



NEWSLETTER

March 2020

Hope you are all safe and well. This edition of the Newsletter has quickly been put together for us to share our thoughts and concerns, as well as to keep you in touch with any news. It is hoped to produce a weekly Newsletter on a Monday evening perhaps via your email. Please send any contributions to Janet (janetbeckett75@hotmail.com)

It was wonderful to see and hear so many people at the Meeting for Worship on-line last Sunday morning. Everything went so smoothly, and it seems all felt connected even though we were in our own homes. Everyone also agreed how straightforward and easy it was to join the on-line Meeting so please give it a try if you did not manage it last week – look out for joining instructions. Here again is the document provided by Quakers for on-line worship, and Jenny on 01243 699843 will also hold herself available for any advice and support.

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/Online-worship-advice>

During that on-line Meeting there was some moving Ministry but two contributions that people wanted shared are as follows:

Rachel quoted

"And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed."

~Kitty O'Meara'~

Here's the link to Kitty O'Meara's website (Living from the Spirit Level)

<https://the-daily-round.com/2020/03/16/in-the-time-of-pandemic/>

Philippa read a short extract from a poem Mutations by Louis McNeice which beautifully stated what we are all thinking and hoping:

*For every static world that you or I impose
Upon the real one must crack at times and new
Patterns from new disorders open like a rose*



Spirit and Creation Workshop

To lift the spirits we will be sharing with you all over the coming weeks the textile panels that were created during this Workshop for the Loving Earth Project. To remind you - this project aims to help people engage with issues around climate change using a creative approach, to reflect on specific issues and help us take action to care for what we love.

Here is Rebecca's wonderful creation of the highly endangered Orangutans. Does it not bring a smile to your face at the same time as reflecting on lost species.

COMPASSION FOR MENTAL DISTRESS: OURSELVES AND OTHERS



A responsive, and a larger crowd of Friends than expected, attended the above workshop held on 8th March organised by the Wellbeing Group. This was led by Beverley Smith, Mental Health Empowering Meetings Project Officer, Friends House, as a follow-up to the Opening the Door Workshop held at our Meeting House last year. The emphasis taken was the sensitivity of words and the concept of love.

After a brief introduction to the sensitive vocabulary required when confronted with a client with a mental health problem, an unusual exercise was introduced in which we might deploy some of this language in a personal situation.

Fortified by a shared (healthy!) lunch, with many thanks to all those who brought a deliciously enticing selection of food, we resettled to a more contemplative tone. Two pieces of text were introduced: a quote from Isaac Pennington (QF & P 26.30), and two Biblical extracts.

The first was a beautiful prose piece on love - it "wraps up all in one, and brings forth all in oneness. It also fulfils the law, it fulfils the gospel".

Two very contrasting Biblical texts contained references to 'lepers': Leviticus 13.45-46 in relation to being stigmatised as 'unclean', and Mark 1.40-42 in which Jesus, moved by compassion, touched a leper, at his request to "Be made clean". This stimulated a lively discussion.

The session concluded with a Buddhist meditation on love.

Our thanks to Beverley for leading such a thought-provoking session.

Trevor

This links so well with a quotation that Paul would like to share with us all.



It is a quote by Harold Loukes that I have always treasured. As a Quaker Prison Chaplain for the last 14 years this quotation in Quaker Faith and Practice, more than any other, has helped to sustain me. It is so deep.

An act of love that fails is just as much a part of the divine life as an act of love that succeeds, for love is measured by its own fullness not by its reception

Quite often in the work prison chaplains do with offenders, you get let down and you can feel that all your efforts have been completely wasted. But these words entirely answer that feeling. When you think about it, it seems obvious why: Love has its own value whether it is received or not. Just think about the life of Jesus. He lived a life of Love and giving and yet He was finally rejected. Here is a lesson for all of us. If you feel rejected by people, don't be downhearted and don't give up loving them for your love has a divine value that endures beyond time.

(Harold Loukes (1 March 1912 – 7 August 1980) was a British academic in India and at the University of Oxford. He was a devoted member of the Society of Friends, and his books on the subject included Friends Face Reality, The Discovery of Quakerism, and The Quaker Contribution.)



Clock-a-doodle-do

Liz (Andrews) reminded us the importance of having fun but also suggests a "good thing" to do while we are social distancing!

1. A) go around your house, garden, car, shed and list all the jobs you have been putting off doing such as sorting, clearing, cleaning
B) divide the list into wet and dry weather or daylight/evening jobs
C) make a game of it by setting your egg timer (or C21 equivalent) for 15 mins. and seeing what you can do in that time to beat the clock. Stop at the end of the time, pat yourself on the back and do a different but "put off "15 min. job. Intersperse the jobs till they are done if you want, but make sure you change body use activity. It will surprise you how much you can achieve but not exhaust yourself.
Have a giggle!

2)A) if you are watching TV, use the 5min. advertisement or change of programme time to run upstairs or down the garden to fetch something or jump on your exercise bike if you have one
B) Ease your stiff joints (eg neck, shoulder, back, knees or ankles). Start small and write the letters of the alphabet in the air increasing in size as you go but not causing yourself pain.
e.g. for your upper neck use your nose but your chin for lower neck. For your lower back, stand and lean back against a wall and write with your buttocks. Invent new places to stretch or dance to TV background music

Have fun and another giggle.

Liz (Andrews)

Do let us know if you have used these tips Send us some other suggestions!!

TIMES OF HOPE



So here hath been dawning
Another blue day;
Think, wilt thou let it
Slip useless away?

Out of eternity
This new day is born;
Into eternity
At night will return.

(Thomas Carlyle- 1795 – 1881)

As I write this 'Another Blue Day', has indeed dawned – the sun is shining its glory and the sky is blue. This day is also full of HOPE for I know not what it brings but I Hope it will be a fulfilling one.

HOPE! – now here's a word but what does it mean? HOPE for what exactly? My Chambers dictionary lists a host of things too numerous to mention here; so, I'll settle for *"to cherish a desire (that something good will happen), with some expectation of success or fulfilment."* A little ambiguous? Then what about this? *"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence,"* (Helen Keller). I like the idea of the combination of 'optimism' and 'hope', together bringing confidence; perhaps you cannot have hope if you do not have optimism! What do you think?

Let's explore together some examples. The present world-wide pandemic, conjures up the Black Death, and the bubonic plagues of the Middle Ages. To my mind, and in more modern times, WW2 in its scope, privations, and magnitude of death are now almost unimaginable. For the present generation, after decades of reasonable peace and stability, this pandemic that we are all, world-wide, experiencing, bring difficult and seemingly unreal times, but not HOPElessness!

WW2 brought in its wake mass destruction and countless lives. Those that survived death had many traumas to cope with during and after the war had ceased. What kept everyone going? PoW's kept themselves sane by countless diversions such as planning and executing escapes, producing camp entertainments and newsletters etc.; troops were entertained by ENSA, an organisation which subsequently organised concerts for civilian workers. What of the civilian population? Despite theatre closures, cinemas remained opened, and in 1940 the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) was set up to support the arts during wartime. It organised concerts featuring classical music and drama, and took ballet and opera to new audiences. Sir Kenneth Clark kept the National Gallery open with small displays of paintings and talks; and lunchtime concerts with such artists as Dame Myra Hess.

All brought cultural diversions from the war and also brought with it that now familiar phrase 'the indomitable spirit', the obstinacy not to be overcome. Additionally, public schemes were devised such as Victory gardens, also called war gardens or food gardens where vegetable, fruit, and herb gardens planted at private residences and public parks in Britain, and elsewhere; and the famous Dig for Britain campaign set up during by the British Ministry of Agriculture. The public across the country were encouraged to grow their own food in times of harsh rationing. The great British public successfully survived the war.

The people of Coventry who received such a hammering during the war, saw the destruction of their beloved 14th-century Gothic church (St. Michael), later designated as a cathedral, the now iconic ruins remain. Immediately after the bombing raid the decision was made to build a new cathedral, leaving the shell of the medieval building to serve as a reminder of the futility and waste of war. This new cathedral was to become the heart of a movement for peace and reconciliation between all people, of all faiths.



One sculpture is known as *The Charred Cross*; a pair of crossed, blackened beams atop an altar made of rubble. In the aftermath of the WWII bombing the cathedral stonemason, surveying the devastation noticed a pair of burned wooden beams lying across each other in the shape of a cross. He tied them together, forming a symbolic cross that is now preserved on the stairs between the new cathedral and St Michael's Hall. A replica stands within the old cathedral.



Interior of the new Cathedral.



Another poignant symbol is *The Cross of Nails*; three nails from the cathedral roof truss made by Provost Howard. The cross now sits in the centre of the altar cross in the new cathedral. The Cross of Nails is more than just a symbol of the cathedral; over 160 Cross of Nails centres have been established around the world to spread the vision of peace and reconciliation. All of the centres have their own cross of nails made from material rescued from the ruins of St Michael's Cathedral. These Centres are under the auspices of The Community of Cross Nails, a world-wide network of over 235 churches, charities, peace-building centres, and educational and training organisations, inspired by the Coventry story of destruction, rebuilding and renewal, and active in reconciliation in their own ways.

These two stories, I think, bring together the meaning of HOPE, OPTIMISM, and the INDOMITABLE SPIRIT. Let us bring these to our own reflections as we become victors over our own 'battles' with the strictures and privations which this pandemic brings to us.

Some of us turn to nature for signs of Hope, especially gardeners, who HOPE that invested work brings its rewards in the final flowering of produce. Some view HOPE in the Spring when flora and fauna burst into life with their first offering of buds or young offsprings, gambolling lambs being an obvious example. We also might see HOPE in the way nature regenerates its genre - the renewing, or continuing cycle, of life - plants can regenerate all body parts from precursor cells. Many trees, for example, can be cut off at the ground and, in due course, sprouts appear at the margins of the stump. These go on to develop new stems, leaves, and flowers.

Let us all pray for Hope, Peace and Reconciliation in the world, and relief and consolation from this pandemic to a regenerated life.

"Out of eternity this new day is born...Think! Wilt thou let it slip useless away?"

Boris Johnson has mentioned that the Coronavirus has resulted in a battle with an invisible enemy. As I started the meat of this article with reference to WW2, I shall conclude with another reference to it - part of a speech that Churchill gave in 1942 just after the success of a battle which marked a turning point in the war:-

"Now this is not the end.
It is not even the beginning of the end.
But it is, perhaps,
the end of the beginning."

Trevor.

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