a personal assistant/carer for two individuals, and a part-time carer for my mother, aged ninety-four and still in her home. I spend considerable time with each of these over seven days every week, I also have to interact in person with others to carry out this work – therefore, for me, and I’m sure others who continue to work ‘out in the world’ during lockdown, we continue to have plenty of human contact. Is there sometimes a tendency to see Friends as all retired?

I value the Friend immensely and find it a rich source of light and enlightenment, but have noticed that views, commentary and perspectives often suggest that Friends are no longer busy out at work – whether or not in lockdown.

‘Some of those living on their own during lockdown have had to cope with isolation…’ would have been more inclusive and show a recognition that Friends come from a variety of circumstances. It would also help those like myself to feel we are known.

I pray Louise is soon able to find company again, and thank her for sharing her experience which I’m sure brought hope and comfort to many.

Christine Green
St Neots Meeting, Cambridgeshire

‘Build Back Better’

We know from X-rays of old master paintings that in many cases the composition had been changed by the artist, sometimes quite drastically, in their endeavour for perfection. This is in imitation of nature, the supreme master artist, the all-pervasive universal intelligence, which has periodically become dissatisfied with its creative formation on earth and, in particular, humans.

In ancient, less-technological times, people rightly felt part of the natural world and, indeed, the extrasensory world. These times produced some exceptional, super-sensitive individuals. So much so that they were able to prophesy events of a far future age that would reset humanity’s evolutionary tendency to accord with the disposition of nature. These predictions had to allude to technologies yet to be developed and much of their writings used figurative language that the reader has to decipher.

Perhaps that future age is now. Isaiah 46:11: ‘Calling a bird of prey from the east’ (Covid-19) and Isaiah 42:15: ‘I will lay waste the mountains and hills… And I will dry up the pools’ [literal]. Isaiah also records why he thinks the current calamities befailing humanity are happening and the eventual outcome: a world of collaboration, harmony with nature and fairness.

Our collective new year’s resolution needs to be to ‘Build Back Better’ – www.buildbackbetteruk.org – in all regards.

Geoff Naylor
Address supplied

A testing time

Our grandson Henry is eight and had a nasty but luckily short infection of Covid, which his brother and parents escaped.

My husband and I were invited to go to the crypt of Rochester Cathedral to be tested to see if we were asymptomatic carriers. Henry was most interested that we had been summoned to the cathedral and said: ‘Is it for a test to see if they are still Quakers?’

Jill Bruford Clarke
West Kent Area Meeting
My main squeeze: Bob Lovett is holding on

‘Love abounds way beyond the physical.’

S some years ago, before Covid, during an earlier period of national depression, a public-spirited citizen stood on a busy street with a notice offering free hugs. Even before that, during the heady sixties, a dear friend of mine who had become a widower in his middle thirties confessed that the thing he missed most was physical contact with other human beings. This was in Scotland when the emancipation of women was still in its infancy. ‘The problem is’, he said, ‘that our macho culture discourages men from hugging one another, and our Presbyterian roots constrain us from hugging other men’s wives.’

Maybe it’s something to do with my age, but I sense that social mores have mellowed, and the act of hugging has become more evident. But care has to be exercised. Offence can easily be taken. We need to safeguard our vulnerable friends from unwanted attentions, and in some churches, the simplicity of the handshake has been replaced by an overzealous hug, much to the irritation of some worshippers.

‘There’s nothing worse than a one-sided hug.’

The contexts vary. There are the hugs we give our children and other loved ones, and there are those we give to friends, in private and in public. There are also those we give to strangers who are distressed or sorrowing, where a consoling hug seems appropriate. But in all of these situations there is a unique acknowledgement of the vitality of another human being. For me, a hug is an affirmation of life and a reminder of our interconnectedness and our caring, one for another. For it to work, it needs to be reciprocal. There is nothing worse than engaging in a one-sided hug, so reading the signals from the other person is important.

Is it good for the soul? I believe so, and others appear to agree. After I had entered into the isolation of ‘shielding’ some nine months ago, my dearest Friend said she would rather die hugged than live un-hugged. That sounds like the soul speaking; and although after chronic pneumonia I’m not prepared to go that far, the sentiment does capture the warmth and importance I also attach to the humble hug.

Covid has cast a blight on any form of natural social behaviour. Like many living alone, I have sorely missed hugging my family and friends. Zoom meetings and video chats go only so far, and the digital emoji for a hug is a pathetic reminder of just how much the real thing is missed.

But during Advent I reflected on the outpouring of goodwill evidenced in cards and other messages. On a midnight clear it came to me that love abounds way beyond the physical. It is possible to embrace and be embraced in a much wider sense. So, for those of you who have been forced into being un-hugged, know that there are many, known and unknown, who are embracing you, just as you may be embracing others, equally known and unknown, in the support you give in living out our Quaker testimonies. Embrace is my new hug; the rest is coming. ●

Bob is from Exeter Meeting.
Thought for the week: Neil Morgan is in the thin of it

‘Perhaps the quintessentially thin experience is the act of human kindness at its spontaneous, miraculous, best.’

We all have some idea of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ places. ‘Thick’ places are intrusive, irritating and bothersome. We have to fit in to them, to change, and accommodate ourselves to them. For me that's noisy cities, especially busy train stations. By contrast, ‘thin’ places are those where what is – what is physically real, what we can get hold of – somehow thins out, to allow access to another world. We sense this spiritual dimension alongside, or behind, the physical reality of a place, in the same way as we might find a backing to a picture.

Most of us can all think of examples of thin places. They seem to have this signalling or revelatory quality to them, leading to an extra dimension of depth behind the everyday world. The Gower Peninsula is one of mine. The Irish and the Welsh (thin places: lleoedd tenau), have been said to be especially sensitive to them.

Alongside thick and thin places, we can also think of thick and thin experiences. Anger and anxiety, in this way, might be thought of as thick personal experiences, which blot out other aspects of reality. Thin experiences are the exact opposite. Notable thin experiences are those times that we appreciate something extra, beyond what is simply functional in any particular sensory experience. The beauty of birdsong is a good example of such an ‘extra’, beyond the survival or practical value to the bird. So are the amazing weaving movements and colours of butterflies, as recently described in a poem in these pages by Jonathan Wooding. Other examples are the extra gratuitous beauty – sometimes quite overwhelmingly so – of flowers or music.

In this way, beauty, or value, is a very basic ‘thin’ experience. Perhaps the quintessentially thin experience is the act of human kindness at its spontaneous, miraculous, best. Emmanuel Levinas wrote a great deal about this aspect of ethics, as did Plato, many centuries earlier. Aspects of nature, on one level, and the Good in human experience, on another, have this thin quality, and provide an experience of revelation.

Thin experience is a pointer to the spiritually transcendent. These experiences do not shoehorn easily into a scientistic frame of reference. The transcendent can be described as an extra aspect of the world and humanity, which touches, at moments, our existential human situation. How might we explain it? Many people try to grasp it in terms of the sacred, or divine. But however we try to grapple with it, it exists. Levinas and Plato, and bird- and butterfly-watchers, are simply describing it. Thin experience is substantially different to the hidden God of Isaiah, so familiar to the poet RS Thomas. It is not something absent, but something present. It need not be effaced or eradicated by logic. The ‘thin’ adds quality to life, and to life's meaning, and remains utterly mysterious.

Neil is from St Albans Meeting.
One to remember: Memorial Meetings over Zoom can be more than ‘making the best of it’, says Carole Thomas

‘The experience greatly exceeded my expectations – certainly my context of sadness.’

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening’ sounds like an opening line to a comedy gig, but it was my welcome to a Memorial Meeting for Worship on Zoom, for an attender at Sheringham Meeting who died unexpectedly in the autumn. I am the Friend appointed and entrusted by Sheringham Friends to organise funerals and Memorial Meetings for Worship. I wanted to write this article to share how the pandemic has confined us in physical terms, but given us freedom to connect in a virtual space.

Although uncomfortable and uneasy at first, many of us have grappled with the concept and practicalities of Meetings in the virtual world. ‘This is alright for business and commerce, but what about worship and discernment?’ Well, all of these things have been proven possible – they’re not the same as in-person Meetings, for sure, but, given that otherwise these activities could not happen, being open to the light, from wherever it may come, has enabled new ways to be revealed. Meetings for Church Affairs? Area Meeting? Meeting for Sufferings? Yearly Meeting? ‘Yes!’ All possible. Again, it is not the same. We need new skills and different behaviour, with openness and patience. It is a compromise. But what about funerals and Memorial Meetings?

Experiencing bereavement during the pandemic has made difficult emotions even more difficult. The sudden and unexpected death of a loved one will, in many cases, have happened without us being able to say goodbye or be with them at the end. Being with family and friends to grieve – and to share emotions, memories and physical and emotional warmth – is essential to the vast majority of people. It is a core element of the human condition. This has been largely stripped away in the current world. And until the vaccine has been received by the vast majority of the population, this is likely to remain the case. We are also unable to eat together as we celebrate a life and comfort each other.

It was in the context of this sadness – compromise and making the best of it – that I approached the arrangements for our Friend. I had been involved with the outdoor funeral service, with the Church of England vicar being open and willing to include a Quaker element at the graveside, as well as personal testimony from family and friends. It was a moving experience in the autumn sunshine. Following that, I did worry about how meaningful a Zoom Meeting could be.

I had learned from Friends House briefings and Area Meetings that having a separate Zoom host was essential for the person ‘running’ the Meeting. The host and I had been able to speak about the practicalities of the event. This included: openings; closings; how to create a Quaker atmosphere; and how to give confidence and reassurance to participants who would be unfamiliar with Quaker ways. We talked about screen-sharing for photographs and music, and decided against.

I haven’t organised many Memorial Meetings but my approach is to give as much, if not more, weight to the needs of family and friends as to the deceased person. As is often the case, there was no wider experience of Quakers within the family, so through email and Zoom I answered questions and allayed anxieties about what the Meeting might be like – particularly about how there was
no order of service. The literature produced by Friends House was really valuable. This was my first sense of how working electronically could be a benefit, enabling these leaflets to be shared in advance.

There was some discussion about the time of the event, as the most easterly and most westerly participants were ten hours apart. Our Friend had family in mainland Europe, on the east and west coasts of Canada, and had worked in the Caribbean as well as having family and friends in the UK. A 7pm start in the UK converted to 11am in the west of Canada, 3pm on the eastern coast, and 9pm in central Europe. The Zoom ‘room’ would be open fifteen minutes beforehand to help us gather and settle.

That evening, as we opened the room, more and more people started to join. Eventually there were more than fifty screens displayed, some with two people. There was lively chatter, just like a physical event: ‘Oh you’re X! I’ve heard so much about you but we’ve never met before!’; ‘How lovely to see you – I’ve not seen you since you were a child!’ There were introductions to a small grandson, seen for the first time. Then there was a ‘Help! I’ve never used Zoom before – this is my first time – what do I have to do?’ Several helpful contributions supported this person to participate comfortably.

Then the time came for me to make an introduction. I welcomed everyone, introduced the elders and explained the format of the Memorial Meeting. I asked for there to be some time left between each contribution, for us to reflect on and absorb what had been said.

There followed an incredibly moving and emotional succession of ministry from family, former colleagues, business partner, and friends. I found it very powerful. Unlike a physical event, people who were thousands of miles apart were able to speak of what our Friend had brought to their lives, to share their sense of loss and their thankfulness at having known her. This would not have happened if the world had not been under pandemic restrictions. There was a deep sharing of the sadness arising from this unexpected death. When it came time to close, one elder asked for a short period of quiet reflection before the other declared the Meeting at an end.

The fact that the funeral and the burial had taken place separately did make the Memorial Meeting straightforward, but I do recommend the system to Friends. The experience greatly exceeded my expectations – certainly my context of sadness. The sense of ‘making the best of it’ with which I had approached the event had not turned out to be appropriate at all.

The Quaker host passed the technical host functions to a non-Quaker family member and the gathering moved into an informal period of conversation. There was a lot of reminiscing and catching up. I learned the next day that this had continued for several hours! The feedback from the family and friends spoke of their solace and gratitude for having shared the experience together. The barrier of being so many miles apart had been removed.

Carole is from Sheringham Meeting.
In 2019, Portsmouth Friend Eduardo Gonçalves won the *Daily Mirror*’s ‘Animal Hero’ award for services to wildlife. He now works to end trophy hunting. *Julie Hinman* caught up with him

‘If we act on the premise that there is that of God in all creatures, we stand a chance.’

**Why do people engage in trophy hunting?**

Trophy hunting groups claim they are helping wildlife conservation and creating jobs for local people. Privately, they reveal their true motivations. They do it because they enjoy it and because they’re addicted to it. A British trophy hunter recently compared it to ‘mainlining on heroin.’

Over the past decade, 1.7 million animals have been killed by trophy hunters. That’s approximately one every three minutes. Some of our most endangered species are being shot every day just for ‘fun.’

**Why is this not stopped?**

The trophy hunting industry is rich and powerful. In recent years, Safari Club International has ploughed over $140 million into lobbying and has poured millions into the campaigns of high level US politicians, including the secretary of the interior – who is responsible for the USA’s hunting and trophy import laws.

The Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF) lobbies for trophy hunters within the US Congress. More than half of Congress are members of CSF.

‘Front’ groups pretending to be conservation organisations have joined the International Union for Conservation of Nature (the global organisation that produces the ‘Red List’ of endangered species). They have gained official status within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

**The planet is suffering a mass extinction of non-human animals. Are some species exempt from being killed for trophies?**

CITES prohibits trade in the most threatened species. Hunting trophies are exempted as ‘personal and household effects.’

There is clear evidence of the devastating impact of trophy hunting on many species, including lions. In the

nineteenth century, African lions numbered 1.2 million. Today the official figure is 20,000, though some believe the true figure could be 10,000. The US government believes lions could be gone from the wild by 2050.

**Big cat factory farms in South Africa breed lions and leopards for ‘canned hunting’. Is this more acceptable than killing wild animals?**

There are several reasons why canned hunting is inexcusable. The animals are often crammed into horrifying, unsanitary conditions. There is multiple inbreeding, which causes painful deformities and diseases, including horrific neurological illnesses. Cubs are taken away from their mothers just after they’re born to generate large profits for ‘cub-petting’ facilities.

The ‘hunter’ who shoots a lion within a fenced-in enclosure from which it cannot possibly escape takes home the lion’s head and skin, and the bones are sold to traders who turn them into lion ‘wine’ for wealthy clients. Canned hunting is fuelling demand for such products, which in turn is prompting breeders to poach wild lions in order to take their young and bring them back to their facilities to ‘refresh’ their ‘stock.’

Despite many of the large trophy hunting companies claiming to be opposed to canned hunting, they now sell canned hunts of other species including tigers and zebras.

**Who else benefits?**

Trophy hunting perpetuates and reinforces exploitation commonly associated with colonialism and apartheid. The money goes primarily to the (white) farmers and (white-owned) hunting companies, which invariably employ white professional hunting guides.

The (mainly North American and European) taxidermy companies charge thousands of pounds to transform your lion or giraffe into an item of fashion or furniture, plus the international shipping companies charge similar amounts to deliver the finished trophy to your door.

Some money ends up in the hands of corrupt officials,
while fees destined for government coffers are said by local politicians and villagers to disappear into what they call a ‘black hole’. Evidence suggests some senior African government figures are personally profiting from the industry.

**What would happen to local economies if trophy hunting was stopped?**
Ross Harvey, an African wildlife trade and economic analyst, presented his findings to the UK parliament in January 2020. It revealed that switching from trophy hunting to nature tourism would create eleven times as many jobs for South Africans, particularly those in poor rural areas.

‘Over the past decade, 1.7 million animals have been killed by trophy hunters. That’s one every three minutes.’

The jobs provided by nature tourism tend to be better-paid and year-round, contrasting with low-paid, seasonal labour from hunting.

**Are there different approaches within African nations?**
Kenya banned all trophy hunting in the 1970s. It has since developed a major home-grown nature tourism sector. This is generating significant revenues with which to fight poaching and enough money to provide a high-school education for every single Maasai child in the country. Elephants and other wildlife are increasing. Botswana banned trophy hunting in 2014 and now has one-third of all the world’s African elephants, twice as many as any other African nation. Unfortunately the new president has recently announced plans to bring back trophy hunting.

**What action is CITES taking?**
CITES is not a conservation treaty; it is a wildlife trade regulation agreement and, at its 2019 conference, trophy hunters were given permission to shoot double the number of critically-endangered black rhinos.

Recently, conservation and wildlife groups joined with cross-party MEPs to call on CITES to implement an immediate moratorium on trophy hunting of endangered species, which was ignored.

**Is there any progress on stopping the trophy trade?**
The Netherlands recently introduced a sweeping ban on all imports of hunting trophies. France and Australia have implemented partial bans. DHL and over forty airlines now refuse to handle trophy hunters’ spoils.

**And the UK?**
There has been very rapid movement on this in the UK. The British people are clear on this issue. Eighty per cent of voters are opposed to trophy hunting. They want it banned and want the government to stop hunters bringing home their victims’ body parts. Asked specifically whether a ban should apply to all species or to endangered animals only, seventy-six per cent said it should be a universal ban. Fourteen per cent believe it should cover threatened species alone.

Two years ago, trophy hunting was nowhere on the political radar. At the 2019 general election, every major party had a manifesto commitment to ban the trade. The prime minister has tweeted his personal support for a ban and confirmed his pledge in parliament. The government is drafting legislation following a public consultation.

This has happened because the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting (CBTH) has galvanised public opinion, mustered a coalition of cross-party MPs, won the...
endorsement of the national media (ranging from The Times to the Daily Mirror), and has mobilised some of Britain's most high-profile public figures. We have the backing of many community and conservation groups in Africa and around the world, too.

I believe we need an international treaty which abolishes trophy hunting. This is a primary objective of CBTH and something we are working with lawyers on.

Does CBTH collaborate with other groups?
CBTH has established a coalition with leading groups including Born Free, Humane Society International, the RSPCA, and many more. In January 2020, we jointly presented a petition with more than a million signatures to Downing Street. CBTH is also coordinating a coalition of European groups. We are part of a southern African lion coalition. Our aim is to start operations in the US shortly. This is critical, as over two-thirds of trophy hunters are from the US, despite the fact that the US general public is against it.

Can individuals avoid unknowingly contributing to trophy hunting?
There are a number of major brands that sponsor trophy hunting. I write about many of them in my first book, Trophy Hunters Exposed: Inside the big game industry. One of the highest-profile brands is Yamaha. Another is the company which owns Budweiser beer. There are a number of banking and finance groups and even wine labels that put money into trophy hunting lobbying. The US Boy Scouts have a partnership with Safari Club International, as does the US Salvation Army, which encourages children to take up trophy hunting.

Is there a spiritual/ethical aspect to this for you?
For me, this issue is fundamentally a spiritual and ethical one. To quote Desmond Tutu: 'It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God has made the entire world just for human beings, or to suppose that God is interested in only one of the millions of species that inhabit God's good Earth.'

In his wonderful book The Inner Life of Animals, Peter Wohlleben reveals new studies which show that non-human animals are sapient, as well as sentient.

Trophy hunting reflects a wider malaise about humanity’s relationship with the earth. The fact that we feel able to exploit, purposely hurt and destroy living entities for nothing more than entertainment goes a long way towards explaining the catastrophic collapse in biodiversity we are witnessing and our abject failure to respond to the climate change challenge in a manner commensurate with its enormity.

If we are to have any hope of surviving, let alone thriving, we need to fundamentally alter course. If we accept and act on the premise that there is that of God in all living creatures, we stand a chance.

What sort of human race do we want to be? Do we want to have no space – either in our hearts or in our natural home – for the fellow travellers we share this planet with? Or do we want to joyfully celebrate the richness of our miraculous earth and the light that burns brightly in all living things?

We treat our living planet as an inanimate resource to use as we please, regardless of the consequences. We have no right to torture or take the life of a fellow living creature for pleasure. The targeted animal is killed not for food or in self-defence but to satisfy human vanity.

What is your hope and vision for the future?
I'm hopeful not least because the vast majority of people agree trophy hunting is a shameful relic of the past. There are exciting new developments. Colombia has banned all so-called 'sport' hunting. It follows a court decision which upheld the argument that killing animals for pleasure conflicted with provisions in its constitution concerning the welfare of animals and wildlife conservation. The magistrate Antonio Jose Lizarazo said simply: ‘Animals are not things, they are beings with feelings.’

In Africa, the Akashingas – Zimbabwe’s all-female anti-poaching unit – is taking over land previously used for trophy hunting. Their project has generated more revenue for people and conservation in thirty-four days than trophy hunting did in a year.

I believe that the banning of trophy imports by the UK will be an international tipping point. It was the British who ‘invented’ modern trophy hunting and exported it to its African and Indian colonies.

‘What sort of human race do we want to be?
Do we want to have no space – either in our hearts or in our natural home – for the fellow travellers we share this planet with?’

It would be of enormous significance for Britain to close this chapter in its history and send a loud message around the world that it’s time to end this senseless slaughter.

You have written widely on this subject. What are your main messages?
Trophy Hunters Exposed: Inside the big game industry introduces the reader to the inner workings of the industry and explores the psychology of trophy hunting and its links to other serious crimes. Killing Game: The extinction industry focuses on the terrible impact of trophy hunting from the colonial era to the present day and reveals what Africans really think about the issue. Trophy Leaks: Top hunters and industry secrets revealed shows the extraordinary kill tallies of some of the world’s top hunters, and the array of prizes that encourage them to kill more animals each year. The book also lifts the lid on some of the underhand operations the industry has funded to try to deceive governments.

I hope these books shine a light on what is happening and what we can do to stop it.

Julie is from Sussex West Area Meeting.
To coin a phrase: Clive Ashwin talks money

‘The growing hostility to money, especially cash, is contributing to today’s social ills.’

A popular song of 1946, when I was a child, went as follows:
'Money is the root of all evil / Won't contaminate myself with it / Take it away, take it away, take it away!' Anxiety about the malign influence of money permeates Christian thought, expressed in Paul’s warning to Timothy: ‘For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.’

But should we think of money itself as intrinsically evil? The accumulation of money for its own sake is of course morally deplorable. But what about the gathering of sufficient money to ensure that one is self-reliant and not a burden to others? Or to enable one to support others who are less fortunate? For most charitable initiatives we are not in a position to offer support in kind, but we can send money, which is then converted into relief.

During a part of my childhood our family was dependent upon National Assistance to provide basics such as food, clothing and rent. My mother received payments in cash, and when she spent it her money was as good as the next customer’s. Money lends a welcome kind of social equality to the poor.

The only benefit we received in kind were my boots. I remember the embarrassment of having to go to school in black boots when other children were wearing shoes. Those boots were a public signal of our poverty.

These memories came back to me when I learned of the admirable campaign to provide free meals for children whose families cannot afford food. I sympathise with Friends who felt that this was an initiative worth supporting. But its principal value is as a warning that the benefits system is not working, and that some families are falling below the radar, a problem which must be corrected, not accepted and institutionalised.

The provision of relief in kind rather than cash has its attractions. It is sometimes argued that if you give people food rather than cash, you know it cannot be mis-spent. But the same principle could be extended to the provision of clothing, footwear, accommodation and other necessities. Indeed, this is the principle which underpinned the philosophy of the Victorian workhouse. By giving money rather than relief in kind you restore self-respect and a sense of control.

The growing hostility to money, especially cash, is, I believe, contributing to today’s social ills. Without the discipline of having to offer cash at the checkout many credit card users drift unwittingly into debt. The modern epidemic of gambling addiction is inconceivable without the availability of credit cards and online payment.

Money, far from being evil, is one of our most liberating inventions. It is impossible to think of any society that has become what we would recognise as ‘advanced’ without it. Early Friends had no anxieties about it. It is not money itself but its unjust distribution which gives rise to social problems. As Francis Bacon elegantly put it, ‘Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.’

Clive is from Aylsham Meeting.
I love Handel’s Messiah – most of it. The rich sounds, the ebullient energy, the familiar soaring melodies, all contribute to a wonderful evening. The words are edifying too – mostly. Perhaps it’s the glimpse into how Christianity looked in 1741. But sometimes they grate, even bringing a catch to the throat. Just why do the nations so furiously rage together? And why do the people imagine a vain thing?

When David composed Psalm 2, from which these two pressing questions come, human beings were just as beastly to each other. That was thousands of years ago. What have we learned since? We still can’t stop the raging. We propagate more vain things around the clock than ever.

The rage between nations afflicts us domestically too. Since 1945 we’ve acquired enough thermonuclear equipment to put an end to all life on this beautiful planet. What is it about us human beings that stops us enjoying each other, instead devising ever more effective ways of making things worse? And, given that it keeps happening everywhere, and all the time, does it really make any sense to hope for better?

‘It’s up to you to believe this spark is there’

To crown it all, the vain things the people do now imagine erode the central message of most of the world’s religions: be more sociable, get on better together, it pays you to take care of one another. It’s as if, since purgatorial hell is no longer there to deter the anti-social, the psalmist’s highly relevant challenges have taken second place. Religions used to offer relief. What stops them doing so today?

Well, for me, Quakerism hasn’t stopped. It keeps blossoming. The more I reflect on it, and the more I learn about it, my appreciation of it, and gratitude for it, grow. For me, where many religions remain shackled to old-style thinking, such as walking on water, or turning water into wine, Quakerism soars. Instead of telling me what to believe, Quakerism advises me to live life experimentally. In place of written beliefs, it offers me Testimonies. And what Testimonies they are. So tight. So relevant. But (it has to be admitted) so counter-cultural.

Take just two: the Peace Testimony, and the Testimony for Truth. The first is portrayed as weakness, capitulating to wrong-doing. The second sounds like whistling in the gale of today’s fake-news. Our cultures seem to be marching ever more determinedly in precisely the contrary direction.

They bring me comfort because they do. The more I learn about that ineffable mystery, the human being, the more I value these Testimonies. Simplicity too is at a premium. To me, every ‘enemy’ that ever was is also, at heart, a human being – and no human ever existed who did not also have inside them a spark of the divine, however you care to define that.

It’s up to you to believe this spark is there, to seek it out – indeed ‘wear it out’, as James Nayler said. More, it pays you to make the effort, however counter-cultural it seems. Once you do, the rages fade, beliefs in vain things recede, allowing real peace to come to all.

Bob is from Hampshire and the Islands Area Meeting.
Joe Biden was born in 1942. Evan Osnos says in this worthy biography that ‘He was a product of the Silent Generation, the cohort of Cautious Americans born between the Great Depression and the end of world war two. He was true to type. He was to be a cautious politician, an instinctive centrist.

Unlike Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, Biden was not Ivy League. He was educated in his native Delaware, with average results. Osnos remarks that he had intellectual insecurity, which lingers. At the age of thirty-one he decided, out of no great depth of motivation, to have a go at politics. He was voted in, by a narrow margin, as a senator for Delaware.

Several weeks before he was sworn in, in 1973, his wife and baby were killed in a car crash. Of his two sons, Beau suffered broken bones, and Hunter, the one whose business links in the Ukraine were later used to embarrass Biden, escaped with head injuries. The pattern of incredible luck and misfortune was to be repeated throughout Biden’s life. After the death of his wife, his sister moved in to look after his boys for four years, after which he re-married.

During his long years in the Senate, Biden came to chair the Senate foreign relations committee. Visiting politicians from overseas found it in their interests to make themselves known to him, so he was on first-name terms with visiting heads of state and members of their entourage when he was vice-president. On the down side, Senate speeches were not put under the public microscope, and Biden developed the habit of saying in public what was usually said in private, which was damaging when he was vice-president. When he held that office, though, he made sure that he was part of the most important committees.

In 1988, at the age of forty-six, one of Biden’s greatest disasters befell him: he had two aneurysms, a ballooning-out of an artery to the brain. It put him in hospital for three months and off work for seven months. Later, in 2015, when he was seventy-three, his beloved son Beau died from aggressive brain cancer at the age of forty-six. Beau’s death changed Biden. He lost his jauntiness, and became a humble, purposeful man.

In general, Democratic politicians fall into two camps: there are the liberal meliorists who take a long view and believe that humans can progress and improve. They stand for realism, coalition building, and practical politics. That’s where Biden fits in. His rival for the Democratic nomination, Bernie Sanders, took a more revolutionary approach. On his agenda were Medicare for all, free college education, better public housing, and police reform. Biden would probably choose less of all these, but in negotiations with the Sanders camp after the latter withdrew from the presidential race, he agreed to carbon-free electricity by 2035.

Biden believes in compromise and, at his age, has no time to lose. His obstacle could still be the Senate, which made life so difficult for Clinton and Obama.
**Friends & Meetings**

**Births**

Sophie Alys LUQMANI  
30 December. Daughter to Ben and Libby Luqmani (née Coppin) and grandchild for Amanda and Raashid Luqmani of Burford LM.

**Deaths**

Matiul (Mati) Hogue CHoudhury  
26 December. Husband of the late Ursula. Member of Hull Meeting, formerly Beverley Meeting. Aged 88. Funeral and woodland burial held 31 December. Enquiries: beverleyquakers@gmail.com

**Changes of clerk**

Bull Street Local Meeting, Birmingham  
From 1 January the clerk is David Sargeant, email dasargeant@hotmail.com

Be sure to keep in touch...  
...put your family notices in the Friend.

**Diary**

**HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN**  
Online retreat with Angela Tilby, for the Oxford Centre for Spiritual Growth. 2–4.30pm Saturday 13 February. Based on Leonard Cohen’s song, Anthem. Donations requested. Register at: www.ocsrg.uk.net or email info@ocsrg.uk.net

**LONDON QUAKERS EVENT**  

**MEDITATIO CENTRE ONLINE EVENT**  
Saturday 6 February 1–6pm. Poetry as a Contemplative Practice. A retreat day with Padraig O Tuama. See www.meditationcentre.org/book-online, tel. 020 7278 2070, or email meditatio@wccm.org or

**Friends & Meetings**

Personal entries (births, marriages, deaths, anniversaries, changes of address, Meeting up, etc.) charged at £41.50 incl. vat for up to 35 words and includes a copy of the magazine. Meeting and charity notices, (Changes of clerk, new wardens, new Members, changes to meeting, etc.) £34.58 zero rated for vat. Max. 35 words. Three entries £83 (£69.16 if zero rated); six entries £120 (£100 zero rated).  
DIARY NOTICES: £36 incl vat for up to 35 words, £30 zero-rated.  
Three entries £72 incl vat, £60 zero-rated.  
6 entries £108 incl. vat £90 zero-rated.  
Deadline usually 12 noon Monday. Entries accepted at the editor’s discretion in a standard house style.  
A gentle discipline will be exerted to maintain a simplicity of style and wording that excludes terms of endearment and words of tribute. Guidelines on request.  
The Friend, 54a Main Street, Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL  
Email: ads@thefriend.org  
Tel. 01535 630230

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**Give the gift of Quakerism**

Leaving a gift in your will to future generations of Quakers is a very personal decision, but one that can have a huge impact.

Legacies have played – and continue to play – a big part in allowing Britain Yearly Meeting to continue to carry out centrally managed work on behalf of Quakers. No matter the size, these gifts to future generations of Friends enable us all to continue to put Quaker values into practice.

To request information about leaving a legacy for Quaker work, please email us at contributions@quaker.org.uk.

www.quaker.org.uk/legacy

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Reg. charity number 1127633 | Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2B
Learning and Research Team Programme Development Manager

Salary: £33,777pa. Contract: 9 months fixed-term. Hours: 35 hours per week with frequent evening and weekend work (option to discuss less than 35 hours). Location: Flexible.

Woodbrooke is changing how we offer learning – working more closely with Quaker communities and developing and expanding our local and regional work. We are looking for a Programme Development Manager to support this work and to help shape the future of the learning we offer.

You will have a key role in identifying the needs of Quaker communities and in developing learning opportunities that respond to them. You will work in collaboration with Quakers and partner organisations, including Britain Yearly Meeting. We are looking for someone who is excited by what spirit led growth might mean in a faith context and how learning can support this.

You will have experience of developing programmes, and of reshaping work to better meet the needs of beneficiaries. You will be comfortable working with multiple groups to nurture effective outcomes.

Closing Date: Monday 25 January 12 noon. Interviews: Week Commencing 8 February.

For details on how to apply see www.woodbrooke.org.uk/jobs

Registered charity no. 313816
Quaker Life

Local Development Workers
Four posts from April 2021

Salary: £23,630 per annum (£29,538 pro rata per annum).
Contract: Permanent. Hours: Part time - 28 hours per week including some weekends and evenings. Frequent travel (when restrictions are lifted).
Location: Based at home or in a suitable office in the region.
One post each in: Scotland
Yorkshire (based Carlton Hill Meeting House, Leeds)
East Anglia
Cumberland and the North-East

We are seeking enthusiastic, pragmatic, optimistic people who are excited by what spirit-led growth might mean in a faith context.

As a local development worker, you will support Quaker communities to be inclusive, welcoming and all-age. The support areas include worship, community, organisational management, social action, collaboration in the wider community, and outreach. You will provide accompaniment, facilitation, project support, and training. You will work alongside others in Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Learning to provide resources and opportunities that grow from the identified needs of local Quakers.

We invite applications from people who are:
• Good listeners, with experience of working with groups to develop and deliver a shared vision
• Familiar with Quaker worship, community, witness and organisation
• Organised and resourceful; able to research information, analyse and sift it, and apply it appropriately to a range of situations and personalities
• Creative and adaptable; able to encourage innovation and support experimentation
• Digitally curious; willing to experiment in using digital platforms and programmes to develop community and to progress work.

Alongside the opportunity to transform the experience of Quakers across Britain, we offer a generous benefits package. To arrange an informal discussion of the role, please email Sophie Smith on sophies@quaker.org.uk.

Closing date: Monday 25 January 2021 (9am)
Interviews: w/c 22 February 2021 - online

For details of how to apply, go to www.quaker.org.uk/jobs

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to equality in all its employment practices.

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk and expects all its staff and volunteers to share and uphold this commitment.

Quakers have a faith commitment to equality, and we encourage and welcome applications for posts from all sections of society. You do not have to be a Quaker to apply for this post, but we expect you to uphold the values of our organisation.