

West of Scotland

Quaker

News

April 2010

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The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Our Local Meeting in Milngavie has just experienced the pain, shock and grief at the sudden and untimely death of one of its Members and an Elder for WSAM.

It therefore is appropriate to record Margaret Gladden's death, see below, in this edition of the Newsletter. This is not intended to be an obituary; others will, I know, write later in Margaret's memory.

I believe that we all would like to be informed of the death of Quaker Friends; so please let WSQN know when this occurs and send, when possible, a face view photo of the deceased - even if somewhat out of date - together with birth and death dates.

Bryan Bowes (Editor)

To the Memory of Friends who have Died



Margaret Gladden. Born December 21st 1940 and died of an ischaemic stroke on April 3rd 2010 in the Western Infirmary, Glasgow. A much loved and respected Member of Milngavie Meeting, and Elder in the West of Scotland Meeting.

Clerk's Letter

Reflections on transformation

Since Area Meeting in March, my days have been devoted to house painting and to clearing out lumber accumulated over thirty years. I realise that this is a rather strange way to start the Clerk's Letter but as I sit surrounded by paint pots, rubbish and recycling bags, I am conscious that in a way, dealing with my stuff, questioning what resources I need, what space I occupy and how my lifestyle contributes to my perceived lack of time, is part of my spiritual journey. At times I've been overwhelmed by the task and I've been close to giving up but what has kept me going has been the satisfaction of bringing about a transformation – creating a cleaner, brighter, simpler space, free from clutter, for living a lighter life. This experience has brought me to reflect on the importance of preparing the ground for transformation.

As an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) facilitator, I help people make sense of the conflict and violence in their lives and deal with it. For a lasting change to happen people have to lay the foundations of non-violence, starting by learning to care for and value themselves, which may lead them to care more for others. In a workshop setting, they experience the value of building a supportive community through improved communication skills, co-operation and trust. But AVP goes further than this: it recognises a spiritual dimension to transformation. It is a fundamental concept of AVP that there is a power for good and peace in everyone and that this power can transform violence. Workshop participants are told, "When you are clear about your position, expect to experience a great inward power to act on it. A response that relies on this power will be courageous and without hostility."

I've had the privilege of hearing workshop participants share accounts of times when their actions brought a positive outcome to a potentially violent confrontation. The common thread which runs through these stories is that the people concerned truly wanted a non-violent outcome to the conflict. Instead of reacting they paused, which created a space, making both parties open to transforming power and making a change of direction possible.

My local Quaker Meeting is held in Wiston Lodge in South Lanarkshire. It is described as a place to grow, a centre for personal, social and emotional development. In a natural environment, well removed from their usual distractions, young and not so young people are taken beyond their comfort zones and experience physical, mental and spiritual challenge. Through this they find out more about themselves and they start to change. The work done at Wiston Lodge and places like it prepares the ground for transformation by opening hearts and minds to new possibilities but there is no magic: it takes effort and commitment for the transformation to last.

Area Meeting in April will be held in Wiston Lodge and Friends will experience the tranquillity of the setting and get a glimpse of some of the work which is done there.

Elizabeth Allen, Clerk

Reports

Area Meeting held in Dunblane 6 March 2010

It was somewhat surprising that as many as 25 Friends arrived in snowbound Dunblane after various emails had been circulated warning of the icy conditions in the car park. The meeting was held in the annexe to Scottish Churches House which is the usual Sunday home of Dunblane Quakers. The meeting room was comfortably warm and we settled down to business.

We heard about two proposed conferences to be held later in the year. Both are “all age” meetings. QPSW has one entitled “What do we Mean by Peace” to be held in August at Swanwick. The QLF&P’s one is called “Being Quaker doing Quaker” to be held in November in Hertfordshire. Financial constraints prevent our being able to send representatives to both, so we decided to send one adult and one child to just one of them. Nominations committee has been asked to find suitable representatives; the choice of which conference to be decided by those selected.

Paul Milling has offered to give AM a presentation on the recent “Viva Palestina” convoy of medical aid to Gaza to which Friends have generously contributed. We are pleased to accept this offer and hope to have it at AM either in June at Wigtown or October in Dumfries. We were happy to admit Lorraine McFadden into membership and appointed a Friend to welcome her and inform the next Glasgow Meeting.

Derek McLean spoke to the Trustees Report. They have now approved the budget for 2010. A recent donation from Dunblane Meeting helped to balance this. An aspiration of the trustees is that eventually the building reserve fund should be 10% of the value of the properties. A Guideline to maintaining Meeting Houses was agreed and will be reviewed annually. It sets out the responsibilities of both AM and the Local Meetings. Peter Christy and Jane Mitchell were appointed to serve as trustees until the end of December 2012.

“Woodbrooke on the road” is proposing to provide training for “Becoming Friends’ Companions” to support newcomers to friends. We discussed this but were not sure whether such a formal approach is either necessary or even advisable. It may be somewhat superficial. However the number of new Friends is increasing and we need to be willing to try new approaches. Perhaps GM would care to organize such training for friends in Scotland.

Residential GM is to be held in Dunblane in November. Dunblane meeting has been asked to form a small working party to organize this. We heard that the builder’s work on the new Meeting House in Wigtown will be completed next week, leaving just the painting to be done. Meeting for Worship should be able to begin in April. To celebrate the opening of the new Quaker home there will be a 24 hour long Meeting for Worship. Date to be notified later. Meeting for Sufferings has sent Area and Local Meetings a list of queries about the stewardship of our resources. Today we considered the first five questions and will consider the remaining five at our next Area Meeting on 24 April.

Margaret Giles (Dunblane Meeting)

Features

Ill-Equipped for the Journey

Some time ago I set off with my local Rambling Club to walk from Elvanfoot to Wanlockhead. Experienced walkers will know that, on a good day, this is a very pleasant walk over the hills following the route of the lovely river Clyde. However, at this stage, it is merely a little stream meandering through the gently sloping valleys of the Borders. Nonetheless this walk is very exposed and affords absolutely no shelter whatsoever; not a tree - not a shrub.

When we started out on our walk, there was a gentle splash of sma' rain. However for the remaining day, the rain never let up for one relentless, drizzling, moment. Climbing over the hills, we were met by a steady headlong wind. The journey became one of pleasureless endurance! A trudge into the driving, unforgiving, weather. Maureen developed a heel blister. When I removed her boot I found that the skin was exposed over an area about the size of a penny (old money). I chastised her "Why did you leave it so long to tell me that you were in pain!" (men can be inadequate at times). Maureen said "I thought I was imagining things - my boots have never let me down before". (Women can be a mystery to men!)

Fortunately a member of our group had one of those 'magic' plasters which seem to replace skin, take away the pain and mend the damaged tissue. This 'ministry' was afforded to Maureen, and so she was able to continue (slowly) with the walk. The woman who supplied the plaster had no particular religious convictions but acted simply from her own built-in resources of care. We continued on our way into the dismal weather. Gradually I realized that I was beginning to feel cold. "Why?" I questioned myself. "I have waterproofs, fleeces, and thermal underwear, I should not be feeling cold" But I was! The incessant wind and rain, which had been blowing in our faces for the past four hours, had gradually worked through my hill-walking armour and I was literally soaked to the skin!

However an 'angel' was at hand in the form of a barmaid in a village pub. This had an enormous coal fire and it, and the drinks we purchased, offered us some solace; but I could hardly see my pint for the steam which was rising from my weather-assaulted body. Maureen was 'steaming' too - if you know what I mean!

On the mantelpiece my eyes fell (unbelievably) on a 'swear box'. Summoning up all of my 'Quaker effrontery', I challenged the barmaid. "Excuse me dear," I intoned, "but you are swearing like a trouper - you must owe this box a small fortune!" She laughingly replied that "her father had given it - he's such a silly old *****!" I smiled inwardly to myself and settled into the enjoyment of the fire and my drink, understanding clearly what she meant. I boxed my tongue-in-cheek Quakerly protest.

When we look upon our fellow men and women with love and compassion (that's what we're supposed to do, is it not?) what do we find? I observe many of my fellow mortals to be trapped in dis-eased bodies and minds and are sadly 'ill-equipped' for their unsolicited journey into life (none of us purchased a ticket).

Some are blind, some lame, some confused and some are quite mad. Many are physical and psychological disasters and some of us don't even leave the womb. Occasionally I find myself agreeing with the barmaid: my 'father' (which art in heaven) can also seem, from this human perspective, to be such a silly old 'Person' also.

However, to my relief and utter joy, the New Testament declares that God is love and that, somehow, it is in loving our neighbours as we love ourselves, that we encounter this God who makes things whole. Could it be that 'He' too perhaps, is in some way frangible? It seems to me that all of the principal religious teachers ultimately point us in the same spiritual direction. Our task, it would appear, is to transcend our false sense of 'Self'. When the self-centred nature within us disappears and 'we' (dualistic nature) become no more, then the chattering confusion of the mind is stilled: we lose ourselves in the act of sharing in our silent spiritual practices with our Friends. The 'I' then becomes non-existent, lost within the compassionate love as observed in the lives men such as Yeshua, Gautamma, Ghandi and Schweitzer. If we are 'lost' in the mystery of this practice, it seems to me that we harmonise with the requirements of the inner calling (God never uses force) which is already an intrinsic part of each of us; the much sought after 'Pearl of great price'.

There is that of God in every man (no ifs, no buts). This is the declared truth of Quakerism and we ourselves endorse it daily. Sadly I find that, whilst we each declare this truth, a lot of us don't really seem to believe it. We insist in continuing our search for God 'out there'. However, in the New Testament which I read, He (She/It) is also 'lost' in compassionate love for us and is seemingly prepared to become 'no more' on our behalf. God thus disappears within a clearly defined and infinite love. We, it seems to me, must then also learn to 'disappear' too and become 'no more' - absent to the hatred, spitefulness, anger and revenge we see around us every day in this mysterious journey we call life.

"The kingdom of heaven is within you" - Yeshua of Nazareth.

Bill Bingham (Glasgow Meeting)

Forgiveness and Logic

The act of forgiveness can be trivial or impossible or anything in between. All Christians try to follow Jesus' commandment to forgive without limit (he did not mention forgetting) and he must have known that forgiving frees us from the inner consuming resentment and anger that may cause real psychological damage and accompanying physical symptoms.

The act of forgiveness is difficult to define, but I think it has to be primarily a specific act of will, not just a pushing of unworthy thoughts to the back of one's mind. It is important to accept that the act of forgiveness both requires and enables one patiently to put aside resentment every time it tries to come back. There is, however, no easy prescription for a continuing injury; this may need some physical constructive response as well.

But what of the injuries that seem impossible to forgive and fill us with anger so

strong that we can taste it? Do you remember how painful and embarrassing it was when you were forced to apologise for something, whether you were sorry or not? Well, forcing oneself to say, "I forgive so-and-so" - and mean it - is far worse, and I don't know how anybody accomplishes this without God's help. A test of success is a prayer for God's care for the offending person, without needing to know the result of that care.

When we remember families in Northern Ireland who are able to say they bear no resentment for the killing of their loved ones, it shows that we can all perform even the most impossible acts of forgiveness.

In view of this, we who have not been injured can do no less than follow them in forgiving their attackers - but only for the distress they caused us, and not for the injury itself. Only the injured can forgive injuries done to them. It makes no sense to say we cannot forgive - let's say the Nazis - for the terrible things they did. It is logical only for us to forgive the distress they caused to ourselves. Concretely, if Tom punches my brother Bob, it is not logical to say "I can't forgive Tom for punching Bob", but only to say "I can't forgive Tom for distressing me". And, of course, if Bob forgives, surely I can do no less.

Margaret Peacock (Milngavie Meeting)

Risks and Talents

Not being a risk-taker myself I have often wondered how I would measure up, for example, if our country were torn by war. Young people learn about the Second World War from TV documentaries or history books. But many people of my generation heard stories first-hand about the courage and humanity of 'ordinary' people caught up in it on both sides. As a teenager one of my friends was living in Warsaw during the fierce retribution after the Polish uprising. Some Austrian soldiers were sent to arrest the nuns and children in the convent where she was staying. But instead the soldiers disobeyed their orders and took them that night to their own lodgings. The next day one of the soldiers drove them all to safety in a horse-drawn covered wagon. Another friend and his wife both risked their lives working in the French Resistance. He said that he felt sure from his experiences guiding Allied soldiers across the Pyrenees that ordinary German soldiers had often turned a blind eye to suspicious activities. One evening I told his wife about my uncle who spent the war on occupied Jersey, and among many daring deeds kept people informed about the daily news from the BBC. Unlike others, he had not surrendered his radio as demanded by the occupying forces. My friend's wife was very dismissive of anyone who would give up their radio - her granny even had a transmitter in her house. Commandos had come and installed it. Risk-taking and heroism, it seems, are not just for the young, fit and healthy.

Although risk-taking is not everybody's cup of tea, everyone has talents, some more than others. We got our use of the word 'talent', originally a coin, from Jesus' story about three men who were each loaned a sum of money in talents. Two men made good use of the money, but one just buried it in the ground. When asked why he had done this he said he was afraid to use it. Of course all coins of one type such as pennies are the same. But we now use the word 'talent' to include many different

(Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5), Jesus began by recognising that his listeners were blessed with different spiritual strengths. He said that each group should feel happy that they have these strengths. His list included the gentle, and those who show mercy, qualities not too difficult for the least brave of us to aspire to. His repeated use of the word 'happy' lifts our spirits, and draws fear of failure away from us.

But what he said next is revolutionary in its empowerment if you remember that he was not just speaking to the select group of disciples around him, but to ordinary people that had followed him into the hills. His words at once both give us self-respect and graciously call to us. "You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world."

The late *Margaret Gladden* (Milngavie Meeting): part of an article written by Margaret in 2005 for the local newspaper

The Cross: Sculpture by Henry Moore (1956)

Glenkiln Sculpture Walk



In the Glenkiln Estate, adjacent to the Reservoir, there are several sculptures which were purchased by Sir William Keswick (a friend and patron of Henry Moore) between 1951 and 1976 and installed by him to form an open-air sculpture park.

It contains bronzes by Moore, including his *Standing Cross* (left) together with works by Rodin (*John the Baptist*, right) and Epstein.

These wonderfully expressive works, standing free in beautiful hilly country, make a memorable half-day excursion from Castle Douglas by cycle or car.

Bryan Bowes (Milngavie Meeting)

Photo: *Bryan Bowes*, Milngavie Meeting

John the Baptist: Sculpture by Auguste Rodin (ca. 1878)



Photo: Bryan Bowes, Milngavie Meeting

Area Meeting in Lanark April 24th

AM will be held in Wiston Lodge (see also Clerk's Letter) at 11.00 for 11.30. From Glasgow the Lodge can be reached by train from Central Station to Lanark, then by bus service 30 to Wiston village road end. By car from Glasgow leave the M74 at exit 11 (Harpenden Services), take the A70 towards Edinburgh through Rigside village, then turn right at the top of the hill towards Wiston on the B7055. The Lodge is 5 miles along the road on the left-hand side adjacent to the school.

For copyright reasons the Google map could not be reproduced, but it can be downloaded from www.wistonlodge.co.uk

From the Editor: **Margaret Gladden's family** of 4 adult children (see memorial note on page 2) are anxious to retain her large house in Bearsden for the time being, rather than selling it. They mentioned that they would like it to be occupied by Quaker Friends who would be in sympathy with the spirit of their mother's life. I have now received the following email message from Rona writing on behalf of herself and siblings:

“We would like you to put an announcement in the Scotland Quaker News. The rent would be very low! We'd be happy just to know that the house and mum's things would be safe”

Further details can be obtained from Rona (nee Womersley) at 01870 60 2579; sineag1@yahoo.co.uk

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Copy should be sent to the editor Bryan Bowes preferably in word or plain text
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