

NORTH EAST THAMES AREA QUAKER MEETING NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2014

First thoughts... Welcome to the latest A.M. Newsletter produced for you by Friends at Leigh Quaker Meeting. The response we've had from Friends around the Area Meeting in writing such interesting contributions has delighted us, thank you! We hope you all enjoy the pages we've included as much as we've enjoyed reading them and putting together this edition for you, hopefully any articles we've not managed to include will appear in the next issue!



In Our Inspiring Quaker Quest at Leigh - March 2013

'We believe that our silent waiting on God, the Light or the truth within, is an experience which affects and guides the way we live our lives. We have no creed, we respect that each Quaker will have their own spiritual journey, which will grow and change, and be lived out in their life as it unfolds'.

Page 2 Javan Thornton on Quaker Faith and Practice

Page 3 Kate Green - The 'Fair Penny' Campaign

Page 3 Leigh Meeting's Harvest Supper

Page 4 Shantini Cawston - on leaving Harlow

Page 6 Rebecca Fricker - High Leigh Weekend 2014

Page 6 Javan Thornton at Summer School, Saffron Walden 2013

Page 7 The Carol Concert at Leigh Meeting House

Page 7 Audrey Regan on speaking about non Theist Friends.

Page 8 The USA Visit to Leigh Meeting House.

Page 8 Judith Roads - Equipping for Ministry

Page 9 News from Bethnal Green

Page 9 Angela Greenwood - E W L Conference

Page 10 Val Caldwell - Serving our Meetings

Page 11 Jean Bradford - Almond topped apricot cake recipe

Page 11 Endpiece

Second thoughts, a letter from the Editors..... Thank-you for reading at least this far into our Newsletter. Your editors have pondered much, what should be included? How much, and what our readers might, or maybe what we think you might find, most interesting? You'll soon discover we decided to include almost everything that we could!

We naturally wondered how many of us *actually* read the Newsletter. The only way we thought we might discover this was by asking for feedback. Please let us know, if you don't we might draw an incorrect conclusion, and we're sure you wouldn't want that. So you need to get writing. Will you, please, either add your name to the list Local Meeting clerks will send to us or directly contact the coordinator for this issue, gillieffery@hotmail.co.uk, so please let your clerk or her know. Just tell us you've seen and read the Newsletter. Don't think 'Oh, I'll do it later', you might forget, do it *now*.

Then it occurred to us that some might not be receiving at all what has been put together. How many Friends and attenders have no access to e-mail communication or own a computer that has insufficient of whatever it takes to download and open the file? Then there are those who for many reasons may not get to meeting very often, who in your meeting makes sure they have access to what

has been written? Printing a few hard copies wouldn't be too unreasonable for someone in each meeting to do. Will all of you think about this as well, please. Remember, your LM clerk can always do with a hand!

We have done well for contributions, but this is only the second edition of the Newsletter in this format, so, all of you out there, will you soon get busy writing for issue number three, without you it won't appear, and none of us want the publication to die for lack of a little effort from each of us.

We hope you enjoy all of the articles that have been written for us, when you've finished reading remember to give us the benefit of your thoughts, we need you, too.



Young People's meeting about Quaker Faith and Practice with Meeting for Sufferings 5.10.13

I went to Friends House to join young people discussing whether Quaker Faith and Practice needs to be revised.

First of all we joined adults in Meeting for Suffering in Worship. Then about 30 young people moved next door to introduce themselves to each other. Some had come very far, from Northern Scotland and Cornwall. We started with a quiz about Quaker Faith and Practice and we had to look through pages to find the answers. Then we were asked about what we know about Quaker Faith and Practice. We talked about it being guidelines for Quaker Life.

Some of it hasn't changed very much from George Fox's time and we do things in Meetings in a certain way as explained in this book, like managing money and holding meetings and appointing people to do jobs. I have read more of Advices and Queries because it is a short little book and I have seen the advices in 'Journeys in the Spirit'. Sometimes I have heard it read in Meeting and at funerals.

I have read a few extracts from Quaker Faith and Practice. I like the one by George Gorman which I read at the Leaveners project at Airton in the summer. We learnt that, until quite recently, elderly people came to worship in the old barn with no heating and the rain dripping from the leaky roof. It has now been refurbished. Quaker worship has been held there for over 300 years.

George Gorman talked about his first experience of a Quaker meeting. "It was held in rather a hideous building: the meeting room was dingy. We sat on rickety chairs that creaked..... The whole place gave little hope that those who worshipped might catch a glimpse of the vision of God..... It was in that uncomfortable room that I discovered the way to the interior side of my life, at the deep centre of which I knew that I was not alone, but held by a love that passes all understanding." 2.03

I also like the reading about Dorothy Case 23.34 because it is a good example of how an individual with help from Meeting worked to build relationships in the community with newcomers. She learnt about people's lives and helped people stick together when it was difficult.

In the young people's meeting we also learnt about the history of the red book. We saw ten old books dating back to 18th century. Some writings of George Fox and the early Quakers remain. It took about 10 years to revise the most recent edition.

After lunch we sat in groups to discuss several questions.

- What is your favourite reading?
- When do you use QF&P?
- What would make QF&P more appealing to read?
- What does it need to include?
- What format would suit you?
- (I can't remember the last question).

I think the book would appeal more to young people and children if it had pictures in it such as the tapestry pictures or Quakers from history with advices and queries because you remember it.

We discussed what might be included in a revised edition. We talked about including;

- Quaker responses to terrorism
- Use of technology including social media
- Climate change and its consequences and how to share and care for natural resources such as land water and energy .

I think there could be more reference to Outreach and working with children and young people, maybe including what they say if it's felt relevant. Some meetings only have one or two children and young people. **WE ARE HERE** and the future needs us.

Perhaps parts of QF&P could be made into a video, maybe an animation where the figures on the tapestry come alive and it is set to music and Quaker songs. That could be epic. It would need to be viewed and agreed by Friends.

QF&P could also become an E book or an App for Apple and Android. There is an American App but it has mainly quotes from George Fox's writing with verses from the Bible.

We agreed on a minute which has been passed to Meeting for Sufferings.

As we left, we were given a shiny red copy of QF&P and told to make good use of it - until another revised edition appears.



Show simplicity, hold fast to honesty! Give up learnedness! Thus you shall become free of sorrows.

Tao Te Ching



THE FAIR PENNY CAMPAIGN Report, January 2013

In the three months since Wanstead LM's campaign started, over 900 people have signed the petition to say that they would pay a bit more tax to make our country fairer (and there are 75 Likes on our Facebook page). The signatures have come from all over Britain – sometimes many in a day, sometimes just one or two. There has been publicity in *The Friend*, and two letters published in *The Guardian*. I've talked about the campaign at Woodbrooke, with London Quakers, and with Friends in Scotland (in Aberdeen).

Through this process, I've come to understand more clearly how the campaign is not only part of our current testimony to equality but is also very much part of the tradition of Quakerly consciousness-raising. This Quaker petition may not have such a great aim as the abolition of the slave trade, but re-forging the link between the payment of tax and the just alleviation of suffering is vital work towards increasing equality in this country.

At this stage, Melvyn, Sharon and I want to continue to work on the petition mostly within the Society of Friends. We would very much like other LMs in our Area to endorse the campaign and to sign up their support on our webpage. We'd be very happy to visit your LM to talk with you about this: please do invite us! We're also planning to take the campaign out into neighbouring Area Meetings and other parts of the country where we have links.

I still feel, as I said at AM in November, that I'm walking down an unknown path in the darkness, but someone is holding my hand: I still don't know exactly where the campaign is going, but I am nevertheless led to keep working at it. *I feel very grateful to Wanstead Friends, especially Melvyn and Sharon, and to Friends in NE Thames AM for their open-hearted support.*

Kate Green

I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.

Anonymous

Leigh Meeting's Harvest Supper. Leigh Meeting held its third Harvest Supper on Saturday 19th October.

The evening saw 40 people, including members attenders and friends, joining together to break bread and make music.

As with all such events, there are some organisational issues that have to be addressed. A small committee was formed to ensure that responsibilities were shared, and that a clear indication of numbers (of participants) and the range of food to be provided covered all eventualities.

Tickets were sold at £5 each. We had to keep a close check on this financial aspect, as the money raised was to be given to Southend Homeless. (Southend being a seaside town has more than its share of homeless peoples). Complimentary tickets were made available to members and attenders, who may have found the fee too costly.

Several members arrived early on the day of the Supper to organise furniture and lay tables. Jean Bradford provided us with a beautiful autumnal wreath of dried flowers and berries, this was hung above the buffet supper tables laden with food.

The evening began with a short Quaker silence, and then the repast began. The food was delicious, the company was excellent, and included a lady (and her niece) who comes along to the Knit and Stitch group held at the Meeting House every 4th Thursday of the month. Following the meal, there was the inevitable washing-up, but those not helping with the clearing and tidying were entertained by John Philips and Sally Lucas with music: the audience was in good voice.

Everyone enjoyed the evening and we were delighted that more than £120 pounds was given to be passed on to help Serving the Homeless in Southend.

From everybody according to their means - To everybody according to their needs



Advices and Queries 28: Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance try to discern when it is the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you which may not be great busyness.

Decisions, Decisions... When deciding the right time to leave 1 Church Leys Harlow Essex, there were many many people, situations and events to consider. First and foremost was Amy's education, second was Dave's retirement and finally were the emotional and financial implications. It was not an easy decision and it took about three years to arrive at the decision we did finally make. Once Amy had decided to pursue a Gap Year before going to University, it became clearer to us that we too could take a year to decide where we wanted to eventually live.

Harlow Friends were extremely patient and the slow, very slow realization that dawned upon us was that we wanted everyone to benefit from our move. Harlow Meeting had been looking for a new direction for a few years and with the pressure put upon us by SWM it was crucial that any decision taken must in some way benefit the Meeting.

It is necessary to state here that we would never have had the experience of living with Quakers and attending MFW if the opening for Resident Wardens at Harlow Meeting had not caught our eye in Canada. It is an amazing gift that Quakers provide the wider community. It was a privilege to serve and it provided us with a home and a life at a time when we knew that we had to be true to our inner convictions, that of living adventurously and a life that would allow us to be. There were also the incredible friendships made and being part of a very special community of like-minded individuals.

Everyone knows Harlow Meeting is special! Then came the time to leave. My mother's gradual acceptance of her declining health and also that someone would have to be with her most of the day meant that I could not just take off into the sunset and have my own Gap Year! Love required of me to be there by her side if I could afford the time and resources to do so. Giving up 1 Church Leys which had been our home since 1996 meant that we would be free, completely free from material possessions and responsibilities.

What better time would there be to take time off work, time away from the girls who had both grown up and the youngest leaving home to go and live abroad for a while? So there we were on the next flight to Kuala Lumpur! Dave ready to finally retire and myself to take on the role of part time carer. It was not going to be fun and games all the time but the weather and my Mum's home next to the seaside was compensation enough and of course spending time with my mother.

My seventeen years of attending MFW has clearly come in handy as there are long periods of being still and silent sitting with my mother but also some quite trying times of patiently cleaning up after her as she forgets that she has to go to the toilet more often and when she is feeling lousy to quietly see to her needs rather than argue with her about her constant demands. All in a day's work! Not great busyness!

This move is still in its experimental stage and many ideas are being discussed and many possibilities looked at but more importantly is the need to wait in the light and see what comes out of it. We are open to new light, new beginnings, new horizons

The most wonderful part of it all was our time at 1 Church Leys with Harlow Friends and for some part of it my work with Quakers both locally and nationally. It was exciting, illuminating and we both

learnt a lot from it. I remember arriving at 1 Church Leys thinking how difficult could it be to open some rooms, clean them and be available.

Well those who remember know that I gave up being joint wardens with Dave after just a couple of years! It was hard work, being constantly on duty, never really doing anything arduous but always there for even the smallest things like reminding the neighbourhood children not to use the parking lot for their skate boarding or football games when the building was in use. It required great inner strength and I obviously lacked it. It was however a great place to live for us as we loved having people around, the way friends and neighbours would drop in spontaneously and the Meeting House was a wonderful draw. I had never experienced silent worship ever and an hour of silence without the responsibility of caring for children was unimaginable peace.

The children loved Meeting too and all the other children at Meeting bonded with our two almost immediately. Life was good and our experiment of moving from Canada to the UK was going very well. We did not want to move and the children were happy with school, friends and Meeting. Quakers were having an impact on us as we had never imagined.

The intensity of silent worship, living on the premises, taking on more and more responsibility with Committee roles suited me very well.

So then how does one leave all this and create another reality. Well, all good things come to an end but it does not mean that more good things are not in the horizon. We dared to dream and we always thought that when the children were grown up and left home that we would have another adventure. We had travelled so much when we first met in Malaysia that the excitement of travel was always there in the back of our minds.



Shantini shopping at a market in Malaysia

We do not have our own home, all our personal belongings are packed in away in attics somewhere, MFW is a distant memory and we miss our children and our friends. Advices and Queries 27 says "Let your life speak"! Whether we will have anything worth saying at the end of our year of living adventurously, only time will tell.



My mother's sudden decline in her health helped partly in making up our minds. During Light Meditation we ask ourselves what is really bothering you. It is not that we are unhappy or seeking solutions to problems all the time but more of seeking to know the Truth. Life it seems has to have meaning, a purpose, a direction that takes us towards greater awareness. Sometimes taking ourselves out of our routine challenges us in ways that often helps us see better. Not always but there is a chance. Living adventurously is illuminating but it can also be hard work at times as we are discovering.



Missing my babies, 'Always remember that you are absolutely unique, just like everyone else!'

Rebecca Fricker of Epping - The 2014 High Leigh Gathering By the time you read this the 2014 North East Thames Area Meeting Gathering at High Leigh “Exploring the Creative Spirit” with Alec Davison may well officially be full! However, the Committee will be enquiring about the possibility of increasing our allocated numbers if necessary so please do still apply for a place if you would like to come.

The gathering is taking place over the Friday 11th – Sunday 13th April weekend and booking forms can be found in your Meeting House, or on the High Leigh section of our Area Meeting website <http://northeastthamesquakers.org.uk/>

So, what will Alec be offering us? As he wrote for our brochure:

We are all amazingly creative people, from childhood to senior citizenship, in our talk and relationships, as well as the multitude of tasks we are engaged in.

This weekend will give an opportunity to reflect upon, and to be involved with, those creative processes that most make us human. What is their Source within us and beyond us?

Is the originating power and energy of the universe the revelation that has traditionally been called the Divine or the Creative Spirit or even God?

Do we need to rethink our theology today and is it actually impossible to be a non-theist as our creative workshops will demonstrate?

Alec and the Committee are looking for Friends with creative leadings to help, with his guidance, facilitate workshops during the weekend. So if you are gifted in music, singing, dance, poetry, creative writing, drama or painting, and think you can assist, please do let us know on the booking form or contact Rebecca Fricker. Please also let us know if you would like to assist with any of our children’s sessions. We can organise obtaining a Quaker issued Disclosure and Barred Form for you if you do not have one (this is now a requirement of all helpers with the children in our Area Meeting and at High Leigh). Please contact Anna Harris for further information.

This is the current composition of the High Leigh Committee – do contact any of us with any queries you may have. We are:

Saska Plowman from Bethnal Green
Angela Greenwood from Leigh

Jeffrey Blay from Epping
Anna Harris from Romford
Rebecca Fricker from Epping

Val Caldwell from Harlow
Chris East from Wanstead



The Quaker Summer school at Saffron Walden. It was my first time at a Quaker Summer School in August this year. A whole week away with no parents! I slept in a dorm with seven others loving all the late nights and struggling with early mornings.

Throughout the week we heard some inspiring stories of various activist projects ranging from Grow Heathrow to the work of Amnesty International and we learnt of creative and non-violent ways of demonstrating to support human rights. However moved we felt, as soon as free time arrived and the phone bank opened, we all rushed to our sources of social media to pass on what we had learnt.

I took some time to make a friendship bracelet and sent it to Xui Jinping, the current President of China, along with a letter in my neatest, most legible, handwriting. I wrote about concerns for the well-being of the journalist, Shi Tao, and requested his immediate release from prison as he has been jailed for sending an e mail about demonstrations in Tianamen Square in 1989.

I also expressed concern about the situation in Syria and that everyone needs to stop sending arms and work to listen and talk to each other, however difficult.

Food was always very well prepared by the chefs and I would rush downstairs to claim my share of crispy bacon at breakfast. I enjoyed the Epilogue at the end of each day as it was a chance to calm down and reflect and hear ministry.

I would definitely recommend Summer school to anyone who has not been before and I am looking forward to the next one in 2014.

Javan Thornton



Leigh Meeting – Carol Concert Leigh Meeting holds a Carol concert annually. The concert this year was held on Sunday 8th December at 4 p.m. at the Meeting House.

This event is intended for Members, attenders, family and friends: we also take the opportunity to invite Members and attenders who have not attended Meeting for Worship recently. Our numbers were somewhat reduced this year but that did not impact upon the quality and variety of the programme.

The programme for the concert is varied, and is organised in such a way that anyone and everyone can make a contribution if they wish too.

The basis for the programme is traditional Christmas Carols, and this year included a rendition of 'Good King Wenceslas', which was performed with a Narrator, a 'Monarch' and a 'Page' (Javan, our only child attender made an excellent Page!), the audience joining in the final verse.

In between carols were readings, including an extract from Dylan Thomas' 'A Child's Christmas in Wales', poetry including 'Camels of the King' by Leslie Norris, 'The Journey of the Magi' by T.S. Elliot and on a lighter note a poem by Ogden Nash 'The Boy who laughed at Santa Claus' and of course music! Some of the music involved audience participation, whilst instrumentals gave the audience the opportunity just to listen.

The Concert began and ended with a brief period of silence. The silence at the end, was followed by Coffee, tea and Mince Pies. As usual a collection was made for Serving the Homeless in Southend*. As always the 'buzz' at the end of Meeting for Worship (and the Carol Concert) belies our Quaker silence!

Our Meeting always enjoys the concert, we know it is worth the considerable effort by willing F(f)riends to organise it each year, we thank them.

**Throughout the year F(f)riends at Leigh also regularly collect food stuff and clothing for the homeless in Southend that we then pass to HARP (Homeless Action Resource Project) for distribution.*



The meeting for Worship is at the heart of the Quaker way. It is a communal experience, not so much a time for thinking, as a silent waiting on 'God' if that is what you choose to believe. We try to be very still, and sense a presence or the Divine Light (however you want to describe the indescribable) in the Meeting. It may be just us, collectively together, each on our personal journey, but we all know there is something.....

'Experiences of Quaker Worship' - held on 17th November during our Quaker Week. The first five minutes speaking at a Quaker Week event at Leigh-on-Sea Local Meeting was about my spiritual journey. This took me from our clothes line at my childhood home to a coffee in Friends House Coffee Shop and hence to signing up to the Non-Theist Friends Network. Phew! I had been so near to resigning from the Society of Friends when taking that coffee with Frank Bonner.

The next five minutes was spent listing some of the reasons why Non-Theist Friends do so love going to Meeting, along with some thoughts about settling down into the silence. The list included:

- To find a space behind/below myself, my ego
- To preserve an empty space for selfless thought
- To be part of a community of shared values
- To get in touch with the teacher within
- To try to discern what love requires
- To centre thoughts on each Friend present

Considering the first two on the list makes me recall a time, decades ago, when my late husband and I sat with Harold Thomas and the South family at Meeting on Canvey Island. Young Andrew South sat, legs swinging, then used the empty seat beside him to extract, one by one, the objects from his pocket. String, a toy figure, a marble – I may not have remembered them correctly but you get the

picture. And this is a helpful ploy when first sitting in Meeting. Maybe I am not the only one who comes sometimes with a head buzzing with thoughts, plans, anxieties about this or that family member and the like. To take out, as it were, each thing from my head and lay it aside can be a useful strategy for entering into the silence.

As to the third one, often people are expressing views that clash with Friends' loving take on life. It is important to question and challenge assumptions but then it is wonderfully reassuring to be back in that Community of shared values that is the Society of Friends. Yes it is comfortable but the important thing is that problems can be thought of in terms of creative solutions to be found rather than the negativity of The Mail and The Sun met all too often on 'the Number 9 bus.'

Much to ponder on the remaining three reasons listed and Friends may have many more to add, whatever strand of our beloved Society they may come from. The thinking goes on.

Audrey Regan



Visit of U3A to Leigh Meeting . Just over a year ago a new branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A) was opened in Leigh. One of the subjects offered to members is to visit local churches and places of worship.

We were asked if a group could visit the Meeting House to learn about the Religious Society of Friends, our way of worship and what we believe.

Last November a group of 17 U3A members visited us. We arranged the Meeting House as we usually do for Meeting for Worship, and welcomed everyone with refreshments. After a brief introduction, we had a short time of silence, so that they could get some idea of what goes on, followed by questions.

Angela Greenwood, Margaret Lee, Joy Coe, Debbie Taylor and Jean Bradford answered many questions from our visitors. Most of the questions related to our way of worship and the work we undertake in the community both in this country and abroad. They were interested to hear of our important work with both prisoners and the homeless, recognising the need for care and the understanding of those living on the edge of society.

There was very keen interest shown, and we feel that this was an excellent form of outreach, especially as it was not initiated on our part, and we have been pleased to welcome some U3A members to Meeting for Worship following their visit. We have received feedback from the organisers of the visit assuring us that we made the time in the Meeting House both enjoyable and thought provoking.



Equipping for Ministry – my experience. I've never been involved with the Woodbrooke two-year course *Equipping for Ministry*, and since I began a PhD back in 2009, the possibility has moved further and further away. It has been a joy, therefore, to have been part of the 2014 induction weekend at Woodbrooke (Jan 10-12) as I have been asked to become a tutor for someone in the new batch of participants. I only had a vague idea of what the course entailed in spite of several members of our Area Meeting having taken the course and spoken highly of it. This weekend there were two from our AM: one just completing and another just beginning. Most fortunate for us all in NE Thames as we benefit from their journey and ministry. Ask them!

I knew that you had to sign up for six different weekend courses over the two years and that you did a project of your own choosing during the final six months. I now know that there is also an online (optional but desirable) community so that you are a real part of that cohort as well as meeting up at residential and on some of the courses. I also know that you have to choose courses and reading from each of the four curriculum strands - tradition, spirituality, community and world – into which Woodbrooke slots its many short courses. I can see that some of those would be right outside my comfort zone, but how exciting to push oneself as part of a longer programme! There is ample support for when things get uncomfortable and opportunity for some really deep sharing over time in a way that rarely seems possible in our local settings.

My tutee (horrible word) lives in Shropshire and is fairly new to Quakers. I am much looking forward to accompanying her on her journey and, I suppose, vicariously getting a sense of what that journey entails. I have no idea whether I would want to embark on this myself. I need to wait until (if!) I am 'doctored', as it were, and got the academic approach out of the way. Then discernment can take over.

Is anyone else up for the challenge? I'm sure we have AM funds to help with such a commitment. And you get to work out what 'ministry' can really mean for us Quakers. It's a lot more than I thought it was – just ask Jan Sellers, our most recent 'graduate'.

Judith Roads, Epping Meeting



News from Bethnal Green. Bethnal Green LM holds a regular discussion group on the third Sunday of the month from 12 to 1pm. The venue is QSA where we hold MfW. Anyone interested is welcome to join us. We don't normally have a shared lunch at these events but if you wish you can bring lunch with you. Also there is a cafe next door where sandwiches etc. may be bought.

Dates/Topics for the next three discussions are:

16 Feb 2014 Belief, Worship and Behaviour (based on a recent article in The Friend)

16 Mar 2014 Temptation

20 Apr 2014 To be advised

Daphne Stedman Clerk, Bethnal Green. LM

---0---

Epistle from the First International Gathering of the Experiment with Light (EWL) held at Woodbrooke on the 27th – 29th September 2013

Greetings to all Friends everywhere.

'How far, how deep, how wide can you go this weekend?' was the question Rex Ambler asked us to consider as seventy-one of us from the UK, Palestine, Finland, Russia, South Africa, Austria, Canada, Sweden, Norway and the USA gathered in the Cadbury room.

'If we are to deepen our meditation,' he went on, 'we need to risk facing unpalatable facts about ourselves and risk speaking about this with our group, not get stuck at a comfortable level which we feel safe sharing with others.

'How wide can we go? A group of non-religious friends trying the Experiment said they were happy with the words "the Spirit within you".

'How far can we go? A woman in a Muslim group who had started doing the Experiment with Light said that as a result of taking part she was able to cry for the first time for her son who had disappeared.

'We can take the Experiment with Light farther, deeper and wider. That is our challenge.'

Personal reflections I felt profoundly grateful and privileged to be sponsored by Area Meeting to attend this Gathering of the growing 'Experiment with Light' network, attended by Friends from many parts of the UK, and of the world.

It was not only good to connect and reconnect with experienced 'Experimenters', but a special opportunity to see how it is beginning to grow in other parts of the world. I spoke to friends from Sweden and Norway for example, who have been practicing for years, and to others from Russia and Finland who are just beginning their interest and enthusiasm.

I was reminded again of the value of waiting in the Light, and consciously **not thinking**, but just allowing and trusting that the Light will reveal what we need to know and to do, and to let go of. In our busy target oriented world this is not easy of course; and it is heartening to see how the Experiment with Light process can bring up quite unexpected insights and challenges, and move us forward both individually and as Quakers.

I was particularly affected by a South African friend, who spoke passionately about his spiritual search, which had involved helpful and powerful practices from different traditions, who had been delighted and inspired to discover that we have our own practice in Quakerism which can move us and stretch us and challenge us in similarly powerful ways. (This was not just some introspective naval gazing Friend, but someone who described himself as a 'fire fighter' working in the front line of poverty, injustice and conflict situations in his native land.)

He challenged us (and me personally) - *'Why do we hide our Light under a bushel'*. I even (again unexpectedly) found myself making a dramatic wool collage in the creative expression group, of the Light bursting forth from under a big tangly bushell!

As you will see from the Epistle, Rex Ambler in his talk, challenged us to take the 'Experiment' deeper and wider. On a personal note have found it not only possible, but personally spiritually supportive, to start a Light Group for non Quakers locally. (Interestingly 3 of this group are now attending Leigh Meeting on a regular basis - something which was certainly not on my mind when initiating the group!)

It was also challenging and inspiring to find friends in Lesotho both open to an Experiment with light workshop recently, and eagerly 'gobbling up' all the materials and CD's I had taken with me to Southern Africa.

It may be relevant to add here that some Area Meetings are using the Experiment with Light process to open to insights and ways forward in relation to particular puzzling and 'thorny' issues they have to deal with. Food for thought!

With love and blessings and many thanks,+

Angela Greenwood



Serving our Meetings. The work of the A.M Nominations Committee is often held back by the reluctance of many Friends to consider or accept responsibility for Appointments proposed to them.

Whilst, of course, work commitments and frailty can play a part in this there are many Friends who take part in neither L.M or A.M duties. There are always opportunities to take on smaller, less onerous roles.

This, of course, means that posts which need to be filled are being taken on by Friends who often carry several roles of responsibilities already in both their L.M'S and A.M too.

On visits for Membership one of the things we discuss is the Applicants willingness to both take part in the Life of the Meeting and the importance of playing an active role in it.(QFP 11.15)

What might be your reason for refusing?

If it is lack of knowledge or understanding of the role courses are available at Woodbrooke to give a better understanding of these and A.M will pay course fees and fares. It might also be helpful to speak to a Friend currently serving in this role or previously having done so. This will give clarity on frequency of Meetings, when and where they are held etc.It will also give insight into the role .

Might you consider taking on an assistant or deputy role to build experience, possibly moving on to the main role as that Friend ends their term of service.

All Friends taking on responsibilities within the Society arrive with varying levels of experience and frequently learn on the job!

Once having served on a committee or taken on an individual role your confidence will grow and you will feel able to tackle new things.

Nominations are well aware that, a Friend may say that Treasurership, for example, is not something they would feel comfortable with or taking on Clerkship roles but there are a large number of other smaller vacancies that need to be filled.

Many Friends who have served feel they have enjoyed and grown into a role and learnt something valuable. Could you be one of those?

Val Caldwell (A.M Nominations Committee)

Congratulations... Val's 70th Birthday Party at Harlow Meeting House was a great success, thank-you everyone who made it such a memorable day!

Leigh Meeting is very fortunate to have its very own version of Mary Berry in the guise of Jean Bradford. Whenever we have a function requiring refreshments, Jean always bakes a cake (sometimes more than one!)

When asked Jean, told us that the recipe that she is most often asked for is: **Almond-Topped Apricot Cake**. We have included it in this newsletter, someone out there may try it and then you, too, can experience the joy!

ALMOND TOPPED APRICOT CAKE
MAKES ONE 9 inch (22.5 cm) ROUND CAKE

FOR THE CAKE

6oz. (175gm) softened butter	6oz. (175gm) self raising flour, sifted
6oz. (175gm) caster sugar	3oz. (75gm) ground almonds
3 eggs	4oz. (100gm) ready to use dried chopped apricot

FOR THE TOPPING

2oz. (50gm) butter	1 tablespoon golden syrup
2oz. (50gm) demerara sugar	2oz. (50g) flaked almonds

Preheat the oven to gas mk.4, 350° F, 180° C. Grease and baseline a 9" (22.5cm) loose bottomed round tin. Beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, beat in the eggs one at a time, adding a tablespoon of flour each time. Fold in the remaining flour, the ground almonds and the apricots and mix well. Turn into the prepared tin and bake for 40 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the topping. In a small pan mix together the butter, sugar and syrup and heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and stir in the almonds. When the 40 minutes cooking time is up, remove the cake from the oven and spoon the topping over. Return to the oven and bake for a further 10-15 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven and leave to cool in the tin.

*Thank God for tea! What would the world do without tea?
How did it exist? I am glad I wasn't born before tea!*

Sidney Smith (1771-1845), the evangelistic campaigner of his day.



Endpiece

This is a story about four people, named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did.

Somebody got angry about this, because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought that Anybody could do it but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.