

Autumn

My work in the third Quarter of 2023



Our "Veg Patch" in August

It's Autumn! Our veg patch is now past the "so burgeoning it's mildly alarming" stage – and the garden has stopped producing upsetting numbers of courgette/marrows. We also managed to produce two tiny butternut squash and three perfect ichi kuri squash.

Last weekend we took our daughters and some of their friends to a pumpkin patch and picked out a huge pumpkin. Sadly for the girls, we are more likely to eat the pumpkin than carve it – it's great for stews and currys. We did however buy two fluorescent supermarket pumpkins for carving.

The nights are drawing in and I am desperately trying to inject some calm into my diary. I am ready to hibernate a bit and enjoy the long dark nights.

It was Quaker week in October this year and Local Development Workers have noticed a recent upturn in newcomers attending Meeting for Worship across Britain (based on observation, rather than evidenced research). This is obviously great news!

Now might be a good time to think about how we welcome newcomers to our meetings, and how we support them to explore Quakerism and become part of our communities. If you would like any advice or support with this, please get in touch.

Who are we as Quakers?

We need all Quakers to take part in the British Quaker Survey -

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/research/our-current-projects/british-quaker-survey/>

Many of us are very interested in where British Quakerism is at present and what its future may hold but we often lack very basic information about who we are and what we believe. This survey, following one we ran in 1990, 2003 and 2013, is a vital piece of that information-gathering.

Please fill in this once-a-decade Woodbrooke survey and spread the word to your meeting or worshipping community. The survey is open until 14 November.

What does your webpage say?

If you look at the "Find a Meeting" section of the BYM website – you may find that your meeting is not at all up to date. Hilary, my Local Development Worker colleague for West Midlands and North West England (South), recently found that the website said that her meeting had no children's meeting. Now she normally runs the children's meeting, so the website was obviously wrong. She was concerned about the people who had potentially been "turned away" without her meeting even having met them.

You might want to check your own meeting's website entries to be sure there isn't some glaring error.

- You can get to the BYM website through this link - <https://www.quaker.org.uk/meetings>. To change anything on this website please email updates@quaker.org.uk. In terms of children's meeting - It's worth noting that the page runs on a yes/no format and so it might be more welcoming to say "yes" and then explain what you *can* offer to children attending your meeting (see next section for ideas) rather than a flat "no".
- You can get to the Quakers in Scotland website through this link - <https://www.quakerscotland.org/meetings>. To change anything on this website please contact your meeting's website administrator or email me.

Children in meetings

If you don't have a children's meeting and want to challenge yourselves, consider how you might welcome children at your meeting. If you bring books to the venue where you worship, could you bring a couple of children's books or a colouring book? Could you bring a bag of quiet activities/toys so that the children could sit in worship with you? Does your venue have baby change facilities? Could you hold all age worship or children's meeting once a month?

There are lots of ideas and suggestions here on the BYM website

(<https://www.quaker.org.uk/communities/children-and-young-people-2/i-work-with-children-and-young-people-in-a-quaker-setting/resources-children>)

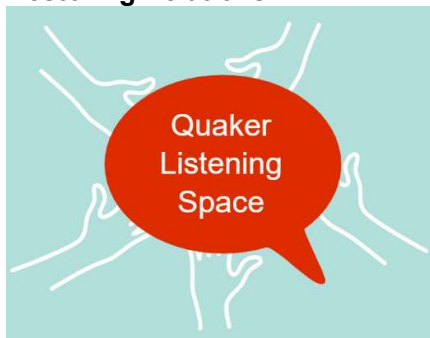
Opportunities for connection and learning:

Opportunities for Parents, Children and Young People, run by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) staff:

On the theme of children and young people, please consider passing this information on to other parents/carers or young people in your worshipping communities:

1. [Giant Online Childrens Meeting](#) on the first Sunday of every month.
2. Young People Epilogue (11-18) on the first Sunday of month, this is an online youth group for fun, discussion and worship. Please contact judea@quaker.org.uk for more information.
3. Parent epilogue with Woodbrooke, second and fourth Monday of month
<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/worship/quaker-parent-epilogue/>

Restoring Relations



Quaker Listening Space logo

Restoring Relations is a group set up by Quakers across the country to support communities in conflict. They have set up Quaker Listening Spaces to provide an opportunity for Friends to share experiences and thoughts to better understand a situation or topic. They use a structure and techniques that could be used to navigate and potentially resolve conflict.

I did some training with them and their work is great. They have a program of online Quaker Listening Spaces which are free for Friends to attend: <https://restoringrelations.org/quaker-listening-space/>

They say: "...the value of a listening space goes beyond discovering new information. Being heard in a safe space fulfils many of our fundamental human needs. Listening spaces help people connect at a deeper level, improve discernment, help in emotionally charged situations, are a better way of handling disagreement and conflict, bring healing after trauma, and can be a means of outreach."

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

Many Friends are deeply affected by what is happening in Israel and Palestine. There is a lot of sadness, fear and anger. Here are two suggestions that have been passed on to me, which you may find helpful:

- My Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel colleagues have released this blog, suggesting 5 actions you can take for Palestine and Israel: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/5-solidarity-actions-you-can-take-for-palestine-and-israel-oct-2023>
- On the 27 November Christian Aid and The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias will be hosting an in-person event, 2pm-3:30pm at Augustine United Church, Edinburgh, with speakers from Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem giving a presentation of their work. If you would like to attend, or would like more information please contact atomlinson@christian-aid.org.

There are also likely to be Friends with lots of knowledge, advice and suggestions in your local and area meetings.

Woodbrooke in Scotland



Naming the mystery banner

On the 18th November Woodbrooke are holding an event at Edinburgh Meeting House on 'Naming the Mystery'.

In meeting for worship, we come together in expectant waiting and to listen - but what are we waiting for? And what are we listening to? This Woodbrooke day event at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House will explore ways to name this mystery, sometimes known as God, Spirit, Love, or Light.

For more information visit:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/naming-the-mystery/

My work:

Current Opportunities that I could provide for Your Meeting:

My ongoing work for Quakers and Meetings includes activities I can run to support your work and learning:

- RESTORE – this was created after Covid to allow Friends to reflect, learn from their experiences and plan for the future.
- Quaker networks for role holders, such as Elders and Pastoral Care Friends.
- Support for Quakers – whether those are as individuals, groups, local and area meetings, or General Meeting.
- Gifts Workshops
- Membership conversations
- In person visits to your meeting – do invite me, if you would like a chat!

If you would like to know more about all of this work, I have put information up on the Quakers in Scotland website – please check here [\[https://www.quakerscotland.org/our-work/support-for-meetings\]](https://www.quakerscotland.org/our-work/support-for-meetings)

Highlights from my work - July to September

Wiston Weekend



Friends practising for the ceilidh

My family and I went to the Wiston Weekend in September. It was a joyful all age gathering with a lovely ceilidh on the Saturday evening. Sunday was the first Quaker meeting where my 10-year-old stayed in worship for the full hour since she was a baby.

I offered a session on Quaker structures and how decisions are made with some trepidation. I suspected that few Friends would feel interested in taking part on a sunny Saturday morning.

To my surprise, most of the Friends attending the session were teenagers – who chose it over the attractions of activities like clambering about on high ropes. It was really interesting to go into the history of our structure, why we work the way we do and how to create

change working within our Quaker structures with younger Friends.

Journey of Hope Pilgrimage

“To reconcile is to seek the healing of what’s been broken. We all experience brokenness in our families, neighbourhoods, and communities in different ways: through disagreement, disconnection, violence, and conflict. But where there is conflict there is also opportunity to re-imagine a new way of life. When we can learn to move towards conflict, extend hospitality to those who have different beliefs or opinions, speak into societal divisions, and hold space for meaningful communication, true healing can take place.”

I have embarked on Journey of Hope, “an immersive leadership training programme which equips and supports faith leaders to creatively and courageously respond to conflict, cultivating a more relational and resilient society”. It’s delivered by Reconcilers Together: a partnership of peacemakers across the UK & Ireland rooted in the Christian faith (quotes from the [St Ethelburgas Website](#)).

Only 20 people across the UK and Ireland get into the course every year. We attend monthly residentials over six months and embed our learning over a further three months. I started this work in September and I am recording my experiences of the pilgrimage through a blog which is available here - [Blog – Faith, life and goblins \(wordpress.com\)](#). It's been an incredibly rich experience so far, and I hope will give me tools to support Quaker communities in conflict, helping us to hear and care for one another even if we disagree. It also takes up a huge amount of time, especially including travel. I will not be as available as I normally am while I am taking part in the residential part of this programme.

Options for Scotland – comes to an end

As you may know the Options for Scotland Group have come to the end of their service. I supported them in their preparations for the future group (now called Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group) before they were laid down at General Meeting in September. It's been a privilege to support such dedicated and hard-working Friends. I look forward to my work with the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group (we need an appropriate acronym – do send in suggestions!).

Peace at the Heart



Children from Oakgrove School perform 'Wangari's trees of Peace' at the Parliament 21.09.23

Anyone reading my newsletters will know about the Peace at the Heart exhibition. It is an exhibition on the values of Peace Education that has been organised by the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group alongside Peace Education Staff working for Britain Yearly Meeting. It went to the Scottish Parliament 26-28 September.

Mary Troup (who is amongst other things the CYP advocate for General Meeting) brought children from Oakgrove School to perform 'Wangari's trees of Peace' at the Scottish Parliament to celebrate the exhibition. 'Wangari's trees of peace' is a performance the children devised with Mary and students from the Glasgow Conservatoire.

It is something of a cheat to have this here as I was not there at Holyrood when Mary, the students, the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group and staff from BYM Peace Education took the exhibition to Holyrood (they didn't need another staff member cluttering up the place). I have been involved in the planning process however – and I thought you might like to see the pictures.

To find out more please go to [Peace at the Heart | Quakers in Scotland \(quakerscotland.org\)](https://quakerscotland.org) and please contact me if you have any questions – or would like to host the exhibition in your community/meeting.

Contacting me:



If you are interested in finding out more about me, I have a webpage and interview video on our Quakers in Scotland website. To visit the page, please go to <https://quakerscotland.org/our-work/support-for-meetings>

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My website address is <https://www.quakerscotland.org/our-work/support-for-meetings>