

News from the Centre



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centralenglandquakers.org.uk

Hope Project Work in Uganda



John Lampen reports on a recent trip to Uganda to support the work of Central England Quakers' Hope Project:

For years our adult students in the Ibanda Literacy Schools [ILS] have asked to take their learning further and acquire skills to increase their incomes. Our co-ordinator, Zelina

Kyakimwa has long dreamed of creating a central Adult Learning Centre to meet this need. The first step towards this came in early 2016 when we acquired our first land at Kibirizi and built classrooms there in brick. (We erected our five other school campuses out of sticks, mud and metal roofing sheets on land

loaned to us by the local elders or the church). This year a legacy from John's mother helped us to construct and equip a second large new building at Kibirizi, containing a secure office and store, a big workshop area and a smaller class-room, and fitted with two solar panels. We were also able to give work tables, stacking chairs, four sewing machines and two knitting machines. They hope to introduce carpentry for men soon. Three Stourbridge Friends, Judith Parkin, Julia Furminger and I opened "Joan Lampen Hall" at a big celebration. We were impressed by the building and also the gardens which demonstrate growing methods and good nutritional principles, besides feeding the children who attend this campus.



New classroom being built at Mirimbo

Mirimbo campus had a large input of new pupils, increasing from around 70 to over 220! New classrooms were needed urgently. We sent extra money, and I photographed the result, perched on a narrow ledge on the hillside and waiting for this month's rains so that the mud and stick walls can be added. I'm always impressed how much of such work is done voluntarily by parents and teachers. We have put aside money for the other campuses, and asked them to submit their own ideas on how to spend it.

Julia and Judith came primarily to show women and girls how to make reusable sanitary pads. They will share their experiences in a future issue. The three of us visited the splendid new toilets at Rwenguhyo Orphanage School, funded by donations from Stourbridge Friends at the suggestion of our Rainbows Children's Meeting, and twinned with our own disabled toilet.



Julia demonstrating at the Girls' Clubs Conference

Support from Central England Local Meetings and individual Friends was outstanding last year. Together with a legacy, we had been given a total of £23,691 in 2019 (a record amount!) which attracted £3774.20 in Gift Aid from the government. We sent the Schools £13,288.59 to cover eighteen months' salaries for twenty-three staff up to June 2019, including two newly appointed Adult Learning instructors, and £6083.76 towards the new building and equipment. We gave Rwenzori Peace Bridge, our other partners, £2483.00 to support their broadcasts, youth programme, AGM and activities during our visit. Stourbridge Local Meeting used our fund to raise and give £2646 to build toilets at Rwenguhyo Orphanage (see overleaf). The

total we sent to Uganda was £25,221.60. Our own fundraising and bank transfer costs were £175.14. In addition the costs for three of us to visit came to £3765.50.

The Ride for Equality and the Common Good July/August 2018

Cathy Khurana reports on this Quaker project to highlight inequality in the UK:



I heard about this bike ride organised by Kendal and Sedbergh Area Meeting when Chris Bullard (ex CEQ) introduced the idea to Meeting for Sufferings – to take a Quaker declaration to 10 Downing Street, to speak truth to power about the effects of austerity on the 'ordinary' people of this country. And I knew immediately that this was something I must do; it brought together two of my passions – Quakerism and cycling.

And so I cycled 387 miles from Swarthmoor Hall to 10 Downing Street with an amazing group of Quakers in the hottest summer for forty years. By the beginning of the second week my passion for cycling had diminished just a little – it was so hot, and there are so many hills!

What kept me going? Well first there was this lovely community of riders, drivers and walkers all sharing common purpose and all looking out

for each other. Then there was a huge outpouring of Quaker support from all the places we passed through, with Local Meetings providing wonderful food for lunch and for dinner each day, and beds to sleep in each night. Then there were the people we met as we cycled, wishing us well and supporting our message. Some Local Meetings also organised an evening event where we spoke and took part in wider discussion and there were times when people came in to the host Meeting House to tell their story of the effect of cuts in welfare expenditure on their lives. These and the stories collected earlier on the 'We Can Afford to Care' postcards made sad reading – the more I read the more it felt that being poor has become a crime. Never having quite enough to live on, never having enough care for old or disabled relatives and the absence of choice, all make life a relentless struggle just to get through each day. While I felt the cycling in the heat and up the hills was relentless, I knew I had a choice, and my journey would end.

It ended on 4th August with a triumphant ride through London in the 'Quaker peloton' from Hampstead QMH via Friends House and a very warm welcome, to Downing Street to hand in our Declaration.

Solihull Quakers at the Tree of Life Festival

Donald Whitlock from Solihull Quaker Meeting reports on the meeting's participation in the Tree of Life Festival:

Solihull Quakers took part in the Autumn Tree of Life Festival on 20th October 2018 at The Beeches Conference Centre, Bournville. The

event is held twice a year in association with Tree of Life magazine. We had an information stand in the main with a CEQAM banner beside it and many different leaflets to take away, covering all aspects of Quakerism.

The highlight of the day was our Workshop at 10 am. Between 20 and 25 festival-goers attended. I gave an introduction to Quakers, including what we believe about the Inner Light and how we believe that everyone has that of God in them, and what happens at a Meeting for Worship, including the significance of silence, gathering and vocal ministry. Louise Scrivens, an attender at Solihull, shared her spiritual journey, what Quakerism means to her, and how she decided to apply for membership. There was a short time for questions, answered by me, Louise and Caroline Gibbs.

Then there was a fifteen-minute Meeting for Worship. I added a little to my introduction, advised everybody to get comfortable, and explained a little more about silence and ministry. The meeting gathered almost instantly! The only ministry was one lady who ministered three times! I was kicking myself because I'd forgotten to say that it was customary only to speak once! However each of her vocal ministries was short, and the gathering and atmosphere of the meeting was, thankfully, not spoiled. We invited participants to come to the stand for more answers to questions. An encouraging number did, and many leaflets were taken away. Solihull Meeting had supplied some white poppies on the stand, which aroused lively interest. Several were taken away, including by some

neighbouring stall-holders who wore them throughout the day.

About thirty organisations pay £100 each for an information stand in the main hall, and some of those also hold half-hour workshops. These run continuously through the day in three smaller workshop rooms. Admission tickets for members of the public cost £10.

Elders and Overseers Support Group and Solihull Meeting supplied several Friends who staffed the stand in pairs through the day. Individual special thanks to these Friends! They were: Donald Whitlock, Louise Scrivens, Aileen Cook, Janet White, Marian Singles, Hilary Johnson, Julia Furminger, Mina Tilt and Peter Fishpool.

In my opinion the day was a tremendous success. I had the feeling that it really was Spirit-led; that many people were holding us, and it, in the Light.

CEQ Peace Committee
Poppy Mosaic Project



To mark the centenary of the end of World War 1 and to create a Quaker response to Armistice Day and Remembrance, CEQ Peace Committee commissioned Quaker artist Caroline Jariwala to create a white poppy mosaic. Words, quotes, texts and drawings were produced in an all age workshop held at

Selly Oak FMH, which were transferred on to ceramic tiles which Caroline then used to create beautiful white poppy mosaic panels.

They will soon have frames for secure free-standing display, and Peace Committee would like to offer all Local Meetings in CEQ the opportunity to exhibit them in all our Meeting House for 2 – 4 weeks. Each mosaic is 1m x 1m, they are a bit heavy, but Peace Committee hope to organise transport, loading and unloading! Let us know if your LM would like to display them: cathykhurana@outlook.com

Show the Love 2019

Claire Bowman reports on a recent interfaith environmental event:



On Sunday February 17th 45 people from different faiths and none gathered together at Birmingham Central Mosque for an afternoon of conversation and presentations, interspersed with tea, cake and crafting. We learned about how the teachings of all the major world faiths include caring for the environment.

After a welcome to the mosque, Rebecca Hawkins, Campaigns Executive of the Climate Coalition began the afternoon by telling us

about its work. She explained the importance of the recent IPCC report and how global warming must be kept below 1.5 C in order to avert a climate catastrophe. A mass lobby of parliament is being organised by the Climate Coalition on June 26th to demand that the government sets a net zero target.



Kamran Fazil of the BAHU Trust (left) spoke to us about his work on equipping faith leaders to speak in a clear and distinct way about caring for our planet as an act of Worship.

“In fact,” he said “we can all be faith leaders, influencing others as well as ourselves towards living a sustainable lifestyle. If we love God we must love his creation.”

Maurizio Silva, Catholic Community Worker and Columban and Father Dominic Innamorati from St John the Evangelist and St Martins Balsall Heath spoke to us about the Pope’s encyclical Laudato Si. They spoke of the Theology of Inter-connectedness, agreeing with Fazil that God’s love is the fundamental moving force of everything. We must radically re-shape our relationships with ourselves, with our neighbours, with the earth. What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after – not just our children or grandchildren but to unborn generations to come? Such a profound change in our lifestyles means we need effectively to be “born again” to a fresh lifestyle and consider those unborn

generations as our neighbours when Jesus says, in the first great commandment, to 'love God with all your heart, mind and soul, and your neighbour as yourself'.

As Central England Quaker Ecumenical and interfaith Coordinator I concluded the afternoon with readings from faith resources created by The Climate Coalition especially for this year's #ShowTheLove campaign. I chose Jewish and Christian readings from the Old Testament of the Bible, Quaker Advice and Query number 41 about freely choosing a simple lifestyle and a wonderful piece of writing by the Prophet Muhammad's wife about how generous he was, giving away any spare money he had, living on a very basic diet and mending his own clothing and sandals.



We were offered a tour of the mosque, and our guide explained that he had grown up on a farm and was deeply concerned about the need for compassion in farming. He thinks that people should eat far less meat and was sympathetic with the idea of radically reducing the consumption of meat, as a means of contributing to saving the planet.

The event was organised by Birmingham

Council of Faiths Footsteps – Faiths for a Low Carbon Future (footstepsbcf.org.uk) the BAHU Trust (bahustrust.org.uk) and Central England Quaker Low Carbon Commitment Forum. It was part of the Climate Coalition's annual #ShowTheLove campaign.

theclimatecoalition.org

Climate Justice for the next generation!

Symran Palak, intern at Peacemakers (West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project) reports on their recent collaboration with Peace Hub:

School students around the UK recently went on strike, taking the streets to protest against climate change. With an estimated 15,000 young people taking part, we at Peacemakers and Peace Hub were inspired to host our next Junior Peacemakers workshop around this very subject.

On the 8th and 11th February, Peacemakers and the Peace Hub hosted their Climate Justice Junior Peacemakers workshops. A popular subject, with the event selling out within days of the release.

Each day four children from three local schools discussed and created posters to share their new-found knowledge about climate justice. Throughout the day pupils thought about their beloved local environment, the current global situation, how people and places increase climate change and what this will mean for places they want to protect. The pupils took inspiration from the case study of Lesein Yes, a Kenyan teenager who promises to continue planting a tree with every football score he

makes. We also looked at Jaden Anthony from New York who is creating comic books, educating people about climate change, donating a \$1 with each sale. Upon hearing these amazing stories the pupils wanted to come up with ways that they can help climate justice.

Some of the many ideas included:

- composting,
- growing their own food,
- reducing plastic packaging,
- using reusable cups
- setting targets to reduce their energy usage.

The pupils shared their excitement by spreading the news to their school and family, implementing their ideas and making a change.

Church & Peace Conference

Barbara Forbes reports on a regional meeting of this European ecumenical peace organisation

“Peace is not a fairy-tale – we have to work to make it happen”.

This statement, by the late Kenyan peace-maker Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, was the inspiration for our Britain & Ireland regional meeting at Bull St FMH in Birmingham on Saturday the 23rd of February. Planning the programme together with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (for.org.uk) we under-pinned our approach with Romans 14,19 - Let us do what leads to peace and builds our common life.

And our “common life” was very much the theme of our keynote speaker, local Anglican vicar Al Barrett (above right) Having lived for

the last nine years on an estate on the edge of the city, his ministry focuses very much on building community and



overcoming the effects of material poverty, which he identifies as poverty of relationships, poverty of identity, and poverty of resources. He works to encourage those who live on “his patch” to re-shape the dominant narrative, which would condemn them to being further forgotten, and instead, to claim the right to tell their own stories and build a strong and vibrant community. He threw out many challenges to the mainly white and middle-class conference participants, in particular about the temptations of being seduced by different types of power – the “power of the provider” (which sees “the other” only as a recipient); the “power of the performer” (which sees “the other as an audience to be impressed or to have their opinions changed); and “the power of the possessor” (which sees “the other” as helpless subjects who are to be helped by “our” projects). (More detailed examples of Al’s thoughts and challenges can be found on the internet by googling Rev Al Barrett.)

This was a thought-provoking start to the day, which continued with further reflections on building a network of Churches of Sanctuary (not churches which offer physical sanctuary to asylum-seekers, but churches which develop a

mission of hospitality, welcome, and, where necessary, advocacy); interfaith work on climate change; and difficult dialogues after the Brexit referendum – building friendships between regions which were at opposite ends of the voting spectrum.

The afternoon workshops continued the discussion on those topics, as well as allowing the opportunity for the first-ever pilot run of a workshop on “Everyday Civil Courage”, developed by Oliver Robertson, formerly national coordinator for The Fellowship of Reconciliation in Britain and soon to be Head of Worship and Witness of Britain Yearly Meeting (Quakers). Between them, the day touched on aspects of “living on the edge” which AI had identified in the morning – being open to unplanned encounters; creating “edge-spaces” where we meet people who are

different from us; building up our common humanity and creating our common home; taking small steps to heal small divisions, when some divisions are currently too deep to be easily healed; and changing dialogue from oppression to cooperation.

All of this is essential in the broken and divided UK, a country riven by division to an extent which none of us has ever experienced before.



No Planet B

Acting out our Faith in the World

An Ecumenical Environmental Day
Conference on Saturday 29th June at Priory
Rooms in Bull St Birmingham.

Hosted by Central England Quakers in
association with the Anglican, Catholic,
Methodist and United Reformed Churches
plus Christian Aid and the Catholic Agency
for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

speakers — inspiration — working together
conversations — displays — workshops
sharing experience

More details available shortly - save the
date!

lowcarbon@centralenglandquakers.org.uk

Sunday afternoon the 19th May 2019
40 Bull St Birmingham B4 6AF

Towards a Better Understanding of Israel/Palestine

A gathering organised by Bull St Quaker
meeting and Central England Quakers

- History of Israel/Palestine since the Balfour Declaration
- The work of ‘Solutions not Sides’
- Volunteering in Palestine

Registration and Refreshments 11.30am

Bring and Share Lunch 12.30am

Gathering 1.15pm to 5pm

RSVP to the Area Meeting Secretary by
May 9th to help with planning:

ceqam@quaker.org.uk 0121 236 2644