

THE YOUNG QUAKER

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The Literary Issue



“A score of years ago a friend placed in my hand a little book which became one of the turning points of my life. It was called *True peace*... It had but one thought ... that God was waiting in the depths of my being to talk to me if only I would get still enough to hear his voice.

I thought this would be a very easy matter, and so I began to get still. But I had no sooner commenced than a perfect pandemonium of voices reached my ears, a thousand clamouring notes from without and within, until I could hear nothing but their noise and din. Some of them were my own voice, some were my own questions, some of them were my very prayers.”

Quaker Faith and Practice 2:53

News

YFGM Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion statement

At the last YFGM gathering in February 2019, YFGM adopted a statement calling for Quakers to be inclusive and welcoming to trans and non-binary people. We also committed to supporting Quakers in the society outside of YFGM to learn about gender diversity and trans inclusion. The minute was developed on the statement from a special interest gathering on Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion in November.

The minute was created following growing concern in YFGM about conversations in Quakerism about gender diversity. In particular, Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) recently released a statement which “affirm[ed] the right of women’s organisations to critique and explore the nature of gender identification and respect their right to freedom of speech”. To put this into context, in the past year several Quaker meetings hosted events by ‘gender critical’ groups, who advocate for the exclusion of trans women from women’s spaces.

The YFGM statement does not discuss who should be allowed to make bookings in Quaker meeting houses, but we did commit to “tak[ing] all steps possible to ensure that all our YFGM meetings are held in a trans inclusive spaces”.

The QLCC statement also states that “we do not accept that the critique of transgender identities in the political sphere is necessarily transphobic”. The YFGM statement rejects this claim explicitly, instead affirming the right of all people to self-identify, and stating that there is no conflict between feminism and trans and non-binary inclusion.

The full YFGM statement reads:

We believe that each person has the right to de-

termine for themselves what gender identities and expressions are most comfortable and authentic for them. We recognize that each member of our community has a unique and deeply personal experience of gender, and that the expression of this is a form of living truthfully and of witness. As Friends — both trans and cis, binary and non-binary — we affirm that there is no conflict between trans inclusion, feminism, and liberation from gender roles and stereotypes. We do not support the use of meeting houses to host events which claim otherwise, and we hope that Meetings will decide not to host these events in future.

The Society of Friends should be welcoming and affirming of trans and non-binary people. We commit to fostering change to this effect and to bringing YFGM and the Society of Friends closer to this ideal.

We encourage Friends engaging in this conversation going forwards to consider the message of A&Q#22: “Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.”

Brexit online Meeting for Worship

On Friday 29th March, the date that the UK was supposed to leave the EU, Quakers across Europe held an online Meeting for Worship. The event was organised by Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and FWCC-Europe and Middle East Section (EMES).

The Meeting did not take any political stance for or against Brexit or any specific deal. Rather, the idea was to come together in worship and prayer, allowing people across Europe to feel connected at this important political juncture, and to provide the stillness and prayer that forms the foundations of witness.

News

Young Adult Pathways in Sustainability (by Laura McQuillan)

At a time when civilisation and the environment seems to be on the edge of breakdown, Living Witness and Next Global Ecovillage Network are seeking young adults to collaborate in a programme:

1. To develop their capacity to sustain themselves and navigate the ecosystem of change agency; and
2. To help build community around addressing the need for an awareness- and values-based societal transformation.

The project is in its early stages and we are looking for Young Friends to get involved and shape it!

We held our first online call on Thursday 28th where we discussed our hopes and needs for the project. We had similar ideas, humour, energy, talking about similar things in different ways.

We discussed:

- How we hope we can find ways to break out of our bubbles and networks to reach the wider society.
- Who this project could be aimed at, people interested in living in an ecovillage or being involved then going back to live an urban lifestyle and make radical changes at home.
- Applicability to activism, how do we in the 21st century convey our understanding of the destruction of the natural world in a way that has some impact? Linking civil disobedience work to peace and conflict.
- How we would like it not to be structure heavy and how co-creation is fun but comes with time challenges
- Finding a powerful, radical Quaker voice
- Jake shared the Global Ecovillage Network saying that - if it's not fun it's not sustainable!

London Young Quakers explore the history of 19th Century Quaker Radicals

On 6th April the London Young Quaker Worship Group held a session at Westminster Meeting House exploring the history and ideas of Sam Hobson and other Quaker radicals.

The session was titled 'Forgettable Quaker radicals: Sam Hobson and the birth of modern Quakerism'. Attendees learnt about how the fundamentals of British Quakerism as we know it were born in the dramatic changes that spread through the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. Virtually all the elements of C19th Quakerism; political liberalism, elitist diplomacy, evangelicalism and paternalism were challenged by a new generation of Friends. The radical ideas of these Quakers laid the foundations of modern Quakerism, and it could be argued that no one symbolised this radicalism more than the Quaker socialist Samuel George Hobson who throughout his life campaigned for the new social order that we as Quakers still strive for today.

The historical portion of the evening was followed by a bring-and-share meal. The session sparked an interesting discussion about how we, as young adult Friends, can positively change British Quakerism to revive the spirit of Sam Hobson & his comrades by creating a radical inclusive community of friends.

Spirit of the Rainbow

Spirit of the Rainbow is a non-Quaker organisation being set up as a grassroots movement to awaken and support an awareness of oneness in ourselves and humanity as a whole. They state that outer work in the world goes hand in hand with inner work on themselves.

Local groups can set their own priorities but may include such things as cleaning up beaches, welcoming refugees, meditation on global unity and spreading the idea of oneness through the media and in our daily lives.

Their first local meeting will be on the 22nd June 2019 from 2.30pm – 3.30pm at Brighton Library, Jubilee St, Brighton BN1 1GE in Conference Room 2. **ALL WELCOME**
Contact email: spiritoftherainbow@yahoo.co.uk

Poetry in translation

Hirad Ba shares his poetry in English and Farsi

Sigh,

My fate was always unfortunate, even compared to yours.

I was doomed even before birth.

I experienced differences, maybe different from your anticipations.

Sigh, I couldn't dance freely, sing loudly, speak my words freely, choose my beliefs or even think openly.

So, I only know sad tales.

But I think we were only in two different cages.

I hope one day, we will have the same rights, with no cages.

ای کاش،

تو می دانستی که سرگذشت من چه تلخ بوده. حتی تاریک تر از آنچه که تصور میکنی

تولد من هم از ازل با نحس و تیرگی های زمین گره خورد

شاید تجربه های من پوچی را به تو بنمایاند

آه،

نه میشد که آزادانه رقصید،

آوازی را بلند بخوانم،

آزادانه هرچه میخواستم بگویم،

حتی نمیشد عقیده ای را آزادانه به تفکر و اداش

پس من فقط، تیرگی های روزگار را می دانم

ولی،

شاید تو هم در قفس دیگری هستی

ای کاش روزی باشد که سرگذشت، به من و تو دیکته نکند هیچ قفسی را.

In Meeting

Bethany Hodgkinson shares her poetry about Quaker Meetings

In silence you can feel the room.

Quiet and blind, the breath of the room swells
like a tide to carry you through the stillness of your mind
(In the moments when you can still your mind),
and the connection of the breath and stillness
is like a decision, or permission, to stop and feel the world.

Not just the room that makes your small world,
but the world you feel with your feet;
That undeniable gravity that connects you
with every distant child and mountain, and deep sea.

You might laugh and say, "it's only concrete beneath you",
but concrete has roots of a kind, or it wouldn't stick,
and we have roots of a kind, or we wouldn't.

So, with the room,
your mind sees the roots reaching and connecting,
and it's like holding hands simply by sharing space.

No one acknowledges this magic.
When you enter the room you hold the secret in your mind
(Like an inward facing smile),
that here we can step back, and see

the world by closing our eyes;
seeing the forest instead of the trees,
seeing God instead of the forest.

And by stepping out into the silence to see the world,
we can see ourselves.
We see the pictures we've painted inside our heads,
and, with another shift, we see the artist,
the higher self that dreams us into the world.

Sometimes the higher self speaks and the voice is so loud that it leaves our mouths,
reaching through the silence to the room.
But it does not shake the silence, which has roots.

Later, and all at once, the room heaves a collective sigh,
the hour for opening the mind being done.
And everyone smiles the placid smile of good dreams,
or pure love, or even of being drunk.

Still, we don't acknowledge the secret.
But, as with every holy place stretching through time
the focus of the mind stays like the memory of smoke
and the silence lingers in the room.

Revising Quaker Faith and Practice

In February, Meeting for Sufferings appointed me as one of the twenty-four members of the *Quaker Faith & Practice* revision committee. We haven't met yet (our first meeting is scheduled for the weekend after May's YFGM), but I've been asked to share some thoughts about the revision.

Revising *Quaker Faith & Practice* is important because of Friends' need to be constantly open to revelation of new truths and experiences. While it hasn't been as long since the last revision (completed in 1994: 25 years ago) as the one before (1959: 35 years), the revision process is likely to take about eight to ten years in all, so a revision is about due.

I'm very keen to begin the revision work as society has moved on so much since the last revision. Our faith and testimonies are more important in the modern world than they've ever been, and Quaker perspectives on current issues desperately need expressing. I'm particularly hoping to see/introduce more material on gender identity issues, extra emphasis on sustainability (not that the current book lacks it, but it seems rather thin), and perhaps some on mental health, and issues around modern technology, social media and so on. We also need to brush up our approaches to God (or whatever you call it) to really reflect the present diversity of thought on the matter, especially non-theist perspectives, which is currently only hinted at. (And if I am to contribute, I need to read Helen

Rowland's book *God, Words and Us* before May – top of my to-do list!!) I've seen people point out that the current book is often painfully reader-unfriendly – its language could be far simpler, and its font could be more dyslexia-friendly.

There's only so much you can do with older Quaker writings regarding simple language, but perhaps paraphrases of some more difficult and/or older sections might be produced as a supplement? I will probably get to bring all of this up with the committee over the course of the revision. Doubtless they will each have their own set of priorities, not to mention the suggestions we will be receiving from other Friends.

However, I'm also quite attached to the current book, and painfully aware that no matter what we keep, some material from that is going to have to go, inevitably including several people's favourite passages (it's hard to cater to fifteen thousand individual tastes) – as last year's yearly meeting epistle said, as a result of continuing revision "some among us are always grieving". I'm thinking of asking the committee if we can consider at least keeping the current volume's web version around for a while, moved into some archive section of the website; previous books of discipline never had an online presence, and it might address this.

Nevertheless, I'm very excited to introduce new perspectives and cover new ground, and particularly to

Tas Cooper shares his thoughts about the revision of the Quaker Book of Discipline

see what comes out of the proposed new format: general statements of principles (pre-sumably to be drafted by us) to accompany the present extracts from Friends' writings, explaining briefly and readably what we do and why. For me, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. I remember reading Quaker faith & practice as a relative newcomer and being frustrated at having to dig through several extracts to get at "the" Quaker perspective on various issues, and after reading Young Friends' Living Our Beliefs, which adopts the proposed format for the next book.

I've appreciated the clarity of the introductory statements on each issue and think newer Friends would probably appreciate such a format even more.

However – and I feel quite a strong concern about this – I'm also aware, (in a way I wasn't as a new enquirer), that on many issues there is no one Quaker perspective. Even our most basic testimonies have various ways of being put into practice and involve various dilemmas, let alone matters of worship and theology. That means it would be important to also include a very wide variety and substantial volume of extracts such as those used in the current book. I have seen such a format used in other books of discipline, sometimes very successfully, but others either letting the committee's voice predominate at the expense of diverse views or overdoing it on the extracts at the expense of simplici-

ty. It might be a difficult balance to strike.

We are scheduled to begin by revising the "church governance" section (the equivalent of the current book's chapters 3-17), which is projected to be a separate volume, as it was until 1994, so most of my thoughts above probably won't come into play for a while, although I will try to express them to the rest of the committee as soon as possible.

On a different, more social note, I never expected to be nominated to the committee and consider it a huge honour, of which I hope to become vaguely worthy! I know half the new committee at least vaguely and am slightly in awe of much of the company I've been nominated to keep; I'm very keen to get to know the rest and am sure I will make many lasting friendships over the course of the revision as well as being exposed to many different points of view, priorities and theological outlooks. I'm looking forward to huge personal development opportunities over the coming years!

If you would like to suggest a passage from a current text for inclusion in the new book, or even write your own, you can do so online at forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea, or email qfp@quaker.org.uk.

How books are making me a stronger Quaker

Ella March describes how studying literature strengthens her Quaker values

I sat in a friend's living room recently, and we chatted a little about our childhoods. We both study English at university, and I noticed, while she talked, that she had chosen to study and write on texts and topics that reflected her childhood feminism. And then it struck me that I've done the same thing. Throughout university, I have repeatedly chosen to write on texts which allow me to explore the Quaker values of justice and equality.

I was brought up a Quaker. I am proud that my religion encourages its members to seek an equal life for all, even when that means challenging long-held beliefs. I truly believe that this world can be a fairer place. But only if we all put effort into making it so.

For a long period of my childhood, books saved me from the world. I liked school, but I wasn't sociable, and that made me stand out. Reading was an escape from social awkwardness. I found friends in the characters who also stood out from the norm- Hermione Granger, Matilda, Lucy Pevensie, later Katniss Everdeen. It wasn't a coincidence that all those characters came from different worlds, or different versions of our world.

To be blunt, I was hiding from our reality.

The thing is, although I understood that Quakers were more open minded than other people around me, I never tried to understand why. Into my teens, I became more aware of the need to work for a better world. It took going to university for me to really start to want to do that work, though. And where books had been my shield, they became the source of my realisation that simply to believe that change was important wasn't enough.

In the past three years, I have studied authors from centuries of British literature. I have written on how Shakespeare, Fanny Burney, and Anne Bronte portray women differently from the norms of their time and encourage young people to develop their own values. I've found more modern texts to engross me, too- works by writers like Zadie Smith, Angie Thomas, and Seamus Heaney.

Instead of just writing about ways my situation as a young woman can be improved, I've considered the ways my viewpoint has often been prioritised over others. Texts like *White Teeth* and *The Hate U Give* show exactly where our world can be made better, and their characters act as role models to inspire that change. It's easier to argue for change when I understand why it is necessary. Studying texts from across British history and society has given me that understanding. I'm sure I don't have to say that continuing to fight for a change in our world is exhausting. I'm reminded of that every time I look at news websites to see articles where discrimination and injustice seem normal. But fighting for change is essential to my identity as a Quaker, and finding so many varied voices through studying literature has given me the strength to keep moving forward. Books have become a source of my power, rather than my shield. I want to be as brave as the characters in my favourite books, past and present.

My love of books has strengthened my Quaker values, and my Quaker values have informed the way I read. I'll be going on to study Victorian literature and its relationship to society's values as a master's in the autumn. Hopefully, one day, I'll be able to contribute literature of my own to a fairer world.

Start Spreading Love

Kiloran Campbell describes the STOP FUNDING HATE campaign

“Stop Funding Hate” is a small but mighty campaign against the current profitability in British media of publishing hateful headlines and articles. The likes of the Daily Mail, the Sun and the Express are particular offenders, with xenophobic and homophobic perspectives linked to hate crimes. In a hope-filled presentation and Q&A session at the February YFGM, one of the minds behind the young campaign explained their aims and methodology. The newspapers and websites that publish this bigoted content are funded by advertisers - mainly large brands like national supermarkets, utility companies and banks. This means that we as consumers are funding the content by using these companies. It also means that we have a voice, and our reactions as consumers and wallet-holders will be noted.

Since the start of Stop Funding Hate, organisations including Paperchase, The Body Shop, Lush, The Woodland Trust and Center Parcs have all confirmed they will no longer advertise in the Mail. The case brought to particular attention in the Special Interest Group was that of the single Facebook post that led to Lego withdrawing their advertising from the Mail, by a man called Bob. Young Friends were exhorted to “Be like Bob”, and express the conflicting emotions produced by seeing products and services we want to use side-by-side with articles and headlines directly linked to rising hate crime. The UN human rights chief has made a statement on the concerning incitement to hatred in the British press. Happily, the campaign has also seen a significant reduction in the amount of anti-migrant headlines (there were 54 in the Daily Express alone by October 2016 in 2016).

What can Young Friends and individuals do to support the campaign? Apart from the obvious - tweeting, posting, and writing emails and letters to companies who advertise in these publications - there is of course strength in numbers. If a group you are already part of, such as a Meeting House, employer, school, university, or union, is supplied by a utility company, stationer, or supermarket who advertise in the Mail or Express, then you already have a group behind a campaign. You could ask those responsible for purchasing if they'd be happy to publicly state that they do not endorse articles and headlines like the ones mentioned above, and ask the supplier to withdraw adverts or block advertising from their website. Stop Funding Hate have a resource page online which includes supporting evidence for the homophobic and xenophobic content promoted by the outlets.

We also had the Conscious Advertising Network brought to our attention, a UK-based coalition dedicated to promoting ethical practice in the advertising industry. Any organisation that deals with advertising is welcome to sign up and endorse ethical, transparent advertising.

For more information and resources, you can visit the websites:

<https://stopfundinghate.info> and <https://www.consciousadnetwork.com/>

A review of Hester and Sophie

Kiloran Campbell reviews Hester and Sophie by John Lampen

13-year old Hester lives with her dad, brother, dog and Quaker mum in contemporary small town England. This short novel takes place over what should have been an ordinary week for Hester - apart from that by the end of the first chapter of the book, Hester's absent best friend, Sophie, seems somehow to have written in the private notebook Hester had hidden away. Hester sets herself the mission of getting to the bottom of this, learning about her friend, her family, and her faith on the way.

Hester and Sophie is a wonderful debut novel, successfully interweaving themes of bereavement, family, and coming of age amid light fantasy and classical poetry. Hester's voice is impressive for an older male author such as John Lampen (a peace-worker) - convincing and relatable. Alongside the relatability of this "ordinary" teenage girl's voice, Lampen deftly supplies mystery, emotion and the remarkable. Published in April 2019, the late 2018 setting may soon feel too relevant, with references to Poldark and Ariana Grande turning the book into a period piece in a few years' time. Sadly the difficulties Hester and Sophie face - grief, bullying, racism, sexism, and anxieties about terrorism, global warming, and refugees, are, too, likely to stay relatable to readers of any age.

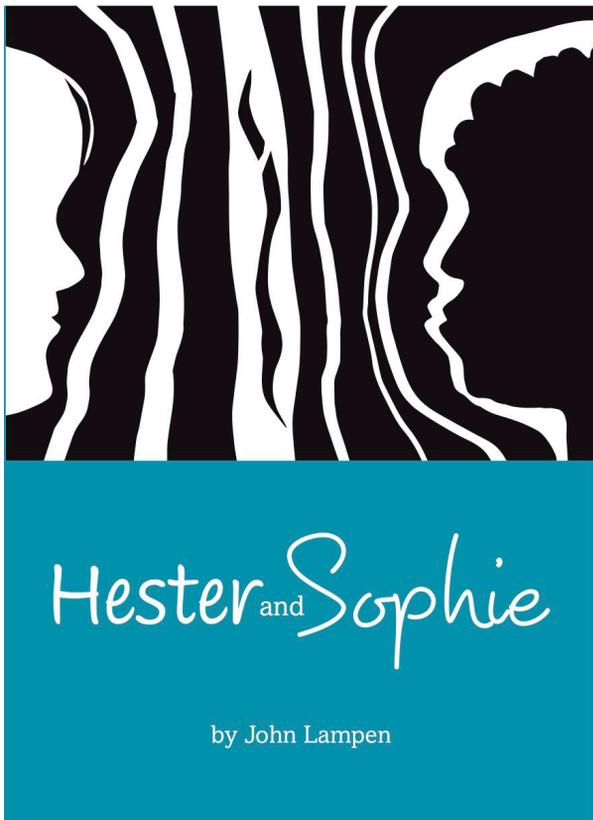
On two occasions Hester looks at her own breasts in the mirror. At first, these particular moments disconcerted me as some of the least likely scenes in the story. In recent years, literary critics have lampooned male writers for creating female narrators who are overly focussed on their chests. However, the quiet acceptance and appreciation of a body in the face of schoolboys' insults is a happy moment. Also refreshing for me was the absence of a romantic subplot. While there is no indication of Hester being queer, she is clearly uninterested in dating boys.

The book seems best aimed at a white audience, particularly as it approaches racism from the perspective of a white friend. It also uses a racial slur, the n-word, in reported dialogue, along with the language of misogynistic abuse. The choice to represent bullies and harassers by echoing offensive language in these two passages results in a shocking read, if realistic dialogue. I would encourage readers of Hester and Sophie to consider the effect of reproducing language like this.

Hester and Sophie is gorgeously illustrated throughout in colour by artist Rosie Ryder. It costs £7.50 and is available at Friends House. It can also be ordered from bookshops (ISBN: 978-1-78972-054-9), or from hopeproject.co.uk via PayPal or cheque, with £1.50 p&p.

An interview with John Lampen

John Lampen, author of a number of Quaker books, has written his first novel at the age of eighty. Here he talks to The Young Quaker about it.



TYQ: What is the book about?

John Lampen: It's the story of a week in the life of a 13-year old girl, Hester, in which she makes a number of important discoveries about herself and the world around her.

TYQ: Is it a "Quaker novel"?

JL: No. My aim was simply to write a story which I hoped would appeal to readers of Hester's age. I hope it will interest some boys as well as girls. But I had no clear idea when I started where it was going. When I began a chapter, I knew more or less what was going to happen in that chapter, but almost no idea of what would come next. For instance, the mysterious words which Hester finds in Sophie's book were just "given" to me – I didn't yet know how they would fit into the story. And I wasn't trying to illustrate a theme.

TYQ: But there definitely are themes in the book.

JL: Yes, when I'd written the first draft (which took about ten days) I was surprised how many things the book seemed to be about.

TYQ: Such as?

JL: First and foremost, losing someone very dear to you and coming to terms with that. Then it looks at growing up and responding to the changes in one's body; discovering the value of dreams, and the way that literature can be deeply relevant to one's everyday life; and what religious experience can actually mean to you, compared to what other people tell you about it. Also I wanted to portray a family which is functioning well and see how it manages its ups and downs.

TYQ: Wow! That sounds like a lot to fit into a short book.

JL: As I said, I didn't plan to deal with any of that. My other books were all planned to "make a case" of some sort. I always write fast, and then revise a lot; but in the past I had a map of each book in my head before starting. The best way to describe writing Hester and Sophie is to say it was like listening to Hester as she told me her story and writing it down. And she too doesn't know at the start of each day what's going to happen!

TYQ: How did you feel about writing in the voice of someone young enough to be your granddaughter?

JL: Well, I was frightened that I couldn't make it work. And I am so grateful that everyone who has given me feedback, including a girl the same age as Hester, who has told me they believed in her. I've had a few hints of disapproval from people who haven't read it. Perhaps they think I've invaded a space I should have avoided. But surely, at a time when so many questions about gender are surfacing, it's not a bad thing to use one's imagination and empathy to try to understand others better.

TYQ: Beautifully put; we can't help but agree with that!

Quaker Faith and Practice excerpts to encourage a trainee teacher

Cathy Hall shares her thoughts of Quakerism in relation to teaching

Teachers are optimists. We would not be teachers if we did not have confidence in the future and in humankind. We trust that given the right opportunities children will grow up into responsible adults capable of making good choices and of saving the world from disaster.

The two qualities which are most important to children of today are hope and imagination. Hope to believe they can change the world they live in and imagination to find ways to do so.

Janet Gilbraith, 1986 (Quaker Faith and Practice 23.85)

As a science teacher in training who has recently introduced their year 8 students to climate change, I can confirm that Janet Gilbraith's statement still holds true. We teach, with dreadful clarity, the greenhouse effect, the carbon cycle and the generally accepted view that continuing to burn fossil fuels will result in further increase in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and hence further increase the average global temperature. We introduce it as if there was no debate in the scientific community about what exactly is causing the increase in global climate, although, of course, there still is.

One student responded with a politely asked question, coloured with what can only be described as frustration – “So why do we keep cutting down rainforests?” I felt in that moment as if I was expected to justify all the past and present decisions of all political and business leaders, and, of course, I could not. So Janet Gilbraith's statement from more than 30 years ago rang true. Not only did this young person need hope that the world could be changed, but my every wish in that moment was that they would have the opportunity to develop the imagination and retain the determination to do so.

On February 15th, thousands of students, including many from my placement school in Oxfordshire, took part in a co-ordinated strike to protest about the global lack of action on climate change. I was encouraged not only by the passion of the students who didn't turn up to their lessons, but the support of teachers. One teacher I was observing on the day began her lesson with “Why are you here? Why are you not striking?”

Whilst all this may show that I have found inspiring reasons to stay in the teaching profession, it would be an understatement to say that I have struggled in my new role. Now, almost at the end of my training, I can clearly say that I have retained my sense of purpose. On my worst days I turned again to Faith and Practice.

Children and young people need love and stability. Are we doing all we can to uphold and sustain parents and others who carry the responsibility for providing this care?

Advice and Queries 23:24

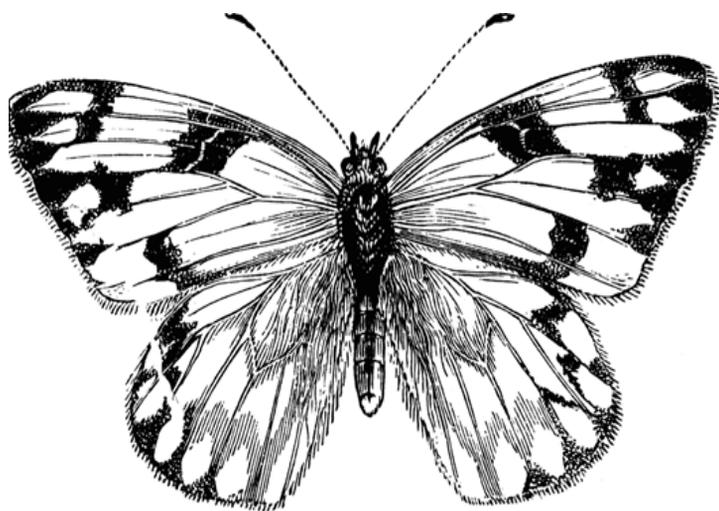
This statement reminded me that I not only needed, but deserved to be looked after. I realised that by attending meeting for worship I had joined a community that intended to uphold me in my work, and for that, I am grateful.

Young Quaker Poems

Cathy Hall shares her poetry

Rhetoric

I will stick with rhetoric,
 I will make it sharp and slick,
 Why forsake it for another,
 When it's simple form and figure
 Is no bother, lest a calculating lover
 Steal it's overarching cover
 For a noble cause,
 But pause -
 Why, I fear that lover snores,
 (Even through doors!)
 So I lie unslept,
 Where, resting gently, all that's
 kept
 Is steeped in language,
 Warm and thick,
 Blanketed with rhetoric



For the quaker doth quake and quibble

For the quaker doth quake and quibble,
 Better yet, to fake and fibble,
 Sayeth the other with the globe-
 some shines,
 From the dark and dullsome
 grimes,
 But the quaker, still doth quake,
 Maybe, have a piece of cake,
 After caking, time for quibble,
 For the quibblesome don't fibble,
 We return again to meet,
 Cold, wind, warm or sleet,
 For the quaker doth quake and quibble,
 To forsake the fake and fibble

Quaker Witness: An attempt at Simplicity 2019!

Kiloran Campbell talks about their quest to avoid Buying Things

Just before Christmas 2018, my family had had an “unwanted gift exchange”; I left laden with stuff. The following week, I volunteered at Quaker Open Christmas, the Quaker Homeless Action shelter open to all on Tottenham Court Road. I’m a lax Attender, so staying at the Penn Club with Friends and having a quiet and reflective morning on the 25th December was a wake-up call in terms of thinking about my relationship with materialism and excess. I had been seeking quantifiable ways to “live simply” for months. Later in the day I watched one of the guests at the shelter open a StreetVet gift box for his dog, including a portable water bowl from Tiger. The flimsy plastic contraption broke after a single night on the streets. I kept thinking about how fleetingly useful the present had been. Christmas is just about the best time of year for those of us in culturally Christian societies to face up to sustainability issues around single use plastic. However, according to a psychologist friend, New Year resolutions are also more effective in habit-forming than not! I’m an all-or-nothing type, so I resolved to stop buying Stuff for all of 2019.

I set parameters, allowing myself a budget including food, medicinal costs, transport, services, and outings. Apart from rent and bills, nearly everything else, from toilet paper and washing up liquid to clothes, shoes, car parts and kitchen gadgets, would be off limits for the entirety of 2019. If I absolutely had to buy something I would do my best to source it second-hand, but I hoped to manage the whole year. On the last day of 2018 I stocked up on stamps and bought some high-strength glue and duct tape. As an arty person, I felt confident I would be

able to create gifts and greetings cards from supplies I already owned in lieu of buying them.

On January 1st, I ran out of lip balm, and was about to start wallowing in self-pity for my self-imposed ascetism and year of chapped lips before I realised it must be easy to make. A quick google and 30 seconds in the microwave later, I had melted some beeswax from a christmas-present candle along with a smidge of honey, cocoa and coconut oil to make a delicious balm and carefully poured it into the empty tube. When I retrieved it from the fridge and discovered I could wind it up just like shop-bought I was delighted! It was an excellent start to the year, and I felt excited about the challenge and how resourceful it would make me. I am still using the little plastic tube of chocolate lip balm!

In February, a blow was struck when my flatmates mistakenly threw out the haul of stockpiled toiletries I’d kept in a box under the bathroom counter. I had started the year attempting a “no poo” lifestyle; washing my hair with water and a vinegar rinse but no soap. I only lasted five weeks before tiring of my hair’s natural texture and come February was desperate for a grease-stripping wash, even if it took palm oil. A friend came to the rescue with a bag full of half-used bottles she’d cleared out of her cupboard - facewash, shampoo, moisturiser, and even toothpaste and deodorant. To my surprise, someone listed a whole bottle of bleach and a range of own-brand hygiene products on freecycle. It turned out that when it came to consumables I was doing just fine without having to buy any!

I also moved to an unfurnished flat in February, and thanks to my father’s farm truck

“Reduce and simplify your material needs to the point where you can easily satisfy them yourself”

Pierre Ceresole, 1937 (Advice and Queries 23:15)

was able to collect a brand new fridge-freezer, washing machine, dishwasher, and some furniture via freecycle over a couple of weeks. As well as being chuffed to have a fancy fridge, saving it from landfill felt great. This really solidified for me that my particular challenge wasn't going to be about living minimally or not owning items, but about considering carefully how I source them and whether I needed to buy them or not.

Apart from a radical shift in what I think I “need”, the biggest change in my perspective so far is how attentive I am to broken and unwanted things once I've finished with them. I've started mending crockery and electronics rather than throwing them out, and saving cling film and kitchen foil. I also began taking more care of things that I donated to charity shops - sewing on buttons and polishing shoes before passing them on. It feels like showing them appreciation and makes them easier to part with. I've been storing non-recyclable items for months if need be to find environmentally-friendly ways of disposing of them instead of chucking them. Walking through town without having a reason to go into any shops has freed up so much time in my life. I've also noticed the strong link between a low mood and thinking of things I “need” from pound shops and stationery stores. I still find myself seeking comfort in acquisition sometimes, but this now manifests in bulk-buying essential food items (not plastic-wrapped, where possible!).

I have stopped considering buying anything online, or shopping for a sofa or bed instead of looking on freecycle. The hardest part so far was realising I wouldn't be buying the new book releases I had pre-ordered, even though I can

request them at the library. I think I am already more patient though - I have to go a little longer for consumer goods to come my way. However, a replacement phone was with me within a month when my smart-phone broke, courtesy of an acquaintance getting an upgrade. The pledge to live more simply hasn't worked in all the anti-materialist ways I had wanted. I am still in hope that someone will list an unwanted espresso machine on the local freegle!

I'm privileged in being able to live this way, not least having access to a car for collecting things and a wide network to draw on so that I can put out calls for unwanted envelopes, phone chargers or jumpers as needed! In periods of lower mood I have had to be careful not to veer into the territory of considering clothing and belongings “deserved” or wonder whether I am “worthy” of them. I may start to struggle more towards the end of the year if more things break or wear out, but I'm also confident I will find ways of living without them. After all, most people around the world always have done.

Quaker Homeless Action are currently looking for Polish books for their mobile library service. The Open Christmas is a week-long shelter and drop-in centre in London, run in association with Streets Kitchen, StreetVet, the Pillion Trust, and others. Young Friends are welcome to volunteer, with free accommodation provided at The Penn Club. Please email Katie on admin@qha.org.uk to enquire about volunteering or making donations.

Writers...

The editors would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of *The Young Quaker*.

It would be impossible to produce the magazine without the ideas, articles and illustrations that you send in.

We're always looking for new material. If you've got an idea for an article, photo, drawing or poem you'd like to see in *The Young Quaker*, get in touch with us. The next issue, due out in time for the next YFGM in October, will have a submission deadline of 23rd September 2019.

Read TYQ online at:
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Editors for this edition: Cathy Hall, Tim Hall-Farthing, Sasha Lawson-Frost, Lynda Berry, Kiloran Campbell

What is...

The Young Quaker is a magazine for young Friends everywhere, produced in print and online. Published by Young Friends General Meeting, TYQ comes out three times a year, to coincide with YFGM weekends, meaning that you can expect a new issue in February, May, and October, full of news, comment, and more.

Young Friends General Meeting is a community for young adult Quakers aged 18-30ish, in Britain. Our main events are the three General Meetings which take place at Quaker meeting houses around the country in February, May, and October each year.

If you'd like to get involved in YFGM, come along to a YFGM event, or to find out more visit www.yfgm.quaker.org.uk or email yfgm@quaker.org.uk. You can also find the YFGM group on Facebook.

Quakers, or the Religious Society of Friends, are a religious group with Christian origins. Quaker worship is mostly silent, with people speaking when called to do so by the 'Inner Light', sometimes called 'that of God within everyone'.

Central to Quakerism are the Testimonies of Peace, Equality, Truth, Simplicity and Sustainability. A commitment to these principles has put Quakers at the forefront of political and social issues; campaigning for the abolition of slavery and more recently for the legalisation of same-sex marriage.

YFGM Catch Up (February 2019)

By Sam Cooper and Rici Marshall Cross, co-clerks

We have enjoyed our YFGM weekend in Kibblestone Scout Camp and have benefitted from beds to sleep on, showers for all who want them and a surrounding of nature. We thank BYM for their outreach grant which enabled this to happen, and we thank those members of the community who took on extra work to adapt our gathering to this new and different location.

Future dates:

YFGM Gathering: 3rd – 6th May 2019

Liverpool Quaker Meeting House

Planning Weekend: 6th– 8th September 2019

Leeds Central Meeting House

YFGM Gathering 25- 27 October 2019

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House