



# Brighton Friends News

A Monthly Publication of Brighton Quaker Meeting

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[www.brightonquakers.net](http://www.brightonquakers.net)

Issue325

## The Innkeeper's Wife's Tale

The way the men tell it  
You'd never know we were there at all -  
Except Mary, and they could hardly do  
without her.  
But who ever heard of a birth with no  
women present?  
And a joyous birth at that.

I only came to help at the last minute,  
bringing water and cloths. I had  
grumbled at the arrival of Joseph and  
Mary, over-busy as I was at the time of  
taxation, but I had made space for them  
in the stable. How could I have turned  
away that young woman, so near her  
time and looking so tired from her  
travel? A half hour later the young  
husband came in to say they had only  
just settled in in time and now Mary was  
really in labour.



I sent my little Sarah for old Miriam to come from next door to help. Then Sarah begged to be let stay and Miriam said she'd be glad of the young legs if the child would act sensible and do a bit of fetching and carrying if it was needed. It wouldn't hurt anyway to have the child there to keep the beasts from getting in the way - uncommon interested, they seemed. Busy or not, I charged Sarah to fetch me when the birth was near, no matter whether I was still cleaning up or had dropped on my bed exhausted. I found I didn't want to miss the birth and they'd surely be glad of the extra hands. It wasn't going to be too convenient there in the stable, though with all those noisy people crowding the inn I wasn't surprised the woman Mary had seemed so much to welcome the peace and quiet of the stable.

So that's how it was, Miriam holding Mary's hand much of the time talking softly to her about what was happening, helping her up when that was what was needed. That Joseph, he was there too all the time, seemed like a caring man - he and Mary both relieved to have Miriam there. The labour went quietly, most of the time, with Mary getting on with her work; the stable not too cold, with the warmth of the animals. Sarah took a catnap or two, but there was the feeling of excitement that always attends a birth. She came wide awake and ungrumbling whenever she was needed.

I went out when I'd at last finished the chores just to see how things were going. A lovely bright starlit night, it was cold and quiet, and one star outshining all the others so close it might have been just over the roof.

I went in then to catch some sleep. Two hours later I was woken by Sarah's shake and her excited whisper. Tired as I'd been when I'd lain down I was at once awake and almost as excited as Sarah, though birth was nothing new to me, heaven knows, whether it was human birth or the birth of a beast.

We three women then were there (for little Sarah seemed a woman after that night) and Joseph, and Mary herself, and the animals. Mary did her part well and it all went fine at the end. And it was a boy (Sarah was a bit disappointed for a minute or two). When Mary had held him for a bit and was ready to rest we put him in the manger, Sarah had made it look like a proper little baby basket, and comfortable with plenty of clean straw.

After helping clean up I went back into the inn but not to bed. Some of the travellers were already stirring, though it was still dark or as dark as it got on that starlit night. Miriam helped Mary take the babe to the breast then she went home to sleep. Sarah, eyes shining, said she would stay on if Mary and Joseph didn't mind.

She could bring the baby to Mary where she slept if he woke. Joseph was pleased enough. It had been a hard night for him too, after their long journey. Sarah told me that Mary just smiled at her.

The events of the night weren't over either. Sarah came running in to say there were shepherds come down from the hills, and going on about angels, and wanting to see the baby. (And how did they know about the birth?). A day or two later there were tall serious men from the East bringing such strange and expensive gifts, not like the bits of food and a small blanket or two that the women round about had given when they heard how little Mary had been able to bring with her for the babe.

In a few days' time they were ready to leave, and leave they did.

There were other births after and deaths too.  
Was this an ordinary birth or was it something special?  
Miriam and I and young Sarah  
Kept these things in our hearts  
Talked about them sometimes  
Remembering Mary and her baby  
Wondering what became of them.

*Jo Vellacott, 1922 - 2019*

*First published in Friends Journal, December 1988*

Disclaimer: due to lack of space this has been adapted from the original poem format.

Submitted by Kate Mackrell

**Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of itself occasionally.**

*Gerald Priestland, 1977, Quaker Faith and Practice 21.25*

# Climate Justice

The 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 was in the middle weekend of the United Nations COP26 held in Glasgow. It also became a Global Day of Action for Climate Justice which was planned by [COP26coalition](#). Protests took place around the world to demand that governments and corporations limit global temperatures to 1.5°C and deliver real and just solutions to the climate crisis.

One such march was held in Brighton and attended by a few Quakers and friends. Here are articles by two of them.

## **Climate March 6<sup>th</sup> November**

A group of Quakers met on The Level near the Open Market to support this local action.

In Advice 34 in Quaker Faith and Practice, Quakers are encouraged to: ***Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.***

The more popular competing attraction was COP26 in Glasgow, but there are all sorts of reasons why people might not be able to make it to Glasgow. I've often thought that it is very worthwhile to support local actions in the community in which you live when they are echoing national or international actions. You may after all come face to face with the people you actually live with, and it might actually be more persuasive in the long run.



There was a mixture of familiar and less familiar faces, Quaker and otherwise. We were joined by a contingent from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) who we have worked with as a Meeting quite a bit on peace issues. Happily, WILPF were a bit more organised with placards and banners on the day and let us share some of theirs. I even spotted a University of Sussex Chaplaincy colleague (the Catholic Chaplain, Father Rod)!

If you are new to Quakers, maybe you would like to join us on a future action. Why not ask around after Meeting for Worship to see if someone is going to the upcoming demo on ... (whatever it is – although peace and climate are a good place to start). If you don't know who to ask, don't be shy, reach out! The duty Elder or Pastoral Friend is often a good person to ask after Meeting, or else why not use one of the Meeting email contacts such as the newsletter?

A Friend who does not know if there is Quaker support for a given protest can usually point you in the direction of one who might. You might be the first person to suggest something. But you might not be the only person interested, and you might start something!

*Jason Evans*

## Thoughts from the Climate March 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

What an adventure! I decided to take my litter-picker with me – why not pick up a bit of litter whilst standing around before and after, and marching on Brighton's sadly litter-strewn streets? Though I was a bit concerned about potentially giving the message that we protestors were leaving mess that needed to be cleaned up.



I celebrate Jason's rainbow coloured jumper – I could always find my way back to the group of Quakers gathered on the Level. So, I left the Level a bit tidier, with a bit less bonfire-night mess.

I thoroughly recommend litter-picking while marching. It felt wild and hilarious; I was doing something productive about the state of the planet at the same time as protesting. However, the pursuit of hard-to-pick-up litter meant that I continually lost anyone I tried marching with, though I spent a few minutes with lots of people that I hadn't seen in the flesh for almost two years, which was great.

But then I fell in with some Dominican friars, one of whom is a colleague of Jason's in the chaplaincy at Sussex Uni. It was really lovely, walking with them and talking about all sorts, including comparing thoughts on Thomas Merton. Their long black robes meant it was also easy to see and catch up with them.

My biggest take-away from the whole event was when I asked one of them what they were doing in Brighton. He said "we're not doing, but rather being". Of course they were "doing" lots, such as going on climate marches and being involved with Citizens UK. But it struck me so powerfully that maybe one of the gifts we have as Quakers is simply to *be* in the face of all the crises we face.

There is a place for protest. We do not have the individual power to change the world. We need to come together and urge those with more power to act in ways that deal with the climate crisis at a systemic level. But also, we need to see the power in simply *being* and responding to what arises – whether this consists of actions we can do (such as greening our own lifestyles), encouraging those who take no action out of a sense of despair, or simply just hanging in there with people.



When we got to Hove Lawns my litter blew away! So I patiently tracked it down, acquired a little more, and took the contact details of my Dominican friends. Hopefully when I get back to England we will go litter-picking together.

*Kate Mackrell*

## Custodian of Records

An exciting opportunity to be part of the history of Sussex West Area Meeting

There is a strongroom in Brighton Meeting House (opposite the kitchen), which contains Minutes of Meetings of all the Local Meetings in Area Meeting.

Following the death of Neil McDonald, Area Meeting needs a third member of the team working as Custodian of Records. The skills necessary are as follows:

1. a strong interest in the maintenance of the Area Meeting and Local Meeting records - Quakers are well known for their diligence in keeping records so it's important that this habit is maintained.
2. must be IT proficient - we have a Spreadsheet of all the files stored in the strongroom
3. happy to work as part of a team of three, from the strongroom in Brighton Meeting House, joining Simon Mansfield, Chichester Meeting and Vivienne Ross, Brighton
4. Current time commitment - able to give two to three hours on one day each month. In a few months less time will be needed.

At the time when the Pandemic began we were about to arrange to transfer all files over 100 years old to the Chichester records office. This will free up space in the strongroom but we have a number of files waiting to fill that space and so the spreadsheet will need to be adapted accordingly.

If you are interested please contact me or write to [brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com).

*Vivienne Ross*

## Saltdean Art Trail

On **11 and 12 of December** we will be holding the first ever Saltdean Art Trail - 3 venues and 6 artists. We will be open between 11am and 4pm.

There's lots of varied art to see, so if you are free and fancy coming along you'll be very welcome. You may find a unique Christmas present!

If you're interested email me and I'll send you an e-flyer with all the information and photos of our work. Please contact me or write to [brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com)

*Susan White*



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**FOOD BANK -- Please Remember -- FOOD BANK --- FOOD BANK**

Please bring contributions to Fareshare to Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings

## Interfaith Contact Group

### Monthly Interfaith Prayer Hour

On the last Thursday of the month via Zoom at **7 pm.** We share inspirational poems and spiritual readings - Words of Connection.

**30 December at 7 pm**

27 January

24 February

31 March



### Fostering Friendships

Members of different faith groups talk about events and festivals in their own faith communities.

There will be no meeting in December.

**26 January at 5pm** via Zoom – we will be considering Holocaust Memorial Day.

To join the Zoom meetings, please email Sheila Boyer, [secretaryifcg@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryifcg@gmail.com).

All welcome of any faith or none. [www.interfaithcontactgroup.com](http://www.interfaithcontactgroup.com)

## Woodbrooke news

### Responding to Ecological Crisis: Quaker Spiritual Insights

‘What is our role as individuals in addressing the climate crisis? What is the ministry of our meetings at this time? What spiritual insights do Quaker writings have to offer us as we explore these questions, both individually and as Quaker communities?’

Woodbrooke has produced a set of study materials using Quaker spiritual insights to help Friends reflect on, and discern their responses to the developing ecological crisis. The materials, which can be used by individuals or in meeting study groups, do not propose specific solutions or actions. Instead, they aim to enable Friends to reflect on this issue, and discern what spirit-led responses are required at this time.

Responding to our ongoing and growing concerns for the environment, Woodbrooke continues to produce excellent materials to help and encourage us in our response to the growing crisis - a source to inspire us in our witness. A copy of the booklet with the materials is in our library and also directly on the [Woodbrooke website](#). It really is worth looking at.

The Woodbrooke building remains closed for residential courses and they are not currently offering Bed and Breakfast. However, the online course programme continues to flourish. Whether or not you are just dipping your toe into the Quaker way or are a long-standing member, there is something there for you. Just follow this link <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>.

*Terry Byrne  
Woodbrooke Correspondant*

**FOOD BANK -- Please Remember -- FOOD BANK --- FOOD BANK**

## The Foodbank is back

[Fareshare](#) are coming back to Meeting House.

Please bring food donations to Meeting House on Sunday mornings as Fareshare will be coming to collect them.



*Terry Byrne, Warden*

## Three messages from Pastoral Friends

### **Coronavirus – Staying in Touch with each other**

Following discernment at Brighton Local and Area Meetings, Overseers are now to be known as Pastoral Friends or the Pastoral Team.

During this period of COVID-19 we are trying to keep in touch with each other in our Meeting. Some people may feel more isolated than others. If you do need help or would just like Friends to hold you in the Light, please contact the Pastoral Friends. If finances are a problem, we may be able to help as we have access to grants.

The current **Pastoral Team** is: Terry Byrne, Barbara Barber, Lisa Compton, Chris East, Stella East, Annie Lieberman, Kate Mackrell, Alan Stratford. [bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com](mailto:bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com)

### **Significant Birthdays**

The Pastoral Friends would like to know if anyone has a "a special birthday" coming up. We are thinking about birthdays ending with a zero!! Really any excuse for a celebration, or at least a card from the Meeting. Do let us know at [bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com](mailto:bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com) about yourself or, with their permission, anyone else you know who has a special birthday coming up.

*Pastoral Friends*

### **A Deep Listening/Worship Sharing group at Brighton Meeting?**

Inspired by the Pendle Hill "deep listening group" and the circles of listening/worship sharing that is happening at Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting, Pastoral Friends would like to see if there is any interest in starting such a group at Brighton Meeting. Please click [here](#) and [here](#) for links to some references.

Please contact Pastoral Friends at [bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com](mailto:bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com) if you are interested.

*Pastoral Friends*

### **FOOD BANK -- Please Remember -- FOOD BANK --- FOOD BANK**

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## From Quaker Home, now Quaker Life.

The Meeting for Worship is at the heart of Quakerism.  
We meet in a living silence, opening ourselves to the love of God in each other.  
There is no appointed leader.  
Each person is responsible for what may happen.  
Anyone who feels so inspired may speak.  
Sometimes the Meeting, which lasts about an hour, may remain silent.  
Worship may be a time of joy, sorrow or reflections; thanksgiving, prayer or meditation.  
It is our shared communion open to everyone.

Submitted by Sheila Boyer

## Community in Action

**Coffee Mornings** via Zoom on Fridays at **11.00 am**. If you would like to join please email the clerk at [brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com)

### **Being Friends Together**

Being Friends Together is a good opportunity to get to know Friends better, learn more about Quakerism and share spiritual journeys. Three groups continue to get together regularly via Zoom. If you would like to join please contact the elders via [bgelders@outlook.com](mailto:bgelders@outlook.com)

**Clerk's mailing list:** If you would like to receive email information and Quaker news from the clerks, you need to have completed a GDPR Form (re data privacy). These forms are available from the Pastoral Team by contacting: [bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com](mailto:bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com)

## Appeals for 2022

In November, a group of Brighton Friends met on Zoom and suggested these appeals for 2022.

January - Quaker United Nations Office  
February - Hummingbird  
March - Green Olive Trust  
April - Emergency Appeal  
May - Brighton Permaculture Trust  
June - Stop the War Coalition  
July - Children of the Jordan Valley  
August - LGBT plus. Switchboard Helpline  
September - Woodbrooke  
October - Clocktower Sanctuary  
November - Women Workers Training Centre  
December - Children's Appeal

These dates may change depending on an emergency arising.

*Angela Bargawi*

## Appeals

Now that we have blended Meetings some Friends cannot put donations in our Appeal Box at Meeting House. Our chosen charities could lose out on much needed donations. If you can, please make your donation through the appeal's website <https://www.unicef.org.uk>

Alternatively, you can send via the Meeting Treasurer. Just send a cheque or do a bank transfer:

Account name: Brighton Quaker Meeting

Sort Code: 08-92-99 Account number: 65009567

**Please do let George know which appeal the payment is for.**

## Children of Afghanistan

We have agreed to make our December appeal for the children of Afghanistan. While there are a few thousand refugees who have succeeded in reaching the UK, more than 38 million Afghanis are still trapped inside their country and unable to leave. Many of them are children. We felt that these are the most unfortunate and probably need our help and support more than the lucky few who have escaped here.



In the hospitals of Afghanistan at this moment there are young children suffering from severe malnutrition. Their hair is thinning, their eyes are deeply sunken in their heads and they have difficulties in trying to keep awake. Although seasonal problems with diet often occurred in other years, the harvest in autumn always allowed the families to recover their health. This year the lack of food is continuing into winter as the countryside is experiencing its worst drought for thirty-five years. The situation is being made worse because foreign governments have axed their aid programmes since the Taliban took over, and humanitarian NGOs are facing insurmountable difficulties in reaching the most needy rural areas.

In the words of a recent BBC programme, "if the world does not help, this crisis will turn into a catastrophe". We plan to send the money raised through the [United Nations Children's Fund](#), which we know is still operating without hindrance in all parts of Afghanistan. Please give generously.

*Angela Bargawi*

**Are you alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are or because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?**

*Quaker Faith & Practice, Advices & Queries No. 33*

## Christmas arrangements at Brighton Meeting House

**Saturday 25** - Meeting for Worship 10.30 am.

**Sunday 26** - Meeting for Worship 10.30 am.

**Sunday 2** - Meeting for Worship 10.30 am

Brighton Meeting House will close at 2pm on **Friday 23 December** and, apart from the Quaker Meetings on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> listed above, it will not be open at all between Christmas & New Year.

We reopen at 9.00am on **Tuesday 4 January, 2022**.



## Brighton Meeting diary

### Meetings for Worship

#### Regular Meeting for Worship

A blended Meeting for Worship is held **Sundays at 10.30 am**.

If you wish to join the Meeting in the Meeting House you must book your place by phoning the office on 01273 770258 or emailing [admin@brightonquakers.net](mailto:admin@brightonquakers.net)

Masks must be worn in the Meeting House but are not necessary when seated in worship in the Meeting Room.

If you are not on the Clerk's email list and wish to join via Zoom please contact [bqelders@outlook.com](mailto:bqelders@outlook.com).

**A new midweek Meeting for Worship** - We now offer a Zoom Meeting for Worship on **Wednesdays, 8.30-9 pm**. Please click [here](#) to join.

We hope that Friends will welcome this as a time of quiet reflection in the middle of busy weeks. The meeting is also be open to Friends from other Meetings in the area.

#### Children's Meetings

The last Children's Meeting of 2021 will be on Zoom on **Sunday 19 December at 10am**. Please contact Helen Ledger, Mike Coote, Christine Habgood or [brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com) for more information and the Zoom link.

We hope to arrange some in person meetings soon.

### Workshops and community events

#### Open Meeting

At the moment we do not have Open Meeting in the Quiet Room after a blended Meeting for Worship but those on Zoom have the opportunity to go into 'breakout rooms' with 3 or 4 other people to have an informal chat about the Meeting before going back to the main Meeting for final goodbyes.

At Meeting House, after Meeting we can now have tea and coffee and sit in the Lecture Room for a chat.

## Meetings for Quaker business

### **Local Meeting for Worship for Business in 2022**

**Thursday 6 January** at 6.30 pm. via Zoom.

Items for MWB must be sent to the Clerk at least one week before the meeting, i.e. **Thursday 30 December**. The only exceptions are emergencies that arise during the week before MWB. Please email [brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com), or write to the Clerks c/o The Meeting House.

If you are a newcomer or attender and would like to join MWB for the first time, please contact the Clerk, who will be able to explain the procedures. If you are not comfortable with Zoom please contact the Elders at [bgelders@outlook.com](mailto:bgelders@outlook.com).

### **Area Meetings for Worship for Business in 2022**

To be advised

### **Sussex and Surrey Regional Meetings 2022**

To be advised

### **Notices**

Notices to be read out after Meeting for Worship should be sent to [brightonquakernotices@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakernotices@gmail.com). The deadline for notices is Friday evening. Notices are still read out at the end of the Zoom and Blended Meeting for Worship on Sundays.

## Newsletter Contributions

This newsletter should reflect the diversity of thinking and experience of members and attenders. If this is to be your newsletter, we need your input: thoughts on the meeting, a passage that has inspired you, a book review, a drawing, something to share with others that might help us grow in community and spirit. Please send your contributions to the Editor, Jackie Robinson at [brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com)

The deadline for the **January** newsletter is **Tuesday January 4**. The editor has the right to edit contributions or hold them over until the next issue, particularly where this is necessary in order to avoid blank pages.

It is the responsibility of contributors to decide how much of their personal details should be shared.

To receive the newsletter by email please write to [brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com). This is necessary to comply with GDPR.

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## Open House at 228 Beach Hut



Over 36 Beach Huts on Hove seafront are having a Winter Open Day on **Saturday 18 December 4pm – 6pm.**

The Quaker Beach Hut is number 228. It is near the [Rockwater Bar/Restaurant](#) opposite Carlisle Road. It is owned by seven Quakers from the Area Meeting and is for the use of Brighton families. Along with other Hove Beach huts we're holding an 'Open House' on **18 December from 4pm - 6pm.**

Everyone is welcome to come along and enjoy a mince pie and non-alcoholic mulled wine.

*Vivienne, Ann, Helen*

## Opening the Brighton Quaker Hope Chest

This event, arranged by members of the Friday coffee morning, will take place online in the early evening of **30 December.** The Zoom link will be sent out from the Clerk's email account closer to the time.

We are calling for contributions to an evening of laughter, a mechanism for health and happiness that costs us nothing.

These might take the form of:

- a personal humorous story or embarrassing moment to share, possibly, but not necessarily linked to the season
- unusual New Year traditions, real or yet to be implemented
- New Year resolutions with unexpected outcomes
- passages from writers and poets who have inspired us
- amusing quiz questions, and suggestions for a wacky prize
- anything else that you think would contribute to the evening – do not feel inhibited by the suggestions above!

Contact George Dean ([gdean90893@aol.com](mailto:gdean90893@aol.com)) **before 16 December** if you would like to offer or talk about ideas for a contribution. Note that someone else could read your contribution if you like.

*The Friday Coffee Morning Group*

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