

Kingston and Wandsworth Area Quaker Meeting Autumn 2025



Figure 1 Annette Gamblin (Kingston) – Strong Roots

*" Make service your centre, with its laws and duties and self-sacrifice, and life is a bondage.
Make friendship the centre and life is freedom."*

QFP 22.10 John Macmurray, 1942

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Friendship

Emma Charleston (Wandsworth) – Becoming a Friend

Having been attending various Quaker meetings since as early as 2007, I always struggled with the idea of community. For me, Quaker meeting was inherently a community — the act of entering a room with a group of people and sitting in silence for an hour gave me a profound sense of connection and companionship. It fulfilled me in ways which I couldn't entirely articulate, but I knew that I almost always left meeting feeling better than when I had gone in.

But whatever magic occurred in those quiet rooms full of chairs in concentric circles was entirely lost for me as I awkwardly shuffled around near the kitchen afterwards, holding a cup of tea I didn't want to drink (controversially, I don't like tea or coffee) and awkwardly making small talk until I felt it would be acceptable for me to leave. I quickly realised that the bit after meeting that many people seemed to cherish was not working for me at all. Having to try and socialise with strangers drained my social batteries and washed away a lot of the peace and serenity I felt after stepping out of meeting. In my early 20s there was often what felt like a huge age gap between myself and other members of meeting — one which I usually failed to successfully bridge through conversation. I quickly realised I was happier if I simply walked out of the building and went home. (I rather failed to recognise that these people would quickly become f/Friends, and not strangers, if I persisted.)

Either way, my love of that post-meeting solitude meant that I mostly failed to become properly acquainted with the (lovely) folks who I sat with in those quiet rooms. One of the reasons I waited so long to become a member (despite clearly feeling at home within Quaker settings) was the awareness that my willingness and energy to be part of the wider social community was... frankly, low.

What changed for me was finding my place as someone who could be useful. After I started putting my professional skills to use in designing small bits and bobs for the meeting, I found that conversations would come easier. Being asked for favours, updating people on projects, or even (though heaven forbid the vanity of it) receiving compliments on my work meant that suddenly the awkwardness of post-meeting tea and coffee was diminished, as I had something to say to people, and people had something to say to me. And from there, conversations that extended beyond just my design work started to grow.

I had also, by my late 30s, maybe grown into my own skin a little more, and realised that I didn't have to awkwardly gag down a cup of tea I didn't even like in order to speak to people, I could simply walk up to someone, say hello, and then walk away again when I was done speaking to them. Sounds simple maybe, but it was a revelation for me!

I finally became a member earlier this year, and am eternally grateful for the persistent welcome and patience that others at Wandsworth meeting have shown me (despite the fact that I do often still dodge tea and coffee :)

Mark Frankel (Richmond) Friendship: from William Penn, The Fruits of Solitude

107. There can be no Friendship where there is no Freedom. Friendship loves a free Air, and will not be penned up in straight and narrow Enclosures. It will speak freely, and act so too; and take nothing ill where no ill is meant; nay, where it is, 'twill easily forgive, and forget too, upon small Acknowledgments.

108. Friends are true Twins in Soul; they Sympathize in everything, and have the Love and Aversion.

109. One is not happy without the other, nor can either of them be miserable alone. As if they could change Bodies, they take their Turns in Pain as well as in Pleasure; relieving one another in their most adverse Conditions.

110. What one enjoys, the other cannot Want. Like the Primitive Christians, they have all things in common, and no Property but in one another.

111. A true Friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a Friend unchangeably.

112. These being the Qualities of a Friend, we are to find them before we choose one.

113. The Covetous, the Angry, the Proud, the Jealous, the Talkative, cannot but make ill Friends, as well as the False.

114. In short, chose a Friend as thou dost a Wife, till Death separate you.

115. Yet be not a Friend beyond the Altar: But let Virtue bound thy Friendship: Else it is not Friendship, but an Evil Confederacy.

116. If my Brother or Kinsman will be my Friend, I ought to prefer him before a Stranger, or I show little Duty or Nature to my Parents.

117. And as we ought to prefer our Kindred in Point of Affection, so too in Point of Charity, if equally needing and deserving.

Annette Gamblin (Kingston) - The Crucible of Friendship



Figure 2 Annette Gamblin (Kingston) Friendship

“You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you. This is the word of the Lord God to you all. Friends are those who keep his commandments and are in the life and power of God.”

George Fox Works of George Fox, Vol. 4 (1831 ed.), p. 31

I recently attended a Woodbrooke course on ‘Spiritual Friendship Groups’ which immediately gave rise to the deeper reflection on what we, as Quakers, actually mean by ‘Friendship’ and I have continued to ponder the question ever since.

It is quite natural within a Meeting to gravitate towards certain people and become friends. We do not come to Meeting purely as spiritual beings, we also bring our personalities housed within our human condition. But what does it mean to consider ourselves as a group of people meeting together in capitalised Friendship?

Already from the mid 17th Century onwards, George Fox referred to early Quakers as ‘Friends’ and their gatherings as ‘Friends in the Truth’¹. He capitalised the title ‘Friend’ in his writings and thus bestowed Quakers with a shared and participatory spiritual identity. (It is widely accepted that he was paraphrasing John 15: 14-15 in the above quote as the assertion of the nature and essence of that spiritual fellowship amongst early Friends)².

¹ Also the Children of the Light’ as in **1Thessalonians 5:5** “You are all children of the light and children of the day”.

² “You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.”

These days, whether implicitly or explicitly, we hope, within our Quaker identity, to have maintained this early spirit of fellowship, currently more commonly known as 'Friendship'.

"Our name, the Religious Society of Friends, suggests that we think of ourselves not only as Friends in the Truth, which the early Quakers saw themselves to be, but also as a society of friends, prizing friendship highly and recognising its value for the religious life.

In our intimate relationships, as in the wider community of our meeting, openness to one another can open us to the Holy Spirit and enable us to acknowledge that of God in our own hearts and in those of our friends." 1994 (QFP 22:02)

The idea of spiritual fellowship or friendship was not invented by Quakers. It has been debated and written about since Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Augustine (just to name a few), continuously weaving its way through the Zeitgeist as a common and encompassing thread, especially in world religions. For example the Samyutta Nikaya, a collection of early Buddhist suttas, states:

"One day Ananda turned to Buddha and said, "I've been thinking, spiritual friendship is at least half of the spiritual life." Buddha replied, "Say not so, Ananda, say not so. Spiritual friendship is the whole of the spiritual life."

That seems quite a big statement to me. The 'whole of spiritual life'?

When I think of 'fellowship' and 'friendship', inevitably and inextricably, the word 'relationship' pops up and follows. What these three words have noticeably in common of course is their suffix '-ship'. It comes from the Old English -scipe, meaning state, condition, or quality, which may lead us to understand it as a state or condition of being. 'Friendship' therefor denotes a certain shape or condition of being together as Friends, which early Quakers were not at all confused about (see Fox's quote), unlike modern Quakers, who seem to struggle to even answer the question 'what is Quakerism', (hence another Woodbrooke course I attended: How to speak Quaker)?

According to our Quaker Faith and Practice 22:10, the sentiment was still alive and well in 1942:

"In friendship we are beyond law and obedience, beyond rules and commandments, beyond all constraint, in a world of freedom. But did not Jesus say, 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you'? Yes, he did. We, on our side, are apt to miss the quiet humour of his paradoxes. 'These are my commandments,' he goes on, 'that ye love one another'.

In other words, the friendship of Christ is realised in our friendships with one another. His command is that we rise above commandments, and therefore his obedience is perfect freedom. Make service your centre, with its laws and duties and self-sacrifice, and life is a bondage. Make friendship the centre and life is freedom."

John Macmurray, 1942

So I have to ask myself, how do we feel about these big statements now? When we look around in our Meetings, what is our understanding and the state of our Friendship? Those of you who have non-theist leanings or find yourself anywhere adjacent, how do you reconcile these bible-centred roots and what they ask of you? What is your translation or rendering of them now?

Some clearly believe that we are not living up to something that came before us which had tremendous value:

“I wonder whether we do not need to rediscover the possibilities of a friendship in which the deepest areas of experience may be shared. Certainly, that kind of openness seems to have existed in earlier generations among a group who were very significant in the life of the Society”. QF&P 22.06

The passages in our little red book which talk about our Quaker community as being together as Friends in a state of Friendship tend to use words like ‘intimate’, ‘open’ and ‘sharing’. In my mind you absolutely cannot have a spiritual life without relationship and intimacy. Friends who know me, know that I often speak of spiritual life as being in relationship with everything. That really does mean EVERYTHING and as Richard Rohr reminded me this weekend - ‘everything belongs’ and everything we encounter is sacred. As Quakers we do know that, which is why, for example, we do not elevate any holidays as special over any other days.

Jack Ciancio writes in the October 2022 issue of the Friends Journal:

“Although we use John’s verse to secure our identity, we now tend to use the “Friends” label offhandedly, rarely pausing to give much thought to the fact that Jesus used it to single out people with whom he had established a sacred relationship. I contend Jesus was not simply talking about friends so much as friendship. In that regard, the word friends takes on a divine attribute. By selecting and calling this chosen group “friends,” Jesus offers himself as a bridge of friendship to God.”

We are fond of saying that we like to respond to ‘that of God in everyone’, are we not? That recognition alone should insist on a state of holy Friendship!

One of the lesser-known writers on spiritual friendship was Aelred of Rievaulx, a Cistercian monk in the diocese of York in 1147, who saw spiritual friendships as a sacred bond, a support in seeking the meaning of eternal life (*‘know one another in the life eternal’?*) He wrote in his *De spirituali amicitia* (On Spiritual Friendship): *“Friendship is that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness and out of many are made one.”* The ancient Greeks who differentiated between the different expressions of love might have called this agape.

One of my favourite Quaker Faith and Practice passages that supports this idea is this one by Isaac Pennington 1667:

“Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.”

As Proverb 27:17 says: *“As iron shapes iron, so one person shapes another”*. Friendship means that we support and shape each other on our spiritual path and journey, into a better understanding and into a better relationship, not just with each other, but also with the vast mystery we struggle to name, yet all have a sense of, otherwise we would not sit in worship together. I have to repeat, we do know this deep down.

I often see meeting for worship as a container into which we all willingly place ourselves so that our Friendship may transform us. We have a ‘corporate’ sense and do not sit in isolation. And yes, we are all walking each other home, in this sense home meaning what the early Quakers might have called ‘the kingdom of heaven on earth’.

So may we be just that little bit braver in sharing, in being more open and intimate with each other, so that we may all be transformed together in this holy crucible of Friendship. May you be nourished by the gifts we all bring to share and not be mistaken in judging them as great or small. It all matters. You matter. You matter in this webbing of Friendship.

In the words of Stephen Cope in Soul Friend:

“Soul Friendships are the crucible in which we are evoked, created, affirmed, sustained, and transformed. Our relationships with our Soul Friends are the containers, the sparks, and the fuel required for psychological and spiritual development.”



Figure 3 Kate Bone (Wandsworth) - 'A Model Meeting' by Gill & Astrid Sewell Ridley

Mary Aiston (Richmond) - Friendship and membership – a personal reflection on John 15

Quaker worship is communal. At any Quaker Meeting for Worship there will be Members and Attenders. All present contribute to the ministry, in silence or the spoken word. All have a responsibility for the worship. We are all “Friends”.

So, what’s the difference between members and attenders? While everyone is welcome, members commit to play their part in building and maintain the worshipping community.

A Quaker community of Friends is different from other friendships. Our friends are usually people we choose; we are likely to share common outlooks and be of similar age. We don’t choose those in our Quaker meeting, we will have a range life experiences and be of different ages, and we won’t agree about everything.

Parker J Palmer put it bluntly:

“we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!” (Quaker Faith & Practice 10.19)

John’s gospel, chapter 15 can tell us something about what it means to be a community of Friends. This is where Jesus says:

“You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants ... I have called you friends” (verse 14)

The commandment Jesus is referring to is love:

“love one another, as I have loved you” (verse 12)

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The disciples Jesus calls friends and commands to love one another are flawed human beings: they compete for status, deny Jesus and doubt his resurrection. This suggests perfection and agreement are not required to be “friends”. What is required is relationship: chapter 15 is all about relationship with God, with Jesus and with each other.

Verse 18 is clear that the disciples will be a community of friends facing opposition and persecution. Given that, it is interesting that it also promises that being a community will bring them joy.

“I have spoken thus to you, so that my joy may be in you, and your joy complete.” (verse 11, see also chapter 16 verses 20 and 22)

Another recurring theme in chapter 15 is that Jesus’s death will give rise to the coming of the advocate (or Holy Spirit) (verse 26 and chapter 16 verse 7), who will guide the community through the difficulties and challenges of the future. This community of friends is not the finished product, guidance will be needed, further growth is expected.

What can we draw from this? If, like the disciples, our Quaker communities are groups of friends are we ready to build our community, face uncertainty and be out of step with the rest of the world? Are we open to learning together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Are we open to moments of joy?

Are those of us who are members fulfilling our commitment to build our communities of Friends? Are those of us who are attenders perhaps feel the time is right to commit to help in this challenging and joyous work?

Mona Saad (Esher) - 'In friendship'

I want to share a story which made me smile and feel upbeat. My 30-year-old daughter, Clara (who is not a Quaker), told me recently that she has started using the 'In friendship' sign off. Clara is in training as an NHS clinical psychologist and on completing her second-year placement she wrote a card to her placement supervisor to express her appreciation for all the support and guidance she had received. She signed off the card with, and I quote:

In friendship,

Clara

PS that's a Quaker sign off, not me trying to disrespect you by flattening the hierarchy.

PPS although flattening the hierarchy would be a very Quakerly thing to do.

Clara and I talked about how she came to use this sign off and she said how the use of 'in friendship' felt so right and appropriate for the sentiment she wished to convey. 'With love' would have been too much and other options such as 'with thanks', 'kind regards', 'best wishes' too formal and distancing. She added that she felt it conveyed an equality in relationship that side stepped management structures.

This exchange made me smile because whilst I know that my daughter embodies Quaker values whether she acknowledges this to herself or not, it is lovely to see how she expresses and spreads them in her life and comforting that my life must be 'speaking' to her.

Juliet Braithwaite (Esher) - Friendship is priceless

There are different levels: those we choose, those who choose us, and those we have because of a common interest.

Friendships can come and go. Some are more important than others, They can cause great happiness, but also sadness, worry or hurtfulness. They may require diplomacy, or honesty, even if it hurts.

I have a friend I have known since I was 6 yrs. old. This friendship has evolved over the decades as we have both lived our lives, but I know I could knock on her door in the middle of the night and she would help me do whatever was needed.



Figure 4 Annette Gamblin (Kingston) - Twin Leaves

Mary Russell (Richmond) - A Real Blessing

I am nervous about gatherings, especially ones I've organised. How many people will come? Will there be enough to eat? Will they get on with each other?

And so it was with our same sex Blessing in the Summer. It was the first of its kind in the old Church in 800 years, so no pressure there. How well would it work?

There were three groups of people: friends (not religious), Quakers (used to silence in their services) and Anglicans (who owned the Church). The vicar had planned the service with us, including two periods of silence for Quakers and some choir. Alex, my wife, vanished into the choir to sing at the beginning, leaving me temporarily alone and looking anxious. Then she came back, and the Vicar gave a talk along the lines of:

'St Paul was wrong about a lot of things. It is time for the Church to grow up and recognise these relationships,' which seemed acceptable to most of the congregation.

A Quaker friend gave a reading from 1 Corinthians about love, using modern language, and we read each other the same poems we had used in our Civil Partnership 14 years earlier. Alex's adult daughter brought us rings; we put them on each other's fingers and were blessed by the Vicar. The half hour ended with more music. It all went quickly and felt full of meaning. People seemed appreciative and engaged, and I began to enjoy myself. To my surprise the event not only felt meaningful at the time but has since helped us in our relationship.

My wife Alex is an Anglican member of this Church, and has a different perspective:

“When we had our civil partnership in Pembroke Lodge, in 2011, it was a really lovely day with many happy memories. Friends and family treated it much as a wedding, and it gave us the same rights as a married couple. But something was missing, the sense of grace, spirituality and holiness which we felt on Sunday 26th July.

I didn't expect our blessing service to make such a profound difference. I had previously attended an evangelical church where same sex relationships were unacceptable and sinful and had not realised how much this had stayed with me. I cannot express what a difference it has made or how deeply reassured I was when I heard Fr Davids words,

I was also surprised by the number of people who attended and the abundance of freely given help. The service, the music, and the words were all intensely moving, marking a landmark moment for us and the history of our church.

So, to everyone who helped, supported and gave us love, cards, presents and encouragement, a sincere thank you.”

Christine Cannon (Esher) - Friendship

Friendship I count a miracle, and richly value. A reciprocated human connection not formed within legal parameters, no written record, no public recognition, no social declaration.

It starts with a chance connection; continues or fades away according to personal inclination. No explanation needed, not consciously analysed, no formal ending. What was once vibrant relegated to the 'Christmas Card List' and later still to pensive wondering whether X is still alive.

Other friendships last a lifetime. There must be some holy chance operating. A connection and loyalty deeper than a blood relationship, and crossing racial, national, religious and political differences. It defies analysis!

I know people who have been friends since primary school. Amazing closeness.

I know nobody from my first 20 years, and in the following 60 years I moved eight times, always to areas where I knew nobody. Refugees and asylum seekers must suffer more deeply, living as they do in a world of transience, displacement, migration and loss. Of course there are acquaintances, neighbours, group members. From each of my eight locations I treasure two or three people who will always be friends. They are scattered round the country, and some in other countries; some I will never see again; some have died. They enriched my life.

They are more treasured than the 500 followers on my daughter's website, one of whom she airily 'deleted' to make room for me!



Figure 5 Rasmus Eriksson - Wandsworth meeting room table

Hazel Morgan (Wandsworth) - A true neighbour

When Joan arrived in the house attached to my semi, she greeted me with "You must be the singer!" She had clearly been in conversation with the vendors. "I love opera!" she continued, and I had to confess: "I also play rock music, but never late, and never loud." I kept to that, although Joan must have wondered what I was up to with some of the music I was practising. She certainly never complained and would always chat over the fence if we were both out in our adjoining gardens.

She had moved to Witham because she had family nearby but determinedly held on to her independence until earlier this year, when yet another fall necessitated her going into hospital. Once she was away from familiar surroundings, dementia set in and she did not last long. She died in July, aged 99.

Her little semi is empty now, so I can make as much music as I like until new neighbours arrive. I'll be fortunate indeed if they are as kind, tolerant and cheerful as Joan; by being thus, she truly loved her neighbour.

Jennifer and Trevor Grubb (Wandsworth) - A few thoughts about 60 years at Wandsworth Meeting

We came to Wandsworth in 1984. Kingston and Wandsworth had just separated from Purley and Sutton – becoming two new Monthly Meetings. Kingston and Wandsworth Area Meeting has five Meetings; Esher, Kingston, Richmond, Wandsworth and Wimbledon. Elders and Pastoral Friends are appointed by area meeting usually to serve for a period of 3 years.

Wandsworth Meeting has always attracted new and continuing Memberships and still does. It is seldom that we do not have a new person attending on a Sunday morning. We frequently have attenders who have been before but have returned after quite a long period of absence. We also enjoy having members from other Meetings attending for a whole variety of reasons. Members of the Meeting often visit other Meetings and bring back greetings from them.

We are all members of the Religious Society of Friends; where does this fit in our relationships with other members of the Meeting? We try to remember our Advices & Queries and to read from them frequently and to benefit from their wise words. We need to refer to some of the 42 paragraphs often and to learn from them. Quaker Faith and Practice (presently being updated) is available at the end of each bench and extracts are often read in meeting as part of ministry.

A couple of weeks ago we had eleven young people in Meeting prior to going on to their own 'gathering', we have had a number of 'all age Meetings' which we value and enjoy. We are reminded in Advices & Queries number 19, to '*rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring*'. When we have visits from local schools it is useful to address with them our testimonies – STEP – Simplicity, Truth, Equality and Peace, and to discuss their relevance for us all in our lives today.

We have a wealth of written literature available to us for reference, borrowing books from the library, taking part in discussion groups and helping each other to move forward when necessary.

Meetings for Learning, usually held on the 4th Sunday after Meeting are organised by Elders and provide us with the opportunity to learn from subjects which are sometimes difficult to understand fully.

We also have 'mini' meetings for learning straight after meeting for worship to refresh our minds on subjects not requiring immediate discussion, but which we can return to at a later date.

Where are our spiritual paths leading and how do we keep them refreshed? Every Sunday provides 'new light' if we are ready to listen. Some Meetings are full of support and values if we are able to discern their true meaning for us.

Thinking Allowed

Carol Griffiths (Wandsworth) - Throwing Spaghetti in South West London

Our outreach website, www.quakersinswondon.org, celebrated its second birthday last month. It aims to encourage seekers and enquirers to visit our Local Meetings by providing a flavour of what Quakerism in our corner of London is all about. If you're not familiar with it already please give it a look, there are sections that we hope will be interesting to even the most seasoned friend.

It's difficult to know quite what success looks like for such a site, but between January and September 2025 over 5,000 separate individuals have visited the Quakers in South West London website. That's about twenty times as many people as we have members and regular attenders. Encouragingly 1,400 came back to take another look and over 300 people a month click on 'find a Meeting'. The numbers are growing.

Our most frequently visited page is the [calendar of events](#) which you may find useful as a reference for what's going on. The next most visited section is that on [Quakers in the world](#) which we introduced earlier this year to demonstrate some of the impact that Quakerism makes beyond our own community. We also show our human side with brief [profiles of some of our friends](#) – you may recognise a face or two.

Developing content to keep the website fresh and engaging is a bit like throwing spaghetti at a wall – some sticks, some doesn't – and it's difficult to tell before you post, so we are continually experimenting with different avenues to keep the website fresh and useful. For example, an author researching the work of Quakers between the two World Wars for a historical novel came to meeting for worship at Wandsworth recently having found us via the website. We had a fascinating discussion about Quakers in literature and, as a result, are now developing a section exploring these often-memorable characters - from bloodthirsty Captain Bildad in Moby-Dick to Honor Bright in Tracy Chevalier's The Last Runaway. We hope this will introduce us to a whole new audience who have read about Quakers and might be tempted in to find out more. Our next move is into even more contemporary literature with links to this Area Meeting magazine!

We hope that the website will play a role in more active online outreach through Facebook advertising, which will be a new venture for us. More spaghetti will be hurled at walls and some of it will definitely stick as we continue to build our community of Quakers in South West London.

Kate Kernoff (Wimbledon) - Some Thoughts for Those Who Attend Meetings and Have Perfect Hearing!!

There are 18 million adults in the U.K. who are Deaf or who have a hearing-impairment. The chances are that there are members and attenders attending each and every Meeting who have totally resigned or have conditioned themselves to the fact that they will only pick up the rough gist of much of the spoken ministry and/or ensuing important discussion. Some may be simply unaware of the amount they are missing out.

I have a moderate to severe hearing loss in both ears and am a member of Wimbledon Meeting. At our Meeting the members and attenders have been extraordinarily empathetic. Over a period of time, they have developed certain very helpful strategies which have helped me cope. I have been asked to write these down in the hope that other Meetings might consider implementing some of these changes. They have been extremely helpful to me (and hopefully might be to others too).

Firstly, we have a Speakers Chair, its function clearly labelled with a laminated sign which hangs on the back of the chair. When someone wishes to give ministry or a reading they move to this chair. I place myself directly opposite the Speakers Chair so the sound of the voice is aimed directly at me and I can lipread to the best of my ability. Also, the movement of someone walking towards the chair often alerts me to the fact that someone is about to speak. Wonderful!

Don't place this chair with the light behind it or in front of a window. The speaker's face would then be in a shadow.

The reading for the day is put up at the entrance to the meeting room. This enables a person to find the reading and follow it as it is being read should they wish.

It is always helpful if people start their ministry with an introduction to the topic (e.g. "I've been thinking about the subject of Friendships today"). A topic introduction allows a h.-i. person time to 'tune in'.

Try to keep sentences short and try not to jump from topic to topic.

Be aware that asides and repartees are often spoken quickly and to one side. They are the bane of many a h.-i. person's life. They laugh because everyone else bursts into laughter but have no idea of what they are laughing at. It painfully gives one a sense of isolation. (Note: The above two bullet-points are also particularly relevant in general conversation with a h.-i. person).

The Zoom needs to be clearly accessible with large, clear sub-titles.

All members and attenders should know where the T-switch is and how to turn it on. However, be aware that not all hearing-aids have a loop switch and not all meeting places have a loop.

I, personally, abhor phrases such as 'suffer from deafness'; it's just so negative and is best not to use.

The above points may seem a lot for a Meeting to consider. After a short while I can assure you that they will seem perfectly natural. I would never have considered attending regularly or becoming a Quaker member if such changes had not been thought of and implemented. D/deafness is not referred to as the unseen or invisible handicap without a reason. If someone is in a wheelchair or is visually impaired others around them seem instinctively and sensitively know what to do to make them not feel an encumbranceit is not usually quite the same with D/deafness. I believe that such thoughtful changes, for which I am enormously grateful, might make considerable difference for others at other meetings.

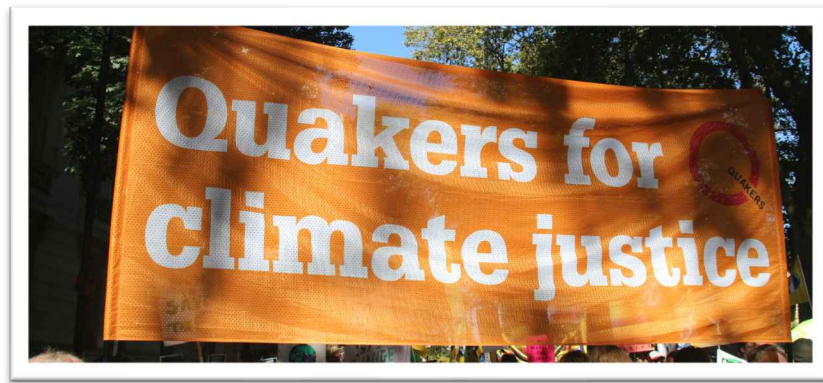


Figure 6 Ben Robinson - Quakers and Climate Justice

Ben Mango (Wimbledon) - Quakers and climate action

It is an interesting coincidence that I joined Extinction Rebellion about the same time as I joined Quakers. It marked a shift in my life as I became more aware of some of the issues that need addressing in our world and my own autonomy and ability and responsibility to work to address them. Quakers have a long history of being actively involved in social and other issues to work for a fair society and to act as guardians for our planet. This is true now as we look at the work of courageous individual Quakers who are willing to risk arrest and even go to prison for doing the work they feel is essential to prevent the collapse of our civilisation.

The work that Quakers do is really vital in working against climate collapse. Quakers bring a unique set of talents and way of working. Particularly one that aims at not taking sides or alienating individuals but trying to work together with them. Particularly having personal qualities that promote peace and harmony rather than conflict and discord. These qualities are essential to prevent division and divisiveness and that notion of us and them. We need to remember that we all need to work together. I have observed in climate groups such as XR meetings that often follow Quaker practices, such as allowing each person in turn to

speak and to focus on reflection rather than fast responses and build to a consensus within the group.

So any way that you can get involved in climate action is hugely important. It is natural that many people might feel disinclined to get involved considering the increasingly authoritarian laws which make it increasingly difficult to protest without the possibility of legal consequences. Please remember that there are many others who are willing to take risks to do what they know is right. We all have a responsibility to act and do what we can. I would also add that in many cases even when people are arrested this does not mean that you will necessarily go to court even or have a conviction. When I first took action, it felt uncomfortable to be doing something that had been out of my comfort zone but generally I researched what possible consequences there might be, what my rights are and perhaps the most important thing was the support I had from other people I was taking action with.

The scientific consensus regarding climate change is growing more serious in terms of the consequences, so it is becoming more and more important that we take action. Try going on a protest, put your toe in the water and you will soon build up confidence. There are many Quaker climate groups that you can get involved in. Your contribution is important.

Kate Kernoff (Wimbledon) – People Trafficking



Figure 7 Hana Stevens - Ghosts

This painting is by Hana Stevens. It was painted in 2020 in memory of the 39 victims who died in the back of a lorry in the people-trafficking incident in Essex in October 2019. It is entitled 'Ghosts'. Hana (23) is currently on remand in Foston Hall Prison for their part in protesting against the genocide in Gaza, Hana's father is an attendee at Wimbledon Meeting. Our thoughts are with Hana and their family.

One of the phrases apparently used by the prisoners to keep themselves sane in what is an insane environment is "They can lock the locks but they can't stop the clocks".

Events

Val Coumont (Wandsworth) - Gatwick Detainees' Welfare Group

Gatwick Detainees' Welfare Group is a charity which wishes it didn't exist – or, more accurately, that it didn't need to exist. It was started 30 years ago by a group of concerned people who had become aware that asylum-seekers were being held in indefinite detention at Brook House and Tinsley House, at Gatwick Airport.

Initially it was a befriending network; volunteers were (and are) paired with detainees whom they visit weekly. Later, a number of well-known writers volunteered to meet detainees, hear their stories, and write them for what became Volume 1 of "Refugee Tales". There are now 5 published volumes.

Indefinite Detention means what it says. It is different from imprisonment only in that a prisoner can count down the days, weeks, months, years, of their sentence, while a detainee can only count them up. The longest known detention lasted 9 years.

So the Tales were written, but they needed to be heard. In 2015, the first group of walkers set off from Dover to Canterbury (the Canterbury Tales inspired the title), stopping overnight in villages and towns to tell the stories in village halls, churches, libraries, community centres, where the walkers often also slept.

Musicians also volunteered their services, adding a celebratory note to the performances, which often ended with dancing. When detainees succeeded in obtaining their Leave to Remain, they joined the walks, creating a walking community which meets and walks today. Despite a fierce heatwave, around 120 people completed 5 days of the Capital Ring last July, the first time the route had been in London. We had the joy of celebrating the graduation, with first-class honours, of one refugee whose schooling had stopped at age 9, and the birth, to another and his wife, of their first child, whom they brought on the walk.

Britain is the only country in Western Europe to detain asylum-seekers indefinitely, though they have committed no crime. We walk in solidarity with all those who have been forced, by war, famine and persecution, to leave everything that is dear to them, and seek refuge here, recognising that the only difference between them and us lies in our circumstances.

Juliet Braithwaite (Esher) - September walk and talk, Wimbledon to Wandsworth meeting house.

Twelve of us enjoyed the hospitality and tea and biscuits of Ali at Wimbledon before walking along a few busy roads, including Queen's Rd. where Stuart welcomed us. We then came to a park and our first sight of the Wandle. We ambled beside the Wandle as much as possible, before emerging at a busy Plough Lane and on to a tarmac path. At Earlsfield we went along a few streets before splitting into two groups, one group going along Garrett Lane to Wandsworth meeting house and one group going through King Georges park to the meeting house, where it was open house.

It was leafy and green in places, but you had to be prepared to follow suburban streets, and to get under the main line train tracks at Earlsfield.

We ate our picnics and enjoyed looking at the information provided for the open house, before departing for home.

The next Quaker Walk and Talk is between Kingston Quaker Centre and Richmond meeting houses across Richmond Park starting at 10am on 22nd November.

Rebecca Fricker (London Link Group) – Buzzing in Brighton

From Friday 26 to Sunday 28 September, 23 young people and 6 adult volunteers headed to buzzing Brighton for another marvellous London Link group residential.

We met for dinner at Wagamama whilst the stragglers battled with disruption on the Underground, all being present and correct by our appointed departure time. The rear half of the post rush-hour Friday evening train was out of action, so with the other passengers, we squeezed on to the half of the train that was operational, and enjoyed catching up with Friends old and new as we trundled through the dark past Selhurst Park, Gatwick Airport and up over the South Downs.

We pulled into Brighton station and stepped down to the sanctuary of the Quaker Meeting house, where some participants had already arrived from Brighton, Lewes and environs, as had our Sainsbury's delivery.

After a few "getting to know each other" games, we closed the day with epilogue and settled down to our improvised beds, snuggled in sleeping bags and roll mats.

On Saturday morning we feasted on Cheerios and toast with freshly brewed tea and coffee, made picnic sandwiches and headed off to Brighton Museum.



Figure 8 Young Quakers at Brighton Museum

The museum was pleasingly interactive and had an exhibition on Mod Fashion and style (1958-66). A rolling video reminded us that Abba's Eurovision success with "Waterloo" had taken place at the Brighton Dome over 50 years earlier.

We had our picnic lunch in Pavilion Gardens and headed off in small groups to enjoy free time in Brighton, some taking in a graffiti art trail. Back at the Meeting House garden, we got to work trimming green beans from bushes which had been gleaned the day before from a nearby farm, being uneconomic for the farmer to harvest. They were delectably cooked up in a Thai green curry and coconut sauce for dinner and given out to Friends at meeting on Sunday.

After a dinner of mostly Mexican fajitas and nachos (with aforementioned green beans on the side) with cake and custard for afters, we played games and walked down through the busy Saturday night life to the beach for a memorable epilogue, under the stars and seagulls, the lights of the pier visible to the east.

On Sunday morning we joined a bumper meeting for worship of almost 90 Friends, with a brilliant Children's Meeting to accompany it. We enjoyed participating in a marvellous shared lunch of soups, quiche, salads, breads and cheeses. After clearing the meeting house we headed back to the train, sorry to say goodbye but happy to have spent a delightful weekend among the company of Friends

Eve, Anna and Seb attended, all from Wandsworth

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Diary

Date	Event
Nov 5 th	Newcomers to Quakers course – Quaker past and future (Wimbledon meeting house)
Nov 7 th – 9 th	Growing South weekend away at High Leigh conference centre
Nov 19 th	Newcomers to Quakers course – Quaker Process (Wimbledon meeting house)
Nov 22 nd	Elders and Pastoral Friends gathering from 10am (Friends House)
Nov 22 nd	Quaker Walk and Talk from Kingston Quaker Centre to Richmond meeting house across Richmond Park from 10am
Dec 3 rd	Newcomers to Quakers course – Quaker Living (Wimbledon meeting house)
Jan 11 th	Joint London Area Meeting (Friends House)
Feb 13 th to 15 th	Truleigh Hill weekend on the South Downs (Truleigh Hill youth hostel, Shoreham by Sea BN43 5FB)

Further Information

Our Local Meetings

Esher

The School House, 19 Esher Green, Esher KT10 8AA

Meeting for Worship Sunday 10.30

<https://esher.quakermeeting.org/>

Kingston

Fairfield East, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2PT

Meeting for Worship Sunday 10.30 and 1st and 3rd Wednesday 6:15

<https://kingstonquakers.org/>

Richmond

1 Retreat Road, Richmond TW9 1NN

Meeting for Worship Sunday 10.30

<https://richmond-upon-thames.quakermeeting.org/>

Wandsworth

59 Wandsworth High St, London SW18 2PT

Meeting for Worship Sunday 10.30 and second and fourth Tuesday at 12:30

<https://wandsworth.quakermeeting.org/>

Wimbledon

40 Spencer Hill Road, London, SW19 4EL

Meeting for Worship Sunday 10.30

<https://wimbledon.quakermeeting.org/>

Area and Local Meeting Role Holders 2025

AM Clerk	Oli Griffiths (Wandsworth)
AM Assistant Clerk	Mary Russell (Richmond)
AM Assistant Clerk	Joan Bulmer (Wimbledon)
AM Membership Clerk	Mary Aiston (Richmond)
AM Treasurer	Mike Stanger (Wandsworth)
AM Collector/Asst Treasurer	David Holtam (Wandsworth)
AM Marriage Registering Officer	Kate Bone (Wandsworth)
AM Trustees	
Esher	(not represented)
Kingston	Caroline Squire
Richmond	Peter Maple
Wandsworth	David Harries
	Carol Griffiths (Clerk)
Wimbledon	Susanna Riviere
AM co-convenors Elders & Pastoral Carers	Anna Barlow (Richmond)
	Linda Murgatroyd (Wandsworth)
Meeting for Sufferings	Kim Boyd (Wandsworth)
Meeting for Sufferings (alternate)	Linda Murgatroyd (Wandsworth)
London Quakers Property Trust (LQPT) trustee	Rob Campbell Smith (Richmond)
LQPT members' representative	Clerk to AM Trustees
The Penn/AM Google Group Administrator	Ben Mango (Wimbledon)
Editor of AM magazine	Oli Griffiths (Wandsworth)
London Quakers	Fred Ashmore (Kingston) Clerk

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AM Outreach

Esher

Mona Saad

Kingston

Gill Holdsworth

Richmond

Kathryn Perry

Mary Russell

Wandsworth

Nick Bush

Carol Griffiths

Marcus Morgan

Wimbledon

Ali Wallace

Deborah Curle

Local Meeting Clerks

Esher Co-clerks

Juliet Braithwaite

Mona Saad

Kingston

Clerking Team

Richmond

Rob Campbell-Smith

Kathryn Perry

Wandsworth

Oli Griffiths

Susie Paskins

Wimbledon

Joan Bulmer

Kate Kernoff

Ben Mango

Resources

Quakers In South West London is our site with Outreach events and news

<https://quakersinswLondon.org/>. There is also a Facebook page

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1982816408751225/?paipv=0&eav=AfZlvefJ27z6UmlBU G68rc9RzmuNOZ4YbI5DGRIyT-vxtXc0jQ9VGZk_S-4PRapHISU&_rdr

The Penn is an Area Meeting wide Google Group - to join please email

stuartwallacehr@hotmail.com

Wandsworth Meeting also has its own Google Group – to join please email

keith.a.walton@gmail.com and Twitter account. @WandswrthQuaker.

London Quakers – keeping Quakers in London in touch with one another and providing a forum to address issues in the wider world <https://londonquakers.org.uk> For regular emails contact ClerkLondonQuakers@gmail.com

For National Quaker news, sign up to QUAKE! for email updates on the work of Britain Yearly Meeting and Quakers in Britain with some useful information, including short online courses, and advice for the times we live in.

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/quake>

Woodbrooke for details of short and longer online courses plus details of online Meetings for Worship. www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Contributions to KWAM Quarterly

The theme for the next (winter) edition will be WORSHIP and the copy date is 23 January 2026

If you have an article or other contribution that you would like shared in this magazine, please email it to Oli Griffiths oliver.g@mac.com