

# The Quiet Word



Leeds Friends commemorating 350 Years of the Quaker testimony to Peace

## Up and Coming Events

**Sunday Meeting for Worship 10:45** at all Leeds Meetings with exception of Ilkley which is at 10:30am and fortnightly house Meetings at Otley (contact David Robson 0113 3188084 for details)

**3rd Sunday-** Teenagers Meeting 12:15pm talk & lunch at Carlton Hill

**4th Sunday Breakfast Meeting** – shared breakfast 9am, MforW 9:30am Carlton Hill

**Wednesdays 8pm** – mid-week Meeting for Worship at Rawdon QMH

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> 7:30pm** at Carlton Hill QMH ‘Women at risk or involved in Prostitution’ a talk by Yvonne Hutchinson of the Joanna Project. All welcome. Talk arranged by Leeds Quaker Criminal Justice Group.

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> 8pm** PAFRAS fundraising reception at St.Aiden’s Church Hall (contact LAQM

clerks for details)

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Carlton Hill QMH:** soup lunch at 12:30pm (for everyone) followed by LAQM Elders and Overseers Meeting – for present and all new E&O's serving from 2012

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> 7:30pm** - Rawdon QMH Two Wartime Classics on Remembrance Sunday. David Robertson of Theatre of the Dales and Maggie Marsh of Trio Literati will read from 84, Charring Cross Road, and actors from the Royal Armouries will perform Only Water Between, Peter Stratford's moving adaptation of letters and memories from World War One.

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> 7pm at Swarthmore** – the Ellen Heaton Lecture 'What is it about the village? How the English developed a way of living both in the countryside and town. RSVP by 14/11 0113 2437980

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> 7:30pm Leeds Parish Church 2011** Hook Lecture 'The Foundations of Morality' by Baroness Mary Warnock. Admission Free by ticket only – please ring 0113 2454700

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> 9:45am** Carlton Hill QMH Discussion on 'simplicity' – open to all and followed by 11am coffee morning.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> 12:15** at Carlton Hill QMH A talk about Bedford Court and a display of Bedford Court artwork, followed by a shared vegetarian lunch at about 12:45

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> at Leeds City Museum** – Interfaith Week 2011 10am to 4pm a day full of activities starting with the official opening by the Mayor at 10:30 – learn about our fellow worshipping communities in Leeds.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> from 9am to late** The Leeds Summat Gathering 2011 at Leeds University / Notre Dame College - a day for people of all walks of life to get connected, be inspired and join in action to change the world.

Free event but please book on [www.summat.org](http://www.summat.org) to reserve your place. Nb helpers are wanted for the NFPB (Northern Friends Peace Board) stall which will be at the Summat. Please contact Robin Bowles [cara@cooptel.net](mailto:cara@cooptel.net)

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> 9am** Carlton Hill shared breakfast, 9:30 to 10am Meeting for Worship, 10:45am normal Meeting for Worship

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> 9:45am** Carlton Hill QMH Discussion – open to all and followed by 11am coffee morning

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>** Leeds AQM and Quaker Gathering 3:30pm at Carlton Hill QMH.

LAQM business from 3:30 to 5:15, then a short break. 5:30pm a mini 'Quaker Quest' style session on Quakers and the arts - three friends will each speaking for 5 minutes on why Art, Music, Poetry, Writing is important to them.

This will be followed by friends discussing the same topic with people near to them. The

session will be all aged and we expect to have children present as we will also have an art and music workshop for children from 3:30 to 5:30pm. 6pm food followed by the social evening.

Please contact Ben Wood at [punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk) or by mobile on 07780755729 to forward or discuss contributions to the QUIET WORD.

## Going Places with Going Green



26/10/11 is exactly ten weeks since Leeds Quakers started generating solar power at the Woodhouse Lane Meeting House. During the ten weeks, 640Kwh have been generated which have resulted in a saving 988Lbs of CO2.

<b>The Figures</b>		
day in month	DD/MM/YYYY	kWh
	16/08/2011	0.000
	17/08/2011	0.000
1	18/08/2011	0.197
2	19/08/2011	13.931
3	20/08/2011	13.830
4	21/08/2011	16.409
5	22/08/2011	21.473
6	23/08/2011	9.996
7	24/08/2011	12.707
8	25/08/2011	0.000
9	26/08/2011	2.732
10	27/08/2011	14.581
11	28/08/2011	14.374
12	29/08/2011	11.633
13	30/08/2011	6.997
14	31/08/2011	4.860
	143.523	<b>Total for August 2011</b>
	<b>10.252</b>	<b>average (mean) per day</b>

Early indications are that the Meeting House may be able to generate more electricity than it uses for much of the year.

## On Caring About Dead Quakers



I've realised more and more recently how much I care about the dead Quakers. I don't just mean the ones I knew personally, although of course I care about them. I mean my spiritual ancestors and forebears (since I'm not actually related, except by marriage, to any dead Quakers). All the people who've done some variant of these rather strange things I do and called themselves Quakers. The people who built and rebuilt the old Meeting Houses, the people whose words and stories and actions we've drawn on to create the "four testimonies" (and who might or might not have known what we were talking about if we said "four testimonies" to them, but that's a discussion for another day). The people in whose passion and faith and craziness and respectability I clothe myself every time I say "I'm a Quaker". The people whose name I bear and in whose place I stand.

I care about them, in part, because they earned it, because for so many of them it was much harder to be a Quaker than it is for me. It used to be illegal, of course. Quite a few of them died young simply because they were Quakers. Then for a long time it used to mean you couldn't go to university or enter the professions, and for a long time it made you conspicuously and visibly strange. I have met people for whom it meant going to prison. The dead Quakers cared enough to stick with it, and I think they earned some respect. Sometimes, in fact, I'm overwhelmed by the privilege and blessing of being able to sit in the same space as them.

But more to the point, I care about them because I'm in their house, using their things. I feel it's simple good manners to think about them occasionally, to join them in worship, to invite them into our processes of discerning the will of God. I don't see the dead Quakers as powerful judges over me or over others. They affect me, in fact, by their powerlessness. Mostly, they didn't even try to bind us to particular ways of being and acting. They didn't write "a rule to walk by", and they set up processes by which everything Quakers do could be rethought and revised. So they're entirely at the mercy of the living Quakers. They can't stop us misrepresenting them, misusing their words or their places or their name, or even forgetting about them. They can't stop us casually throwing away the practices and traditions and structures that they worked and lived with (instead of working and living with these things ourselves and letting them change gradually, as they need to). The dead Quakers have

no power and no authority. We just have to decide whether and how to care about them.

So if I tend to be a rather conservative Quaker - small c, if you please - it's not only because I'm a natural born pedant (though it is that, too). It's because I feel unable to avoid the call to honour my spiritual ancestors - as a crucial part of maintaining, to the glory of God, the strange and wonderful thing I inherited from them and hope to pass on. And for me the privilege of serving a Quaker meeting is all the greater privilege because, in its very small way, it's a service for the dead Quakers and the future Quakers as well.

**Rachel Muers**

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## Amnesty Greeting Card Campaign



*Please join us in sending seasonal greetings to prisoners of conscience across the world*

**Sunday November 27th, 1pm - 3.30pm**

**Rawdon Quaker Meeting House**

**Quakers Lane Rawdon LS19 6HU**

We provide all the information you need and the cards – and you write them (any additional non-religious cards are always appreciated)

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December is Human Rights Day and Amnesty's Write for Rights Day.**

Join us at Rawdon Meeting House

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1pm - 3.30pm

*We will be writing letters to those in power and hold them to account on the cases featured in the campaign.*

*All information will be provided.*

*All you need to bring is your good will!*

*There'll be drinks and lots of cake to keep you going*

*Come for as long as you like - its fun*

*Everyone is welcome*

**Further information from Charlotte Allen 0113 2583686**

## AM outing to Bradford



On Saturday 24th September 12 Friends representing most of Leeds local meetings travelled by train to Bradford to visit the Peace Museum. Julie Obermeyer, the curator gave a helpful talk on the history and work of the museum including recently funded work in local schools. Friends then travelled on foot or by bus to the Bradford Quaker Meeting house for a warm welcome from Eric Easterbrook and Friends with tea while we chatted and ate picnic lunches. The afternoon was spent at the Bradford Media Museum, a short walk down the hill where the remaining Friends watched the 3D film "Born to be Wild" followed by refreshments in the cafe.

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## Equality and community building.....



Following our Yearly Meeting gathering at Canterbury, friends might be forgiven for thinking that Meeting for Sufferings would focus on sustainability. I would have delighted in sharing the news of our new Leeds solar panels as well as my experiences of seeing a multitude of solar panels on the refurbished Kings Cross station roof as I got off the train, or the hybrid electric bus that passed me on the walk along Euston Road to Friends House. But sustainability was not our topic – it will be when we meet again in December as we will want to hear from friends and meetings regarding the challenge before us, namely, how are we to put our historic decision to seek to become a low carbon and sustainable worshipping community into practice.

The topic before us was the cuts and the increased inequality that they are creating. Catherine West, **a Quaker from Muswell Hill Meeting and leader of Islington Council** was the main speaker and she told us about their 'fairness commission'. Islington has a great mix, with many very affluent people living next to those in great poverty. It has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest child poverty rate in the country and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest life expectancy for men. Fuel poverty is increasing and welfare reform, including changes in the housing and disability benefits will bring even greater inequality.

As a result of community engagement with the 'fairness commission' the council has sought to minimize the impact of the cuts imposed by central government. One example is it ensures that the £8:30 London Living Wage is paid by all its contractors and a big change was to return to inhouse cleaning services which have proved to be cheaper than paying the private sector for this service. **We recognized that more equal societies are more sustainable societies** and agreed to issue a press release urging that equality should be the touchstone of any proposed cuts. The question was also asked, 'why is Quaker Social Action only working in the East End of London? Should we not be engaged in supporting those in great poverty throughout the country and if so what should we do.

In Leeds, there are many Quakers working to support the needs of destitute asylum seekers, but are we doing enough? Should we, for instance, consider developing stronger links with St. George's Crypt? QPSW (Quaker Peace & Social Witness) is supporting the Church Action on Poverty 'Close the Gap' campaign, which local meetings can also join. We were also encouraged to lobby councils to introduce 'Fairness Commissions' and to brief MP's on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation research that details the rapidly increasing inequality and to press for the government to undertake an 'equality audit' of the impact of the cuts.

In the afternoon, we looked at strengthening and sustaining the life of our Area meetings. We were asked to consider if AM's are clear about their roles, are fit for purpose and to consider what help they may need. We recognized that AM's are an essential part of our structure and the primary function is to enable us to come together as a worshipping community of friends. Many AM's are experimenting with change, friends in the remote West Scotland AM are even using telephone conferencing. From the sharing that took place, my impression is that Leeds is one of the meetings leading the way and that others are keen to learn from our experiences.

Meeting for Sufferings is the national gathering of Quakers that is held between the annual Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) to which all friends are invited to attend. Sufferings is about to change and from May 2012, all Area Meetings will be represented by a single friend rather than up to four friends. This will reduce the size of the gathering and it is expected that the meeting will become much more effective in its discernment. Soon there will be an opportunity for new friends to represent Leeds as both Eileen Fowler and myself are nearing the end of our service. I have found Sufferings to be the most interesting and exciting Quaker meetings that I have ever attended and I look forward to some day in the distant future when I might again be asked to represent Leeds friends.

The Leeds Area Quaker Meeting (LAQM) Nominations Committee will be seeking the names of two friends, a representative and an 'alternate' who would be able to attend should the representative be prevented. If you are invited to serve on Meeting for Sufferings, my advice would be to say yes. Service is for three years and there are normally only five Saturday meetings a year which are held at Friends House, London.

**Robert Keeble**

## Leeds Area Quaker Meeting One-Day Workshop: “Our Attitude to Death”



**Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> November**

Leeds Area Meeting held a one-day workshop, entitled “Our Attitude to Death”. The meeting consisted of two halves. In the morning, no fewer than 27 friends examined how we prepare for our own death, both practically and emotionally. We were asked to consider what is a good death and how we would want to die. In the afternoon, 25 friends looked at how we view the situation of others who know that they have not long to live, but nonetheless wish to have a “good death”. We held a deep and reflective period of ‘worship sharing’ where we considered the topic of “Assisted Dying”. Other topics covered included making an “Advanced Decision”, and considering what else we might do to prepare for a time when we may no longer be able to make rational decisions about our future.

What next? This will be considered at our LAQM in December, but it was suggested that a day conference with invited speakers could be arranged for the benefit of a wider audience and that such a conference could be held at Oxford Place.

### Other Notices

*Ilkley Meeting has arranged for a speaker from Circles of Support and Accountability Yorkshire to talk to us at the Meeting House on Friday 18 November (7.30 pm). The speaker will be Peter Mate, a volunteer with the service, who lives in Ilkley. He'll be giving a general introduction to the work of Circles (in Yorkshire), which describes itself (as I'm sure many Friends will know) as 'a community response to sexual offending, working in partnership with criminal justice agencies'.*

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*Hello My name is Emma Bolland and I am running the Leeds Abbey Dash 10k road race on Sunday 20th November to raise money for PAFRAS: Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Leeds. Both PAFRAS and myself would be very grateful if you could sponsor me. No donation is too small. You can sponsor me online with a debit or credit card by going to the link below. Many thanks, Emma.*

<http://www.justgiving.com/emma-bolland0>



Dear everyone, I am writing to ask you to make a comment, online or by post, on Kirklees Council Planning Application 2011/92615. The following link can be copied and pasted into your browser.

[http://www2.kirklees.gov.uk/business/planning/application\\_search/detail.aspx?id=2011/92615](http://www2.kirklees.gov.uk/business/planning/application_search/detail.aspx?id=2011/92615)

To make an objection, click on the link on the left of the webpage. High Flatts meeting house is accessed by a path about 30 yards long that crosses a neighbour's land. The neighbour's house remained in Quaker ownership until the mid-80s. Access to and from the meeting house is protected by legal easement. The neighbour wants to move the garden wall, narrowing the path considerably.

Work on this wall has been started although planning permission has yet to be granted. Both his house and the meeting house are Grade II listed and consent is required before any changes are made to the properties or their environs. The proposed change to this path will seriously damage the primary access to the meeting house, where Quakers have worshipped for about 300 years. Meanwhile our main access to the meeting house has been closed, and our legal rights to use it have been denied.

**Any up-and-coming notices please forward to Ben Wood, Quiet Word Editor**  
[punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:punkrainbow@hotmail.co.uk)

## “Women at risk or involved in Prostitution”



A talk by Yvonne Hutchinson of the Joanna Project was held at Carlton Hill on 7th November 2011 and was well attended by about 20 friends. Joanna is a Leeds based Christian outreach and support charity, journeying with women to help them exit prostitution and live a new life. There are 24 volunteers staffing the evening outreach work and some of the women being supported have said ‘ I am so glad to have Joanna in my life’ ‘Joanna was

there when I had been given up as lost by everyone else – thank you for caring when no one else did’. From July to September 2011, the Joanna volunteers met 49 different women working on the streets of Holbeck and made 129 separate contacts with women. Joanna is committed to keeping women as safe on the streets as possible until they choose to exit prostitution completely. To give support to the Joanna Project, please see the website [www.joannaleeds.org](http://www.joannaleeds.org)

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## The Religious Society of Friends OTLEY QUAKER MEETING



### Report about the Child and Adolescent service provided by solace in 2011

During the period January – September 2011 the Child and Adolescent Service has cared for 122 children and young people of whom 55 were new referrals. Between April – September 2011, the current accounting year, an estimated £16,360 has been spent on the service, of which £9,290 has been spent on the employment of a child therapist. Specific donations received include £6,000 from the Quaker Peace & Social Witness relief grants scheme and £10,038 from local Quaker Meetings in Leeds and Leeds Area Quaker Meeting trustees. The balance of the expenditure to the end of March 2012 will be met from other unrestricted funds. Donations of £10,000 have been committed by Leeds Quakers towards a further year's work.

#### Working with children at solace

Differing approaches are required depending on the child's age and stage of development. Each child requires an individual approach. Parents with small children are often very distressed. An assessment helps determine what type of therapy would be most effective, not just for the child and parent but for the family as a whole. By reducing parental stress children gain a reciprocal sense of wellbeing. Understanding the meaning of play can take time for both parents and children. There may be access to fewer toys and toys that allow family interaction are uncommon. Parents often fear the State both in their country of origin and in the UK whether the Home Office, the judicial system or GPs and social workers.

**Solace** engages by reducing parental fears; teaching techniques to reduce anxiety; supplemented by talking therapies. Advocacy for parents needing considerable contact with others involved in the child's life is an essential part of the service. An older child

requires more direct one-to-one support. Teenagers need ‘packages’ of care – three or four sessions of individual work complemented by a similar amount of advocacy.

Young people may not want to talk about the things that really worry them, they want someone to “fix it”. This “fixing” often requires attendance at multiagency meetings. Positive relationships with other agencies are fundamental to an holistic approach to a child’s health and wellbeing, but the time spent is of enormous benefit. Children and young people do not live in a vacuum. Some are homeless or sharing space with other families. Some are lone asylum seekers, well supported but struggling both with their experiences before coming to the UK and an unsympathetic UK asylum process. Others with serious mental health issues are supported by **solace’s** volunteer therapists as well as the Child and Adolescent Therapist, reducing stress, depression and anxiety.

### Two vignettes

1. Lynne uses pictures to identify a problem, particularly useful with children who don’t like talking. A young boy drew a picture which revealed that he was anxious about being sent to another country, his mother cried a lot and there was nothing he could do about it. He is frightened because he has only ever lived in the UK – ‘I don’t want to go anywhere that upsets my mother’. He can’t sleep, he stops learning and gets anxious.

At school, they didn’t understand his anxiety and why he cried in class which made him prone to bullying. Lynne was able to explain. The school provided more support to stop further deterioration.

2. Reza and his brother Hassan from Kurdish Iran, aged 11 and 12 had been tortured in prison and sentenced to death, commuted until they reached age 16. They escaped but Hassan was shot dead. Reza eventually reached the UK and is living with foster parents in West Yorkshire. Referred by Social Services to **solace** due to anxiety and depression he was able to use his own language and recently started school for the first time aged 14.

*“I will be born again. Up to now it’s been a nightmare. I have a lot of help from people, including **solace** where I can say how I feel because there is always an interpreter. I want to learn English; I want to join in the conversation, but I can’t. Here is like another world for me.”*

The value of the Child and Adolescent Service has been recognized by voluntary and statutory services. The commissioning process and statutory funding will take longer. Until then charitable giving is essential, invaluable and acknowledged in the treasurer’s report. In the same way that working with adult asylum seekers led to the need for this service, working with individuals who share many of the same challenges, has led to pilot plans for group work in 2012.

**David M Robson,**  
Clerk / correspondent, Otley Quaker Meeting, October 2011

## Some Thoughts from the Editor: Even at Christmas Peace has a Price



I realised as I was putting the latest **Quiet Word** together that there was very little about Christmas in its pages. Initially, part of me felt that this was right. After all Friends have long held that one should remember the life and example of Jesus at all times, not merely on specified days. ‘Isn’t all of life sacred?’ Friends often say. Yet, in holding to this position too rigidly, Quakers have always been in danger of leaving the telling of the Christmas Story to other people. In affirming general sanctity historic Friends have perhaps abdicated their responsibility for renewing its radical message at the ‘season’ when people are most culturally receptive to it. For this is not simply someone else’s story, this is the first Quaker story in which we glance our own reflection. Our *Peace Testimony* permeates the nativity in Luke and Matthew. When Friends campaign against war and injustice the divine declaration given to the Shepherds is brought to life again: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests’ [Luke 2:14]. When Friends genuinely practice our *Testimony to Equality*, we sing along with the prophetic voice of Mary, who filled with the Spirit tells us how despite her lowly status in the eyes of society, God ‘has lifted up the humble... filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty [Luke 1:53]. Here is also the call to value *simplicity*. God decides to manifest not in the halls of emperors and tyrants but in a ram shack through the body a frightened young woman.

What about the *Truth Testimony*? Oddly I think the greatest mirror of truth in the Christmas Story is King Herod. He represents the world of which we are all familiar; one marred by the politics of fear, mutual suspicion and violence. Raging and sneering against a new light that he cannot comprehend, Herod is not able to let go of the belief that order is based on fear and leadership on the spilling of blood. In Herod’s own darkness and insecurity we see all the more clearly ‘the light’ little child born in Bethlehem offers. He is a ruler without earthly power, without armies or principalities, without popular majorities or a solve-all-your problems manifesto. He only has love and the sacrifices which absolute dedication to love requires. He lived, not for the exercise of power, but for the bonds of fellowship- a commitment he knew came with a heavy-cost.

Yes, he said, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ but he also said, ‘take up your cross and follow me’. The first Christmas was never meant to wipe away the inhumanities of the world, (the

birth of Jesus is preceded by the slaughter of the innocents by Herod) but rather to show them up more starkly. The Magi, among their gifts, offered the child myrrh, for they knew that the star they had diligently followed did not signal the banishment of suffering, but illuminated a path which comprises the seeds of both immense joy and crushing grief. Early Quakers, in their attempt to live the Peaceable Kingdom midst the bloody years of the English Civil War, knew this only too well.

Pacifism (genuinely held) is never naive, idealistic, or indeed afraid of hard choices. To be committed to the declaration of peace given to the Shepherds is to live strangely and in some circumstances, dangerously. To refuse the course of generations and take the consequences is a supreme example of bravery and moral realism. To live in the Spirit of Christmas is realise the price of peace. This world has got enough false optimism, sugary platitudes and shallow idealism in it to fill several oceans. Advertising and magazines train us to see fulfilment without effort and gratification without deferment. But things don't work like that. The Quaker message for Christmas is not that 'everything will be well if we do and say nice things' but rather that the promise of Bethlehem must be cherished, wept over and cared for even when we don't have a star to guide us. If we remain faithful to our inward-stars- our testimonies and our openness to one another, then maybe, just maybe, we can help to bring to birth a just and amicable earth.

**Ben Wood**

## 'Unarmed Peacekeeping: an alternative to military intervention?' Dr Tim Wallis,



**Thursday 10 November. 6.30 - 7.45pm, Coffeevolution, Church Street, Huddersfield HD1 1DD**

You are warmly invited to this free event organised by Huddersfield Quaker Peace Group. We are really pleased that Dr Tim Wallis, Executive Director, Nonviolent Peaceforce, is able to come to Huddersfield as part of his UK speaking tour. Tim is based in Brussels and his work as an advocate of peace and nonviolence spans more than two decades and several organisations. Nonviolent Peaceforce, an unarmed, paid civilian peacekeeping force, fosters dialogue between parties in conflict and offers a protective presence for threatened civilians. NP peacekeeping teams are currently deployed in Sri Lanka, the Philippines and in Sudan. <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/>

The venue, Coffeevolution, is only 5 minutes walk from the railway and bus stations. Coffeevolution is a friendly, fair trade, independent cafe and was recently voted No1 cafe in Huddersfield by The Guardian: <http://www.coffeevolution.co.uk/home.aspx>. Please feel free to forward this information to anyone you think might be interested, and do get in touch if you would like any more information.

Best wishes,  
Robin Bowles  
*Huddersfield Quaker Peace Group*  
e-mail: [cara@cooptel.net](mailto:cara@cooptel.net) m: 07792 309 897

### **Tim Wallis**

Tim has been Programme Director for Nonviolent Peaceforce (2008-2011), Training Director at International Alert (2006-2008), Director of Peaceworkers UK (2000-2006), Director of the National Peace Council (1997-2000), Editor of *Peace News* magazine (1995-1997), International Secretary of Peace Brigades International (1991-1994), Coordinator of the Commonwealth Peace Library (1986-1990) and Campaigns Organizer of the Molesworth Ploughshares Campaign (1984-1986). In 1995, he led an exploratory peace team to Chechnya and was involved in setting up the Balkan Peace Team and a number of other peace team projects.

## **Preparing to Serve**



A comment made at a business Meeting set off a train of thought. Do we train or prepare Friends adequately for taking on roles of service and responsibility? I'm thinking of Clerks and Convenors. Is there a need within the Local Meetings and Leeds Area Meeting for training in Clerkship? Woodbrooke on the Road can produce a course. We can tailor the course to the needs of the Meetings and those present. Anyone interested or involved in Clerking could seek a place. There is a question of cost and who is going to pay.

In *Faith and Practice* we are told about the roles and responsibilities that help to maintain the life of a Meeting (Chapter 3. General Guidance on Church affairs and the Index in Faith and Practice provide detailed information on Clerkship.) It is a book that can miss out on the "how?" How do we perform the task in hand? Do we know how a task "should" be done? Do we know what is in "gospel or right ordering"? Is lack of knowledge or experience put individuals off wanting to take on roles? I'm beginning to believe that what we think is "the

Quaker way” are observed behaviours from Meetings we attend. What we believe are right behaviours originate from our beliefs of practice in accordance with our experience and interpretation of the Quaker life, our Testimonies and good manners and practice.

As Quakerism, evolves so does our Church Government and governance. That is natural. By not knowing what has been accepted because it has been tested and found to be true, do we lose the glue that holds a worshipping community? Clerkship, and I include being a Convenor, is a potentially onerous task. We ask those appointed to fulfil a multiplicity of roles:

**\*To discern the sense of the business meeting**

**\* A mediator when tensions rise.**

**\*A Chief Executive,**

**\* A Leader and administrator.**

We ask them to display assertiveness, humour, restraint, and patience. They have to be well organised and sociable, methodical with an eye on the clock and yet not allow the business to be rushed. They may need to be familiar with Quaker procedure and local practice and previous decisions. We may expect them to keep themselves informed of the activities of the Local, Area, and Yearly Meeting in addition to Quakers in Yorkshire. Reading the list can be exhausting. Expecting a Clerk or Co-Clerks to fulfil the expectations of the role is too much. Do we prepare those in post for the role? Do we responsibly and adequately support those in post?

Woodbrooke offer Clerkship training to give confidence, and assist Meetings to run their business meetings effectively. Are Quakers in Leeds willing to bear the cost of hosting a Woodbrooke on the Road course? A 1 day course will cost approx £420.00. A 1½ day course, minimum charge of £600.00. A full 2 day course approx minimum charge £780.00.

Woodbrooke do offer a Clerkship weekend training at their normal cost. Details can be found on the website or in the Woodbrooke programme. A group booking from Leeds will reduce costs to an individual Meeting and allow more people to benefit. Woodbrooke have informed me because we held training in early March they are prepared to offer this course at a reduced rate if booked before 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Woodbrooke need about 4 months to organise tutors and agree a teaching plan.

Friends may be asking why I’m raising this via the Newsletter and not through a LM or AM. I wish to encourage discussion about an important part of Quaker life. I’m concerned given that we have only until February to decide and book a course the usual channels may take time. I don’t know if Woodbrooke will extend the booking date they may if we ask them.

**Steven Walton,**