

Quaker Quest

Explore the Quaker Way

A series of introductory evenings
in February & March 2010

Does God exist?

"It depends what you
mean by God"

Well ... perhaps"

"Of course"

★ **Introductory Evenings - 23rd & 25th Feb**

Hear 3 local Quakers give their personal answers...

- ➔ What has drawn you to the Quaker community and why do you stay?
- ➔ How have your faith and beliefs changed over time?
- ➔ What has surprised you about the whole Quaker thing?

★ **Quakers and Worship - 4th March**

- ➔ What do Quakers do during a silent Meeting?
- ➔ What does silence mean for you?
- ➔ Do you miss the more active types of worship?
- ➔ What about the singing?

★ **Quakers and God - 11th March**

- ➔ Does God exist?
- ➔ What is your personal relationship with God?
- ➔ Is God relevant to Quakers?
- ➔ Can you be an atheist and a Quaker?

★ **Quakers and Christianity - 18th March**

- ➔ Are you a Quaker or a Christian?
- ➔ What do Christians believe that Quakers don't?
- ➔ Can you be a Quaker and a Buddhist?

★ **Living the Quaker Life - 25th March**

- ➔ What does living a Quaker life mean to you?
- ➔ What guides you?
- ➔ Does being a Quaker make any impact on what kind of work you do?



Venues

Introductory evenings in February:

University of Leeds Chaplaincy LS2 9JT
Tuesday 23 February 2010 • 7pm

Swarthmore Centre,
Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3 1AD
Thursday 25 February 2010 • 7pm

Quaker Quest evenings in March:

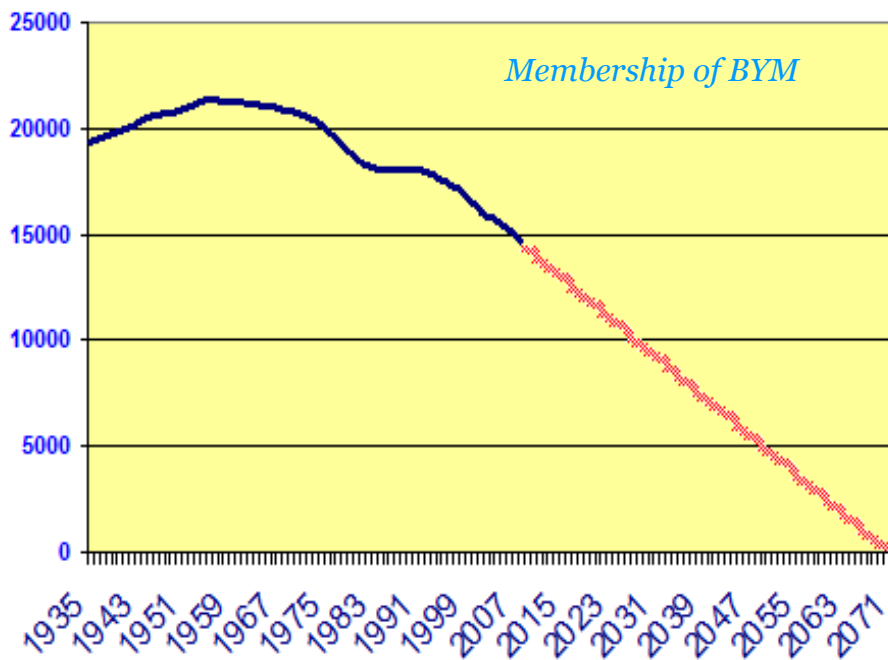
Quaker Meeting House,
188 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX
7pm (supper from 6.30pm)

“Lies, damned lies, and statistics”

by Paul Martin Emery

Dear Readers,

On the last page of the last Quiet Word was a box graph entitled lies, dammed lies and statistics and then the request for any comments? Well along with my usual contribution of one of my poems I would indeed like to comment on the graphs projection of the decline of British Quakers and as the graph suggests, their possible disappearance by 2071 all together.



Firstly it may be helpful for readers to know a little about me and my circumstances first. I have been for many years since 1982 an attender at Ilkley Meeting and for some time now have enjoyed the privilege of tending to the grounds of the meeting house and lately taking care of the inside as well. I also came from a staunch Roman Catholic background. The relevance of this information and its relationship to my view of the significance of the graph will I hope become clear.

You see in my previous faith, it is true to say, that there was always an element of emphases on numbers. The old adage about big Catholic families. It is also true to say that for many people, there is comfort and reassurance in the thought that thousands of others share their view on a particular issue, or in these circumstances, share a belief.

Large numbers of people thinking the same can also seem to speak, to a kind of security for the continuance of the particular view point or belief. However I feel very much that the true worth of any belief lies in the hearts of those sharing that belief, and how the belief is lived out, for the benefit of others, not in the number of people who happen to share it. The crowd are not always right as history has so tragically proved so many times.

When I started to attend meeting I found a completely different, none dogmatic approach to issues of faith. I once found myself standing up in meeting and stating that for me, I found Quakerism to be, an island of peace in a sea of dogma. I was struggling at the time with my own faith; whilst also being assailed at the time by malicious, hard line evangelicals.

You see the peace I found at meeting during that time was so precious and reassuring to me. It encouraged me and gave me the confidence to take a step back and find my own way and view. Not one imposed on me.

I believe that experience to be special, and for me, it speaks to the very essence of that which makes Quakerism, as I have come to experience it and respect it, so unique. It is this uniqueness of the Quaker approach to faith issues and world affairs, which is the bedrock of your strength. It is this much needed, non dogmatic approach to these important things that will secure the future, not necessarily the numbers coming through the door, although that does have a bearing.

I don't believe I am the only one to experience this. I sense we all have our own individual experience of meeting, that which we all take away ourselves, that which speaks to our own condition.

I enjoy tending the grounds of Ilkley Meeting; they have a nice layout and aspect. It is lovely when the grass is freshly cut on a gentle summer's day, but the most precious part of my time there, is when I have finished my internal duties, and have finished laying out the table and circle of chairs for meeting. The meeting house is now ready for the coming meeting for worship. It is quiet and settled after the business of all the groups who have used the meeting house all week. Silence and the peace it brings now reign. As I sit in the beauty of this intense and private silence, alone in the meeting room, sometimes reading Quaker Faith and Practice, I experience a deeply personal feeling of oneness and healing. It is a deep and powerful experience of the gift of the silence and one I have come to know, during those moments, each week, as a listening and an answering silence.

So this is my answer to the graph ... It doesn't matter ... The proposed projection re 2071 is irrelevant, because something as deeply enriching and healing, as the power of the silence, which Quakers so embrace, as the central tenant, of their form of worship, coupled with your unique, and non dogmatic and inclusive approach, to life and faith matters, will always find a place, in the hearts of those, who seek real enlightenment.

The Quaker way will always find a place in the minds of those, who have the courage to seek, and to find that, which truly speaks to their life condition, not imposed by dogma, but freely found.

It will always find a place, in the hopes of those, open hearted, to finding for themselves, within the caring embrace, of the meetings listening and answering silence, that oneness in the light, which in its turn, will allow them, to be open to the most precious experience of all ...

To let their lives speak.

So there is my answer to your condition, to the suggestion implied by the graph. No lies, damned lies, or statistics. Just be who you are, and follow the words of your founder simply **Let your lives speak** and the silence will be deafening and touch the lives of so many, for years to come.

Winter Song

*Winter chills are here once more
The year nearly at its end
And Christmas time is here for sure
Winters festive friend
The robin dances in the new born snow
To his song of winter time
His breast that ever warming glow
His song a forest rhyme

The crisp white frost upon the trees
Takes the breath away
Its beauty the eye does please
As it paints in natures day
Dark shadows fall upon the ground
The gift of the Sun filled light
A fleeting treasure never to be found
As each shadow takes its flight

The river flows its winding way
Under bridge to waterfall
And winters song does colour the day
With the sound of natures call
These landscapes reach to touch the soul
As we see the winter view
Of linen white so crisp and cold
The colour of winter hue

How blessed are we to look upon
The colour of these days
The glory of the winter song
That never ever fades
Each winter time does tell the heart
That spring will soon be here
But let winter awhile now play her part
And sing her song so clear*

Paul Martin Emery



Making Fair Trade Normal Trade



A joint British Medical Association and World Development Movement Meeting

**7pm to 9pm
Friday 26th February 2010
Council Chamber, Leeds Civic Hall**

Speakers include:

Mahmood Bhutta, ENT Surgeon from Oxford. Co-founder of the Medical Fair and Ethical Trade Group at the British Medical Association. Campaigning to bring fair trade to the NHS with products like textiles, rubber goods, food and surgical instruments. This campaign has support from health workers, the Department of Health and NHS Supply Chain. This work is supported by the BMA and has been the subject of articles in the BMJ.

Beverley Kenny, Assistant Director of Catering and Conferences for Leeds University. The University has made a lot of progress in developing the range of FairTrade goods being purchased and used at the University.

Ian Adderley, Chair Leeds Fairtrade Steering Group. Fairtrade started as a grassroots movement and continues to develop that way. A lot is happening in Leeds and across the Yorkshire Region to promoting the furtherance of Fairtrade.

The contribution of Leeds City Council to promoting Fair Trade will also be explained.



There will be an opportunity for discussion and to make suggestions about ways to make Fair Trade normal trade.

All concerned in promoting FairTrade are welcome.

Please keep the Friday evening free to join us at Leeds Civic Hall for a positive contribution towards Fair Trade fortnight and in making Fair Trade normal trade. Any with a health connection will find Mahmood Bhutta's contribution very interesting, a good speaker with something useful to say.

Martin Schweiger

***New Attender?
Discover the Quaker Way
at www.quakerweek.org.uk***

Circles of Support and Accountability in Yorkshire

In a recent article in the "Friend", Steven Harvey, Executive Director of Circles UK, tells the story of a remarkable project that Quakers helped create in Britain. Here in Yorkshire, after about two years' planning, three Circles were set up, funded by North Yorkshire Probation Service, and involving several local Quakers. In June 2008 Circles UK was launched and Circles Yorkshire and Humberside affiliated to it.

The aim of Circles is "no more victims," and to this end a group of three or four trained volunteers, who are ordinary members of the public, meet for a year with a released sex offender, called the Core Member, to help him or her adjust to life outside prison, re-integrate into a hostile society and lead an offence-free life. This of course, is no mean feat. Most offenders suffer from very low self-esteem, lack of confidence and poor social skills, and the job of volunteers is to give help and support in whatever way they see fit, coupled with helping the Core Member to take full responsibility for his thoughts and actions and be accountable to the group, backed by probation and the police. Trust must be built up and the sometimes delicate balance struck between giving encouragement and challenging unhelpful attitudes.

The Core Member of our group was unable to work because of mental health problems and lived a lonely and isolated life. We managed to get him psychiatric treatment first with the National Health Service and later at the Retreat, and also voluntary work for a few hours a week, bringing him into contact with other people and increasing his social skills, self confidence and self worth. Both the treatment and the work are ongoing although the group has officially disbanded. Now there is hope. It may take a long time to put him back together again – but he smiles and even laughs - and he has not re-offended!

Circles have obtained a chance to present their work along with four other social change projects in Leeds in the evening of Wednesday 24 March at an event of The Funding Network where hopefully this local Circles project will raise about £5,000.

But now, sadly, this worthwhile project has come to an end as funding has dried up. However a new charity has been formed to carry forward the pilot work throughout Yorkshire and Humberside and funding bids are in. Circles have obtained a chance to present their work along with four other social change projects in Leeds in the evening of Wednesday 24 March at an event of The Funding Network where hopefully this local Circles project will raise about £5,000. Anyone can go along and it's free and, if they wish, then pledge money (minimum 50 pounds) to this local Circles project. If you are interested please contact Graham Prescott of Brighouse Area Meeting – enq@just-trust.fsnet.co.uk or telephone 07508705967.

Meanwhile, 20 trained volunteers and a number of sex offenders in our area are waiting to resume this valuable contribution towards making communities safer.

Graham Prescott (Halifax)
Maggie Ashworth (New Earswick)

For more on the *The Funding Network* see page 6.

Did You know?

2010 is the 350th anniversary of the Quaker Peace Testimony.

On 21st November 1660 a declaration was given to King Charles II from "the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers against all plotters and fighters in the world..."



The Funding Network, Leeds



When you give money to good causes, do you prefer to meet the people and projects you support, rather than simply writing out a cheque?

Are you interested to know exactly what difference your gift will make? Do you enjoy stimulating, unusual events?

If so, we would like to invite you to an event on Wednesday 24th March 2010 that will let you experience a radically new approach to philanthropy.

The concept is simple – we invite five projects to present their work to a group of invited guests interested in helping to drive social change. They have six minutes each to present and tell us what they would do with a £5,000 donation and the audience have the opportunity to ask them some questions.

There's no pressure or obligation to give – indeed many people enjoy coming along just to be part of a fun, worthwhile evening and learn at first hand about social change issues. Alternatively you can give anonymously, before, during or after the event!

These Funding Network events have been described as a marketplace for donors and charities and as speed dating for philanthropists.

Since starting, in 2005, The Funding Network raised over £110,000 for twenty different projects.

The projects selected for 24th March 2010 include:

- **Teen Challenge Leeds** is a Leeds-based charity that works in areas such as Chapeltown, Holbeck and Burmantofts. They offer support to the families of people who are addicted to drugs and alcohol.
- **The Anneli Project** is a newly-opened refuge, in Leeds, which provides a safe haven for women within the sex industry who have been trafficked internationally and within the UK.
- **The Circles Project** works with registered sex offenders who have committed not to re-offend.
See page 5 above!
- **The Children of the Forest** charity has created a special refuge in Sangkhlaburi, a town located on the Thai /Burma border. It provides a home for women and children fleeing abuse from the Burmese military junta which has included systematic destruction of villages, slavery, rape, child labour, child prostitution and murder.
- **United Bank of Carbon (UBoC)** is based in Leeds and has a remit of tackling Climate Change. Their focus is on supporting rainforest protection projects in the Americas, Africa and Asia Pacific.

**The Funding Network event will take place from 6.00 – 9.00 pm
at the HQ of the Yorkshire Bank* (behind the Merrion Centre)
on Wednesday 24th March 2010.**

The evening is completely free of charge and will include light refreshments.

For details and to book a place:

email amanda@leedscommunityfoundation.org.uk or telephone (0113) 242 2426

Susan Seymour

* This is a change from the previously published venue.

Meeting for Sufferings Reflections

In January your representatives on Sufferings, Robert Keeble and I, had the privilege of a whole weekend at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire. We were able to get to know each other better as people particularly in our Home Group sessions. These are groups of about 12 people from 12 different parts of the country who meet together for part of each day. Playing thought-provoking games helped with this and also gave rise to a lot of fun.

We heard of the talks which have been going on with a government minister about the issue of same-sex marriage. She was clear that if we wish to hold same-sex marriages in the manner of Friends we would not be breaking the law. However the state would not be able to recognise them as legal marriages.

Our papers in advance had given us some questions about equality in our Meetings and it threw up more in the session. Examples included: why wasn't poverty mentioned; how do we respond to racism; why don't we attract people who aren't middle class or people from ethnic groups? And very interestingly do the formal rows in which we sit for our M of S meetings affect the input of members?

We were able to browse and buy new materials e.g. 'Quaker Voices' – a replacement for Quaker Monthly; and also 'Becoming Friends' – an introductory book for newcomers. Indeed communication was the focus of our last session - not least the two-way communication that should happen between the Quaker central work based in London and our Meetings up and down the land.

Robert Keeble and I will hope to engage, enthuse and possibly even involve some of you with the central work and equally we indeed to take your concerns back to Sufferings.

Eileen Fowler

Quakers in Yorkshire Activities in 2010

ENA Days (Gatherings for Enquirers, Newcomers and Attenders)

Sat 6th March	Wakefield QMH
Sat 26th June	Ilkley QMH
Sat 30th October	Leeds, Carlton Hill QMH

Junior Holidays (Ages 7-12)

Sat 24 Apr	Reunion - Mount School, York	7 -17 years
25 - 27 Jun	Nell Bank, Ilkley	10 -12 years
16 - 20 Aug	Snowball Lodge, York	9 -12 years
17 - 19 Sep	Barmoor, NY Moors	7 - 9 years

Link Group (Ages 13-18)

06 - 07 Mar	Harrogate
25 - 27 Jun	Settle
10 - 12 Sep	Bradford (dates to be confirmed)
04 - 05 Dec	Huddersfield, Paddock QMH

Holiday School (ages 13-17)

15 - 22 Aug	Queen Ethelburga's College, Thorpe Underwood, nr York
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For more detail visit: www.quakersinyorkshire.org.uk