

YORK AREA QUAKEVINE

Quaker News, Views, Insights and Reports

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May/June 2021

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Editor writes:

Dear Friends - There is so much to absorb in this issue that I am holding over till July the second in our series where Friends speak personally about their experience of Quakerism.

Do note **two** significant Area Meeting matters included here: the full page attempt to give a flavour of the Threshing Meeting and future course comes first, It is followed by a brief outline of the proposed plan for May's Area Meeting business.

Tracey and Martin's covid-postponed marriage

Long ago, at the start of 2020, before anyone imagined that the word pandemic was about to leap out of the dictionary into the centre of our lives, York AM appointed a meeting for worship for the marriage of Tracey Copestake and Martin Pearson: it was for May a year ago. We know too well why this could not take place as planned.

But Area Meeting's support and authorisation of that special meeting for worship still stands and a new date has been fixed: Saturday 29th May 2021 in the early afternoon.

One sadness remains. The Quaker Registering Officers' Handbook 2.6 states: *"The AM will want to be assured that there will be sufficient local Friends attending to ensure that the meeting for worship is properly held"* while covid restrictions for May state that only 30 people will be permitted to attend a wedding. This means it will not be possible for AM Friends to show their loving support for Tracey and Martin by turning up on the day.

Instead we offer three possibilities. You could write a few words to be read out during the wedding; email your words to Sarah Allen sarahelisabeth.allen1960@gmail.com, who will be one of the elders, by Friday 28th May. You could send your paper good wishes – words, pictures, drawings – to Ben Arnup benarnup@gmail.com who will be creating a display. And we could all hold our Friends in the Light around the time when they will make their declarations to one another – even though we cannot be physically present as witnesses signing the marriage certificate.

Barbara Windle, clerk to York AM



York Human Rights City Network: Our 2020 Report

When the Lord Mayor of York declared York as the UK's first Human Rights City in April 2017, all three of our Quaker Meetings within the city endorsed the vision of York as '*a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe community built on the foundations of universal human rights*'.

That's not surprising because Quakers have worked tirelessly for human rights from long before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved in 1948 or the European Convention on Human Rights was agreed in 1950. The concept of human rights flows naturally from our testimonies, particularly on peace and equality. I

imagine, though, that most of us will associate human rights more with the work of QUNO or Quaker Peace and Social Witness than with our local meetings. It seems to be part of our consciousness that human rights are more to do with matters that are 'out there', in far off places and about how other governments behave, rather than with what is happening in the life of our own communities.

And yet human rights cover many aspects of everyday life ranging from the right to food, to shelter, education and health. They require that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect. They apply to us all but they are particularly important for those who are disempowered



or disadvantaged. There is a growing interest in how human rights can be explored at a local level and York is at the forefront of where this is happening.

The York Human Rights City Network (which I chair) is a civil society partnership hosted jointly by York Centre for Voluntary Service and the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York. Our main vehicle for influence is the annual Indicator Report, which aims to link human rights to the everyday. The 2020 Report focused on the impact of COVID-19 and responses to the pandemic on human rights in the city. During the first wave the Network gathered evidence from 28 local organisations and 16 individuals and pulled this together for a submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights enquiry into the impact of COVID-19. New research was conducted later in the year and all the information gathered was collated into the final Indicator Report which was published in March 2021. You can find the report here: <https://www.yorkhumanrights.org/wp->

<content/uploads/2021/03/YHRCN-IndiRep-5-FINAL-2.pdf>. The main finding is that the pandemic has exacerbated issues of inequality and discrimination in the city. York Foodbank use was five times higher in 2020 than in the previous year. Claims for Universal Credit were more than twice those for the previous year. There is a significant 'digital divide' within the city with 64% of civil society organisations finding digital exclusion as a problem. The report calls on the City of York Council to make tackling poverty and inequality its priority, ensuring there is a coherent strategy across all the city's relevant agencies in order to recover after the pandemic. We argue that it is vital that York's marginalised residents and all those in vulnerable situations are not forced to carry the burdens of 2020 for years to come.

The research highlighted that both the Council and civil society organisations found York Human Rights City Network's research and resources helpful to them in framing their response to the crisis in human rights terms. This has led to a recommendation for human rights training for Council staff and civil society organisations to help build the city back with respect for human rights and the dignity of residents.

There is a lot more of substance in the report, which has now been presented to the Human Rights and Equality Board – created after York became a Human Rights City to build a strategic vision on human rights for the City Council, and to address issues of concern raised in the Indicator Reports. It includes representatives from the main political parties, relevant statutory bodies, and from civil society and the faith communities.

It is encouraging that our work in York has been noted by the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Todd Howland, its chief officer for development, economic and social issues, has written:

The effort of York to produce this report is commendable and should serve as an example for other cities. Its content will certainly be valuable for local, national and international discussions on recovery.

Stephen Pittam [New Earswick] *chair of the York Human Rights City Network*
stephen.pittam@gn.apc.org

Prison Chaplaincy (QPC) at HMP Full Sutton

As York AM will soon be needing a new QPC, I have been asked to tell you a little about the role of Quaker Prison Chaplain at HMP Full Sutton. I have been doing this for about six months and am enjoying it immensely but my relocation to Wales means I must give this up by December 2021. Do you know anyone who might be suited to this important work? Have you yourself thought about getting involved?

The key thing I have learned is that chaplaincy is less about criminal justice [we have no influence over that] and more about journeying with people in their spiritual lives while in a specific institution. I keep finding that many of the men are in better shape spiritually than are many of us who are in Meeting each week and have comfortable lives. This is an inspiring place to be. Chaplaincy is simply meeting people where they are and responding. Within prisons, getting inside to where they are (and out again) involves a fair amount of paperwork, security clearance and patient perseverance in the face of institutional inertia. One of the main qualities needed is forbearance.

Beyond this is where the real work begins. Each encounter is potentially transformative. Prison Chaplains are there to serve everyone, including all staff, so chaplaincy is a

peculiarly neutral role in a system that is sometimes fraught. Chaplains are thought of as the heart of the place and are very well received by all. It is a privileged position which brings great opportunities to 'enter with tender sympathies into the joys and sorrows of one another's lives'. Remember, there are often Quaker communities inside these places, of which you and your Meeting know nothing.

Paid chaplains are in a slightly different position from those only going in to minister to their own congregations: chaplains must also undertake their share of statutory duties such as visiting those in healthcare or segregation. This means we are continually called to speak with those of all faiths and none: we may need to organise paperwork for a Muslim to request involvement in Ramadan; or take a meditation pillow to a cell for a Buddhist; a Catholic may chat with us in the corridor about why God allows innocent suffering; an atheist may talk about bereavement; many people ask what Quakers are.



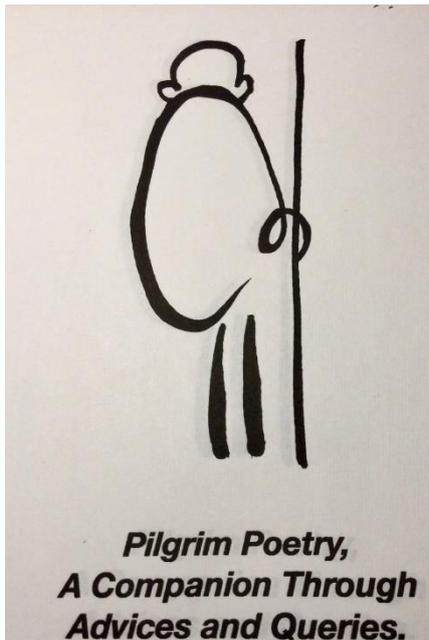
Regular meetings of groups are the chaplains' most prominent activity. There is a possible fortnightly early evening meeting for anyone wanting to join the Quaker group for discussion, silence and sharing. Volunteer visitors can gain clearance to become regular attenders and help strengthen the group as a Quaker community, acting as elders and listeners. Many people attending this group will also attend other church groups. We have Methodists, Pentecostals, Anglicans and Catholics who attend their preferred service on a Sunday but come to our Quaker mid-week Meeting in addition.

My current paid role [4 hours weekly] is actually done fortnightly, as one full day. If the group is running, I work from around lunchtime until about 7.30pm, the end of the group meeting. In the afternoon I meet prisoners individually, remind everyone of the group taking place and make preparations. There would be scope to amend this timing e.g. working one evening weekly or working at weekends.

There are always conversations and listening needed and there is a great willingness by the managing chaplain to accommodate and involve all chaplains according to our individual gifts. This is spiritual work in a highly supportive multi-faith team, and the broad range of conversations and encounters is sometimes surprising and inspiring. If you feel ready for a new challenge, this is a most unusual and rewarding position.

Please do get in touch direct if you would like to hear more about this work and would consider getting involved. Please email or phone me on quakeremma1971@gmail.com or 07771 934339.

Emma Roberts [Leeds Area Meeting]



Afternoons of Pilgrim Poetry

I hope you all know that delicious feeling that comes from being with a group of people who all have a passion for the same thing. I have had the great privilege of being with Anna Baldwin and Barbara Windle discussing the poems in Pilgrim Poetry with about ten other poetry lovers from across York Area Meeting. It was just that delicious feeling!

Pilgrim Poetry arose from my Equipping for Ministry course. I compiled a collection of poems, one to go with each of the forty-two Advices and Queries. Each meeting house has a copy of Pilgrim Poetry, duly quarantined at present I suppose.

Every fortnight Anna Baldwin, (yes, it was confusing having two Anna Bs), sent out two poems from the collection plus at least one more on each topic from

herself and Barbara. Others in the group added their choices and we were delighted to hear some fine original compositions. Overall it was so illuminating to receive such a treasure store of years of reading guided by two extremely well versed(!) facilitators. I was particularly glad to look at passages from the Romantic poets and Shakespeare that I had not come across before.

Together we pondered on the Advices and Queries, on the poems from the collection and on the additional poems. We stretched our minds to understand the intricate ones, marvelled at the mastery of some, laughed together and were moved by others.

Most importantly, we made friendships across the meetings which I am sure will be enhanced when we can meet face-to-face. Zoom may not be everyone's favourite medium and we were occasionally frustrated by it, but our poetry zooms were a great joy and encouragement in these restricted days. Our horizons were broadened and, I think, deepened - if that's not pushing horizons too far. We all found old friends among the poems and it was lovely to be reminded of some nearly forgotten ones. There was also the delight of coming across new poems and poets to sit with. It has been a wonderfully enriching few months. Thank you, Anna and Barbara!

It is impossible to close without a poem so here is one by Robert Frost from our penultimate session, chosen by Barbara and the shortest one we encountered:

The way a crow	Has given my heart
Shook down on me	A change of mood
The dust of snow	And saved some part
From a hemlock tree	Of a day I had rued.

Anna Botwright (Thirsk)

BW writes: All the thanks go to Anna-of-Thirsk really. Without Anna choosing this Equipping for Ministry research project, what would have been our focus for those very enjoyable and enriching Tuesday afternoons?

Next York Area Meeting: Saturday 8th May 1.30 pm – 4.00 pm

Five main agenda items:

Marriage meeting date recorded
Assisted dying - MFS April report
For your comfort & discomfort: Race and Gender – Quaker Life Rep Council report

Nominations
Sustainability Group update

I hope – DV - to send out papers and the Zoom Link on 1st May

Dates for future Area Meetings in 2021

Meetings begin at 1.30 pm unless otherwise stated

All by Zoom until we are allowed to do otherwise

Wednesday July 14th at 7 pm Acomb

Saturday September 11th Thirsk

Saturday November 13th Friargate

General Announcements

Local, flexible, tailor-made support available in in York

If you feel you need a little extra care and support in your day to day living, I am here to help. I have worked in residential and domiciliary settings and am available to offer personal care, respite for carers, short-term help following an illness or return from hospital, companionship, support with domestic tasks and shopping. DBS checked, vaccinated and with carer's insurance, I am also keen, with my techie head on, to enable families and friends to get together "virtually" on screen where actual contact is not possible. Please do get in touch with me to chat more.

Emma Anderson 0781 131 3850

Writing Workshops: Awakening the Writer Within

Janet Dean and Clara Challoner Walker run 'Awakening The Writer Within' creative writing workshops for experienced and new writers. Several members and attenders from Friargate have joined us in recent years.

Over the past year all of our workshops have been online and to celebrate the fact that this has opened up our courses to over 200 people from the UK, Europe and beyond, we are running a whole day writing retreat on Thursday 20th May exploring poetry, prose, dialogue and drama. Facilitation is by email prompts, Zoom and a closed Facebook group and participants can choose how they want to engage.

We are also delighted to be returning to the North York Moors National Park to run small face to face half-day workshops at the Moors Centre at Danby, starting on the 5th June. Find out more about both programmes and book at

www.awakeningthewriterwithin.co.uk

York Area Quakevine (YAQ)

YAQ appears in January, March, May, July, September, November

Contributions to Barbara Windle (barbwindle@outlook.com 01904 481977)

The editor may select and edit all contributions.

Deadline for next issue: Saturday 19th June.