

the Friend

18 & 25 December 2020 | £2.00

Nativity stories: The
Christmas characters
reconsidered



Dear Friend

Our Christmas gift to you

Greetings and good wishes from us all at *The Friend*.

Welcome to this 32-page double issue. We've gone heavy on Christmas this year, which we know won't please everyone. But we think there are some pieces here that will explain why we've done that, and how we've tried to take a Quakerly approach to the season.

I'd like to take a moment to offer my thanks to all our contributors this year. It has been a tricky one but the quality of your writing has been equal to the task – not just in this issue, but since the pandemic struck.

We have been producing the magazine every week from our homes, as Covid-19 has tested us all. But we are only able to do this because of the support we receive from our subscribers and advertisers. Please help us to keep *The Friend* coming out each week.

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Thank you for your support, we look forward to seeing you next year!
In Friendship

Joe

Joseph Jones
Editor

The Christmas issue continues on the next page.



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18 & 25 December 2020 | Volume 178, No 51

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News	4
<i>Campaigning, prisons and more</i>	Rebecca Hardy
Letters	6
Christmas is coming	8
<i>A holiday cheer</i>	Elaine Bright
Thought for the week	9
<i>Christmas belongs to us all</i>	Bernard Coote
Christmas characters	
<i>Mary</i>	10 Marisa Johnson
<i>Joseph</i>	11 Harvey Gillman
<i>The shepherds</i>	14 Rosie Carnall
<i>The magi</i>	15 James Newman-Shah
<i>Herod</i>	18 Mark Russ
<i>The innkeeper</i>	19 Nim Njuguna
<i>Anna</i>	22 Rhiannon Grant
Born to be wild?	12
<i>Retelling the oversweet story</i>	Tim Gee
The coming of the Light	16
<i>A 'protean' understanding</i>	Derrick Whitehouse
Embracing the season	20
<i>A 'Quakerly Christian' perspective</i>	Geoff Pilliner
The powerless baby	23
<i>Having an example</i>	Howard Grace
Taking care	24
<i>Lessons from His Dark Materials</i>	Lois Gallagher
Poetry	26
<i>'Asylum seekers' and 'Walking in Winter'</i>	Rainbows Children's Meeting & RV Bailey
Christmas greetings	27
Friends & Meetings	28

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.

From *Quaker faith & practice* 21.25 (Gerald Priestland, 1977)

Quaker centenarian raises £40,000

Newbury Quaker centenarian Ruth Saunders, inspired by Tom Moore who famously raised £32 million for the NHS by walking 100 laps of his patio in the days leading up to his 100th birthday, has gone one further by completing the final lap of her marathon. She walked the final two laps at Newbury Racecourse on 4 November where she was filmed and photographed. Her story has appeared in the press throughout the country.

Ruth, who is 104, originally set out on 104 sponsored autumn walks to raise money for Thames Valley Air Ambulance. She then extended her goal and has so far raised over £40,000. She said: 'You can say Tom was my role model in this. I just thought that if he could do it, so could I, even though I am four years older. I am not setting any cash targets. I just want to make as much as I can.'

Of the Thames Valley Air Ambulance, she said: 'They are such wonderful



Photo courtesy of Lynette Edwell.

people and came to the assistance of my son when he needed them. I want to do something to help them in return.' Ruth Saunders' fundraising page is at: www.justgiving/fundraising/ruthsaunders104.

'Chilling' effect on campaign groups

The UK government is making it harder for campaigning voices to be heard, staff from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) have said. Writing on the Quakers in Britain

website, Grace Da Costa, public affairs and advocacy manager for BYM, sets out the impact of what the blog describes as the 'chilling effect on civil society', and shares details of a network formed to counteract it.

'Our freedom to [campaign and protest] is being threatened, but Quakers in Britain and other concerned groups are working together to do something about it,' she says, citing a Civil Society Voice network, which Quakers have formed with charities including Friends of the Earth and Shelter.

One of the factors making it harder to campaign, she says, is less engagement and consultation from the government with faith and civil society groups when changing laws and policies. Other factors include: changes in rules on campaigning during elections such as the Lobbying Act; anti-advocacy clauses which prevent charities in receipt of government funding from criticising government policy; and limits on the right to protest.

Grace Da Costa also refers to criticism aimed at charities that campaign, such as 'Boris Johnson's disparaging remarks about "lefty human rights lawyers and other do-gooders" and... Tina Stowell's recent *Daily Mail* article telling charities to stay out of politics and "culture wars".'

The blog also highlights the fact that the government is considering changes to the judicial review system that she says 'would have a

negative impact' on access to it for ordinary people and the organisations that represent them.

Recent initiatives of Civil Society Voice include: monitoring and sharing information about the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on human rights and civil liberties; and submitting joint evidence to a parliamentary select committee inquiry on constitution, democracy and rights, in which it asked 'for the whole of civil society to be involved in any attempts to change the UK's constitution'. The network also met with Danny Kruger MP.

Friends call for more black history lessons

A Scottish Friend involved in one of the four South-East Scotland Area Meeting study groups set up to explore racism has said that there should be more taught about British black history on the UK school curriculum.

'It's complicated to actually implement a change,' said Rici Marshall Cross from South Edinburgh Meeting, where the study groups were originally set up. 'We heard about a project [the Black Curriculum] that is preparing lesson plans to make it easier for teachers to bring it into their lessons. This is the sort of positive action we'd love to support.'

Overall, she said, it was 'shocking' how little detail she knew about British roots in slavery and the British civil rights movements. 'The idea [for the study groups]

WORDS

'Behind the curve.'

Edwina Peart, diversity and inclusion officer for BYM, on Quakers and race.

started as a book group around Reni Eddo-lodge's book *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (inspired by the book groups being run by Woodbrooke) and has widened to us sharing suggestions for a range of things to read/watch/listen to. In my study group at least, we've been learning about British black history, white privilege and how to be anti racist.'

Writing in the Edinburgh Friends' newsletter, Rici Marshall Cross said she has learnt more from podcasts and programmes such as David Olusoga's *Black and British: A forgotten history* and *Britain's forgotten slave owners*.

Other resources recommended include: the BBC podcast *What does a black history curriculum look like?* and the Radio 3 essay: *Thinking Black*.

'Talking with one another about white privilege helps to open our eyes to the many ways we navigate our lives without the burden of being judged by the colour of our skin,' she writes.

'Stories and accounts by people of colour lead us to ask ourselves what we can do. Perhaps it is in the small but challenging conversations with friends and family that we can help others to see systemic racism around us. We hope to arrange a learning session for all Friends in the Area Meeting about what to do if we witness a racist incident, from very obvious hate crimes to smaller everyday racism and microaggressions.'

The study groups are

one of the ways Quakers are exploring their historical entanglement with slavery and commitment to diversity.

This month BYM sent out a press release stating 'Quakers were totally immersed in the slave trade. Not just as abolitionists. They were ship owners, captains, merchants and investors, in ports such as London and Bristol. This hard truth faced Quakers' representative body this week.'

The announcement followed Meeting for Sufferings on 5 December in which, instead of the usual Quaker silence, music was played including Bob Marley's 'Redemption Song', and work from a young black rapper, Dave.

Edwina Peart, diversity and inclusion officer, said: 'Quakers who played a leading role in abolition are now behind the curve. This is a moment of crisis in which the fault lines of inequality are laid bare.'

'Tough time' for prisons

The challenges facing prison staff and chaplains throughout the pandemic was explored in an online Quaker workshop this autumn.

'All prison staff, including prison chaplains, are having a tough time during this pandemic. Each prison has responded in different ways: some chaplains have continued working throughout, some have hardly been able to go in, and some are finding different ways to keep in touch with the chaplaincies, prisoners and staff for whom they care,' Judith Catty,

NUMBERS

£40,000

The amount raised so far by Friend Ruth Saunders for Thames Valley Air Ambulance.

from the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee, told *the Friend*.

The conclusions were drawn from a talk by Phil Chadder, HMPPS Chaplaincy Training and Development Officer, who spoke at the event on the theme: 'A view from HQ: Chaplaincy during Covid.' Judith Catty said: 'He gave a national picture about how prisons have been coping during the lockdown and the role chaplains have played, going in throughout, when many other non-uniform staff have not. Phil was very encouraging and appreciative of the role that prison chaplains play in their varied and challenging work and left workshop participants feeling better.'

Thirty-five Quaker prison chaplains came together for the online event on 17 October. This replaced the annual autumn Quaker Prison Chaplains conference at Woodbrooke.

Friends explore slavery and the City

Friends in London took part in a walk around the capital last month aimed at deepening their understanding of the capital's links to slavery. A small group of Quakers joined the Slavery and the City walk; they were brought together by London Quakers and led

by the group Six in the City on 3 November.

Fred Ashmore, from Kingston and Wandsworth Meeting, told *the Friend* the excursion was 'fascinating'. 'We wandered round the heart of the Square Mile, starting near St Paul's where we remembered the unholy memory of the Church of England's slave-worked sugar plantations in Barbados; [and] dropped into the Guildhall square for a discussion of the critically important trial which established that "owners" may not kidnap a free black person and transport him or her to the West Indies.'

The walk also took in the former meeting place of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade on Old Jewry, in which Friends played an important role, and the nearby printing works which helped spread the campaign around Britain.

'The final stop was a modern and very striking sculpture 'Gilt of Cain' in Fen Court off Fenchurch Street,' said Fred Ashmore.

'It commemorates the vital linkage between the the financial accumulation which powered the City of London and the slave trade, whose residues in place names and public works still pollute cityscapes all over Britain.'

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Letters

The Friend welcomes your views, to letters@thefriend.org. Please keep letters short. We particularly welcome contributions from children, written or illustrated.

Please include your full postal address, even when sending emails, along with your Meeting name or other Quaker affiliation.

**In essentials unity,
in non-essentials liberty,
in all things charity.**

Wracked with guilt

I finished Meeting for Sufferings on Zoom on Saturday 5 December wracked with guilt. When listening to the moving presentation by Britain Yearly Meeting's Edwina Peart on Friends and racism and the subsequent discussion, I realised that we Friends could and should have made much more of the link between racism and Brexit, and so might have helped to counteract ludicrously dishonest claims of the Brexiteers.

If we had faced up to our generational failings, admitted our guilt and used our influential position in the media (perhaps not as great as we would like to think but still considerable) to publicise its implications, the current process of leaving the EU, so shaming, I think, to the UK and damaging to the poorest in society for generations to come, might have been different.

I remember hearing the argument put forward by Brexiteers, not effectively gainsaid by anyone, that the world, especially former colonies, would be falling over themselves to buy our goods. This unreal suggestion was anchored in the fallacies that every child absorbed when growing up in the UK, at its core

being white supremacist racism and the belief we were loved across the world – not least by former colonies.

I briefly worked in a steelworks in 'steel sales', the climax of which was personally selling 4,000 tons of steel railway track to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). But there was no selling involved – colonial railways *always* used Cumbrian-made rail track. Not any more. India and Sri Lanka make their own or get it from China or Japan, which are 10,000 miles closer.

Colonial history protected UK industry for too long while non-colonial countries focused on making goods of quality and value.

Not facing up to this reality has had tragic consequences. I believe it misled thousands of voters about the reality of UK history and the fault lines in its supposed future outwith the EU.

Robert Straughton
Swarthmoor (SW Cumbria)
Area Meeting

Our racist history

I was saddened at Meeting for Sufferings that we did not respond to the call to apologise for our involvement in the slave trade.

Earlier this year I was horrified to learn that it was 2015 before the British taxpayer finally came out from under the debt of paying recompense to the *slave owners* for freeing their slaves! Not, as one might have expected, to pay the enslaved people.

This means that our legal and financial systems have been upholding the principle that humans could be property for over 200 years after slavery was supposedly abolished. It is the secrecy we still allow in Britain about sources of income and taxes paid that enabled such an abhorrent action to continue.

One Friend at Sufferings said that he could not join with an

apology for Quakers' historic involvement in slavery, because he could apologise only for something for which he was personally responsible. But we could – and we should – say 'I am sorry that this ever happened, and that it happened within a society to which I am heir; I acknowledge that I still benefit greatly from this historic injustice. I will now work to understand the truth about its extent and depth, to recognise how much it is still embedded in my norms, and to eradicate its pervasive influence personally and in wider society'. And mean it. And act on it.

*Frances Voelcker
Porthmadog Meeting, Gwynedd*

Testimony to the life

A testimony to the life of Friends should not be in the form of an obituary or a eulogy, but should record the service they have given within the Society no matter how small. It should be something that will inspire and benefit Friends.

Is it necessary to bring qualifications into it when writing a testimony? After all, when nominations are searching for Friends to serve they are not looking for those with a string of degrees and PhDs!

What is needed are Friends who are willing to serve the Society by bringing their particular gifts, talents and skills to the role, but do not necessarily have a college or university education.

Many Friends are from privileged walks of life and the professions. We are often seen as white, middle-class intellectuals. This creates a barrier to those who may feel intimidated outwith our Society – and possibly within the Society too.

Are we creating barriers with our testimonies to Friends' lives? A short, well-rounded record to the spiritual life to the glory of God would be sufficient.

The person I would be inspired by would be someone like Annie

Morris (*Quaker faith & practice* 18.18) who spent seventy years serving her community despite a struggle with declining health – a faithful Friend.

*Sila Collins-Walden
North Scotland Area Meeting*

It is what it is

Jane Herd's article (20 November) made me think. The first time I met the phrase 'It is what it is' was this year. It was spoken by a carer with an incredibly difficult situation to cope with. When yet more was put on her plate she said it again. When I would be paralysed by the burden of coping, she looked what she needed to do in the face and said: 'It is what it is'. Then she got on with life with courage, grace and humour.

She has taught me such a lot. Surely the phrase is only heinous if it is used, as Jane describes, to shut people down? The same words, if said by people who themselves face the difficult situation, can offer an approach to life full of love and faith.

*Dawn Hampshire
West Somerset Area Meeting*

Not nice

When we make a statement like 'Jesus was not nice' (23 October) we are treating as fact a story about him that was written by just one of the gospel writers (Luke, chapter 11). Only one of these writers – John – actually knew him in life. The others were relying on traditional stories whose accuracy would vary according to how close a relationship they had to the Galilean disciples, especially Peter.

Luke relied mostly on copying the accounts of Mark and Matthew, and all were chiefly speaking of Jesus' early healing work in Galilee, an area with which they were most familiar.

Luke gives us a picture in which the pharisees are rather remote figures, only occasionally mentioned, who are rich and unsympathetic towards the poor.

John gives us a different picture.

The pharisees in Jerusalem, whom he knew well, and with whom he seems to have had family connections, are authoritarian characters who actively interfered with Jesus' healing of the sick, particularly on the Sabbath. It is on those occasions that he criticises them while, not as far as we are told, disregarding the details of the law in his everyday life.

*Elaine Miles
Jordans Meeting, Buckinghamshire*

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is not other people's tax being spent by Quakers without their consent.

Gift Aid is recoverable only against the tax paid by the taxpayer making the donation. They have to knowingly agree to this being recovered by the charity they are making the donation to. If the donor doesn't pay enough tax, the donor is responsible for making up any shortfall in the Gift Aid.

Full knowledge and consent of the donor is present and the wider public is not involved. The government is hugely reliant on the charity/third sector, including religious bodies, to deliver community support. Hence Gift Aid is a relatively efficient funding policy, apportioned by the tax-paying donors themselves.

If a taxpayer making a donation to Quaker projects thinks that the Gift Aid amounting to twenty-five pence in every pound that could benefit that work, would be better spent by the government (armaments, nets for capturing refugees' boats, 50,000 extra border officers, Brexit lorry parks and so on), then they simply do not have to give consent to Gift Aid when making the donation.

However, I suggest Gift Aid should be treated as hypothecation by the donor – at least directing where this sum of their tax goes – to the charity of their choice!

*David Baker
Address supplied*

It might be a bluer Christmas than usual, but Elaine Bright still has a holiday cheer

‘Christmas time is coming, the geese are getting fat – and they are not alone.’



Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash.

Christmas time is coming, the geese are getting fat – and they are not alone. I am finding even my ‘work from home’ casuals are snug. I can’t *put a penny in the old man’s hat* since I haven’t seen the Euston Road for six months. A summer ago, I did give a young man on the street a sandwich and a bottle of water. He was young, same age as my youngest son. I wasn’t sure what he liked, so I picked a sandwich at random. He chased me up the road shouting ‘Will this kill me?’. Turns out he was allergic to onions!

If I didn’t *have a penny, a half penny would do*, but to whom? The musicians on the tube range from playing ABBA on a squeeze box at ninety miles an hour, to a violinist playing the theme from *The Godfather* – the whole train fell silent to that one. I once fell into a conversation with a user of various substances. He invited me to dance along to ABBA. I declined so he danced solo with lovely abandon. He advised me to tip the ABBA contribution as the guy with the amazing violin was crap. I love London.

If I *haven’t got a halfpenny then god bless me*. A small line but so kind. And it is not lost on me and mine as we have had times when we struggled to find a halfpenny. I know that others will struggle this Christmas, too. But I have to admit I love Christmas – the lead up, the day, the total madness of it all. I am an unashamed Christmas fan. I have hosted Christmas since my early years when my family looked aghast at what they were expected to eat. I feel the same every year. The cast has changed but we create the same pantomime, the feeling when all the guests arrive and we close the door, and know that for one day we can just be family together. We laugh, play games, drink too much, sober up, eat all day, cry for those who were at the table, but who left, leaving a gap of love and humour. A table, at first sight weighed down with food, but actually weighed down with affection and love.

Christmas is an evolving festival: the ground rules are constant but the interpretation is personal. I now wonder how my Christmas will be this year. Most of this year’s cast is ‘resting’ and the remaining performers will have to play several parts. The spirit of those missing will be felt with the happiness the day brings. The hardest will be remembering those who are now part of Christmas past. These memories are most easily shared with those whose support is silent but strong. A raised glass to absent friends.

I know the local school will be happy I’m not part of their Christmas plans though. The candle-lit supper was a highlight of the year until I helped out. I put my paper napkin on a tea light, the table cloth caught fire and while trying to extinguish it I was laughing so hard that an enthusiastic lady started to deliver first aid for asthma!

The circle of life can seem a cliché, but now I have new tiny people in my life I get it, I understand how it all works. Life really is a wonderful thing.

A virus is a moment, family is forever. ●

Elaine is the finance officer for the Friend and for Friends World Committee for Consultation.

Thought for the week: Christmas belongs to us all, says *Bernard Coote*

*‘Every birth is a coming
from darkness.’*

Cancel Christmas? Alarm and fear were in those words, which made headlines earlier in the pandemic. It was unthinkable. Christmas is so deep in our history and customs, religious or otherwise. Friends have long had questions and insights about its observance. They deserve a

sharing together.

The story itself is unusual. It was 300 years in formation, with many versions in different languages. A significant birth is usually tied to a certain date and place in history. In the early accounts, establishing exact evidence was not a high priority. There was something deeper.

The nature of birth is that it is unique to each of us, and the story of this birth has been shared over millennia, with all humanity. In the records, read

**‘The light of
nativity is a
making visible.
It is a time to see
possibility and
hope.’**

publicly to millions every year, the story begins with the birth of Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, in Luke’s gospel. Elizabeth, a relative of Mary of Nazareth, and her husband Zechariah, are told of a forthcoming birth, their first baby. They couldn’t believe it. Zechariah

is made speechless for asking a question. The original editors commented, ‘These things were talked about and all who heard them pondered and said, “What will this child become?”’. Little did they know.

Quakers have had a particular understanding of it. Sydney Carter wrote:

*What happened nineteen hundred years ago
Might not have happened
How am I to know?
So shut the Bible up
And show me how
The Christ you talk about
Is living now.*

Every birth is a coming from darkness. It brings the sparklight, the dawn flash of trust, discovering our unique ‘being together’.

A working couple had a baby who became an influence kings could only envy. His sayings enshrined in a sacred book in every language, and in legal statutes. The calendar reset to mark his birth. It is a story from times of fear and alarm. The light of nativity is a making visible. ‘What will this child become?’ It is a time to see possibility and hope. Not for cancelling. ‘Show me how the Christ you talk about is living now.’ This is a rare and challenging prospect. Belonging and togetherness will be a deep concern for millions of us this Christmas. We need light to unite us on the way. ●

Bernard is from Blue Idol Meeting.



Photo by PxHere.

There's something about Mary, says Marisa Johnson

'Mary has been dis-incarnated, placed in a heaven that cannot be known in this life.'

For the current issue of *the Friends Quarterly* I wrote some reflections on Mary, the mother of Jesus. I explored my personal connection to her, and how her story has resonated strongly in my life. But here I want to focus on Mary herself, and what the mythology that surrounds her may be obscuring. What we know of her story comes from the writings of men who had an agenda, and who wanted to portray the story of Jesus in ways that proved the points they were making, namely that he was the Messiah foretold in Scripture.

Neither Mark nor John mention the story of Mary's miraculous conception. In Matthew's account it is Joseph, not Mary, who receives the angelic visitation and revelation of the divine nature of the child in Mary's womb. Luke does put Mary at the centre of the story of the Annunciation, and gives her the wonderful speech known as the Magnificat. I wonder how Luke would have known of these events. Would Mary, who is always portrayed as shy and reflective, have spoken about them to her son's followers?

I very much like an alternative version of the Annunciation, imagined by the poet and theologian Nicola Slee, who places Miriam, another version of Mary's name, in the more likely context of a busy extended first-century family. The poem (from *The Book of Mary*) ends thus:

I was never alone anyway. / There was always somebody wanting something: / "Miriam, help me make the bread." / "Miriam, clear that trestle." / "Miriam, fetch more water." / No angel wafted in on golden wings. / Gabriel barged in, banging his bag down on the table. / It was the only way he could get my attention above the din. / At least a dozen pairs of eyes turned to look where he stood, dishevelled and dusty, shouting. / "Miriam, there's another job for you to do".

I like this Miriam, an ordinary, believable young woman, part of a community focussed on the business of survival. I imagine her healthy, down-to-earth, unphased by the messy reality of birth – and death. Would she really have known that she was carrying God's child? Is it more likely that an awareness of Jesus' destiny unfolded slowly, as she accompanied him through his prophetic witness?

The iconography of the past 2,000 years has not been fair, or kind, to Mary/Miriam. It has created images of virginal aloofness, of unexpressed sorrow, that have put her above and beyond the reach of ordinary women. Like Jesus, Mary has been dis-incarnated, placed in a heaven that cannot be known in this life, where her only role is to pray and intercede for us. This could not be further from the triumph Mary claims in Luke's gospel: 'He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble' (Luke 1:52). Isn't this the miracle in the story? Isn't this 'The Kingdom of God' that people had been promised?

As this extraordinary year draws to a close I want to celebrate a lifeforce that is undaunted, a hope that the promise of heaven on earth will be fulfilled, through the overturning of 'the powers' and the lifting up of the down-trodden. Today Mary is on the march, with a placard saying 'Black Lives Matter'. It is God's word, incarnated in her. ●

Marisa is from Cambridgeshire Area Meeting.

Image by Mariusz Matuszewski from Pixabay.



Joseph: *Harvey Gillman's* original father Christmas

'I will always be the old man at the back, a small player in the grandiose drama.'

Saint Joseph with the Infant Jesus by Guido Reni, c1635.



I sit here in amazement of what they will say of me. None of them knew me, except that I was his father. What they mean by father I do not understand. They will write that Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, that she bore a child, that an angel told me to marry her in spite of that. And I, in the goodness of my heart, being a “principled man”, will obey. Then, having taken away my paternity, they will call me saint. They will make me “rotector of the church”/ What is a church?

Paul who made him known throughout the world will not mention me at all. Mark knew most about us, but he ignores Jesus’ childhood. Matthew will make me the son of a Jacob, who like the Jacob of old was a dreamer and went down to Egypt. Luke will give me a different father, born of a different line from old king David. We knew in the family we had royal blood, but we didn’t talk much about it. The prophets had said a royal redeemer would be born in Bethlehem. I am no expert on the prophets but that is where he was born. In fact, we lived in Nazareth, an obscure town in Galilee, and were simple artisans knowing more of wood, metal and stone than of the world and rulers. We did have to escape to Egypt, obeying another dream. Herod was afraid of redeemers. This was the only time I left my country. I didn’t like it very much. Throughout my life, I always tried to protect my son whatever the cost.

They will call us “holy family” and say our son was a god (as a Jew I shudder even to think of such a thing). In their pictures, I will always be the old man at the back, a small player in the grandiose drama. I had other children. Some called them cousins, others maintained they were step-brothers and sisters. I do not recognise my family as they described it. I do not recognise my son in their writings.

We had gone to Jerusalem for Passover. On the way home we discovered we had mislaid him. We found him in the temple, discussing sacred things with the teachers of the Law. We were knocked out by this. Where did he get all that learning? There were no religious centres in Nazareth. His mother told him off. Didn’t he realise how anxious we were? He told us he was in his father’s house. We didn’t understand. The temple is, after all, the house of the father of all of us. Mary fell silent, looked at him hard. She was an uneducated young girl and rarely spoke in public. I loved her gracefulness, her perseverance, her devotion.

I will disappear from their writings that Passover, though my son will be known as the child of Joseph and Mary, a man from a remote town who will do amazing things. I worried about him throughout the rest of my life. He was still young when I died. What have his followers done to him, to his mother? What have they done to me? They were not at his birth, but they will write such wonderful things: how at his birth in a stable, wise men from the east will kneel, animals will do him honour, shepherds will hear angels, search parties will be sent to kill him. Beautiful words and terrible, but I do not remember these things. I am still trying to understand the meaning of all this, the meaning of my son, something way beyond the words they used about him.’ ●

Harvey is from Rye Meeting.

Born to be wild? *Tim Gee* finds another way to tell the oversweet story of Christmas

‘Why, when the prophets said he would be called “Prince of Peace”, was Jesus named after a military man?’

At this time of year, the Christmas story is hard to escape. In advent calendars, cards, school plays and nativity sets, the story of Jesus’ birth is everywhere. One Quaker response is to ignore all this – after all Christ is born in our hearts every day. But I take a slightly different – although not incompatible – approach: to read these stories in a way that takes the political turmoil of the time into account, to ask what it says to us today.

Whether we’ve read it or not, we probably all know the story: Joseph is in love with a young woman called Mary who becomes pregnant. They travel from Galilee to Bethlehem to register for the census. On arrival, place after place tells them there’s no room at the inn. They sleep in a barn where Mary gives birth and lays her newborn child in a cow’s trough.

The story as told by Matthew begins earlier than that though. It begins with a family tree: ‘Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, Jacob begat Judah’ and so on through David and Solomon down to Joseph. It’s not there by accident. If things had have been different, Joseph could have been king.

But things *were* different. The works of historians like Josephus give us a sense of how things actually were. Judea and Samaria were under military occupation and were now a backwater of the Roman Empire. The empire was ruled by Augustus, the adoptive son of Julius Caesar who was considered

divine. According to imperial religion, the emperor was ‘Son of God’.

Locally, Rome appointed a man named Herod to be ‘King of the Jews’.

Herod spearheaded a significant construction programme, including rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple. As a person described in Greek as a *tekton* (which means both carpenter and manual labourer) Joseph may well have been a low-paid worker on those building sites. Taxes from locals paid for this work, with the leftover sent for the use of the Romans to fund the very soldiers who oppressed them. Many people fell into debt.

Unsurprisingly there was resistance, especially in Galilee, which was known as a hotbed of revolt. Part of the authoritarian infrastructure of the time was the census. In 6CE there was a rebellion against it led by Judas the Galilean (not to be confused with Judas Iscariot). He was said to be the son of the freedom fighter Hezekiah, who had led a guerrilla war some forty years before. Hezekiah was father in turn to Menahem ben Judah, who would also go on to fight to liberate the land from Roman rule.

Herod also faced an uprising, led by one of his former slaves, Simon, who succeeded in looting and burning down the royal palace in Jericho. Soon afterwards, a young shepherd named Athronges continued the insurrection, including by ambushing columns of Roman soldiers. It’s likely that these revolts sought to emulate events from more than a century before, when rebel warriors reclaimed Jerusalem from the Seleucid Empire.

In the story told in the gospel of Luke, there are some clues as to Mary’s religio-political outlook. In the song she sings when she learns she is pregnant she describes God





as one who brings rulers from their thrones, but lifts up the humble, and who fills the hungry with good things while sending the rich away empty.

She was clearly not alone in this view. There was a well-known prophecy that a descendent of David would liberate the land again. This helps us imagine the hope

‘There was a well-known prophecy that a descendent of David would liberate the land. This helps us imagine the hope some must have felt when they heard that Joseph’s partner was with child.’

some must have felt when they heard that Joseph’s partner Mary was with child. According to Matthew, the first people to visit the young family were agricultural labourers who arrived by cover of nightfall.

Later, a trio of very rich men arrived, bringing with them expensive gifts. We could view them as pilgrims or take the fact that they came from abroad as evidence that this movement was always internationalist. The possibility that they were Zoroastrians suggests interfaith formed a part of the movement. But there was another side to their visit

too. When Herod had heard about the birth, and the rich men on their way to visit, he enrolled them as his own spies.

If I think myself into the scene, I can see why this might have raised the parents’ suspicions. Why would

these very wealthy people visit them? And with gold and hugely expensive oils? After meeting the family, the rich men’s consciences got the better of them, and they returned to their home land by another route. I think they may have warned the couple themselves. Either way, Joseph and Mary sensed the danger they were in and fled from their homeland to Egypt.

Given all this, I find the names Mary and Joseph chose for their children particularly interesting. Thanks to Mark we know the names of four of Jesus’ brothers: James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. Could it have been that the youngest two were named after Judas the Galilean and Simon the slave rebel?

This leads us naturally to ask about the name of Jesus. The prophecy had been that their child would be called Immanuel. Instead they called him Yeshua as in Joshua – the man who had led the Hebrews into Jericho, translated into Greek as Jesus. Why, when the prophets said he would be called ‘Prince of Peace’, was Jesus named after a military man? It might have been unconscious, but it seems it fulfilled the other part of the prophesy: in his name swords are turned in to ploughshares.

I find all of this profoundly relevant. Today we live under rulers who propagate injustice. Today social movements are still spied on by governments. But still today too, God is born, and lives on, in the struggles of the oppressed as they struggle to win peace and the Kingdom of Heaven. ●

Tim is from Peckham Meeting. His Open for Liberation: An activist reads the Bible, will be published next year.

Shepherds' delight: Rosie Carnall makes a link with the Book of Discipline Revision Committee

'In accepting the invitation the shepherds have an experience that transforms them.'

The Angels appearing to the Shepherds, William Blake, 1809.



And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them' (Luke 2:20, KJV).

Once, when I was an Area Meeting clerk and tired after a Meeting, I put the television on and spent a happy decompression hour watching *One Man and His Dog*. Green fields, distant humans, and clever dogs herding sheep – it was very soothing. I've felt connection with sheepdogs before; that part of me that relaxes when everyone has arrived. Only later did I make the link between clerking and shepherding.

As a Quaker clerk, I'm listening for the signals that guide me to guide the Meeting. Sometimes it seems like we all want to go in different directions but, if I listen well, I can help us to reach the same place in the end. And when it's one of those Meetings where the light is clear, but the day is not too hot, and the community unites easily and moves together as one, well, it's simply joyful.

That joy is something I experience as a co-clerk for the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. 'We encourage the revision committee to be prayerful, joyful, creative and bold,' said the Yearly Meeting minute. As a new committee, we're coming together as a community of people united by a common task, entrusted with a precious responsibility.

In that way, I wonder whether we are like the shepherds in the Christmas story. Their role is as a humble and practical group of ordinary people getting on with the task at hand. We on the revision committee can certainly relate to that. In the Christmas story the shepherds are given an invitation, in accepting it they have an experience that transforms them, and they return full of joy and praise to tell others about it.

I don't know how diverse a group of shepherds outside of Bethlehem would have been – perhaps not very? They were likely all men, although probably with a range of ages. I guess they must have all been from the same area. They all had the same occupation. Our committee community is diverse in these ways and more, coming together to share our different experiences, understandings and knowledge.

We are new to our task, but have guidance on how to approach our work, can learn from how it's been done before, and have a long history to draw on as we move forward. And, like the shepherds in the Christmas story doubtless were, we are mindful of our responsibility as stewards for the common good. Those sheep they were looking after wouldn't have just been their sheep, but the sheep that their families and friends depended on. And yet, when the heavens opened and the angels sang, the shepherds took up the invitation.

On the revision committee we are listening for the spirit: prayerful, joyful, creative and bold. We seek the way to express again our Quaker understanding of our faith, rooted as it is in Christianity, and how to reflect the expressions of new light that, as Quakers, we continue to find in the unfolding mystery around us. ●

Rosie Carnall is from Sheffield Central Meeting.

The magi were outside Jesus' religious tradition. James Newman-Shah offers reflections from Islam

'God illuminates the path and we must reflect on what that means for our light within.'

Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rameen. In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.' This is the line that opens the Quran and is said by me and my fellow Muslims multiple times daily. Every Surah recited starts with a reflection on God's compassion and mercy. It has been said that the entire Quran can be summed up in this single line. It is on the lips of Muslims before we eat in the morning, and when we head to sleep.

Muslims reflect upon what is called the ninety-nine names of God so that we may witness his gift to us on earth in a state of constant God-consciousness, knowing that: 'Unto God belong the Most Beautiful Names; so call Him by them, and leave those who deviate with regard to His Names' (7:180 – all quotes from *The Study Quran*).

God is Al-Wahhab: the giver of gifts. The gift of Islam now dominates my life and leads me on the path to peace, to justice and equality. This gift has led us on the same path to know God and worship in this collective brotherhood. During every prayer we recite Surah Fatiha which asks God to: 'Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray' (1:6-7).

God is Ar-Razzaq: the provider. When I fast during Ramadan I am reminded of how much I take for granted, how easy it is to access food and water. As the sun sets and I can break my fast, I am grateful for what God has provided as nourishment but also what God has provided me by the action of fasting, to open my eyes to those who do not have that of which I am blessed to have. It is why the Zakat, the giving to charity, is an obligation in Islam, and not an option: 'They ask thee what they should spend, Say: "Let whatever of your wealth you spend be for parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the indigent, and the traveler. Whatever good you do, truly God knows it"' (2:215).

God is An-Nur: the light. God illuminates the path and we must reflect on what that means for our light within, and how we can share it through love and charity. 'God is the light of the heavens and the earth. His light may be compared to a niche containing a lamp; the lamp within a glass, the glass like a radiant star; lit from a blessed tree – an olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west. Its very oil would almost give light even though no fire has touched it. Light upon light! God guides to his light him that wills' (24:35).

God is As-Salam – Peace. Muslims greet each other with a small prayer of peace. This simple act is to humble us, and to encourage us to bring forth this offer of peace wherever we travel. To all readers I say 'Salaam Alaikum'. Peace be with you during the Christmas season. God is not limited to the ninety-nine names, but by meditating on just some of them we find common ground among faiths. Knowledge is encouraged throughout the Quran, and just as I have furthered my knowledge in your faith through my time as the Quaker Centre manager, I hope I have gifted you with some further knowledge in mine. ●

James attends Khutbah, online through the pandemic, at Lewisham mosque. See www.lewishamislamiccentre.com.

From: Untitled subway drawing of the Nativity, Keith Haring, c1983.



The coming of the Light of the world is how many Friends have engaged with Christmas. *Derrick Whitehouse* considers what that might mean today

'Light is the foundation of our Society, yet these days we appear to be rather disordered in the way we think of and handle it.'

W*alk in the Light,
wherever you may be!
Walk in the Light,
wherever you may be!
In my old leather
breeches and my shaggy,
shaggy locks, I am
walking in the glory of
the Light, said Fox.*

This joyful and well-known chorus is the song by Sydney Carter, which conveys George Fox and one way we might interpret Light. We know how George and others of the Valiant Sixty were healers in the Light as it was presented in their day, and many turned towards it. Since those days healing seems to have changed. In many ways we have become more knowledgeable, yet we seem less reliant on Light (especially with healing as a result of the progress in allopathic medicine). Yet there is something of a revival with spiritual healing in our Religious Society.

In George's day spiritual healing was well known and widely used. When George talked of 'that of God in everyone' and 'the Light of Christ', it really meant something. Now, as one well-known US Friend said in conversation recently 'You mean TOGIE [that of God in everyone], which many Friends trot out. It has simply become a cliché.' By the same token 'We will hold you in the Light' has become another platitude for many. It has become so easy to say, 'We will hold you in the Light' because we do not know what else to say when it has little or no depth for us.

Light is the bedrock of our beloved Religious Society. But how well is Light understood? Why are people not staying with us? How should we understand the spiritual concept of Light in the twenty-first century, compared with how George and others understood and used it as a functioning metaphor during the sixteenth?

With today's Light, is the metaphor the same or more complex than how it was understood by Fox and others long ago? Does the concept become more enhanced now even if the metaphor becomes related to the developmental nature of the internet, our social, environmental and health concerns, or the competitive world in which we reside? Can Light be expressed in greater complexity or is it still a basically straightforward notion? Today we contrast Light variations in colour and brightness and only rarely with complete darkness.

'Hope is being able to see that there is Light despite all the darkness', said Desmond Tutu. Does this enhance or diminish the healing or enlightening practicality of the spiritual concept? It is present when we consider the complexity and variations of Light in relation to the structure and nature of the internet (especially with Zoom and Skype). It can even deal with the tensions and understanding that pervade the subtlety of war and conflict. Could these practical concepts, which for Quakers raise unacceptable living concepts, possibly provide an improved metaphor and a more varied understanding of the notion of Light as it can be experienced personally in the twenty-first century?

For me, one useful approach could be what we might call 'protean'. Proteus was a Greek god of the sea who





changed his appearance and his line of thinking to confuse his audience. Consequently, 'protean' in the Oxford English Dictionary can mean 'variable, versatile, taking many forms'. As a result I find myself considering whether that is the way in which some Quakers think

'We are so fortunate that our predecessors worked on and developed the concept of Light, and made it the foundation of our Society.'

about Light. The question is whether this is a good thing or a bad thing, or a variable confusion that some may either simply dismiss or warm towards?

Light is the foundation of our Society, yet these days we appear to be rather disordered in the way we think of and handle it. Maybe we all have our private notion of what the term asserts for us but how much time is spent in open

and personal seeking and conversations with each other? What does our reading culture say on the subject and how far are we each prepared to share thoughts that emerge with others, especially newcomers who are probably wondering what it all means?

We are so fortunate that our predecessors worked on and developed the concept of Light, and made it the foundation of our Society. This underpinning is special and meaningful to the way we are and function. It must not be lost within the vibrancy of the way Friends think, communicate and work towards security, understanding

and spiritual openness. Light is about recognising and trusting, it is not about intellect. Maybe this is why early Friends of Truth were able to heal people who were not particularly well educated.

So today why is Britain Yearly Meeting not growing numerically? Are we simply a load of middle-class intellectuals? Do people talk regularly with each other and truly understand our concept of Light? Something is there that prevents people from joining in with us and staying with us. Can we learn lessons from George Fox on how to work with folk who are not especially intellectual? How do we communicate in an acceptable manner so that folk can feel comfortable in our midst? Or do we accept who and how we are feeling, resigned to the fact that we may not grow numerically despite the fact that what we present is good and effective in so many ways?

'From the beginning the Quaker Christian faith has had a universal dimension. George Fox saw the Light "shine through all" and he identified it with the divine Light of Christ that "enlightens every man that comes into the world" (John 1:9). He pointed out, as did William Penn, in greater detail, that individuals who had lived before the Christian era or outside Christendom and had no knowledge of the Bible story, had responded to a divine principle within them... Obedience to the Light within, however that may be described is the real test of faithful living' (*Quaker faith & practice* 27.04). Are we still dazzled by the Light? ●

Derrick is from Broad Campden Meeting.

King-sized failings: Mark Russ considers Herod

*‘For Herod’s victims,
the good news is
bittersweet. The
difficult times are not
over yet.’*

Herod ordering the massacre of the innocents, Pistoia Cathedral.



Christmas isn't good news for everyone. For the Herods of the world, it's very bad news. We meet Herod in the second chapter of Matthew's gospel. Here, Jesus is presented as a second Moses. This makes Herod another Pharaoh. He represents tyrants and oppressive political powers. Just as Pharaoh can't bear to free the enslaved Hebrews, Herod can't bear to acknowledge a rule other than his own. The message of the magi about a new king can only mean Herod's downfall. He can't give up his power – who would he be without it? So Herod schemes and lies, and manipulates the magi with false piety. But he's unable to eradicate the threat to his reign, and when his schemes don't work, he rages, destroys and murders. Where Pharaoh failed to kill the boy-children of the Hebrews (his plans foiled by the resourceful midwives Shiprah and Puah), Herod succeeds.

Is Christmas good news for Herod's victims – for the slaughtered boy-children of Bethlehem and their grieving parents? This is where we find the tension in the Christmas story between the now and not-yet. The good news is that the tyrants' days are numbered. Babylon is fallen. Their end is nigh. Oppressive political power has no lasting foothold in God's good creation. But at the same time, they won't

**‘Oppressive
political power
has no lasting
foothold in
God’s good
creation.’**

go down without a fight. Even in their death throes they're able to cause great suffering. For Herod's victims, the good news is bittersweet. The difficult times are not over yet. There is still much to struggle for. But God's light is in the world, revealing that which Herod wishes to remain hidden. God's

judgment is pronounced on the powers of domination, and God's children are given hope to endure and resist evil.

Where do we find ourselves in this part of the story? When Herod hears of the arrival of a new king, he is afraid, and the whole of Jerusalem with him (Matthew 2:3). There are people who benefit from Herod's rule, who are invested in Herod's reign. Are we like the rest of Jerusalem, fearing for the end of an order that gives us power and privilege? Are we like the supposedly wise magi, who can sense that a new dawn is breaking, but assume they'll find it in Herod's palace? Are we the mothers of Bethlehem, mourning for those crushed beneath Herod's boot, praying for the day when, like another Herod, he'll be struck down by an angel of the Lord, eaten by worms and die (Acts: 12.23)?

Herod reminds us that Christmas is not as simple as we might want. It is both good news and bad news, depending on who you are. A Christ-shaped future is breaking through, but the struggle isn't over. There is still evil to be resisted but, in the end, love, mercy and justice win. In the words of Doris Plenn: 'When tyrants tremble, sick with fear and hear their death-knell ringing; When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?' ●

Mark is a programmes coordinator at Woodbrooke.

Making room: *Nim Njuguna's* alternative history of the innkeeper

'I offered my apologies for keeping them waiting, took the reins of their donkey, and led them in.'

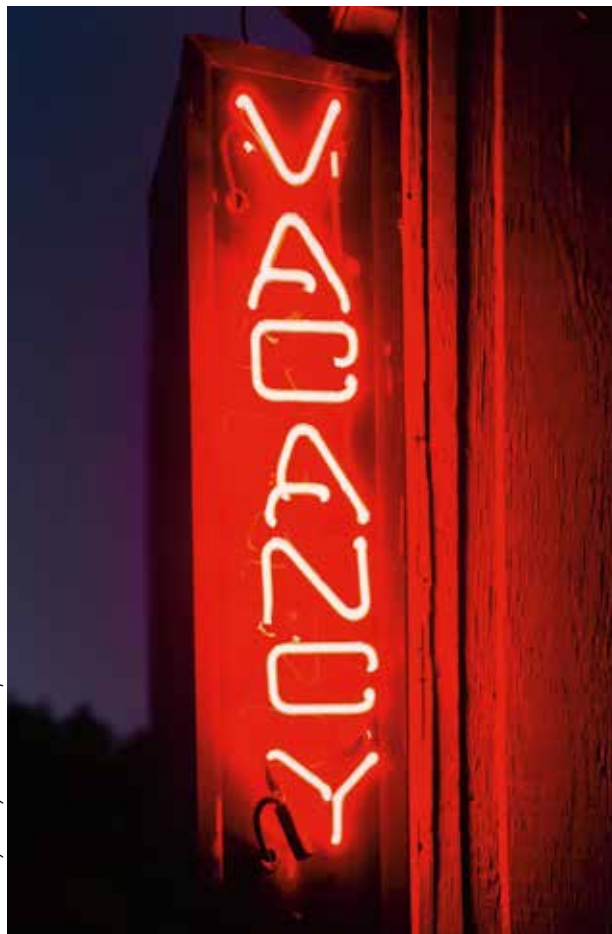


Photo by on Tyson on Unsplash.

I am no longer talking to journalists,' said Moshe the innkeeper dismissively waving away the inquiring stranger. 'Not after that sly reporter ended up maligning my name. He probably trashed my reputation and that of My Brother's Keeper's inn for life.'

'I am from the *Temple News*', responded Jaleel, 'the reputable Jerusalem mouthpiece respected for duty and righteousness. I am

here to listen and to restore your good reputation. I assure you, I will listen to your story without interruptions.'

'Well, I will tell you so that you can finally debunk the fallacious allegations that I shooed away a young pregnant woman and her husband, saying, "There's no room at the inn". He failed to mention the alternative I offered them.

'As you can imagine, the town was swamped, bulging with people from all over the province. When I saw her, I knew immediately that the woman – well, she was about fourteen – was in need of immediate help, but where could I put them? It was my wife who insisted that we could not tell them to look elsewhere – the poor child was ready to give birth any time and we should treat them as guests. After introductions, I offered my apologies for keeping them waiting, gently grabbed the reins of their donkey and led them in. They washed their feet by the log fire and ate bread, cheese and soup while my servant attended to their donkey. Afterwards Leila took them to our guest quarters – a quiet, safe and comfortable place. Knowing it was Mary's first birth experience, Leila was reassuring, saying, "If you need anything call me".

'We were awakened a couple of hours later by loud banging on our door and found an anxious Joseph standing there looking confused and breathless. "The baby is coming and I don't know what to do." Leila snatched the midwife bundle she had prepared for this moment.

'Joseph, flustered and panicky, could not cope with Mary's groaning and grunting, so Leila asked him to leave. He came out to the veranda where I was quietly praying. He was pacing to and fro with determined countenance; I tried to attract his attention by asking, "Are you hoping for a boy?". Before he could answer, a high-pitched yowl intervened and Joseph yelled, "The baby's here!" and dashed into the room in tears of joy and relief.

'Later, my friend Athronges appeared from the hills with fellow shepherds, claiming angels told them to come see the baby. When I inquired further, they all ended up babbling about a great light in the sky and a chorus of angels praising god. This seemed farfetched and I suspected they had been drinking.

'Just then, two men and a woman arrived, dressed in richly colourful garments and riding on camels. They claimed they were priests following a star to where a king was born. Entering the house they looked adoringly at the baby, fell down and with joy worshipped him, offering gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

'I have told you the truth as a solemn commitment before God and I beg you to write a strong rebuttal on my behalf to restore my good name and my prospects.' ●

Nim is from Harrow Meeting.

Can Friends fully embrace the holiday season? Geoff Pilliner offers a 'Quakerly Christian' perspective

'I find it far easier to celebrate the birth of a homeless refugee than the image of a baby who was perfect in every way.'

As a well-seasoned Quaker, I find Christmas presents problems. Not Scrooge-like problems but spiritual challenges. Early Quakers did not believe in holy days and feast days, believing that every day is sacred, and kept their shops open on Christmas Day against all the rules and customs of the time, but my concerns are in a different area.

I certainly regard myself as a Christian – a Quakerly Christian, but Christian nevertheless. I believe that Jesus was the one man above all others who displayed a one-ness with the Spirit, an extreme understanding of human nature, a total commitment to living out what he held true, and an unparalleled ability as a teacher of things of the Spirit. The challenge to 'follow Jesus' is one that I accept, although I know only too well that I do not follow Jesus with any great success.

Having said that, I would not keep my shop open on Christmas Day if I had one. I see nothing wrong in having a party at the Winter Solstice, of enjoying oneself, meeting up with family, having a good time. It is the coldest, darkest time of the year when most traditional forms of work come to a halt, when we all need some light to lighten our days and we can start to look forward to the warmer, longer days ahead. The Christian Christmas was built onto traditions that go back millennia in time.

The problem comes when you marry the two ideas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the celebration of the Winter Solstice. Christians have woven many fancy stories around the birth of a special little boy that first Christmas, and in so doing have

missed, indeed hidden, it seems to me, some of the most important messages about Jesus, who he was and who he is for us today.

So, what really happened on that cold night in Palestine over 2,000 years ago? We can know nothing for certain. The only person who lived long enough to tell anyone was Mary, his mother. Over thirty years later, when it became important for people to know what happened, it seems likely that Joseph was dead, and neither of them wrote a single word down so the account was passed verbally from one to another for quite some time before it was chronicled in written form. So were the stable, the shepherds and the wise men happy exaggerations?

Let us allow some speculation. It seems likely that Joseph and Mary were making the journey from, presumably Nazareth to Bethlehem, because they were required to do so by the authorities for the census. It is likely that this was during wintertime and cold. The inn could well have been full because it was the Winter Solstice when families were getting together. It is certain that Mary was pregnant, and it seems certain that they had to stop because Mary had gone into labour. If you accept the picture so far there is no difficulty in accepting that the stables or cattle sheds were the only protection available, and of course some of the shepherds may have come into the stables and seeing Mary's predicament were only too willing to help where they could. Most people are kind and forthcoming when they see someone in trouble. It seems plausible that some more affluent people were making their way to Bethlehem too (after all, it was party time) and seeing something happening went in to find out more. Weighing up the situation, they offered money to help the young couple pay for food, and herbs to help Mary recover. A perfectly predictable human situation under the circumstances of that time.





Does that spoil the magical story of Jesus' birth? In one way it does. If one wants to believe that God would do something spectacular at the birth of his special servant – or more traditionally that God the Father would want something special for the coming of God the Son to Earth, then spoil the story I have. But look at the speculated human story a different way. Here is the birth of the baby of a possibly homeless couple, born on the wayside, supported by strangers. Most families, if

'That child, born in such ignominious circumstances, would become the man who was closer to the Spirit than anyone in history.'

their daughter had to make a long journey when she was almost nine months into her pregnancy, would have accompanied the couple, or made sure a friend was traveling with them. Would you allow your daughter, heavily pregnant, to make that journey, possibly at night, with only her husband for company?

were required to do so by the authorities, hoping to get to Joseph's family before the baby would be born, stranded on their journey because the baby came too soon, finding that hotel places were all taken because of the upcoming festivities, and helped in their plight by strangers who gave them protection from the weather, essential help with the birth, and some money to help them along.

And to add to their problems, a few days later they were fleeing as refugees to Egypt, frightened of the

possible harm that would come to themselves and their baby, because of some violence generated by the authorities.

That child, born in such ignominious circumstances, a refugee when only a few days old, would later become the man who was closer to the Spirit than anyone in history, better understood what human beings were like than anyone, a gifted teacher beyond rival, a man for whom commitment meant total commitment, a man that is remembered through time more than any other, and a man that we wish to emulate but find that an immense challenge. I find it far easier to celebrate the birth of a homeless refugee who managed to become such an example to us than the image of a baby who illuminated the night sky, was worshipped by shepherds, feted by royalty, and perfect in every way.

Am I a heretic? I suppose that if a heretic is one that does not accept everything in the Bible at face value, then yes, I am. Am I a spoiler of something that many people get a lot of comfort from? If the stories of the star and the shepherds and the wise men are essential parts of your faith, then yes, I am. Have I taken away the party spirit of Christmas? I hope not, I welcome the opportunity for families to get together and exchange presents. Have I disconnected religion from Christmas? On Christmas Day I will still remember the baby of homeless parents who became a refugee, but also so changed the world that we remember him still, and still search for that spiritual light that will lead us to be a little more like him. So have a happy and joyful Christmas, but remember that it is about being committed to following Jesus who came from an unenviable beginning to bring immense light. ●

Geoff is from Alton Meeting.

Prophet driven: *Rhiannon Grant on* Anna

‘Rather than trying to untangle what they were looking for, let’s focus on the act of looking.’

Old Woman Reading, Probably the Prophetess Anna, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1631.



After the main nativity story, Luke’s gospel gives a little coda to the events. Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to do their religious duty. There, they meet two slightly odd characters: Simeon, a man who has been led to wait for Jesus (rather like other characters in Luke’s narrative, who sense the coming of this important child), and Anna, a devout woman whom Luke seems to position as an early evangelist. In fact, when she meets the baby Jesus she does two things: praises God, and tells other people about him. Looking backwards, she seems very similar to Hannah, who took her son Samuel to the temple to serve God (see 1 Samuel). Looking forwards, she seems to be taking on the same role as the gospel writer, who also has the job of praising God by telling other people about Jesus.

This incident hardly even makes a story, especially since we don’t get any ending or pay-off, and never find out what happened to Anna or the people she told about Jesus. And it might seem distinctly uncomfortable at first from a Quaker perspective. Telling other people about your faith might be invasive. Making bold claims about what some kid will do in the future is risky (and while Anna might have been right, plenty of people have been proved wrong over the years in very similar situations). Our cultural context is very different and the (potentially misplaced) confidence which would be required isn’t always there.

But Luke doesn’t say that Anna just told anyone who passed. He says that she spoke ‘to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem’ (Luke 2:38, NRSV). Who are those people? ‘Jerusalem’ might be a symbol for Israel, so it could be those who are looking for the redemption of the whole community. Early Christians, like Luke, included themselves in that, but I’m not entirely comfortable with this move today. I tend to be hyper-aware of not overstepping the boundaries of communities to which I do not belong. On the other hand, early Quakers would have been fine with it. And what about ‘redemption’? Jerusalem or Israel doesn’t need to be redeemed like a coupon, so this must be the theological use, something to do with salvation – and in Christianity, something to do with Jesus.

I’ve got a better idea. Rather than trying to untangle what they were looking for, let’s focus on the act of looking. Anna spoke to people who were seeking something, and in that choice of words a connection is already emerging. Groups of Seekers became Quakers in the early days, and the term ‘seeker’ has been used since to name groups within the Quaker community, and to suggest that Friends continue to learn throughout life. If Anna spoke not just to anyone, but to those who were religious seekers, she was sharing her insights about this child’s importance with those who wanted to know. She spent all her time at the temple, so was in the right place to meet them; and she had been waiting for the right time for years. I leave the story with this query: if I were in the right place at the right time, would I recognise who I’d met and have the courage to share the news? ●

Rhiannon is a tutor at Woodbrooke.

What can a baby say about power? *Howard Grace* has an example

‘Was he deliberately putting himself into a position of powerlessness?’



Photo by Tembinkosi Sikupela on Unsplash.

My wife Maria is Dutch. She was born during the second world war. German soldiers told her parents that their house would be used to base occupying forces. They had no option but to leave – they were powerless.

When I first met Maria's parents, forty-five years ago, I had been involved with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and tended to be pacifist. They disagreed with my military stance. Their wartime experience had left them with a conviction to guard against being subjugated to oppression, and being powerless in the face of that.

I'm sure we have all experienced powerlessness. From the start, children feel the constraint of not being able to do what they want. But all through life we are restricted

‘From childhood, he grew into a person of profound spiritual power.’

by the rules of society or, closer to home, by the actions of neighbours, sometimes doing annoying things which we are powerless to stop.

Take Brexit. The slogan was ‘take back control’, which touched a chord for some.

The result was positive for half the population. But surveys now show that more UK adults feel powerless about the situation than angry or worried.

At Christmas time, I wonder how this theme relates to Jesus, who was also born as a powerless child. From childhood, he grew into a person of profound spiritual power, whose life made a great impact. There are several understandings about the significance of his eventual death. But my own pondering leads to wondering whether a key issue revolves around his choosing to take the path of powerlessness again, which then led him to the cross. He could have walked away from the Garden of Gethsemane, but ‘During his agony as he prayed, his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down upon the ground’ (Luke 22:44). Was this agony because, for whatever reason, he was deliberately putting himself into a position of powerlessness?

What followed, when he was ultimately on the cross? In our Meeting for Worship this morning, a Friend shared that story of Jesus telling a disciple, of Mary, that ‘She is your mother’. The disciple took her to live in his home. To the others who were being crucified with him, he said, ‘I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me.’ Regarding those executing him he said, ‘Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ When Jesus was powerless he still loved, and thought for others.

The Covid pandemic has made many feel a greater sense of powerlessness. Whatever our beliefs may be, at this Christmas time might Christ's example inspire our living in a selfless and loving way. ●

Howard is from Newbury Meeting.

As viewers tune in to the Christmas culmination of *His Dark Materials*, it reminds Lois Gallagher of her work with young adult carers

'It can feel like an internal battle of epic proportions.'

As Christmas approaches amid a long Covid-19 winter, some of us are looking forward to the culmination of the BBC's second series of *His Dark Materials*. Watching this adaptation of Philip Pullman's novels, I was interested in the storyline of Will, a young carer, because I work with young adult carers aged eighteen to twenty-five in a supportive housing project called Move on Up, part of the work of charity Quaker Social Action, with the support of Commonweal Housing.

Will is in his early teens, living with his mother, who has anxiety, obsessive thoughts and psychotic symptoms. Will is deeply devoted to his mother, but his life is limited by the need to care for her and protect her from harm.

In many ways Will leads a rather mundane life, but is caught up in an epic battle in his search for his missing father. This could be seen as a metaphor for what many of our young adult carers go through in their struggle to establish an independent sense of self in the midst of their caring. It's an adventure beset with barriers, and one we are constantly exploring.

Take Yvonne (not her real name). Her mother has mental health problems and a history of substance misuse. Her father has diabetes and is in very poor health. Yvonne has cared for her father since she was twelve. She has also been key in the care of her two youngest siblings.

Yvonne comes in to see me on a grey November afternoon. I have been mostly working from home and have had to keep in contact with our tenants

by phone, but go in once a week to provide face-to-face support for our most vulnerable young adults. I use the word 'vulnerable' as if it is a problem, but actually one of Yvonne's strengths is this ability to be vulnerable and make connections with people who can help her. It's a new feeling and she likes it, but it's like flexing an underused muscle, receiving help rather than giving it.

We sit two metres apart near an open window; Yvonne keeps her coat on.

Yvonne tells me how things are going. She spends a few days at a time at her Dad's, helping to do his shopping, picking up his medication, cooking for him and supporting him emotionally. He has huge swellings in his feet and is in a lot of pain. She watches how much pain medication he takes, as he can sometimes overdose and go into a heavy sleep from which she cannot wake him for hours. He is thin and struggles to walk. She hates to see him declining in health and having to wait for hospital appointments, which are delayed because of Covid. A nurse comes in for an hour or so once a week, but this year there isn't much in-person care available.

When Yvonne comes back to the Move on Up flat, she exhales. She sleeps, does yoga, cooks for herself and chats to her flatmate. She also comes to see me. We explore her feeling of being strongly pulled in two different directions: 'I want so badly to be by myself,' she says, 'and I want so badly to help my Dad. I worry all the time about whether he is OK. Then when I'm with him for a while I get so fed up and feel I'm at breaking point.' It can feel like an internal battle of epic proportions.

We think together about how much you can take on of other people's problems. Young carers can often get merged, in their minds, with the person or people they care for and find it hard to establish an autonomous self. Yvonne tells me her Dad is stubborn, and can't talk about





how he feels, and gets depressed, and this frustrates her. But she knows that she can't make everything better for him. At times, as the eldest of five siblings, she feels the whole world is on her shoulders. She knows she has a tendency to hold it all in and not ask for help.

It's hard for young people in general, and for our young adult carers in particular, to find the tools they need to be independent. Separating psychologically and physically from their family can be very painful.

'There are big ups and downs on this journey, but especially this year, with multiple furloughing and rising youth unemployment.'

will feel the pain of change. Will has to leave his beloved mother behind for a while in order to find his destiny, and to a certain extent our tenants have to do the same.

Yvonne has just started an apprenticeship, managing to carve out time to do some learning for her future. Her sister, who is at sixth-form college, has to care for their Dad while Yvonne is studying. She has her own classes and coursework to complete. They are just about managing to juggle it between themselves. It's really important that their teachers and other adults around them understand that caring is not just time-

The roles have often been confused during the years of caring: who is playing the parental role, and who is the child? How do they combine a continuing relationship with the family with moving forward into an independent life? This task is fraught with risks. Perhaps their parent will become more ill without so much care from them. Perhaps the burden will fall more heavily on a younger sibling. Perhaps everyone

consuming but emotionally demanding. Without understanding and support, many young carers drop out of education and struggle to establish a professional life. An important part of Move on Up's work is helping the tenant build their confidence to push through into personal, professional and financial achievements. There are big ups and downs on this journey, but especially this year, with multiple furloughing and rising youth unemployment.

The second series of the BBC adaptation has come at a salient point: in 2020, we have faced a crisis different from that of the bears, witches and scholars of Pullman's story, but no less frightening and destabilising. At least we have the stories that help us make meaning of it all. As we pull wearily into 2021, we must protect the artistic and compassionate parts of our society found in writers, actors, creatives, charity projects and public services so that young people like Yvonne have the chances they deserve and the opportunities to make sense of it all.

Yvonne and I talk about how important it is that young carers get their voices heard. She says she would like to tell her story more widely. We finish our meeting. 'I'm not even sure if it's helpful for you to hear this,' I say, 'but I do think you're amazing. I think you are going to look back in twenty years and have so much understanding and empathy for others going through what you went through.'

She looks at me thoughtfully. 'Yes,' she says, 'I think I am amazing. I am a strong young woman.' She manages to escape the typical adolescent leanings towards either false modesty or grandiosity, but states it simply, as fact.

I smile. 'I'm glad you think so,' I say. ●

Lois is from Quaker Social Action. Find out more about Move on Up at moveonup.org.uk.

Poetry

'Asylum seekers', by Rainbows Children's Meeting

Mother and child are fleeing in the night.
The brutal soldiers search for them behind,
And in the sky ahead, the stars are bright.

The tired donkey follows Joseph's light,
Cautiously stepping like a man who's blind;
Mother and child are fleeing in the night.

And Joseph worries; he's far out of sight
Of home and workshop, friends and neighbours kind;
But in the sky ahead, the stars are bright.

And Mary cries for other children's fright
In Bethlehem, where killers try to find
The child and mother fleeing in the night.

And all the time the baby, eyes shut tight,
Rocked by the donkey, never cried or whined;
Mother and child are fleeing in the night.
And in the sky ahead, the stars are bright.

Rainbows Children's Meeting is part of Stourbridge Meeting.

'Walking in winter' by RV Bailey

A harder journey to Bethlehem this year.
So many closures, and so resolute, such
Rare joy. The landscape re-configured,
Perhaps forever, the sky dark ahead, as far
As we can see.

We take the next step,
And the next, the next –

And at the end, as always,
A child's contented gurgle
And the morning star.

Rosie is from Wotton-under-Edge Meeting.



Godric Bader and Anne Atkinson-Clark send greetings to all Friends, wishing you a happy Christmas and a vastly improved 2021.

Roland and Trish Carn wish all our friends both near and far a happy Christmas and a healthier, happier 2021. We remain in Cambridge at Flat 23, School Court, Thoday Street, CB1 3BN. 01223 211155. Now 'retired' from wardening!

Joyeux Noel et Bonne Année from F/friends at **Centre Quaker Congénies**. We look forward to welcoming back our visitors and guests in 2021 for Meeting for Worship, our creative events or for a holiday. We have missed you this year. A bientôt Nick and Marie, Amis Résidents and Group Languedoc Meeting.

Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year to all our Quaker clients from **Edwards Insurance Brokers**. We are delighted to serve many Meetings and charities and thank you for your support. David Edwards, specialist church and charity broker. 01564 730900. church@edwardsinsurance.co.uk

Christmas greetings to all our friends, love from **Joy and Bill Evans** of Warwick Meeting. We would love to hear from you. Our address is 98 Queensway Court, Queensway, Leamington Spa CV31 3LS. Our correct email is billevans17@outlook.com.

Jill and David Firth wish Friends a joyous 25th of 12th month and a spiritual 1st of first month. God bless *The Friend* and all who sail in her.

FWCC shares Christmas greetings from around the world. May we be a blessing to each other. Thank you for your love and financial support throughout the year. From the FWCC World Office staff, from home.

Seasons greetings to all Friends from Jez and Michael in the **FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section** office. It has been a joy to meet with so many of you on our screens this year!

Howard Gregg sends warm Christmas Greetings and Good Wishes for 2021, with thanks for all the loving support given to me this year.



Christmas Greetings

Glenthorne Quaker Guest House send our warmest greetings, good will and thanks. We look forward to welcoming you in 2021! From all the staff in Glasmere, the Lake District. www.glenthorne.org

Grainger & Platt Accountants of Carlisle send our warmest Christmas Greetings to Friends everywhere with best wishes for the New Year. Richard Platt 01228 521286. www.grainger-platt.co.uk

Robin Hawes (Beccles LM) sends loving greetings for Christmas and good wishes for a peaceful and healthy New Year, to all Friends, especially in Norfolk & Waveney AM and London West AM.

Heather and I send greetings to all Friends, with thanks for upholding our Society. **Andrew S Hatton**, Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, UK. Member Mid-Essex AM, Maldon PM.

The Kindlers send good wishes to all Friends and Meetings. We're sad not to have visited you this year but hope to resume activities soon. Bookings now being taken for online workshops. www.thekindlers.webs.com

Jackie Leach Scully and Monica Buckland have spent this extraordinary year in Australia. We send seasonal greetings to F/friends near and far, in this world and the next; hold in the Light all who work for truth, justice, and kindness; and look forward to further antipodean adventures in 2021.

Seasonal greetings from **The Peace Museum!** Thanks to all Friends who supported us this year; towards our new premises appeal and our education work. We continue to find new ways to share stories of peace.

George Penaluna & Seong Hee Cho send love and green greetings to friends and Friends in the UK, South Korea and the USA - acknowledging our carbon footprints and reducing them where we can. Love saves the day.

The Directors and staff of **The Priory Rooms** conference centre send greetings from our "Oasis of Calm in the Heart of Birmingham" to Friends everywhere. Tel. 0121 236 2317. www.theprioryrooms.co.uk

Quaker Concern for Animals wishes all Friends a happy Christmas with peace on earth to all God's creatures. To join QCA, receive updates on animal welfare issues and our Journal, please visit our website; www.quaker-animal.co.uk or write to us c/o Sutton Coldfield Quaker Meeting House, Kenelm Road, Sutton Coldfield B73 6HD.

Quaker Congo Partnership UK sends greetings to all our supporters who are helping us to contribute to better health, peace, education and economic prospects for people in South Kivu in Democratic Republic Congo. www.quakercongo.org.uk

Seasons greetings from the **Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont** (near Hannover), the only Meeting house in Germany since 1800. Good news: the sense of the meeting (YM 2020) was to keep the property and invest in the future. We look forward to welcoming you in this beautiful spa town, simple overnight stays are possible, email pyrmont@quaaker.org

Season's Greetings from the **Talking Friend Service** and thanks to our volunteer Readers who record *The Friend* each week for visually challenged Friends. www.talkingfriends.org.uk

Elsbeth Wollen sends warm Christmas greetings to f/Friends in the UK and those based at Quaker House, Brussels. She has kept well this year and learnt to clerk Quaker business meetings via Zoom!

Woodbrooke sends greetings to all, however you mark the season. This year we have found hope in the connections we have made with many of you. With grateful thanks for all your support and upholding.

Friends & Meetings

Births

Arthur Edwin WEHRFRITZ
25 September. Son for Ben and Rebecca Wehrfritz (née Pollard). Grandson for Elizabeth and Bertram Wehrfritz of Wanstead Meeting, previously at Westminster Meeting.

Deaths

Jean Judith EDWARDS
27 November. Suddenly. Member of Polegate Meeting, formerly Blackheath. Aged 89. Funeral 2pm Monday 21 December, Wealden Crematorium, Horam Road, Heathfield TN21 0LH. Donations: Quaker Social Action and Britain Yearly Meeting. Enquiries: 07789 591381.

David HUGHES 3 December, peacefully in Ludlow. Last remaining child of the late Mary and John Hughes, of York Meeting. Brother to the deceased Michael and Barbara, widower of Betty, and father to Lotte and Tanya. Bootham and Sibford Old Scholar, former member of Friends Relief Service. Aged 101. A humanist burial and celebration of David's life will be held in the New Year in Shropshire. Enquiries to Lotte Hughes: lotilda@hotmail.com

Jeanne JONES 2 December. Widow of Don, mother of Alysun and Chris. Member of Bristol Area Meeting, formerly Uxbridge. Aged 91. Memorial Meeting 19 December, 3pm at Horfield Meeting House and via Zoom. Enquiries: horfield.warden@bristolquakers.org.uk

Edward STANTON 8 December in Kendal Nursing Home. Son of the late Harry and Elizabeth Stanton, brother of William (deceased) and Sarah. Member of Windermere Meeting, previously Sydney and Street. Aged 83. Cremation 9.30am Monday 21 December.

Christopher Michael SOUTHALL
11 December peacefully in hospital. Widower of Monica, father of Angela, grandfather of Liam, Alex and Gemma. Member of Kendal Meeting, previously Chester and Coventry. Sidcot School Old Scholar and former FAU. Aged 89. Cremation Leamington Spa, Monday 4 January with family after the manner of Ffriends. Contact: angelasouthall@hotmail.co.uk

Diamond weddings

Roger and Hilda (née Ecroyd) STURGE were married at Croydon Friends Meeting House on 10 December 1960. Now at Redland Meeting, Bristol. Thankful for the support of Friends and 60 years of deep and abiding friendship.

Meeting up

PASSIONATE, SPIRITUAL, life-loving Quaker woman, 66, loves country walking, classical music and prehistoric sites, seeks man with sense of humour for committed, fun, emotionally-engaged relationship. London and environs. Replies please to Box 1000, c/o The Friend, 54a Main St, Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL.



B&B and self-catering

Christmas & New Year greetings from this glorious corner of the Malverns. Covid: B&B max 2 households, with dining room/lounge each.

Kevin and Elizabeth Rolph
www.thedellhouse.co.uk
01684 564448

Friends & Meetings

Personal entries (births, marriages, deaths, anniversaries, changes of address, Meeting up, etc.) charged at £41.50 incl. vat for up to 35 words and includes a copy of the magazine. Meeting and charity notices, (Changes of clerk, new wardens, new Members, changes to meeting, etc.) £34.58 zero rated for vat. Max. 35 words. Three entries £83 (£69.16 if zero rated); six entries £120 (£100 zero rated). **DIARY NOTICES:** £36 incl vat for up to 35 words, £30 zero-rated. Three entries £72 incl vat, £60 zero-rated. 6 entries £108 incl. vat £90 zero-rated.

Deadline usually 12 noon Monday. Entries accepted at the editor's discretion in a standard house style. A gentle discipline will be exerted to maintain a simplicity of style and wording that excludes terms of endearment and words of tribute. Guidelines on request.

The Friend, 54a Main Street, Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL
Email: ads@thefriend.org
Tel. 01535 630230

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who supported our Big Give Christmas Challenge. The challenge, to unlock £10,000 in match funding within seven days, was achieved in just two! However your support didn't stop there, meaning the total rose to £23,947. We are amazed and humbled by your generosity.

We would also like to thank all of our supporters, volunteers, trustees, funders, staff and partner organisations for their wonderful support throughout the year. Festive best wishes from everyone at Quaker Social Action.



Quaker Life



Local Development Workers Four posts from April 2021

Salary: £23,630 per annum (£29,538 pro rata per annum).

Contract: Permanent. **Hours:** Part time - 28 hours per week including some weekends and evenings. Frequent travel (when restrictions are lifted).

Location: Based at home or in a suitable office in the region.

One post each in: Scotland

Yorkshire (based Carlton Hill Meeting House, Leeds)

East Anglia

Cumberland and the North-East

We are seeking enthusiastic, pragmatic, optimistic people who are excited by what spirit-led growth might mean in a faith context. Our expanding local development team is a key part of our plans to reinvigorate Quakerism and to help Quaker communities thrive.

As a local development worker, you will support Quaker communities to be inclusive, welcoming and all-age. The support areas include worship, community, organisational management, social action, collaboration in the wider community, and outreach. You will provide accompaniment, facilitation, project support, and training. You will work alongside others in Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Learning to provide resources and opportunities that grow from the identified needs of local Quakers.

We invite applications from people who are:

- Good listeners, with experience of working with groups to develop and deliver a shared vision
- Familiar with Quaker worship, community, witness and organisation
- Organised and resourceful; able to research information, analyse and sift it, and apply it appropriately to a range of situations and personalities
- Creative and adaptable; able to encourage innovation and support experimentation
- Digitally curious; willing to experiment in using digital platforms and programmes to develop community and to progress work.

Alongside the opportunity to transform the experience of Quakers across Britain, we offer a generous benefits package. To arrange an informal discussion of the role, please email Sophie Smith on sophies@quaker.org.uk.

Closing date: Monday 25 January 2021 (9am)

Interviews: w/c 22 February 2021 - online

For details of how to apply, go to www.quaker.org.uk/jobs

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to equality in all its employment practices.

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk and expects all its staff and volunteers to share and uphold this commitment.

Quakers have a faith commitment to equality, and we encourage and welcome applications for posts from all sections of society. You do not have to be a Quaker to apply for this post, but we expect you to uphold the values of our organisation.

QARN

Quaker Asylum and
Refugee Network

Working to end the
hostile environment

We hope you all have a healthy,
happy Christmas and can share
it with your loved ones.

**Open Zoom meeting
Saturday 23 January
11am-12.30**

Log in from 10.30am
for chat and time to settle.

- Presentation on current issues:
Status Now for all
Borders Bill
Detention matters
- Exchange and questions
All Quakers welcome
For zoomlink contact
info@qarn.org.uk

We can provide speakers for your meeting

We are seeking offers of service for
Steering Group Members and Treasurer.
Email f.s.ashmore@gmail.com for details.



Could you be a Trustee for the Quaker Mental Health Fund (UK)?

The charity, formerly *The Retreat York Benevolent Fund*, is looking for **two new trustees** who can bring new vision and enthusiasm to our important work.

The board meets four times a year with working groups, such as finance, fund-raising and marketing meeting in between. We will be needing help in these areas but we especially need fresh input.

**If you would like to know
more contact Kathy Parker at
clerk@quakermhfund.uk**

Classified advertisements

54a Main St, Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL T 01535 630230 E ads@thefriend.org

where to stay

COTTAGES & SELF-CATERING

1652 COUNTRY, HOWGILL, SEDBERGH. One-bedroom 4 star holiday cottage. Yorkshire Dales National Park overlooking Firbank Fell. Walks and Quaker trails from the door. B&B also available. Hope to see you sometime in 2021! Jim Mattinson 07774 281767. www.AshHiningFarm.co.uk

accommodation

WANTED

LONDON AREA. Irish Quaker's daughter seeks one-bedroom flat, reasonable rent. Anywhere considered. Email: aineodonoghue2@gmail.com

for sale & to let

CUMBRIA, ALLITHWAITE, near Cartmel and Lake District National Park. Detached 4-bed house, garage, outbuildings. Flower/vegetable garden plus mature orchard. Sittingroom with woodburner; Morecambe Bay views; electric heating; solar tubes to boost water heating. c.1ha. Railway station 1 mile. £375,000. Contact: robinlemare@yahoo.com

MARYLEBONE, LONDON. 1st floor offices with ensuite toilet to let. Handy to Harley Street. £22,000pa. Approx. 350 sq.ft. Tel. agent: 020 7935 9345.

personal

ACCOMMODATION IN BATH offered in exchange for some help and support for older female Friend. Own room, shared use of kitchen and bathroom. Woman only. Please contact daughter: familyletterbox1@gmail.com

IT'S YOUR BODY YOUR BABY AND YOUR BIRTH

Wherever you live, you can have a remote package of support from an independent midwife. First online/phone consultation free.

www.theonlinemidwife.com

books

OUT OF PRINT QUAKER TEXT SOUGHT Quaker researcher seeks a copy of Thomas Kennedy's 'British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Community.' Willing to buy or borrow. Please contact Hugh Jones: hjones50@me.com or 01273 739145.

Classified ads

Standard lineage 63p a word, semi-display 95p a word (rates incl. vat). Meeting and charity rates 52.5p and 79p a word respectively (zero-rated vat). Min. 12 words. Discounts: 10% on 5 insertions, 15% on 10 or more. Cheques to 'The Friend' or pay by bank transfer.

**Ad. Dept, 54a Main Street,
Cononley, Keighley BD20 8LL
Email: ads@thefriend.org
Tel: 01535 630230**

miscellaneous

FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP OF HEALING Following in the footsteps of George Fox, the FFH seeks to restore the Quaker tradition of healing. 01425 626112 / 07512 890768. www.quaker-healing.org.uk

QUAKER MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES and other bespoke calligraphy. Liz Barrow 01223 369776, lizbarrow3@gmail.com www.lizbarrow.co.uk

WRITING YOUR BOOK? Biography, family history, novel or non-fiction, let me help with layout, typesetting, printing. Photographs/images can be included. Free quotes. Leaflets/brochures also prepared. Trish: 01223 211155, trishc@compsbycarn.demon.co.uk

Learning and Research Team Programme Development Manager

Salary: £33,777pa. **Contract:** 9 months fixed-term. **Hours:** 35 hours per week with frequent evening and weekend work (option to discuss less than 35 hours). **Location:** Flexible.

Woodbrooke is changing how we offer learning – working more closely with Quaker communities and developing and expanding our local and regional work. We are looking for a Programme Development Manager to support this work and to help shape the future of the learning we offer.

You will have a key role in identifying the needs of Quaker communities and in developing learning opportunities that respond to them. You will work in collaboration with Quakers and partner organisations, including Britain Yearly Meeting. We are looking for someone who is excited by what spirit led growth might mean in a faith context and how learning can support this.

You will have experience of developing programmes, and of reshaping work to better meet the needs of beneficiaries. You will be comfortable working with multiple groups to nurture effective outcomes.

Closing Date: Monday 25 January 12 noon. **Interviews:** Week Commencing 8 February.

For details on how to apply see www.woodbrooke.org.uk/jobs



WOODBROOKE

WWW.WOODBROOKE.ORG.UK

Registered charity no. 313816

Britain Yearly Meeting



Legacy Fundraiser

Salary: £20,828 (£34,748 pro-rata) per annum – London
£17,722 (£29,538 pro-rata) per annum – Regional

Contract: Permanent.

Hours: 21 hours per week – hours can be worked flexibly

Location: Based at home or at our offices in either Leeds or Friends House, Euston Road, London

About the role

We aim to ensure that Quakers in Britain continues its work for equality and for a sustainable and peaceful world. Our new fundraising team was established a year ago to ensure the organisation has the capacity to successfully raise income from a range of sources. We are looking for an experienced legacy fundraiser to help us do this.

About you

- You will be ambitious with a flexible approach to work and be excited by the opportunity to develop and launch a new and inspiring legacy promotional campaign.
- You will have demonstrable experience in legacy fundraising, including developing and managing marketing campaigns and maintaining relationships.
- You will have a sound understanding of what motivates individuals to leave legacies to charities, organisations campaigning for social change and faith-based bodies.
- You will also have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, demonstrating the ability to work collaboratively with a range of different stakeholders, including volunteers.

Working for us

Quakers are committed to equality and encourage applications from all sections of society. You do not have to be a Quaker to apply for this post, but we expect staff to uphold the values of our organisation.

You can expect a wide range of rewards and benefits, including a generous holiday allowance, staff discount at Friends House Café and Restaurant, a season ticket loan, and flexibility that will ensure you enjoy a good work-life balance.

For more details of this exciting role and how to apply, please download our application pack at www.quaker.org.uk/jobs.

Closing date: 14 January 2021 (12pm)

Interviews: 27 January 2021

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to equality in all its employment practices.

Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk and expects all its staff and volunteers to share and uphold this commitment.

Quakers have a faith commitment to equality, and we encourage and welcome applications for posts from all sections of society. You do not have to be a Quaker to apply for this post, but we expect you to uphold the values of our organisation.

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Ramallah Friends School *says* *Thank you!*

The Ramallah Friends School community is grateful for your generous and continued support. Our little Middle Eastern town of Ramallah welcomes the Christmas Season shyly this year, as the dire economic situation has hit almost every household. This month, Palestine entered its ninth month under the state of emergency declared by the government last March due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

With masks on, our students have managed to finish an entire semester of the academic year with flying colours!

All of our educational and academic programs have been transformed to adjust to COVID-19 closures and precautions. Many members of our school community have lost loved ones to the pandemic and some are still fighting the virus themselves.

More than ever, your support is helping us keep many of our students in school while their families have suddenly lost their source of income. Many of these students grew up at RFS and have been our students since KG and it breaks our hearts to see them suffer. Your continued generosity and kindness has made it possible for more than 1470 students from 800 families to stay at RFS and continue their education in our Quaker School.

Thank you for thinking of our children and community at such harsh times, your support means everything. All of us at Ramallah Friends School wish you and your loved ones good health, safety and a Happy New Year.

Adrian Moody

Adrian Moody
Head of School



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