Ludlow Quaker Journal

November/December 2023

This Journal will publish anything that Friends think is of interest; so its range may be very wide. If you find it too long, select only what interests you from the Table of Contents. Please contact Barbara Mark if you would like to have something included or wonder if you have a subject that might be of interest.
It will be published on-line only and will come out when enough articles have been gathered in. Comments and letters to the editor are also welcome.
Do remember if this copy is pdf you can listen to it via Windows 10 'read aloud' option at the top of the sheet.

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DO LOOK ON LUDLOW MEETING WEB SITE FOR ALL THE JOURNALS

Many thanks to everyone who has helped me on this issue.

White Poppy Wreath on Sunday 12th November

A wreath of white poppies and scented herbs, made by Murri, was placed at the Peace Memorial as part of the civic wreath laying ceremony on 12th November by Barbara and Esther.

Ludlow Quaker Meeting was invited to lay our wreath with the Ludlow Humanists and the South Shropshire Interfaith group. Below are the two representatives of the Interfaith group.

Vigil for Peace

We then held a half hour Vigil for Peace. We did this as our Meeting for Worship. We placed ourselves on one side of the Market Square once the public had moved away and traffic was flowing again. In total 22 of us took part. We were joined by several people not directly involved Quakers, including Imam Sohayb Peerbhai from the mosque in Craven Arms and two women from Humanists.
It was an excellent 'turn out' on such a miserable morning.
Many cars slowed down and one gentleman took the trouble to lower his window to offer words of encouragement and a few people asked for a little information.

Sohayb told us about his experiences at the demonstration for Peace in London the day before.
He could not believe how many people had turned out and was up-lifted by the support he felt.
He said there were people from every walk of life and ethnicity there. It was truly a wonderful event.
He had seen no disruptive behaviour at all

A Poem for Peace in Israel and Palestine

Today I am taking sides.
I am taking the side of Peace.
Peace, which I will not abandon
even when its voice is drowned out
by hurt and hatred,
bitterness of loss,
cries of right and wrong.
I am taking the side of Peace
whose name has barely been spoken
in this winnerless war.
I will hold Peace in my arms,
and share my body's breath,
lest Peace be added
to the body count.
I will call for de-escalation
even when I want nothing more
than to get even.
I will do it
in the service of Peace.
I will make a clearing
in the overgrown
thicket of cause and effect
so Peace can breathe
for a minute
and reach for the sky.
I will do what I must
to save the life of Peace.
I will breathe through tears.
I will swallow pride.
I will bite my tongue.
I will offer love
without testing for deservingness.
So don't ask me to wave a flag today
unless it is the flag of Peace.
Don't ask me to sing an anthem
unless it is a song of Peace.
Don't ask me to take sides
unless it is the side of Peace.

Rabbi Irwin Keller, Oct. 17, 2023

Interfaith group news

South Shropshire Interfaith group has marked Interfaith Week (12th to 19th November) in Craven Arms with a tree planting at the Discovery Centre at which the High Sheriff of Shropshire, Mandy Thorne, MBE, agreed to attend and we were also joined by our County Councillor, David Evans.

Our Chairman, David Wiseman, read a Tree Planting Prayer

Mark followed this by saying that trees have been extremely important in both ancient traditions and modern Jewish life and a minor festival celebrates Tu Bi-Sh'vat or 'New Year for Trees'. It is a time to re-connect with nature and value our environment. The Torah -the first five books of the bible is commonly referred to as the 'Tree of Life'.

The second event in our busy Interfaith week was a talk by Shazad Azam of the Ummah Welfare Trust who spoke about the work of faith-based Aid Agencies, which followed our AGM at the Methodist Church in Craven Arms.

A zoom talk on the work of 'Children of Peace' will not now take place on 28th November, as we had hoped, as the founder and President of Children of Peace Charity, Richard Martin, has been taken into hospital.
A new date will be arranged in due course.

The talk had been arranged through Herefordshire Interfaith to cover neighbouring interfaith groups in Worcester, Shropshire, Cheltenham and Wales and The President, Richard Martin, as founder, had been invited to give this talk about the charity.

Children of Peace is a charity organisation for Isreali and Palestinian children aged 4-17 years and their communities, and the aim is a shared spirit and wellbeing through arts, education, health and sport, working for people, building trust, friendship and reconciliation so that future generations might live peacefully side by side. The website is www.childrenofpeace.org.uk

A date for your Diary
Our Annual Holocaust Memorial Day will be on Sunday, 28th January 2024 at 5pm and it will be held in Ludlow. The theme is Fragility of Freedom.

Ludlow Quaker Art Group

We started in 2010, I think with members from the Meeting. Over the years others joined us. Although numbers varied there was always a regular core group.

The format was; an introduction and discussion, then getting on with your own idea , I would make tea etc., kindly brought by Jeni, Jan or Tessa , Before the end we would have our own 'Gallery show', to look at what we had done, exchange views and pick up some useful tips from sharing our thoughts.

In 2011 we held our first exhibition in the Ludlow Library Gallery Room. We were able to send donations to chosen charities, including a contribution to Quaker Peace and Social Witness.

Many thanks to the family and friends who helped , put up , with stewarding , demonstrating and taking down. We did this for several years until the council took over the room. We went into the main library until 2017 but it wasn't the same. We also had art and craft days at the Meeting House. Again many thanks to members who shared their skills and time setting up and making refreshments

Jeannie Brookes and Dori Ericson, now sadly passed away, were part of our group and exhibitions.

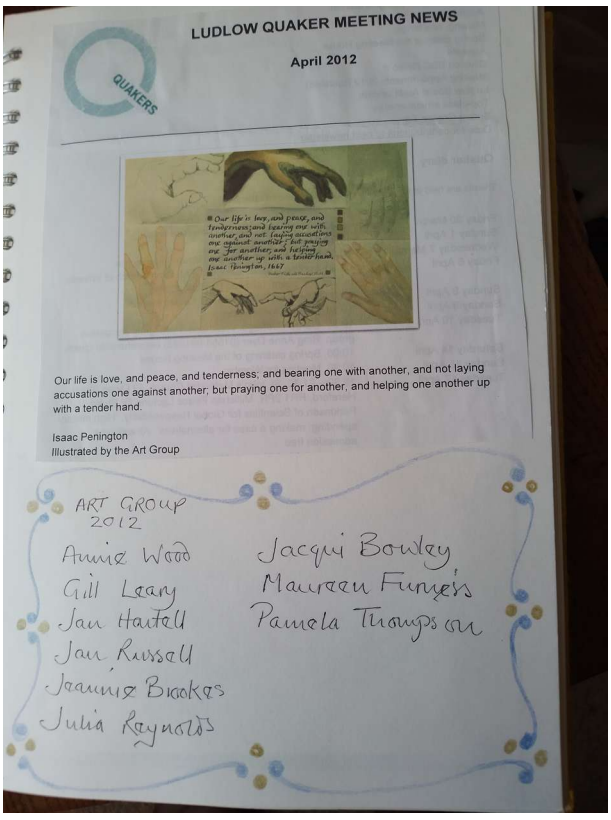
The painting on the kitchen wall, of the Meeting room interior, is by Richard Olsen. He was a core group member and he is a watercolour wizard. We all benefited from his help.

We couldn't meet during Covid restrictions. Jeni Peters set up a Whats App group. It has proved a good way of keeping in touch, show work and inspiring us to keep painting. We are going to keep this although not meeting as before.

I feel sad to be stopping the group now, when I think of all that we have shared and the energy and support for our activities outside of our own monthly meetings that has made these possible.

I have a journal of the exhibitions , with photos, also the craft days, the art and the people who came to help. I will bring it when I next visit Ludlow and can leave it at The Meeting House for a while, where ever is convenient.

Those were the days. my friends. Thank you Julia for this article



Special Sausage Rolls

Makes 8

Ingredients
400g pork sausages, skins removed or pork sausage meat
50g ready-made dried sage and onion stuffing mix
1 tbsp dried thyme
1 x 320g ready rolled butter puff pastry sheet
1 egg beaten, to glaze
1 tsp fennel seeds (optional)
1 tsp black onion seeds, also known as nigella seeds (optional)

Apple sauce ingredients
(or you can buy 100g ready-made sweetened apple sauce)
2 apples, either 1 sweet apple such as Gala and 1 sour apple like Pink Lady
or, if you like a tangy apple sauce, use 2 Bramleys
35g butter
35g castor sugar, or demerara is good if you have some
1 tsp of ground cinnamon
1 or 2 tbsp of fresh lemon juice

Method for apple sauce
Peel, core and chop apples into roughly 1cm cubes
Add the apples, butter and sugar to a pan with a splash of water
Put the pan on a low heat, stirring occasionally, for about 15 mins. until the apple breaks down to a puree. Depending on the type of apple, you may need to enlist the help of a potato masher. In any event, leave some small soft lumps in the puree.
Mix in the cinnamon and 1 tbsp of lemon juice, taste and add the second tbsp If you wish. Leave to cool.

Method for sausage rolls
Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas mark 6 and put a large (min. 30cms x 26cms) flat baking sheet in the oven.
In a large bowl put the sausage meat, sage and onion mix and thyme, along with a big pinch of salt and pepper and mix well with your hands to combine.
Lay out the sheet of puff pastry and cut it in half lengthways. Spoon half the apple sauce down the centre of each pastry strip, about 5cms wide.

Take half the sausage meat and roll and shape into a long log the length of the pastry rectangle and lay it on the top of the apple sauce, then repeat with the other one.
Brush one edge of the pastry strip with the beaten egg, then carefully fold the other edge over the sausage meat log, just halfway past the centre of the log, then carefully fold the beaten egg pastry strip over the sausage meat log, again just halfway past the centre of the log, then repeat with the other one.

Now brush the top of the rolls with beaten egg and turn them over so that the seam of the pastry is underneath the logs. Now brush the top and the sides of the rolls with beaten egg Cut each strip into 4 sausage rolls, leaving the cut edges exposed.
Just to make them look good, make four diagonal shallow cuts (about 3cms long) on the top of each sausage roll, and if using, sprinkle a few black onion and fennel seeds on each roll.

Take the hot baking sheet out of the oven. Take a sheet of baking paper the same size as the baking sheet and put a dab of butter at each corner then place the sheet of baking paper, butter side down, on the baking sheet.
Place the 8 sausage rolls on the sheet of baking paper, at least 5cms apart and cook for about 30 mins. until golden and cooked through.

Serve warm or cold. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days and eat cold or reheat until hot throughout (with chips and mayonnaise!)
Thank you Peter

Book Revue

Henry Stanley Newman by Maggie Waldman

This book was highlighted in The Friend publication 1st December 2023 but it is of particular interest to local friends as several of our members live in or near Leominster. Orphans Press and Newman's road will be very familiar to some of us.
However I was not aware of what an exceptional man Henry Newman was. This book revisits his life and works, information taken from many other books which are now very old and out of print.
He was a conciliator bringing together diverse groups in the Society of Friends in the 1890's. He had three full-time jobs, as a grocer, charity administrator and a missionary as well work at Quaker Meeting. He was a 'doer' as Maggie puts it. He did all this with grace, consideration and respect for others and vision.

This book was launched at Almeley Wootton Meeting House this summer.
It is well worth reading.

Barbara

CYMAR

This Charitable body encompassing all the Quaker Meetings in Wales and Southern Marches will come into being in January 2024.
The AM Charity will not be laid down straight away but time will be given to the local meetings to sort their affairs out.
Ludlow Meeting has sort more time as the Meeting is not in unity yet. Many friends like the idea, many are unhappy and some do not see how border Meetings can work in this charitable structure.
The inaugural Meeting was held on 19th September 2023 where new Trustees for Cymar were accepted for 2024. Barbara

Truth and Integrity Group (A Quaker recognised body**)**
Here is a quick up-date on what has been happening.
Two seminars have been held in partnership with Woodbrooke – Finding Kinder Ground (MP for Ludlow, Philip Dunne was involved in this) and Building Kinder Ground. The sessions worked well and much has been learnt from them which will inform future seminars.
Two workshops for area/regional meetings have also been run which were well received, one in NE Thames AM, and one in Sussex and Surrey Regional Meeting. These have enabled the co-clerks to develop an approach to running sessions, and the content for such sessions, which will make it easier to prepare for other such events.

Nominations for the Truth and Integrity Award will open in January.
Also next year there will be three more seminars with Woodbrooke which will focus on other faiths – asking what their faith demands of them in relation to truth and integrity. These will be on 21st February, 24th April and 26th June. More information will be given out next year.
On 1 February a new google group will be opened and those joining will be asked to commit to protocols designed to ensure that the group operates under Quaker principles.

For your interest I write minute 9 of the Steering Group held on 5 December:

We are mindful of the horror, pain and suffering in Israel/Palestine.

We are conscious that we are a recognised body of an organisation which has a wisdom and expertise far beyond our own: Friends House, EAPPI and the Quaker Conciliation Group to name but three. As individuals we may wish to join the various vigils, marches and other forms of actively making our opinion known. But, in terms of QTIG, addressing this issue as it is manifested at the moment is beyond our remit. Our best response, at this stage, is silence . In due course it may be that this situation will provide an object lesson and case study in the difficulties of recognizing truth among the welter of lies, fabrications and partial truths trying to win our attention and persuade us of the justice of a particular cause. We remain committed to the essential humanity of all victims. We pray for peace. Gerald Hewitson, Anne Wilkinson
Clerks

Your link people in Ludlow Meeting are Barbara Mark and Maureen Furniss. who are on the Steering group

Report from Quarterly meeting of QARN (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network, another Quaker recognized body)

Grace da Costa: (Quakers in Britain, Public Affairs and Media Manager) recorded a message for the meeting but was not very positive on much change for those hoping for Asylum in this country.

Contact with Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration - ICIBI - the current Chief Inspector has been very vocal in the media especially about the way the government is trying to remove any power he might have to increase government transparency. We have heard that his contract is unlikely to be renewed in March. QARN hopes that they can write to him to offer support (address is on ICIBI website). If he doesn't get re-appointed, he might be asked as a speaker on some occasion.

There is great hope the leaflets published will spread the word. They hope that the leaflets will be used at the upcoming Churches of Sanctuary conference in June.
It was suggested that some might be printed and left in Friends House cafe/bookshop.
There was a small item in "Quake" but they might also put an advertisement in The Friend.

The report back from the Churches Refugee Network was that there will be a Churches of Sanctuary conference on 8th June 2024 in Carrs Lane Church in Birmingham. This is a joint venture with City of Sanctuary. QARN may be invited to run a workshop on advocacy.

A report about the Status 4 All Now was given. This is a group of organisations, set up in 2020, from across the United Kingdom and Ireland working together to call on the British and Irish states to ensure that all migrants in precarious positions are granted “Status Now”. Despite differing regulations, the aim and purpose remains consistent and the same in both.

They reported that Detention Forum is already working on materials for the upcoming election.

QCEA is planning to work on a handbook, for publication in 2024, modelled on Building Peace Together. It will compile peaceful, right-based approaches to migration at origin, transit and destination, with the aim or showing the range of action governments and citizens can take to ensure migrants and people on the move have access to basic rights, while also showing the clear benefits that making peace with migration would have at a 'whole of society' level: from justice and social cohesion to public health considerations. QARN, QCEA and Woodbrooke will offer a course on Peace Approaches to Migration in March 2024. Insights gathered through this course will feed into the initial research stages of the handbook.

Both Rethinking Security and Safe Passage are looking to the inevitable General Election next year and how they can work with Parties to make the system kinder. The Kinder transport Anniversary on the 21st November provided a public spectacle to highlight the plight of the refugees and people who seek asylum here. Another idea is to have a public commemoration of the single biggest loss of life in the channel which happened on the 24th November 2021. Events have to interest the local media and could then influence public opinion and hopefully politicians.

Words of Wisdom

Stevie Krayer (Abergavenny Meeting/Cyfarfod y Fennihas) kindly let me share her letter printed in The Friend publication of 1st December.

She also sent me this quote from Quaker Faith and Practice 24.60 Wolf Mendl
It is not so important when the perfect world will be achieved or what it will be like. What matters is living our lives in the power of love and not worrying too much about the results. In doing this, the means becomes part of the end. Hence we lost the sense of helplessness and futility in the face of the world's crushing problems.

I write as a Jewish Friend, in response to Tim Robertson's letter (3 November).

He is probably correct in asserting that many mainstream Jewish organisations would see the Quaker position as rooted in 'old tropes' about Jews. For many Jews, their identity is so bound up with Israel that criticism of Israel's actions is experienced as a personal assault, no matter how privately uneasy many Jews may feel about the occupation. (And many do.) I understand those painfully ambivalent feelings. But it would simply be dishonest to pretend that the cycle of violence started out of the blue on 7 October or that Israel is purely a victim and bears no responsibility. In fact, isn't the accusation of antisemitism yet another 'old trope', intended to discredit and silence anyone who tells the truth about a lengthy, brutal, illegal military occupation? We do have a Truth Testimony as well as a Peace Testimony.

So is BYM 'institutionally antisemitic'? To me, the 11 October statement offers no evidence for this. It seems to me measured, truthful and compassionate, and it upholds our traditional testimony by calling for an end to violence and a just peace based on international law. It is unequivocal in condemning *all* indiscriminate violence. To suggest that BYM has abandoned the Peace Testimony in order to give a thumbs-up to Hamas murders would be an appalling and unjust slur if it were not so patently absurd. The fact that crimes are not committed in a vacuum does not mean they cease to be crimes; no amount of suffering can confer a 'right' to oppress or kill in turn. I'd like to see some genuine evidence that the official Quaker position departs from that principle.

I will say that during my 30+ years among Quakers I've encountered hurtful individual examples of everything from mere crass insensitivity to unabashed antisemitism. In 2003 I stood on the platform at Yearly Meeting and reminded Friends that ordinary Israelis were human too. That seemed to come as something of a revelation to some Quakers. Perhaps there were some listening that day who even thought I was 'providing justification' for Israel's violence.

As I write this, the slaughter of civilians in Gaza has intensified and newborn babies are dying for lack of functioning intensive care units. I'm not sure that an investigation into BYM's position vis-a-vis Jews is the priority right now. But I do think it might be helpful for each of us to drop our defences, stand still in the Light and check whether we honestly believe that *every* human being is equally 'unique, precious, a child of God'. Whether a murdered child is called Leah or Laila, whether she is one of thousands from her community or only one of tens, the agony for her parents is the same.

Quaker Peacebuilding Perspectives (QPP)

This group is an informal, international peace group formed in April 2022 out of deep concern about specific international armed conflicts. QPP is driven by the realisation that such conflicts can have grave far-reaching consequences extending well into the future. For any specific conflict, QPP strives to contribute alternative approaches to resolving it with more potential for success when compared with some of the dominant perspectives expressed in the media and through general public opinion.
We are eager to collaborate with all others who wish to wage peace with strength of purpose and commitment to bring a specific conflict to an end.

Statement on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict has continued for too long causing excessive suffering. This has resulted in the intolerable loss of countless civilian lives since 1948 until the present day.
Quaker Peacebuilding Perspectives (QPP) emphasises the overriding need for the resolution of this protracted conflict as a matter of urgency, without waiting for an end to the current exchange of hostilities.
The successful resolution of the conflict will necessitate:

- Palestinians and Israelis living side-by-side in sovereign states of their own, with equal measures of security, freedom, opportunity and dignity.
- Taking into account the legitimate needs, responsibilities and rights of all inhabitants of Israel, Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.
- Internationally supported forces to maintain law and order, peace and security:
    - of a composition that is acceptable to the elected representatives of the residents of the territory in which a particular force operates,
    - monitored by a credible authority with an accountability mechanism accessible to all residents of the territories in which it operates,
    - for the purpose of preventing any territory from being used as a platform for launching any violent attack while protecting all territories from violent attack (e.g. including systems like iron dome / S400 / Patriot etc.)
- Each governing authority representing the interests of the territories over which it exercises full effective control, should be selected without external interference, equipped as necessary to fulfil its responsibility, including preventing territory under its control from being used for launching any violent attack.

QPP believe that the above provisions to disarm all parties who are otherwise committed to pursuing a path of violence ought to be taken into account. Omitting any of these considerations could seriously diminish the chances of success of an attempt to resolve this protracted conflict, paving a way towards peacebuilding.

For further information, email: peacebuildingperspectives@gmail.com

The Start of the Quaker Way: Fox 400 A Woodbrook Course

25 January - 8 February 2024

The live Zoom sessions are every Thursday at 19:00-20:30 (UK time)

‘Ben’ Pink Dandelion

Explore the beginnings of the Quaker movement and how the summer of 1652 proved pivotal for the start of the Quaker movement. Each week will take you step by step through some of the key figures and texts to better understand the foundation of Quakerism.

We visit, virtually, the key sites of the Quaker consolidation in the North West of England and explore the importance of the north to Quaker success.

The course is based around a series of films and discussion topics with the option of live discussion with the tutor each week. What you do when within the three weeks is up to you.

This course coincides with the run-up to the FWCC world plenary gathering in 2024 and will be an excellent preparation for Friends attending, whether in person or online.

The course is part of the celebrations next year for the birth of George Fox in 1624

Found in QUAKE November

Environmental Issues Pages

Fungi in my garden.
(The great dustbin men of our earth)

Friends of the Earth
are letting people know UN scientists have published a “final warning” to avoid climate disaster. Their latest climate report is an alarm call to humanity. The report says, “there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.” If we act now, we can stop things from getting even worse.
Notice shared on 23rd November 2023

Climate and Migration Coalition
By making migration safer, we enable more people to use it as a means of building their climate resilience. People on the move always face risks. Creating new, safe, and legal migration options for climate-vulnerable communities should be viewed as a key adaptation strategy. Governments must begin to cooperate and reach agreements to protect the rights of people on the move.

What Our Report Recommends:

Creating Safe, Meaningful Work Opportunities for People on the Move: Across the world, people are leaving climate-vulnerable locations and seeking work in new places. Creating secure, safe, and meaningful work in potential destination locations is vital. Assisting individuals who want to move in gaining the skills and knowledge they need to access these jobs will also be important.

Creating New Legal Migration Options for Climate-Vulnerable Communities: As the impacts of climate change grow, more people will need to access safe, legal migration options. Governments should work to create these new migration options, make existing migration routes safer, and strive to protect the rights of people on the move.

Finance and Responsibility: The people facing the most acute climate risks are those who have contributed the least to global heating. All governments must begin to address climate-driven migration, but the governments of high-emitting countries have a special responsibility to provide financial support and new legal migration options.

CARING FOR
GOD'S ACRE

The Journey of a Snowflake

As winter descends and blankets of snow start covering the ground, it's easy to forget the incredible journey that each snowflake has made.

It all begins high up in the atmosphere, where temperatures are low, and the air is laden with moisture. Tiny dust or pollen particles live up here. Water vapor condenses onto these particles and freezes, laying the foundation for the snowflake's growth.

Once the initial ice crystal forms, more water molecules in the atmosphere join it, bonding together in a hexagonal lattice structure. This structure is what gives snowflakes their unique and mesmerising symmetry. The process of crystallisation creates the six-sided foundation of each snowflake.

As the snowflake continues to grow, it falls through the atmosphere. During this journey, its fate is determined by the constantly changing atmospheric conditions. Temperature and humidity variations result in the snowflake's intricate branching patterns and designs. Each is unique, influenced by the specific conditions it encounters on its way to the ground.

Perhaps the most enchanting aspect of a snowflake's journey is its individuality. No two snowflakes are alike. As each snowflake travels to Earth, it captures a snapshot of the atmospheric conditions it encounters, resulting in its own one-of-a-kind design. This uniqueness has captivated the imagination of people for centuries.

Finally, after its long chilly journey, the snowflake gently touches the Earth's surface, joining its countless companions to create the beautiful, wintry landscapes we admire.

Andrea

Andrea Gilpin andrea@cfga.org.uk
www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

Notice from Green Christian

30th November – 12th December: COP28 UAE at Expo City Dubai. The Conference hosted over 70,000 participants, including heads of state, government officials, international industry leaders, private sector representatives, academics, experts, youth, and non-state actors. As mandated by the Paris Climate Agreement, COP28 UAE will deliver the first ever Global Stocktake – a comprehensive evaluation of progress against climate goals. The UAE will lead a process for all parties to agree upon a clear roadmap to accelerate progress through a pragmatic global energy transition and a 'leave no one behind' approach inclusive climate action.

For those who could not make 8am, but wish to join with the prayers, the sessions are also being pre-recorded and put up on this webpage each day: https://greenchristian.org.uk

I joined these prayers on several occasions and there were some beautiful and significant words and prayers said.

Eko on-line campaigning work

Here is one of the recent campaigns that have succeeded.

Global timber giant Samling has given in to international public pressure and dropped its lawsuit against Borneo's Forest Defenders. It's a huge win for Indigenous and environmental rights. This lawsuit was designed to silence and bankrupt the small grassroots organisation, Save Rivers, that exposed Samling for destroying Indigenous land, deforesting huge swathes of rainforest, and pushing endangered gibbons toward extinction. The Indigenous led campaign was supported by the Ekō community all around the world. More than 5,800 of us chipped in to help fund the Forest Defender's legal costs so they could keep fighting the lawsuit. Eko helped shine a global spotlight on Samling with more than 33,000 Ekō members signing the petition calling on Samling to drop the case. 5,400 people emailed Samling's CEO directly amplifying this ask which put so much pressure on Samling it went to the police and tried to file harassment charges against Save Rivers (it didn't work).

Infinite possibilities: Daniel Clarke Flynn

The Friend 16 Nov 2023 thought for the week.

We were each born at a specific time, in a specific place, into a family, clan, tribe, country, nation, ethnicity, culture and language. All of these were coupled with traditions that emanate from the beginnings of human history. But the conflict we see today arises when we place these specifics and traditions before our humanity. We must put our humanity first for humanity to survive.

We human beings are unlike anything else we know of in creation so far. We are living things, animals, with choice. As we evolved we created beliefs from what we could see. We attributed godly powers to nature and the heavens. As we developed, we created gods who lived 'in the heavens above' and then a single God, the Sun, until the 'Copernican revolution' opened our eyes to see more.

We are each called to rise above our beginnings, and add to creation with our unique, temporary, and necessary existence. Necessary because we are each necessary to each other, none of us an island, as John Donne poetically extols. We are all part of the main. And we are all interconnected, to each other and to creation.

To survive, we must stop asking 'What can I expect from life?' and start asking 'What does life expect of me?'

How can I do that? I can't change life, Marcus Aurelius' Serenity Prayer suggests, but I can pray for the wisdom to know what I can change. I need to ask at any given moment 'Who am I and what am I called to do?'

When can I do this? In silence, listening to and observing my own thoughts and behaviour, and that of others, without reaction or judgment.

Where can I best do that? In my experience, in Meeting for Worship. I need to practice this in community.

The more points of view I hear, the broader I see. I begin to experience that of God in everyone. I begin to see from creation's perspective, and the view can be breathtaking.

In his 'Varieties of Religious Experience' lectures (1901-1902) William James concluded: 'There is a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts: an uneasiness and its solution. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand. The solution is a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers.'

We are each called to experience the infinite and eternal within us, then to go about doing ordinary things in our daily ephemeral lives. We are each called to life by creation, with our unique human capacity to stop, look, and listen – to become 'practical mystics' as Jennifer Kavanagh has it, and unite with an invisible power, greater than us, beyond the visible creation from whence we came.