



# Roundabout Central England



The newsletter of Central England Quakers - Autumn 2022  
[centralenglandquakers.org.uk](http://centralenglandquakers.org.uk)

## Church Leaders Visit Woodbrooke



*Rhiannon Grant reflects on the West Midland Church Leaders meeting (where she represents Central England Quakers) held on 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> October at Woodbrooke.*

I spent an intense and enjoyable 24 hours with senior church leaders from around the West Midlands. We met at the Woodbrooke Centre, which was Quaker home ground, but new to many of the attendees - and I was new to the group, having recently been appointed as the Central England representative to Birmingham Churches Together. It's not clear what it means to be a 'senior church leader' when you're a Quaker, so I decided to stick to lots of listening, some honest sharing about what's going on in

our meetings, and not being impressed by fancy job titles or purple shirts. Even when we disagree on some key issues, different churches often turn out to have a lot in common. For example, we might disagree about equal marriage but be working on similar lines in trying to support younger people into leadership roles, or we might disagree about the content of our theology but be working on similar lines to help people be confident in talking about their faith. That makes the conversations always interesting! I hope this summit has laid foundations for future cooperation and exchange of ideas and experience.

Church leaders visit Woodbrooke cont.

*A Statement from West Midland Church Leaders following the meeting:*

We met together in Birmingham to pray and encourage one another. We represent a range of traditions and ethnicities and rejoice in that diversity. We gathered united by our faith in Jesus Christ, the hope that he inspires in us and the love which motivates us to love in response. We sought in prayer to discern God's word to us and the West Midlands area we love and serve.

**We rejoiced in stories of growth, whilst realistic about the challenges of sustainability post-COVID.**

We want to build our unity through prayer and mutual understanding, so we more faithfully reflect our faith in Jesus Christ. Our call is to be more effective in blessing our communities in his name and sharing the reason for the hope that is in us. We encourage all our churches to engage locally and internationally, working with all of good will to contribute to the common good. In these challenging days of the cost of living crises, wars and climate crisis, we long to be a transforming presence, creating warm and safe spaces and living sustainably.

In a world that often seeks simplistic answers, we are called to hold the space for complexity and conversation across difference. We want that for our churches and we seek to be facilitators of that respectful dialogue in the wider community.

## New Venue for Solihull Quakers

*Caroline Gibbs , Co clerk of Solihull Meeting sends us news of their new meeting place:*

Solihull Friends have been meeting at Solihull Methodist Church Centre from 10:15am each week since 7<sup>th</sup> August this year. Staff members Janice and Kevin have warmly welcomed the meeting, and the kitchen has been made available for our use. Friends also have an open invitation to join Solihull Methodist Church members for coffee and chat after Meeting for Worship

The Centre (pictured below) is right next to Solihull train station, with several bus stops nearby and has adequate parking spaces. The light-filled meeting room is on the ground floor and ideal for Quaker Worship.

Friends report that from the start they have felt centred and comfortable in meeting and are delighted to be sharing a building with another worshipping community whose members are also on a spiritual journey. They are getting to know their Methodist hosts and establishing a routine.



# Remembrance belongs to us all: Poppy kits

*CEQ Peace Committee have sent poppy kits to all local meetings in our area, with an invitation.*

We are asking you to contribute to marking Remembrance this year in the following ways.

1. We encourage you to use the materials in the pack as well as any of your own (stones, egg boxes, plastic bottle bases and general junk/found materials) to make poppies for display in your meeting house, its garden or your own home and garden.
2. To share some of what you have made towards the display which will be in the Peace Hub window during October and November. Any contributions to be sent or given to Pete Doubtfire at Peace Hub or Reception at the Priory Rooms by mid October. You are similarly invited to join us on Saturday 5th November, for the 'official opening' of our beautiful Peace Poppy Mosaics in their new home in the garden at Bull St.



3. If possible please ask your local shops and community centres to display a postcard and also consider sending one to your local MP and council members.

Our purpose is to raise awareness of the messages and ideas behind the various coloured poppies. The red poppy is strongly associated with loss of life in armed conflict and the white poppy is often perceived as disloyal to those who have died in those circumstances.

**By including poppies of different colours in our displays we hope to widen understanding of these symbols of Remembrance.**

We hope you will put your creative heads on and enjoy making your displays. We'd love to see photos of anything you create – please send to [office@peacehub.org.uk](mailto:office@peacehub.org.uk)

## News from Friends in Ireland

*Diana Lampen reports from Ireland Yearly Meeting held in Belfast.*

I was honoured to be appointed as Representative for Britain Yearly Meeting at Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM) at the beginning of August. IYM has always been both Northern Ireland and The Republic combined. It was a wonderful experience! Every session started with deep gathered worship for half an hour or so. The Clerks did a magnificent job. We were joined online by Barbara Luetke, from the USA. She writes Historical Quaker novels. She came to Woodbrooke, on an Eva Koch scholarship, to make sure she was accurate in the Quaker history in her novels. And in another session the speaker was Esther Mombo from Kenya. The joys of zooming!

In person we were joined by Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, from South Africa; but now in Geneva as head of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). John and I have known her for many years since she had just been released from prison after all her campaigning against Apartheid. The next time we went she was a Member of Parliament! Also joining us was Tim Gee, now Head of Friends World Committee of Consultation (FWCC).

The Public Lecture, which was available online was given by Lynn Finnegan, with the title "Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet: the challenge of asking beautiful questions". It was so good to have such a positive and stimulating approach.

There were many choices for the times we weren't in the main sessions. I went to two very moving worship sharing sessions. The whole atmosphere was relaxed, positive and friendly.

Personally, it was a joy to be back in Northern Ireland, without the challenge of The Troubles, and to reunite with many old friends and make many new ones. I hope to remain in contact with some of them. It was quite hard to say goodbye! I say I left my heart behind!

# From Quakers and Back

*Juliet Woodhall from Walsall Meeting reflects on her Quaker journey.*

I was born in 1937 and raised as a Quaker, though my father was a Presbyterian. He became a Quaker in the last few years of his life, accompanying my mother to Meetings for Worship, when my brother and I had left home.

My early education was at Quaker Rathgar Kindergarten and junior school in Dublin. I loved school and when I caught chicken-pox and was isolated at home for 3 weeks I cried bitterly for days. Isabel Douglas the Headmistress was a wonderful teacher and Quaker. The Douglas family were well known in Dublin in the 1950s.



Newtown School  
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At the age of eleven I was sent to Newtown boarding school in Waterford. Many of us who had been to Rathgar junior school went on to Newtown. It was a Quaker school ahead of its time – being a boarding, co-educational establishment. My years there were happy ones, though I experienced awful homesickness at times. When I left and became “worldly-wise”, I wished we had been taught more about the Religious Society of Friends and its history. I felt very inadequate in discussions concerning my faith and Quakers – especially with my Roman Catholic friends. There were few helpful leaflets to hand out like the ones I see explaining so much now.

I studied Hotel Management, and cooking for hotels and catering establishments for two

years in Dublin, passed all the relevant exams and went to work in London. Housekeeping to start, a far cry from all the cooking I had been learning and practising. Life was much easier but I was often bored and lonely. I knew few people and it wasn't easy making friends until I contacted an Irish family - one of whom had been on the catering course in Dublin. The mother of the family took pity on me being on my own, and kindly took me under her Catholic wing. She inspired me with her staunch beliefs. I wanted to be like her – so certain of what her church told her. She took me to Mass with her family – explaining all the time what was going on - the ringing of the bell at the consecration, the kneeling and the standing. Many weeks on I began to enjoy the ritual, the hymns and the vision of the priest on the altar in his embroidered robes.

**This was worship in quite a different way to the silence of Meeting for Worship.**

I was introduced to a priest who gave me an hour's lesson in Catholic beliefs every week. I listened and tried to take on board all I was told. Next step was Baptism at Spanish Place – a Catholic church frequented by the famous and celebrated. I had become a “convert”. Goodbye Quakers – I never gave them another thought. I had fallen into the lap of the vast Roman Catholic church. I wasn't pushed, I fell. It was what I wanted.



Spanish Place Church photo by Motacilla  
used under Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0

My life took another strange turn when I was offered a job at a finishing school in Weybridge, Surrey. I taught cooking to girls whose wealthy parents had sent them to England to learn English. The school was attached to a convent, though we were housed in beautiful grounds ten minutes' drive away. Two of the sisters (nuns) came from the convent to help me in the kitchen while teaching the girls. The rest of the staff were lay people like myself. It was a wonderful job because I was able to practise my faith daily. There was a beautiful little chapel where I went to 7 o'clock Mass each morning. A priest came in also on a Wednesday to hear Confessions and say Benediction. I had every opportunity to enhance my beliefs.

After six years at the finishing school I met a chap from West Bromwich. We married in 1962, and came to live in Aldridge (Walsall). The Catholic church had just been built, and opened with Midnight Mass that Christmas. It should have been easy for me to get to some of the services but in 1962/63 there was the winter of the big freeze. Everything froze, including my faith, the toothbrushes in the bathroom and the potatoes in the pantry as well. I became pregnant and it was impossible to walk to church without slipping and falling on icy pavements. I had no car at that time and I must admit, with two small children, my faith was tested and found wanting. But eventually, when the children reached school age, I got to know some of the mothers who waited, like me, at the school gates, and I began to feel a sense of belonging. Later I was invited to join a prayer group. That became another eye-opener, especially with other people's ideas of Catholicism and what their faith meant to them. I began to feel abysmally ignorant, not able to recite by heart many of the prayers, and even some hymns seemed oddly strange. However, for years I attended the prayer group faithfully and made good friends there. I enjoyed the social side.

### **Many years later my faith took a massive U-turn.**

Driving into Walsall along the Lichfield Road one day I suddenly saw a sign "Quakers meet here every Sunday". They met in the Deaf Centre. Although I had never actually been in that particular building I knew of it. I used to

help as a volunteer some of the deaf students with their reading and writing. I was going to go to the Deaf Centre to learn sign language but it never happened because student numbers decreased and there was nobody to teach me, or practise with me.

After seeing that sign about Quaker meeting I could not get the idea out of my head about going to Meeting again, and wondered what it would feel like after all those years. I could drive to it too, as there seemed good parking. Then I happened to meet a Quaker who, like me, used to be a Catholic. We stopped to greet each other and I inquired about Meeting and its time. She told me Quakers now met at Aldridge Community Centre. Even better for me, being a 5-minute drive away.

One Sunday, sometime later, I plucked up enough courage to turn up there. I was immediately met by the Quaker I knew, who linked arms with me saying "We don't speak after this point". Did she not know I had been brought up as a Quaker and taken to Sunday School from the age of 5 years? She propelled me to a seat among many whose eyes remained closed.

### **Silence reigned. A feeling of familiarity overwhelmed me.**

Memories flooded in. A Friend got up to speak. She could not have said anything more apt for me quoting John Henry Newman's famous hymn words: "Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on; the night is dark and I am far from home, lead thou me on". From then on the kindness and thoughtfulness of Friends embraced me and drew me in. I felt I was back where I originally belonged.

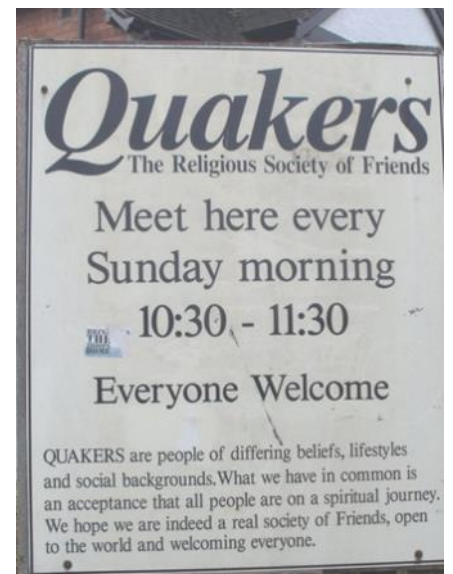


Photo by Elliot Brown used under Creative Commons BY 2.0

# Quaker Youth Group

The Quaker youth group met at Cotteridge Meeting House on Saturday 1st October to prepare a vegan meal for themselves and their families facilitated by Fran Wilde. Eight young people from three different meetings were present and 19 people sat down to eat together.



Items from the meal, including presentation of food as a smiley face, and as a Quaker 'Q'.

# Food, Community and Faith

*Chris Martin and Cathy Tuckett report on the recent Food, Community and Faith discussion at Cotteridge Meeting.*

As part of our Great Big Green Week activities, we were very fortunate to have Tamsin Cooper, Richard Trengrouse from Hay Green Allotments, Anne Gallagher from the Incredible Surplus project and Harriet Martin talking about plant-based diets. Tamsin was in our children's class in the 1980s and is now a senior civil servant living in Reading with her family. She was the civil service lead on the independent National Food Strategy Independent Review with Henry Dimbleby.

**“Food and eating is a joyful, an act of love and nurtures our families and relationships.”**

Our speakers enabled us to explore the issues from both national policy and local community perspectives. Tamsin began by how saying how food and eating is a joyful, an act of love and nurtures our families and relationships. She said how much she enjoyed cooking for her family, especially after a stressful 'day at the office' and that they grew as much of their own food as they were able. Having worked for 20 years on all aspects of food she highlighted the importance of education about the relationship between diet and health. She then went on to talk about food poverty and how 28% of families are now skipping meals. Finally, she touched on the environmental impact of the present food system, especially meat eating and livestock industry, and its contribution to the ecological and climate crisis we face.

After shorter contributions from Richard, Harriet and Anne, we had a fascinating discussion of the local community issues and challenges. Anne, one of the founders of the Real Junk Food Project, spoke about the importance of communal eating – taking a meal to a neighbour, Places of Welcome where people can go both for companionship as well as something to eat. Richard said that over the lockdown allotments had been good for plot holders' mental health and he was now looking for signs that people were trying to maximise the amount of produce grown.

We were left with a strong impulse to take more practical action to help the many people who will be suffering from both food and fuel poverty in the winter ahead. The Energy Champion project is one example of this. Another is an initiative called Warm Welcome Spaces. Working with churches and other faith groups, civil society organisations, businesses and Local Authorities, they want to make sure that nobody is left to suffer on their own this winter. The Warm Welcome Spaces campaign equips churches and other community organisations to open their doors and create free, safe, warm and welcoming spaces this winter.

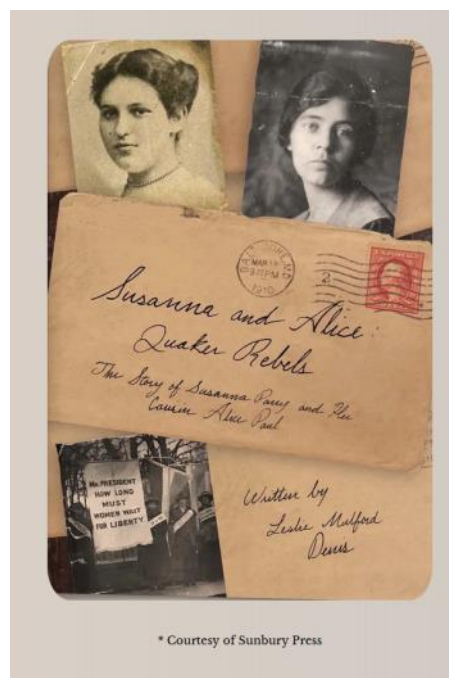
Cathy Tuckett attended the official launch of Warm Welcome online this week and is keen to explore whether Friends could be involved. There is no minimum opening requirement to become a Warm Welcome space. It can be for as little as two hours a week, on any day of the week and it can start whenever an organisation feels ready. It does not have to involve food, but a minimum of a hot drink is expected and some sort of food would be welcome. Registering interest allows access to online resources and, once details are confirmed, the location of the Welcome Space will be shown on an interactive map online. Please take a look at [www.warmwelcome.uk](http://www.warmwelcome.uk) and/or contact Cathy for further details.

## New Book: 'Quaker Rebels'

*Leslie Denis (an American Quaker, based in France) shares her new book about two US Quaker suffragists who came to Birmingham in the 1910s.*

I am happy to announce the publication of my new book, *Susanna and Alice: Quaker Rebels*, about suffragist Alice Paul and her cousin Susanna Parry, who were cousins of my grandfather, Edwin Parry. The title is a nod to my grandfather's book, *Betsy Ross Quaker Rebel*, about his great-great grandmother, Elizabeth Claypoole, whose name in her first marriage was Betsy Ross and who was one of the organizers of the Free Quaker Society of Philadelphia. Alice Paul and Susanna Parry were, like Betsy Ross, Quaker rebels who challenged the cultural norms and the laws of their day. I think Friends of the Central England Quakers Area Meeting would enjoy reading about them.

The book was eight years in the making, from the day my cousin gave me Susanna's collected letters. The collection contains letters from Alice, which are featured in the book and should delight Alice Paul scholars and followers.



The letters also reveal Susanna Parry's story of thwarted love for her college roommate, which remained a secret for generations until discovered in a box of dusty letters. Moreover, the book is rich in information about subjects of interest to Quakers: the history of Quakers in America, Betsy Ross, Jane Addams and settlement reforms, Swarthmore College, Alice Paul's training as a suffragette at the Pankhursts' WSPU, and the Woodbrooke Quaker settlement and school near Birmingham, which Susanna and Alice both attended. The book contains a chapter of letters which Susanna wrote during her studies at Woodbrooke in 1914, including a fascinating account of a dinner at "Manor House," the home of the Cadbury family.

The release of the book is timely: Alice's fight for women's full equality under the law is celebrated in this 50th anniversary year of the passage of her Equal Rights Amendment, and the telling of Susanna's long-hidden story of forbidden love is a relevant cry for freedom of choice at a time when women's fundamental rights are being threatened in America.

*Susanna and Alice: Quaker Rebels* is published by Sunbury Press and is available to order online in paperback and e-book formats. I believe Quaker readers would be inspired by this unusual account of two Quaker women who dared to defy tradition and fight for change in the last century.

More information is available at [lesliedenis.com](http://lesliedenis.com)

# Notices & Dates for your Diary

## Approaching the Bible – Advent Reflections

For our Area Meeting Bible study series this winter, Margo Dobson of Cotteridge meeting will offer a series of sessions using short videos of paintings of John the Baptist, which are housed in the National Gallery. Along with suitable Bible passages Margo will help us 'prepare the way for the Lord' in the run up to Christmas. No preparation will be required.

The sessions will be on Wednesday evenings 7:00 to 8:30pm on Zoom:

- 16th November
- 23rd November
- 30th November
- 7th December
- 14th December

If you are interested in taking part please email [engagingscripture@centralenglandquakers.org.uk](mailto:engagingscripture@centralenglandquakers.org.uk)



## Jesus – The Road to Emmaus

Barnt Green & Redditch Quakers warmly invite you to join us for these sessions engaging with scripture.

Our guest speaker is Michael Ashton, a Christadelphian. He will present for discussion material that attempts to discover details of a conversation briefly mentioned in Luke's gospel. Two disconsolate disciples were returning home from Jerusalem three days after Jesus' crucifixion. Their hopes were completely dashed, and they fell into conversation with someone they met on the road. After a long time, their companion revealed that he was their hoped-for Messiah, whom they thought was dead.

By searching for the details of the conversation that occurred, more information will be uncovered about Jesus' life, mission, crucifixion and resurrection.

Time: 7:30 – 9:00 pm (Doors open 7:15pm)

Dates:

- Tuesday Nov 1st
- Tuesday Nov 15th
- Tuesday Nov 29th

Venue: Friends Meeting House  
6 Sandhills Rd  
Barnt Green  
B45 8NR

For further details email:

[ceqengagingwithscripture@gmail.com](mailto:ceqengagingwithscripture@gmail.com)

*Image left: "Jacopo Bassano (c. / n. / ca. 1510–1592): Virgin and Child with John the Baptist and Saint Anthony the Abbot" c/o Finnish National Gallery, used under Creative Commons 0 1.0.*

**Do you have news to share for the next edition of Roundabout Central England?**

Please send news, reflections, and notices to: [website@centralenglandquakers.org.uk](mailto:website@centralenglandquakers.org.uk)