



Brighton Friends News

A Monthly Publication of Brighton Quaker Meeting

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www.brightonquakers.net

Issue 310

Re-opening Meeting House

The Meeting House reopened for hirings on September 1 with full Covid-19 precautions in place. Risk Assessment Documents have been sent out to would-be hirers. There is interest being shown in future hirings.

The Meeting Room is currently open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings for private Worship and reflection.

Finance & Property Committee (F&P) feel that, having just opened for hirings, they need more time to consider all the issues and are not yet ready to reopen for Meeting for Worship. F&P are in the process of purchasing equipment for blended meetings and hope these will be ready to enable us to have blended Meetings when we do reopen.



Finance & Property Committee

Creative Thinking required for our Meeting House

The Finance & Property committee has continued to meet via Zoom throughout the lock down period. A topic of concern to the Committee is the significant drop in income due to the cancellation of all hirings at the Meeting House. Our Meeting House has had a healthy income from a wide range of hirings. Some of our hirers may return, others may have developed new ways of carrying out their meetings.

The F&P committee is asking Friends to offer any creative, innovative ideas that could be promoted to our existing hirers or attract new hirers to help generate income for our Meeting House. Ideas that can be implemented quickly and safely, (keeping in mind Covid-19 guidelines) would be very welcome. Longer term plans to generate income will be part of F&P's agenda for many months to come.

Please send any ideas to either: fpconvenor.brightonquakers@gmail.com or one of us, we are both in the address book.

Roseanne Wilding and Penny Cloutte

Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM)

Thanks to Zoom and a pandemic, I didn't have to choose between Britain Yearly Meeting and Canadian Yearly Meeting – both originally scheduled for the same week. CYM went ahead, online, and I noticed that I was not the only Friend from the UK who was there. Sadly, I had other commitments during the times that worship-sharing groups ran, but I managed many of the other sessions, including the three special presentations I describe below.

“Two Row on the Grand: a Learning Journey” concerned a project that every year brings together groups of indigenous people and settlers to symbolically renew a 400 year old treaty. Daniel Allen told vivid stories about the relationships developing, and the learning, particularly of indigenous wisdom. The thing I miss most about not being in Canada is being involved with the work of Truth and Reconciliation in which the legacy of settler colonialism is being explored, and ways to move toward healing are being discovered.

“Defunding Criminal Justice – Transforming, Abolishing and What Comes Next” explored issues which have come to the forefront in the Black Lives Matter movement, looking at the historical concerns of Canadian Quakers with the “justice” system and alternative models.

“Quaker Leadings and our Calling in these Times”. I needed to virtually travel to Canada to have Alastair McIntosh of Glasgow Meeting blow my mind! To quote the Yearly Meeting Epistle: “Alastair urged us to think in depth about our concern for the environment and global warming, and the climate of racism and how we respond. He asked us to consider what we can uniquely offer that is not being done already in the secular world, and called for our actions to be based on spirituality, reminding us that we have practices and experiences of deep discernment.” He has just published a new book, *Riders on the Storm*, which I love. There is a reading group based on his book running at 7pm on Thursdays in September – google his name to find his website with further info and a link to register. (See Page 6 for a review of *Riders on the Storm* – Ed)

Further description of the sessions, and hopefully links to recordings can be found at www.quaker.ca/yearlymeetinginsession/longer-schedule-description/ (though these are due to move soon to a more permanent home somewhere else on quaker.ca). This site also gives the yearly meeting epistle – a wonderful read.

I also strongly recommend having a look at the most recent issue of the Canadian version of Quaker Concern, which has articles on advocating for indigenous rights during the pandemic, shifting punitive perspectives, connecting militarized policing in Israel/Palestine with policing in the US and Canada, spreading peace... <https://quakerconcern.ca>

Kate Mackrell

When we are nourished to our roots in any one tradition, the truths of all the others will be available. Someone who rejects the Christian tradition out of hand has not yet fed deeply enough on whatever their alternative religious source may be.

Rachel Britton, 2004, Faith & Practice, Canadian Yearly Meeting

Building the New Economy

You may recall that a small group of Friends started to read through and discuss the QPSW produced series of booklets about the New Economy back in the early days of the pandemic. There has been a resurgence of interest in these from Meetings across Britain. The booklets address issues directly brought into question by the pandemic - what is our economy for and how do we make it fair to people and sustainable for the planet? Over the next few months we will share some of our learning from the groups which have now completed the sequence of sessions.

First of all, 'economics' (eco nomy – home+management) is about the stuff of everyday life and although it has underlying complexities, it is a very applicable field – we all have direct experience of its effects. For many of us, the series brought things into clearer, applicable, focus: «So if the current measure of GDP counts forest destruction, flood damage and war as positives, why don't we use one of the other measures that already exist, and which might focus our activity more positively?»

Second, most of us (Gerard, Jane, Jackie, Alan, Dave, Christine, Michelle, Sim, Kate and Mike) were able to sustain the 8 sessions by Zoom. The leaflets are readable, not too long, well supported by illustrations and well-chosen quotes, as well as returning frequently to Quaker priorities.

Third, they contain much to encourage us to change individual choices, although the main focus is systemic change. You will hear more about this in subsequent reports.

Booklet 1 showed us that there are other ways to measure wellbeing that should include positive work, wellbeing, environmental measures, fairness and health. It is also clear that we are beyond the boundaries of what our planet can sustain, so perpetual, exponential growth is not a realistic pathway. It showed us also that economics is not a science limited to experts; we can all engage in it, and the move to different ways of organising is very possible. Imagine that, money used for positive social benefit rather than private profit!

The structure of the New Economy reading groups is set out in the link below, and all the material is available on line. The booklets are well put together for individual reading, but discussion does add depth and insight. If there is interest in a second reading group, autumn is coming and Zoom remains a good method. Please contact me or brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com for advice.

For more information go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice/new-economy/new-economy-reading-groups#heading-1>

Mike Coote

Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.

Inter Faith Contact Group

PLEASE NOTE THERE IS A CHANGE IN THE DAY. THIS HAS BEEN MOVED TO THE LAST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH.

Monthly Interfaith Prayers are now being held via Zoom. We share inspirational poems and spiritual readings - Words of Connection.

The next prayer hour will be on **Thursday September 24 from 7 - 8pm.**

All welcome of any faith or none.
www.interfaithcontactgroup.com

If you would like to join the prayer meeting please email bqclerk@outlook.com

Each week the Interfaith Contact Group produce four prayers and/or poems on their 'Words of Connection' Blog page. To read these, please go to:
<https://interfaithcontactgroup.com/category/words-of-connection/>

If you would like to be made a 'friend' of the Interfaith Contact Group (which costs nothing,) please drop a line to Anthea Ballam, Chair IFCG at chair@interfaithcontactgroup.com



Learning about: Green Well Being

Research shows us that being in nature promotes well-being and can help with the healing of mental health issues. Peace of Mind is offering a day at Saddlescombe Farm to experience that for yourself and to learn how your faith community can use nature to support people with mental health issues.

If you have limited mobility, Jo will make the necessary adaptations to the programme. Depending upon Government advice, transport probably can be provided in Grow's mini-bus from central Brighton for a limited number, so please indicate if you need transport

Saturday, October 3, 2020, 10:00 – 4:00

Saddlescombe Farm BN45 7DE

Course Facilitator: Jo Wren and the team of "Grow".

Course fee - £10

You can learn more about Grow from their website:

<http://www.growingwellbeing.org.uk>

Booking forms from cpark1947@gmail.com or www.peaceofmindcbh.org

Peace of Mind (Brighton and Hove)

- Empowering faith communities to support people with mental health concerns

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Three Book Reviews

The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri

Christy Lefteri is a Cypriot who worked in Athens in 2014 helping Syrian refugees who had managed to escape the horrendous Al Assad regime. The story follows the journey of a young couple who made their way to England via Turkey and Greece. They endured personal tragedy, shared in the tragedy of others and suffered unimaginable hardship. As well as being based on true stories, there is a mystical element which takes it into another realm.

A brilliant and moving read.

Much of the narrative reminds me (going back many years) of stories we heard from refugees, mostly from Africa, who came to the Friends Centre for help with English, citizenship applications, housing, health and work.

Eventually, the happy side was seeing a group of (mainly) women at work in the Canteen on Fridays – making their National dishes – singing their National songs, dancing their National dances while their children played happily in the creche. All the staff could join in this celebration of the refugees' new found, dearly fought, freedom.

(While I was still mobile I would meet past students in shops, on buses, at gatherings. What memories we shared!)

Patricia Norman

Proof of Heaven by Eben Alexander

Friends might be aware of QFAS, the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies, now a recognised body of Britain Yearly Meeting, who investigate topics from a Quaker perspective that might normally be regarded as coming under the umbrella of Spiritualism. I've been curious about near death experiences for a while and was interested to read this book in response to one of their recommendations. What distinguishes it from other accounts is a few important things: first of all Eben Alexander is a top neurosurgeon and committed man of science, lending more weight to his testimony than the average man in the street. Furthermore, because of his medical background he is able to dismiss some of the more obvious "scientific" explanations as very unlikely, if not impossible. Finally his experience happened in the context of a "perfect storm", a nasty case of bacterial meningitis from which he very nearly died, and in the middle of a coma when his scientific experience tells him that his brain would be incapable of generating the detailed experiences he relates. Eben's experiences are suggestive of a world beyond death that is much kinder than conventional notions of the afterlife, and he brings back a life-affirming message of love and peace. While there is little beyond a colleague's medical testimony to support Eben's amazing story, it is very interesting.

Jason Evans

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**Riders on the Storm – the Climate Crisis and the Survival of Being
(August 2020)
By Alastair Mackintosh**

Alastair Mackintosh is a Scottish Quaker and campaigner with interests in climate change, poverty, community empowerment, peace studies, and spirituality. He is an inspirational speaker and Terry Byrne remembers him speaking at a packed Brighton Meeting House some years ago.

Born and bred on the Isle of Lewis, his writings are soaked in a spirituality which he argues is derived from the Hebridean soil. His latest book, "Riders on the Storm – the Climate Crisis and Survival of Being" is a thoughtful summary of the current state of climate science. The book also explores the psychology behind both the climate change denialists and the alarmists (including some members of Extinction Rebellion). In his view, both are guilty of weakening our ability to take positive action, as they "collapse the possibilities of the future".

There are doubtless many other writers who can provide a broad overview of climate science and its associated politics. Like most of them, Alastair McIntosh emphasises the critical importance of peer-reviewed consensus science. However, unusually, he also argues persuasively that we will not be able to address climate change without an underlying spiritual dimension. By spiritual he means "the profound inner interconnection of all things, the meaning of life as love made manifest". He examines "what it takes to reconnect with the earth, with spiritual life and with one another. With soil, soul and society".

He is rarely explicit about his Quakerism, but he does employ, in a fresh and unselfconscious way, phrases familiar to us such as discernment, patterns and examples, that of God in all, the light within. Jung and Gandhi are also quoted from extensively; he reminds us of Gandhi's warning that his "way of peace and social transformation cannot be instrumental. It cannot be a spiritual method used for worldly ends, no matter how pressing these might be." It has to be lived.

Riders on the Storm (the title a quote from Jim Morrison) is a wide-ranging work which I am reluctant to try to paraphrase. However, Alastair McIntosh does identify population growth and "insatiable consumerism" as the twin drivers of climate change. His remedies have nothing in common with the totalitarianism of right or left – top down state control of women's reproductive choices or hair shirt prohibitions of home comforts necessary for "dignified sufficiency of living". Rather, he argues for a spiritual renewal which gives power and real choices to women (which, amongst other things, tends to result in smaller families), and which gives real meaning to people's lives, including a sense of rootedness and community which can liberate us from reliance on insatiable consumerism as "a balm to life's afflictions".

Well worth reading, as are many of his other books!

Here is a link to his website:

<http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/ridersonthestorm.htm>.

Michael Richardson

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Interested in joining a monthly writing group?

I've been discovering during lockdown just how many of us are writers, and I'm inspired by the monthly writers' group at Wellington meeting. It would be lovely to have something like that in Brighton. We'd meet on Zoom for the foreseeable future.

If you are interested, drop me an email: katemackrell@mac.com

Kate Mackrell

Claridge House re-opened September 1 2020



Claridge House is the Quaker retreat near East Grinstead, run by Friends Fellowship of Healing.

Dormans Rd,
Dormansland,
Lingfield RH7 6QH

In order to provide a safe environment, a number of measures have been put in place for the duration of the current **COVID-19** situation.

Full Board Personal Retreats

October Monday 5 - Friday 9

November Monday 2 - Friday 6

December Monday 7 - Friday 11

£130 per person per day. Minimum stay two days.

Autumn Retreat to Nature - stretch your legs and your minds

September Monday 14 - Friday 18 £640

October Monday 26 - Friday 30 £640

November Monday 9 - Friday 13 £640

Autumn Leaves Weekend with Bronwen Menzies

September Friday 25 - Monday 28 £480

October Friday 16 - Monday 19 £480

Other workshops including Christmas Break and New Year Retreat.

For more information and to book go to www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk or call 01342 832150 Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm.

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Gaia Passage for Brighton Quaker Meeting

Breathe deeply the air that surrounds you;
Let it massage your heart;
As it beats with the energy of Gaia and the cosmos
Let the light in the space within
Offer promptings of love and truth.

*Submitted by Gerard Rosenberg who heard this at a
Quaker Voices on Mental Health webinar August 22 2020.*

Coronavirus - Staying in Touch with each other

Message from Overseers

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 Overseers. If finances are a problem we may be able to help as we have access to grants.

Overseers - Ann Howard, Jane Rosenberg, Terry Byrne, Chris East, Stella East,
bqoverseers@outlook.com

Community in Action

We are in lockdown but our community is still 'in action'

Coffee Mornings via Zoom on Fridays at 11.00 am. If you would like to join please email bqclerk@outlook.com

Brighton Young Quakers are a group of 18-30ish year olds who are Quaker, Quaker-ish or Quaker-interested. As we are unable to meet in person we will meet every Tuesday at 18:30 on Zoom, for some worship and a catch up. For details and to obtain the Zoom link, email brightonyaf@gmail.com. You can find the link on our Facebook group or our WhatsApp group, which can be joined via this link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/IqONGmLatpx9pWJtKPdDEa>

Matt Alton

Being Friends Together

The East and West groups continue to get together regularly on Zoom. A third Being Friends Together group started recently but it is not too late to be part of the group. Being Friends Together is a good opportunity to get to know Friends better, learn more about Quakerism and share spiritual journeys. If you would like to join please contact the elders via bqelders@outlook.com

Clerk's mailing list - if you are not on the list and would like to be, please contact Sheila Boyer at bqclerk@outlook.com

Appeals

In these strange times we cannot put donations in our Appeal Box. Our chosen charities could lose out on much needed donations. If you can, please make your donation through the appeal's websites. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can send via the Meeting Treasurer. Just send cheques or bank transfer, as long as you let George know that the payment is for this Appeal.

Appeal – Voices in Exile

Voices in Exile works with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in East and West Sussex with no recourse to public funds. We offer practical support including an independent food and toiletries bank for those who are destitute, and legal support including generalist advice and specialist immigration casework (up to OISC Level 2) for those who would otherwise be unable to access justice. As part of our holistic approach we also advocate for, accompany and enable people to access services, build community, and develop their own skills and potential through a peer-led programme of learning and creative activities, volunteering and mentoring.

Our vulnerable refugee & migrant clients are already marginalised and isolated and many are effectively excluded from access to mainstream services as a result of the government's hostile environment policies. Many also have underlying health and mental health issues as a result of trauma, conflict, physical injury and the anxiety of living in immigration limbo. All are disproportionately at risk of the impact of Covid-19 both because of their immigration status and because they belong to BAME Refugee communities. Some have lost work and been made destitute as a result of having NRPF (no recourse to public funds) status. Some risk becoming homeless when current emergency provisions come to an end.

Since lockdown many of our clients have been too scared to go out, while a few have arguably not been cautious enough. Many have received misinformation via social media channels and informal community networks. Some have commented on how anxious the increased police presence has made them feel. Many with school-age children have found it difficult to home-school because of lack of English and digital kit. People have reported increased difficulties in accessing healthcare, and we have had concerns about the increased risk of domestic abuse in some families.

During Lockdown we have had to change our way of working with our clients. These changes have incurred substantially increased costs for Voices at a time of profound financial uncertainty for small charities. Although we believe that we can get through the immediate crisis, the longer-term funding landscape looks bleak and we have already exhausted many of the current available funding opportunities. Any donation the Friends could offer would be very gratefully received.

<https://www.voicesinexile.org>

Brighton Meeting diary

Meetings for Worship

Regular Meetings for Worship

Brighton Meeting House is temporarily closed but we have an on-line Meeting for Worship via Zoom on Sundays - 10.30–11.30 am.

If you would like to join please email bqelders@outlook.com

Children's Meetings

For the last three months of the year the Children's Meeting will be held via Zoom on the Third Sunday of the month, 10 – 11 am.

October 18

November 15

December 20

The Meetings will be led by Mike Coote, Christine Habgood and Helen Ledger.

If you would like to join please contact Helen Ledger or bqclerk@outlook.com.

Workshops and community events

Open Meeting

We can no longer have Open Meeting in the Quiet Room but after Meeting for Worship via Zoom on Sundays, we have the opportunity to go into 'breakout rooms' with 3 or 4 other people to have an informal chat about the Meeting before we go back to the main meeting for final goodbyes.

Meetings for Quaker business

The next **MWB** is on **Thursday October 1** at 6.30 pm. Items for MWB must be sent to the Clerk at least one week before the meeting, i.e. **Thursday September 24. The only exceptions are emergencies that arise during the week before MWB.** Please email bqclerk@outlook.com or write to clerks c/o The Meeting House.

If you are a newcomer or attender and would like to join us, please contact the Clerk, who will be able to explain the procedures. If you are not comfortable with Zoom please contact the Elders at bqelders@outlook.com

Area Meetings for Worship for Business in 2020

Saturday September 19 at 10.30 am via Zoom

If you would like to join the above Business Meetings please email bqclerk@outlook.com

Regional Meeting

Saturday September 26 at 10.30 via Zoom, 'Holding Difficult Conversations in Meetings' with Ivan Hutnik and Restoring Relations Team.
Please see the back page.

Notices

Notices to be read out after Meeting for Worship should be sent to brightonquakernotices@gmail.com. The deadline for notices is Friday evening. Please note that Notices are still read out at the end of the Zoom Meeting for Worship on Sundays.

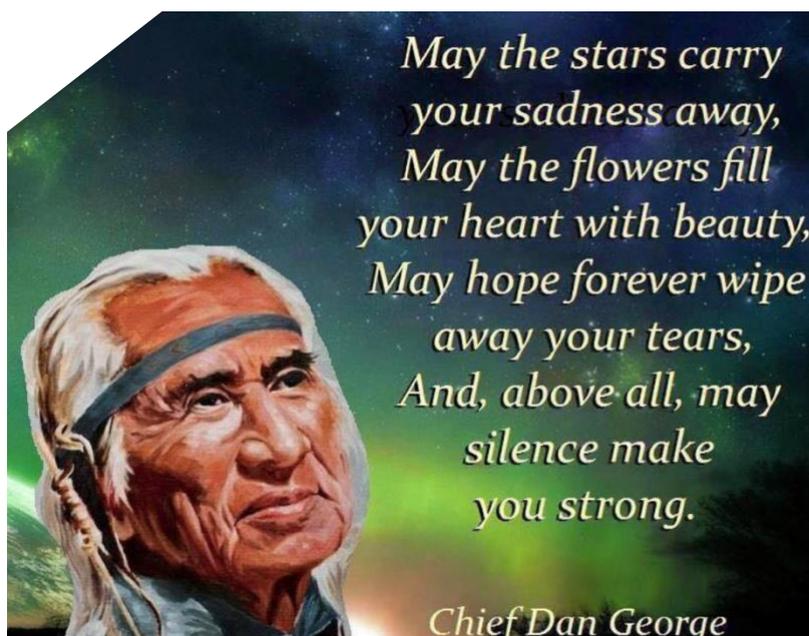
Newsletter Contributions

The editor wants the newsletter to 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

The deadline for the **October** newsletter is **Tuesday September 29**. 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 given.

To receive the newsletter by email please write to brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com. This is necessary to comply with GDPR laws.



Maintaining Relations in Challenging Times

Handling conflict and difficult conversations are challenges that all Quakers face in their personal, community and working lives. Often we come away from these situations realising we could have handled things better, while not knowing how to.

This short workshop acts as an introduction to maintaining relations when individuals and Meetings are challenged. These challenges are often experienced as threats which make conflict more likely. The workshop covers the importance of listening to understand; the basic psychology of how we react to threats, and explores the nature of conflict, drawing on the participants' experiences.

Conflict is part of our everyday lives. We all see the world in different ways. Our individual circumstances, opinions and viewpoints mean we do not always see things the same way, even among Friends, which leads to disagreements, difficult conversations, and potential damage to our relationships with others. Conversations where we see things differently to others can be handled in ways that can lead to positive, rather than negative outcomes. We can strengthen our relationships by more fully exploring areas where we see things differently. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing: it can lead to a better future.

In many everyday conversations, we often listen merely to respond, not to truly understand. While this makes for lively conversation, it is not the type of listening that helps deal with conflict.

Something unexpected happens when we suspend our normal way of listening and give the speaker our full attention. By focusing on the person talking, we relieve them of the need to cram what they want to say into a limited amount of time. This opens up the space for interaction, freeing the other person to express themselves as they need and at a pace comfortable to them, in the knowledge that they are not going to be cut short. This introductory workshop will explore this experience, examining patterns of conflict, and ways to start to improve our individual and group interactions.

Please note: advance registration is required prior to the workshop.
To register, please email:
alistair.heslop@redmantle.net

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