



NEWSLETTER

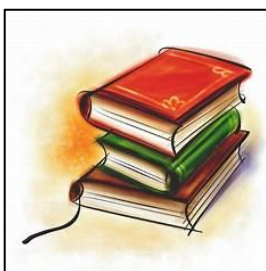
February 2019

It has been a quieter couple of months at the beginning of this year but with some very thought-provoking events to share with you.

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- Inter Faith Planning Group – a visit to a Sikh temple
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- SOGII (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Inclusion Group) shares news of many events
- Ramblings – another reflective contribution – this one is on The Light
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Library



When did you last visit the library in the stairwell of the meeting house? There is a wide range of books available to borrow just by signing the loans book. The categories range from Quaker thought, history and biography to social issues and world faiths. If you are searching for a particular book the card index by author is a good place to start and the acquisition book will tell you about new arrivals. Some of our members have kindly donated books as they are downsizing their personal collections.

Are there any books that you would like to see added to the library? Please talk to Barbara Shepherd

Art Group News *Creative Redemption.* This was the title of a very interesting and thought-provoking Art Exhibition at the Oxmarket Gallery and inspired the Art Group to visit and have a heartfelt discussion about it.



We first of all defined the word “Redemption” – *to free oneself by fulfilment.* Then we responded to the Exhibition’s publicity which said “This is an exhibition by four artists all of whom, in their own way, have benefitted from the restorative powers of their personal creative process. In the honesty of revealing the wounded condition, powerfully sensitive works of art have been born; beautiful in their own right, but also serving to offer empathy, encouragement and hope.”

One artist who suffered from anxiety went on daily walks, taking one bag with her to collect rubbish that spoils the environment, but the other bag collected debris that she used to make imaginative art works and collage, as she said “to recycle items in which she sees beauty”. An artist we all responded to very much produced beautiful textile work which had been created whilst she was convalescing from an illness. She wrote “The work can be slow and labour intensive – I strive for my work to convey a sense of calm and peace”.

Another artist portrayed the chronic and systemic nature of poverty in Brazil. He transformed his memories of the fragile lives of those he worked with into an artistic interpretation of the world they inhabited - a metaphor for poverty and division. The fourth artist displayed her preoccupation with the significance of early childhood experiences, in particular those of maternal deprivation and loss. She worked with rust and natural dyes to convey meaning.

We all brought along an object which had helped each of us to be restored during times of difficulty which really made it a very personal and heart-warming afternoon.

New Economy Group



The New Economy group stems from the reading group that we had a little over a year ago. We wanted to build on what we explored in the sessions but the ‘agenda’ is very broad. One aim of the Reading Group material was to help Quakers feel more confident in talking about economic issues so I suppose you could say it’s succeeded in that.

At a day conference at Chichester University Business School we were reminded that economic theories matter because governments, business and others use them to develop policies that have real and immediate effects on all of us, in the UK and globally. They determine who wins and who loses. The conference offered various criticisms of current economic models and it’s not difficult to see that our economy isn’t working fairly and effectively for everyone. What’s harder is to find ways to change things.

Lots of organisations and individuals have offered alternatives over the years but they struggle to get any traction on the prevailing ‘wisdom’. Academics can try to change things by developing understanding. Meanwhile, we can take the smaller actions open to us. So, after a rather mind boggling conference it was good to simply walk with others to ask the County Council to disinvest the pension fund from fossil fuels. If we’re to avoid catastrophic climate change extracting more fossil fuels becomes unviable and so unprofitable. Disinvesting to reinvest more positively will safeguard pensions as well as supporting the industries of the future. That’s achievable. Now what was he saying about Monetary Policy????

QUAKER INTERFAITH EVENT: VISIT TO THE CRAWLEY SIKH GURDWARA.

Blue skies and sun dawned and accompanied our journey to the Crawley Sikhs. And what a riot of noise, colour and cooking smells greeted us as we were welcomed by Baljit Kang and Satinder Kaur, both of whom led the Sikh visit to Friends House at the end of last year. They ensured that we conformed to the tradition of covered head, the washing of hands, and the placing of our shoes in the rack provided; all in order to show respect.



We were led into the temple in order to observe the service. The priest sat under a covered dais and read continuously from a huge book to softly performed music from a sitar, harmonium, and drums. During the ceremony worshipers are traditionally allowed to come and go, but

despite this the Guru Granth Sahib is treated with the greatest of respect and, indeed, it is regarded as a living thing not as a book.

We were given breakfast and then treated to a reading by one of the young people from one of the teachings from the Guru Granth. This was followed by a tour of the kitchen, and a demonstration and some hands-on experience of making chapatis; much fun was had with this! Appropriately enough, our kitchen experience was followed with a treat for which the Sikh hospitality is famous for, the Langar - the free kitchen. Traditionally, guests all sit together usually on the floor - rich, poor, all faiths and none; eating the same meal means you are all friends. I hasten to add that we quickly joined the ever-increasing queue and ate at the tables provided for those with bad knees!

There will be an extended article about this visit in the Interfaith Planning Group Newsletter to be published in March.



Sanctuary Group

You may remember last autumn the Sanctuary Group came up with a plan for local members to host asylum seekers Portsmouth for weekend visits. That idea never got very far and so now we are thinking of organising a day out for them – a day outing to Chichester, lunch in the Meeting House provided by Quakers, a walk round the walls for those that would like it, a tour of the Cathedral for others - perhaps time in the Priory Park Play Area for a group of the children. With a bus there and back we think that would make quite a good day out and take some of the strain of the parents during the holiday. We're looking for a date in the Easter holidays – perhaps Tuesday 9th or Friday 12th April. The invitation still has to be approved by Business Meeting but if it is help will be needed!

On another matter Sajid Javid, the Home Secretary, has published an Immigration White Paper. The Refugee Council believes that this is a good time to press for three things:

- 1) A 28 day time limit on immigration detention. Britain is the only country in Europe which doesn't have one and it means that people spend far too much time under lock and key. A time limit would force immigration officials to act faster – either send detainees back or release them.
- 2) Relax the rules on family reunion so children can grow up with their parents as is the case in most of the rest of Europe.
- 3) Lift the ban on people working while they seek asylum. Technically they can do so after 12 months if they're in a "shortage" occupation but in practice nobody has ever heard of an asylum seeker being allowed to work. They should be given this right after six months and without restriction – it would be good for them and good for Britain, it would save us money and give them dignity.

We in the Sanctuary Group agree with these modest proposals.



The **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Inclusion group** [SOGII] continues to meet and grow. Welcoming many Friends from Chichester, and other Local and Area Meetings we now meet every two months to share information and discuss matters of interest to the Quaker LGBTI community and it's supporters.

At our last meeting Yvonne, from Wanstead Meeting, facilitated a fascinating presentation "The Story of LGBT in Quakers" which looked back over Friends trail-blazing work for LGBTI inclusion since the 1950's including the emergence of the iconic book "Towards a Quaker View of Sex" in 1963, the 2009 York Yearly Meeting minute regarding same-sex marriage and other landmarks celebrating our diversity as Friends.

Brighton Meeting are hosting a series of workshops on "Gender and Transgender Issues" assisted by Edwina Peart, the Inclusion and Diversity co-ordinator from Friends House, to which we are all invited. The first meeting on 17th February was very well attended and, in forthcoming sessions, it is hoped to share personal experiences from those most closely involved, particularly trans Friends and those sharing wider gender and women's concerns. The second meeting is planned for Sunday 28th April at Brighton Meeting House following MfW.

The subject for discussion at our next meeting on April 14th, following MfW at Chichester Meeting House, will be the initial draft document produced by Quaker Life Central Committee as a "response to the shared experience of Friends throughout BYM" . Everyone is welcome to come along and Friends can read the pdf draft document by going to Quaker Life Central Committee Gender Diversity.

Planned dates for meetings of SOGII for 2019 are:- April 14th, June 9th, August 11th, October 13th and December 8th

You will remember one of our Attenders wrote a reflective piece for the Newsletter last time which was much appreciated. Now inspiration has struck again - a short series of articles about **The Light** which is so fundamental to Quakers.

RAMBLINGS.....BY B.



THE LIGHT. (Part 1)

*O gladsome radiance of the Holy glory of the Father immortal, heavenly, holy blessed Jesus Christ: now that we have come unto the setting of the sun, and behold the evening light; we hymn thee, Father, son and Holy Spirit. Meet it is that all times Thou shouldst be magnified by voices propitious,
O Son of God, Who Bestowest life.
For which cause all the worl doth glorify Thee (Rachmaninoff – Vespers)*



I gazed into the fire which had suddenly flared in response to the fresh log that I had just put on. The flames licked hungrily, the light almost dousing the light from the two burning candles on the mantle shelf. I wondered how it was that artists came to differentiate between spiritual figures and mortals. Perhaps artists first tried to capture the nimbus of candles.



The halo is a radiant circle or disk surrounding the head of a holy person, a symbolic representation of spiritual character through the symbolism of light. The earliest I could locate evidence for is found in the Buddhist art of India, appearing from the c 3rd century CE.

The halo was used regularly in representations of Christ, the angels, and the saints throughout the Middle Ages.



Of course there was also gold to imitate the Holy Light. Gold and silver leaf was used quite extensively in ancient mosaics appearing first in Roman mosaics of the 4th century AD: gold and silver tesserae were used in Roman and the earliest Christian mosaics simply to depict gold and silver objects. In later mosaics of the Early Christian period and in Byzantine mosaics, solid fields of gold tesserae formed the gold background that appeared in almost every decoration.

The Christening of Jesus (5th century) details in the cupola of the Neonian Baptistery, Ravenna

There again gold leaf was also extensively deployed on icons and altar pieces.



Remember that places of worship would have only been illuminated by the light of candles of one sort or another particularly around these objects of veneration. One can only imagine the awe and wonder that met the worshippers, especially the poor and downtrodden, as they entered to pray. They would have been met by the shimmering mystical effect of all that gold appearing through the mist of incense from the surrounding gloom and enhancing the sacred Mystery soon to be enacted there. Theatrical? Possibly, but it was all they had.



During the 15th century Renaissance however, with the development of artistic naturalism, the nimbus created problems in representation. At first it was depicted by some Florentine artists as a solid object: a disk fixed to the back of a saint's head as can be seen in the image below.



Jesus and nine of the Twelve Apostles depicted with "Floating" disk haloes in perspective (detail from The Tribute Money, illustrating Matthew 17:24-27, by Masaccio, 1424, Brancacci Chapel).

This method was realised as inadequate and led to its decline in Italian art in the 16th century and to its abandonment by such artists as Michelangelo and Titian. In Flemish painting of the 15th century, it began to be represented as rays or pools of light. This caught on during the Baroque period as this charming image by de La Tour illustrates. (The Newborn Christ, 1640.)



In this approach a pool of light centres on the most important figures in the image, the Christ Child and the Virgin Mary, whilst some of the light is allowed to spill onto the other figure who is most probably St. Anne, the Virgin's Mother.

Well, my fire has dimmed, my candles are out and I remain in the dark. Time to take my leave of you with this thought:-

"...and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came to as a witness to testify to the light so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world..." (John 1.4-9.)

Being a Quaker

We are asking for short articles for the Newsletter on this topic. In this edition, Barbara (S) tells us about a weekend she spent learning more about Quakerism.



Last autumn I spent a discerning couple of days at Charney Manor on a membership retreat — Finding out about Quakers. It was helpful to spend time with other enquirers to learn more about the Society, its beliefs and organisation. The facilitators discussed concerns that we had and answered many questions. They encouraged our wider involvement with Quakers, visiting other meetings for worship as well as attending area and national events. Charney Manor is a welcoming venue with comfortable rooms and delicious food.

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook
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