



Faringdon Quaker Meeting

NEWSLETTER 130 Feb-March 24

Reading dates

February

04 John A&Q

11 Janie

18 Paul

25 Val

March

03 Patricia A&Q

10 Arthur

17 Trish

24 Simon

31 Chris

New Website for

Area Meeting

[https://
osamquakers.org.uk](https://osamquakers.org.uk)

Area Meeting

Sat 9th March Bur-
ford

Collection

Jan-Feb QCEA
(Quaker Council for
European Affairs)

Mar-April EAPPI
(Ecumenical Accom-
paniment Programme
in Palestine & Israel)

May-June Christian
Aid

Shared Lunch

Takes place on the first Sunday of the month, alternating with Meeting for Business. Next Lunch: the 4th February 24 everyone is welcome.

Meeting for Business for Worship

Sunday 3 March 24

Study group

A Friendly Bible study

Sunday 11 February 11:45 -Janie to lead.

Faringdon Peace group

Monthly Meeting Wednesday 7th February at 7.30pm Venue To be arranged. Zoom

The Red Cross and the France- Prussian war

[Link to Faringdon Peace Group](#) [Link](#)

faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk

Prayer for Peace (first Meeting was attended by 12 persons with profound ministry) We all say we want peace, but most of us feel pretty helpless in bringing this about. Faringdon Quakers invite you to join them and pray for peace on the last Saturday morning of each month, until Easter. Our Coffee Room will be open from 10am-12 noon - and we serve a very good cup of coffee! - then between 10.30-11.30am we invite you into the main Meeting House for a quiet time of prayer and contemplation. This is for people of all faiths and none. During this time, you can come and go as you wish, so don't feel you have to sit in silence for an hour! Jenny Braithwaite 01367 240929

A Quaker Couple in Nazi Germany (1994) Brenda Bailey. Among the books given recently to the Meeting's library by Michael Gynge is Brenda Bailey's account of the lives of her parents, Mary, and Leonhard Friedrich, especially during World War II when Leonhard was interred in Buchenwald concentration camp from 1942 but Mary, whose marriage had conferred German nationality on her, remained in Bad Pyrmont in Saxony, where they had been wardens of the Quaker Meeting House. Brenda had been sent home to Sidcot Quaker School and she did not see her parents until after the war, by which time she had served in the Friends Ambulance Unit and had married Sydney Bailey. The book is based mainly on Mary's diaries and letters, and on Leonhard's account of his Buchenwald experience, published in *Der Quaker* in 1975.

Mary met Leonhard when working in Germany while working with Friends' War Victims' Relief. They married in 1922 and subsequently founded Nuremberg Quaker Meeting, which was well established by 1931 when Friends discovered an old Meeting House and burial ground in Bad Pyrmont, south of Hanover, which was originally built in 1800 but had fallen into disuse. Leonhard and Mary moved to the rebuilt Quaker house in 1933 to be wardens and to re-create a Quaker community there.

The story of Mary's witness and wartime experiences is amazing, but difficult to summarise. She was interrogated by the Gestapo and the police many times. Her home was frequently searched, and the Quaker house was taken over, though the burial ground was respected. German Quakers were a constant support, though dealing with local Friends could be difficult. She constantly wrote letters on Leonhard's behalf, and this may be why he was one of those who survived, when 70,000 perished in the camp.

The book has been catalogued as D/BAI. Michael and his father worshipped in Freiburg and Michael came into membership in Germany, although he is from a strong British Quaker background, and he is warmly remembered by Bad Pyrmont Meeting. I have been in touch with them through their address given in *the Friend* at Christmas. They encourage visitors to the Quaker house in their spa town.

Christmas came early at Faringdon

The December shared meeting developed into a Christmas celebration.



Also Paul led a shortened meeting on Monday—Christmas day, attended by 6 members.

As Paul said to mark—Emmanuel - that God is with us.

Chris, our treasurer , says Live adventurously!

Grants available to Quakers from BYM

During the recent on-line meeting of treasurers nationally, Anne Pfeiffer, the grants programme officer, was keen to 'spread the word' regarding the various grants available from BYM. Below is a brief summary of each; I have not included those which are specifically aimed either for overseas work or for Quaker property in UK.

Adult Education Grant – available to members and attenders requiring help with costs as a mature student.

Hope Grant – small grants to improve the quality of life of members and attenders who are unemployed or unable to make a living wage.

Prospect Grant – to help members or attenders move from unemployment to self-employment.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Relief Grants – to help relieve suffering of those affected by natural disasters, climate change, war or conflict. This grants programme is not for immediate crisis relief and includes peace-building projects.

Yearly Meeting Bursary Fund – to help with the cost of attending BYM.

Quaker Events and Learning Grant – to support 18-35 year olds participate more fully in the life of the Society of Friends by attending events or courses.

Financial Relief Grant – to improve the quality of life of 18-35 year olds with low income.

Living Adventurously Grant – for 18-35 year olds needing financial support in service undertaken as part of their Quaker witness.

or further information, visit www.quaker.org.uk/our-work and select Grant-making. There is helpful guidance on checking criteria and completing any application. Anne can be contacted via grants@quaker.org.uk or phone 020 7663 1053.

Friends seeking financial help which falls outside these remits can

Contact Anne anyway – she may well have some useful suggestions

Approach OSAM – I am happy to facilitate this if required

LM funds could be available – you can approach me in confidence in the first instance if you wish.

Faringdon LM supports a range of good causes in different ways. We have a nominated charity or organisation to which Friends are encouraged to donate over a specific period of two months. Such group include Asylum Welcome, Médecins sans Frontières and the National Friendship Fund. Prior to Covid19 pandemic, cash donations were made at Sunday meeting, and the total amount sent as a cheque from Faringdon by the treasurer. During lockdown, Friends sent their donation (with Gift Aid details if appropriate) directly to the organisation, and this process is continuing. However, if Friends/attenders/visitors would like instead to give cash as per our original system, then I am more than happy for this to resume. I will consolidate these and send the total with Gift Aid envelopes to the relevant charity or group at the end of each two-month period. The Gift Aid envelopes and box for donations are on the windowsill by the side door in the MH.

If you have any suggestions as to worthwhile organisations for such donations, please let either Jenny B or Pat know.

Chris

Are you listening?

Listen very carefully I shall say this only once' - and Michelle of the Resistance did! It was to get a laugh on the show, but it is quite a profound comment. How many of us, in this noisy bustling world really listen.

How often have we heard - Are you listening to me? and You never listen to a word I say!

Listening is a real skill, and we should use it to the best advantage. But too often we are not 'tuned' in or worst still just 'tuned out'. As a result, we miss so much - and probably irritate others at the same time.

Are we on the same wavelength?

Samuel was woken in the night by a voice calling him. He assumed it was Eli - but it wasn't. Only when on the third attempt did Eli point out to him that he should listen very carefully as it would be the voice of God. Then he was on the right wavelength.

In Quaker Meetings we worship in silence waiting to hear the voice of God and if we are fortunate to tune in to him, we then share that message in vocal ministry.

We are all blessed with an inner voice which speaks to us. It has advice as to what is right and wrong and helps to guide our actions - if we listen to it. Its purpose to is to help us live a better life; a caring, sharing, and helpful life. Surely that is better not only for ourselves but for all with whom we come in contact.

Are you listening?

Peace taken from Quake -BYM 11-Jan -24

And Finally -this is a long article by Tim Gee which thoughtfully explores the Quaker Peace Testimony today.

Tim Gee -Why I am still a pacifist.

How do we stay true to our peace testimony in times of war? Many Quakers struggle with this difficult question. Tim Gee reflects on the spiritual and practical considerations involved.

I became General Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation in January of 2022, a role of service to the world's 400,000 or so Quakers, who collectively comprise one of the world's traditional peace churches.

In February of 2022 the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia began. Almost immediately a process of testing, working out, challenge and grappling began as Friends explored individually and together, how or whether pacifism can remain a tenable position in such a context.

I describe myself as a pacifist, and even wrote a book about it a few years ago. I did not expect this to be tested so early in the course of my new role.

There is of course a difference between pacifism and Quaker peace testimony. Pacifism is a relatively new word, only a century or so old. Quakers have been around a lot longer than that. Most Quakers who have ever lived then, have not been 'pacifists' as such.

But there is also a relationship: today 'Quaker pacifism' is often used as a shorthand to refer to our peace testimony. Shorthand's are fine, as long as we all know that's what they are.

Peace testimony.

Our peace testimony isn't a document, or a statement, or a creed, or an ideology. Testimony means 'witness'. Our peace testimony is the cumulative body of action and reflection flowing out of Friends' experience of the divine, as we've sought to interpret it in different situations.

Many people might well be surprised to discover Wolf Mendl's observation, reproduced in [chapter 24](#) of Britain Yearly Meeting's *Quaker faith & practice*, saying that there are no formal rules laid down for Quaker conduct in times of war, except to follow the Light of Christ.

The Light of Christ in practice seems to have led us to work for peace, ever since the time of those early Friends who declared "we utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world."

In every major time of war Friends have tried to articulate Quaker peace testimony in that context (many of them are also in *Quaker faith & practice*). In 2022 I was part of a group that tried to do that in the [context of the war in Ukraine](#), and in 2023 we did the same about Israel and Palestine.

In the first of them we referenced Sydney Bailey's 1993 Swarthmore Lecture, which recognises some common themes, running through Quaker peace testimony, summarised as (1) the refusal to kill, (2) relief of suffering and (3) responding to the call to be peacemakers by building the institutions of peace and removing the causes of war.

In essence though it is about the vocation God has given to us to be peacemakers who (to borrow some words from Margaret Fell) profoundly seek that "others' feet may walk in the same".

The first step then is spiritual – following the leadings of the living Christ and the Biblical Jesus (and James, and Paul and the Prophets for that matter). An early Quaker text described Friends as being led by two lights – the Light of Christ and the light of reason, the second of which follows the first, like the moon reflects the sun.

Although it is not the first step then, we can and should apply rational thought, as part of a process of discernment. And rationally, through experience and reason we can say that the only route to long term peace is to do long term work for peace. War, in practice, tends to lead to more war.

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The war in Ukraine

This piece began by looking back to February 2022, when the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began. There was a moment then – almost a couple of months – when media were focussing on the human costs of invasion and war (quite a contrast to the pattern of war reporting in the last 20 years).

Politicians, faith leaders and people powered protests alike were calling for peace. Even large companies who would usually claim they are just trying to make money for their shareholders started calling for peace and backing it up by moving their operations.

There were also peace talks at that time. The details are disputed and no doubt more will emerge about what could have been, and the lives that could have been saved had they been able to reach an agreement. With hindsight people will ask whether the eventual outcome, whatever it is, was better or worse than what could have been agreed then.

One detail that has come out appears to be that one of the factors that weakened that possibility was the intervention of the UK's then Prime Minister. I say this to underline the point that, even thousands of miles away, the words and actions of the people that speak in our names still have an impact internationally.

But then the decision was made to fight on, and the reporting changed accordingly. A good many people who opposed the various aggressive wars and invasions of the past two decades, supported arming Ukraine in this circumstance, on the basis of self-defence.

That left Quakers in an unusual and uncomfortable situation, without the same kind of experience and expertise that our agencies have for example in Israel and Palestine, without the kind of relationships or name recognition that would allow us to serve a mediation role, and in a polarised political and media environment where whatever messages we could get out about peace were likely to be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Plus, we became all the more exposed in the absence of the kind of broad-based anti-war movement of the type there was against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So there was a lot of questioning. There's also a thought experiment I imagine many of us will have done, asking "what would I do if I was Ukrainian, or lived in another country that borders with Russia?" And it's an important question, indeed a necessary one. Understanding or indeed empathising with the reasons people have to fight, is a very good step towards being able to be a peacemaker.

It's also impossible to answer. None of us can know what God would call us to do if we were someone else. We can only ask what God is calling us to do or be as who we are, where we are now.

What we can also do is ask what Friends who are closer to the frontline are doing. When I visited Quakers in bordering countries last year I didn't find the same kind of intellectual anguish as in Britain and the USA. Instead, I found people immediately and practically moved to help people fleeing from Ukraine in whatever kinds of ways they could.

Whatever happens the world is going to need people who know about peace?

So, love is the first motion. But we can apply logic to these situations. We can look at what the possible futures for this conflict are. At the time of writing, the one that looks most likely is a long and bloody continuation of the war leading to much more death and suffering. A second is some kind of negotiations especially as costs mount, leading to a truce that could turn into an uneasy peace. A third is outright victory for Ukraine, possibly with a highly militarised border in the east. A fourth is outright victory for Russia, probably with a highly militarised border in the west.

There is something all of these have in common: whatever happens the world is going to need people who know about peace; keeping it, nurturing it, extending it and so on. It is also going to need to support an international system invested in peace with the tools to grow it. That is something that we know something about, and something we can and do contribute to through our words, actions, and international programmes. It's also something which people recognise and trust us for, thanks to our peace testimony.

Another thought experiment we could engage in would be to ask, what if, after hundreds of years of peace work, Friends decided, actually perhaps war in some circumstances is ok. Would the world be any more peaceful if the small number that Quakers represent tried turning our hands to war instead? I don't think it would. I also don't think we would be very good at it.

The war in Palestine

This year I was signatory to another statement, led by Quaker agencies and released on 17 October 2023, affirming our belief in the sacred worth of each person, mourning every killing in Israel and Palestine, and calling for a ceasefire and the return of all hostages.

At that time the most reliable available reports said that the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October had killed over 1,300 Israelis. As of 16 October, the subsequent Israeli military attack on Gaza had killed at least 2,950 Palestinians, including over 1,030 children. It had displaced more than one million Palestinians in Gaza, with over 7,500 homes destroyed. We warned that these numbers will continue to rise if attacks do not end.

Even a few weeks later I find it very difficult to read those words, knowing that those numbers did rise, five-fold at the time of writing and probably even further by the time this is read. In the midst of this there was a fragile truce. Incomplete as it was, for a few days our screens were filled with images of relieved families reunited with their loved ones, and for an all too brief moment saw the fruits of what dialogue can do.

None of the ways forward are easy, or simple or pure.

What does this mean for our peace testimony?

This time I have not heard the same wrangling as before. In a situation where each side believes they are acting in self-defence, and uses this as their justification for extreme violence, the call for a ceasefire and release of hostages provides another way, which a great many institutions and groups are calling for. The pause in fighting was widely mourned as having been too short.

There are also things we can say and do based on longstanding experience. The Friends School in Ramallah has long provided a good quality, peace-oriented education for its students, and has been receiving attention and support from Friends more widely. Quakers in Britain has long been supporting ecumenical human rights observers in the West Bank and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has staff in Gaza, who against the odds have been managing to get some emergency help to people there.

This though provides a different challenge. Here is a situation where Friends have been doing long term work for peace. There have been Quakers in Palestine doing educational, humanitarian and peace work for 150 years. In 1948 some of the refugees sheltered at the Friends Meeting House. AFSC helped set up some of the refugee camps in Gaza which are now being bombed. Yet, despite this long-term work, there is no long-term peace.

Significant as all this work is though, for all the effort that goes in, and for all of the good that comes of it, the Quaker and broader peace presence in Palestine and Israel is still relatively small, and sometimes marginalised. The war is not a result of too many peacemakers in the Middle East.

If this presents problems for peacemakers, it does for supporters of war too. Some of those people, particularly on parts of the political left, who supported the right of Ukrainians to resist occupation with arms, sought to stay consistent to that principle, and insist on the right of Palestinians to do so too. When some of the gruesome images came through of the human impacts of attempting to apply that principle in practice, many of those people had to row back from their previous view.

Then there are others who support the right of Ukrainians to resist occupation with arms, but don't apply the same to Palestinians. And it's reasonable to ask why this is, including whether racism, or religious bias might be part of it. Of course, the situations and the armies are different, but if someone was to suggest that one army was entirely moral and the other not, it's fair to point out that that there are well documented extreme and unsavoury elements in Ukraine's army too, some of whom will likely be beneficiaries of the arms that are sent.

I only say this to point out that while its right Friends and other peacemakers grapple with peace principles in the context of armed conflict, turning to war isn't an easy answer either. None of the ways forward are easy, or simple or pure.