

Ludlow Quaker Journal

No. 2, June 2015



In 2014 Friends minuted their wish to dispense with a regular Meeting Newsletter, but to retain an occasional Journal to provide a forum for news, comment and events. The Journal will publish anything that Friends think is of interest; so its range may be very wide. If you find it too long, select only what interests you from the Table of Contents. It will only publish what the editor receives without solicitation, so if you want Friends to know about your interests and concerns, make sure they reach the editor: he will be very pleased to hear from you. Comments and letters to the editor are also welcome. I hope you enjoy this second number.

Roger B.

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Two items which should have been included in the first issue of the Journal were omitted by the editor, for which he offers their authors profound apologies. Anne D's report on the Westhope Discussion Group, and Anne A's account of the March Sustainability Weekend at CAT, Machynlleth, open this issue.

Westhope Discussion Group, January 2015

Report on the Discussion Group's activities in 2014

Westhope Discussion Group meets fortnightly, Tuesdays at 7.30. Usually at Garden Cottage, Westhope, but, till Ursula's leg recovers, we are meeting at her house. She has come up for air after a long run of overdue deadlines for essays, so the group has been only Roger Dunn and Anne Dyer. Our main sticking point is why, if God is all powerful, does he let evil and tragedy happen. Earlier in the year we profited from Ursula's research for her Open University essays, and worked our way through all the main religions, agreeing or disagreeing with their basic tenets, discovering why they had these differences, and what they had to teach us. Like most Quaker discussions, where we started and where we ended described a circle, rather than a straight line, embracing such varied thoughts as whether dogs have souls, why some people thought murder was the irrefutable argument, and was suffering good for the soul.

Anne D.

Taking the next step in fulfilling our commitment to be a Sustainable Community

This was a residential weekend organised by Friends in Wales at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, from 27 February to 1 March 2015. About 40 people, including three children, came from a wide geographical spread over Wales and a few from the borders. CAT has expanded recently and now has residential accommodation and excellent conference facilities, including an auditorium whose walls are made of rammed earth. It is all from natural materials and the food is vegetarian. The cafe and bookshop were closed due to the season, but well worth a visit in the summer!

The programme included three main aspects, a better economic system, action and campaigning, and spiritual and psychological. We discussed these in plenary sessions and also separate groups, and the last session for each consisted of the next step, what are we each going to undertake when we leave.

I chose the economic aspect, led by Gill Westcott who has made a study of the subject and helped us with difficult concepts. She had prepared a PowerPoint presentation of 8 slides, including: an alternative economy, climate change,

economic growth, and options for action for a New Economy. These very clearly show the problems and possible alternatives. Our present economic system conflicts with all our testimonies. It is based on 'growth' and GDP, neither of which has anything to do with well-being and happiness. Growth cannot continue in a finite planet, and GDP counts things like oil leaks and accidents as adding positively to GDP. We had some discussion in pairs about how we feel about the future. Climate change is going to have very serious effects on all our lives, but particularly on future generations. It was pointed out that as a community of faith we can support one another in making changes and preparing for a different future. Gill also told us of the practice in the Iona community of challenging one another on their use of time, money and greenhouse gas emissions.

Options for action included: 1) Prophecy, e.g. declaring what is wrong, painting a vision of a fair, sustainable future. 2) Reform, e.g. tax justice campaign, monetary reform, welfare reform. 3) Direct action, e.g. divesting from fossil fuels, moving our money, avoiding supermarkets, demonstrations. 4) Creating alternatives, e.g. co-ops, co-housing, buying local and organic, ethical saving. 5) Ethic of love and solidarity, e.g. the gift economy, volunteering.

A paper on 'Principles for a new economy' has been prepared by the Economics, Sustainability & Peace sub-committee of QPSW, which lists 10 principles.

In the plenary session Maya Williams from QPSW told us what issues various meetings are campaigning on, supported by material from QPSW. These include energy justice, equality, climate change, and divesting from fossil fuels. Some of this work is in co-operation with other bodies such as churches. The spiritual and psychological group was led by Lisa Mundle, on non-violent communication, and was about understanding other people and where they are coming from.

This conference was another step on the way to recognise the value of the rest of creation, and that in fact we are part of a complex bio-system which we upset at our peril. The Society of Friends has had an ambivalent relation to the natural world throughout its history. Early Friends had a vision of the New Creation, Woolman and others in the seventeenth century were sensitively aware of other living beings, but it was not until the last century that British Quakers as a body began to take up the challenge. The natural world was the subject of Yearly Meetings in 1988, 1989, 2000, 2001, and again in 2011 when Minute 36 committed us to becoming a 'low carbon sustainable community'.

I would like to express thanks to the organisers, Frances Voelcker and Jules Montgomery, who enabled the conference to run very efficiently and supplied information beforehand which was very helpful.

Anne A.

Included in the March Journal was an essay by Frank Parkinson, on which the editor invited comment. Anne A. took up the issue.

Comments on Frank Parkinson's paper in the last Journal

The main points I picked up were that Quakerism has to relate the sense of divinity to science, that Quakerism is evolving, and that we need to be more of a community in our beliefs and practice.

I do agree with Parkinson that Quakerism is evolving, and needs to be open to new discoveries and ideas. In fact it has been evolving since it started, from the first 'publishers of truth', to the 'quietist' period, the evangelical period, and, since the Manchester Conference in 1895, into more awareness of social, economic and political issues. This Conference also included an acceptance of science in that the story of Genesis is allegorical and not factual. A greater recognition of our relationship to the rest of creation is developing now, and this, of course, has a strong link to new discoveries in science. In fact, one might hope that a fifth period could be evolving, the 'eco period'. Douglas Gwyn's recent book*, reviewed in the *Friend* of 17 April, confirms this. The exciting thing about Quakerism is that it is 'open to new light' and perhaps more ready to explore spirituality than some other spiritual movements. Many (Quaker) writers emphasise that we are, or that we should be, a community; and our diversity in beliefs and practice is sometimes quoted as a disadvantage. However, 'EcoQuakerism' could bring us together.

Note: Alastair Heron's book *Quakers in Britain: a century of change 1895-1995* (1995) is a very useful book in regard to changes throughout history, especially post 1895.

**A Sustainable Life: Quaker Faith and Practice in the Renewal of Creation* by Douglas Gwyn, QuakerPress of FGC 2015, ISBN: 9781937768553: Ed.

Anne A.

Study Weekend at Coleg Trefeca

The residential weekend at Coleg Trefeca took place 27-29 March. Roy writes:

Seventeen Friends and Attenders from Ludlow, together with Christine Lewis from Brecon, took part in the 2015 Trefeca weekend, on the theme of 'Hope in the Face of Evil'.

The weekend was superbly led by John Lampen. John is not only a good communicator, he has a great deal of experience to share, having, with his wife Diana, a lifetime of experience in the fields of peace and reconciliation: with emotionally disturbed children; in Derry for eleven years of the 'troubles'; through their Hope Project in setting up peace education projects in the West Midlands,

Belarus, Ukraine, and the Balkan states, among others. He led us into some very deep places.

We began by viewing a film showing how some of the parents of children killed in their schoolroom by a lone gunman in New England, worked through their grief in amazingly constructive ways. A session then followed with the title 'Why do bad things happen to good people?'; the challenge this makes to a trustful attitude to life and a belief in a loving God, and a consideration of some of the 'false' explanations with which we may try to comfort ourselves. A deep place indeed.

We were then challenged to 'Think clearly about forgiveness'; about how it can break the power of the past to determine the future; how 'forgiveness' can be experienced as a gift rather than as an achievement.

In considering 'Is the Quaker Peace Testimony an adequate response to the evil in the world?', John Lampen took on the role of someone who wanted to become a member but found the Peace Testimony a stumbling block. We were again challenged, as we tried to persuade him out of his hesitations.

In the 'rounding up' session, we were confronted with one of Emily Dickinson's less obscure poems, which I think is worth quoting in full at the end of this report.

The above is only an inadequate summary of a weekend of great richness and power, the experience of which may be regarded as a well, to be drawn upon in times of future need.

Throughout, John prompted and provoked us (in the nicest possible way) with stories from his vast experience of disturbed, threatening, violent, and seemingly intractable situations. For this writer at least, John is living proof that it is possible both to inject into such situations, and survive them with, grace, faith and hope.

*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the
words
And never stops - at all -
And sweetest in the gale is heard
And sore must be the storm*

*That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.
I've heard it in the chillest land
And on the strangest sea
Yet never in extremity
It asked a crumb of me.*

Besides our powerful sessions with John L., there was time also for fun and games on the second evening, when special dress was the order of the day, Christine L. in her Welsh dragon outfit leading an impressive field. During the free Saturday afternoon, George led a group walk through local countryside.

The organisation of the weekend fell to Margot, who carried out the task excellently and with great attention to detail: much appreciated by all the participants. Margot has also gathered and collated participants' feedback:

Trefeca Feedback

The content of Friends' feedback forms makes fascinating reading, reflecting as it does a variety of personal responses, together with unanimity on essentials. The most valued and frequently mentioned aspect of the weekend was:

The opportunity to meet others in Meeting outside the confines of the Meeting House.

The sense of togetherness.

Meeting together in a relaxed atmosphere.

The talk, the walk, the company.

The people I met!

The fellowship of being with Friends over a weekend and getting to know them in different aspects of the daily routine.

The opportunity to be with Friends and chat with them is always important at these weekends.

Seeing and spending time with Friends.

John Lampen's facilitation was much appreciated:

I thought him clever, courageous and kindly.

His knowledge and his ability to communicate were superb.

A great opportunity to hear John Lampen.

A superb leader, speaking from a lifetime of experience.

Studying John's theme in depth brought greater understanding of the situation.

Other responses indicated an impression that John tended towards the didactic: there seemed to some that there was a shade too much direction, though his knowledge and capabilities were never in doubt. Many stressed that they would have welcomed more group work:

Increased audience participation.

More talking (for us) - less listening.

Perhaps more work in smaller groups to discuss issues and allow individuals to express themselves.

Very interesting and thought provoking. However it was my fellow Quakers that I wanted to get to know better and there was little real opportunity for this.

More group work would have been beneficial.

There was little opportunity for small group sessions.

Uneasy at being asked to speak in front of the whole assembly at every session.

Some would have liked a more relaxing Friday evening:

People are tired at the end of the week.

Friday evening should have had more exploration of what people thought of the theme.

Friday night could have been more relaxed - more ' of a 'get to know' time.

It would have been very nice to have had some music - just to sit and listen.

Some music of some kind would have been welcome.

Others would have welcomed early morning Meetings for Worship:

I wonder if a short Meeting for Worship could be included again, as there was something rather special about it.

We could have started with a pre-breakfast Meeting for Worship.

Much more in the way of en-suite accommodation would have been preferred but the overall impression is that the limited facilities did not diminish the value of our spending 48 hours together.

We discovered that we have story tellers, singers, dancers, mime artists, fiendish quiz-devisers, charismatic actors - and a harmonious group of people who threw themselves into playing some highly diverting games.

Those who summoned the energy for a long Saturday afternoon walk were glad they did, and there was no doubt that the Saturday night entertainment was appreciated:

It was very enjoyable and well organised.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Saturday evening entertainment.

The Saturday evening entertainment was great fun - that's when I was able to see the hidden depths of Friends!

I particularly enjoyed the Saturday evening entertainment.

Requirements and suggested themes for the next weekend:

Science and religion.

History of Quakers.

The communication of Quaker principles and ideals to non-Quakers.

Important that we have a charismatic mentor and that the theme is very far-reaching.

Examining how Quakers engage with those in authority - have we any influence?

An inspiring leader! The topic then is almost irrelevant.

Tradition and innovation in the Society.....is there anything that is unacceptable within the SoF, or does everything have equal validity?

Sustainable living - or Quaker economics - or - the question whether there is too much (or too little) ministry in our Meeting.

and - a recurring plea:

I would like some small group work, when we can share some of our thoughts.

More group work and 'working together'.

When considering the possibility of future events of this kind, we were reminded that we should take care to avoid their being too close to an Area Meeting residential weekend.

What came over loud and clear was the reaction to the question: 'Should this continue to be a regular event?' Though some opted for a weekend every 2 years, the unanimous answer was 'Yes!'

And - one Friend's summing-up:

I did benefit from being there and will look back to it with real affection.

Being Friends Together

We attended this Woodbrooke course last November, on behalf of the Meeting. The focus was on nurturing our individual lives and our shared life of worship and fellowship; on testimony and witness. We worked hard on questions such as:

- What is our understanding of what Quakers are for? (No more than 50 words!)
- What is the purpose of our Meeting?
- What does it give to those within it?
- What has the journey of our Meeting been so far? Where could we go now?
- How are we connecting to the community around us? How would we wish to connect to the community around us? How can we engage more widely in the life of our community? If our Meeting disappeared, would anyone notice, and what would people miss?
- What does the Meeting give to the community around us, and to the wider world?
- How does your life speak? What would people know about Quakers from the way you live your life? How does your Meeting share, know about, and uphold this?
- How can we reduce Quaker busy-ness? What dead things can we clear, what things can we prune? What can we do with what we've got?
- Write a list of all the things our Meeting does, and ask why we do them. Is it because we have to? Is it so that something can flourish? Look at what might be dispensed with or reduced. Distinguish which structures, habits, heritages do/don't allow us to respond to the Spirit.

These were challenging and invigorating questions, and Meeting might want to look at some of these.

Some ideas that came to us as we worked that may or may not be useful:

- Making sure everyone in the Meeting has a job to do, perhaps small and shared with another person, is a good way to help everyone to feel they belong.
- We could invite a speaker to talk about the mutual enrichment of reaching-out work and inner spiritual life.
- We could arrange sessions when Friends talk about the work they do in the community individually, and share experience with others. We could then uphold them in their work.
- We could look for a small project of work in the community that we could do in 3-6 months. Perhaps supporting a Friend who is already working in this area.
- If Meeting undertook some Bible study this might offer Friends who have different spiritual understandings a way of sharing their views.
- Afterword in some Meetings is done after refreshments, on alternate Sundays; for those who wish. This might meet the wish of some Friends to separate Afterword clearly from worship, and it would allow some to choose not to take part.

- We might fund all or part of the cost of a course at Woodbrooke for new members and long-standing attenders who might consider applying for membership.
- We should make sure that events are reported to those who didn't take part, so they know what is happening, and might be encouraged to join in another time.
- We could use the Quaker Speak videos on the web (7 minutes or less) to spark discussions to help newer attenders find their way into Quaker life.
- We could increase the Meeting's sense of being a community, and reach out, by worshipping together regularly in the outside world.
- We could increase the Meeting's sense of community by going on outings together.

As part of the course we were also introduced to the Being Friends Together collection of study materials. This is for us as Friends to grow as a community together; deepen the life of the spirit together; explore our living tradition together; and be in the world together.

To give you an idea of what is covered, there are materials on our testimonies (economic justice, sustainability, peace), on being a community, gifts and ministry, knowing each other in the things that are eternal and every-day, on Quaker spirituality, spiritual practice, and worship, on Jesus, the Bible, Quaker stories, and Quaker history.

We think these topics could help us to address the wish of the Meeting that we expressed in our Spiritual Life report to work on our individual and shared spiritual life. They could also help us to take corporate action in our community. The weekend emphasised that nourishing our inner lives nourishes the life of the meeting, and helps us to reach out further, and that reaching out nourishes the life of the meeting, and our individual spiritual lives. So nurturing spiritual life and reaching out strengthen each other, rather than being alternatives as we had perhaps thought. The topics could also help our new attenders to learn about the Quaker way, and become more firmly part of the Meeting. We think Meeting could find plenty of useful things here.

The Friends who created Being Friends Together suggest a discernment exercise to help Meetings identify where to focus their energy and attention first in this rich offering. This could be done ourselves or with help of an outside facilitator. It could be a half- or full day.

Regardless whether we do this discernment, we could choose topics and work on them in one-off meetings, in the evenings, after Sunday shared lunch, on Wednesday afternoons, or preferably a mix of these. This would allow everyone who wishes to join in, even if not in every session.

There are lots of ways of working on the topics, not just discussions but also craft sessions, all-age sessions, sessions for children, and so on. We could explore a single topic in several different ways according to people's inclinations.

The materials that make up Being Friends Together include some from publications we know, such as 'Gifts and discoveries' and 'Hearts and minds prepared'. More have been added (there are about 1,000 in all!). The collection has been posted on the web, but Being Friends Together is not online learning – it is traditional Quaker learning though working together face to face.

To look at the materials, do a web search at home or in the Meeting House for Being Friends Together. In the email address box put in: clerk.ludlow@smquakers.org.uk. Then password: LudlowQuakerMeeting (capital letters for each word and no spaces). Use the keyword search to look for the topic you are interested in. Wendy is happy to help find what you want. Many of the materials can be downloaded and printed for those who have no web access. We think the collection has useful materials for Children's Committee, Elders, Nominations, Social Concerns, Sustainability, and the Wednesdays group. Also for Friends to use individually.

We thank Meeting for sending us on this thought-provoking course and hope it will enable us all to grow together as Friends.

Wendy and Cynthia

A Journey towards Quakerism

Dori has sent the Journal her account of how she and John came to Quakers. Friends' spiritual journeys are of great value and interest and the Journal will always be very happy to print them.

It began in September 1945 just after the war finished, and I was accepted on a three-year honours degree course in Mediaeval and Modern History. In the third year, we had to submit a five-thousand-word extended essay, the title of which was of our own choosing. The one I chose was 'The Rise of Capital Punishment, between 1660-1760', which seems a quaint choice for someone with a horror of violence from an early age – so I'll tell you why I chose it.

The seventeenth century was a turbulent century with a king decapitated, a fearful Civil War, the establishment of a Commonwealth, a new king enthroned, and continuous agitation among many dissenting groups who were becoming more literate and thus able to express their dissatisfaction. The magistrates knew well that these were the ashes from which more fire could erupt, and so they charged as many people as possible with unlawful behaviour and then imprisoned them. However, imprisonment meant not only restriction of movement but having to suffer any mistreatment the gaoler decided on in pursuit of financial extortion. He held

many helpless people, and there were many different religious theories being propounded. Quakers were often accused for refusing to remove their hats, a social norm at that time when in front of the king or their social superiors – which caused serious concern and the magistrates were afraid that they intended to kill the King. Hundreds upon hundreds of people were charged for various but sometimes spurious reasons and then imprisoned. Anabaptists, Seekers, Fifth Monarchy Men, Baptists – and Quakers! The greatest number were of Friends, who went, quietly faithful, and remained faith-ful through punishments such as starvation, beatings, incarceration in filthy cells, cells with no light at all and which were also completely soundless. That must have been the greatest challenge of all.

Many years ago, we went with a group of Friends to attend Yearly Meeting which that year was held in Lancaster. There was free time, probably on the Saturday afternoon. We went to see the old prison and we were offered the chance to see the cells in which Quakers were once held. Once the door closed, the full horror of both sightlessness and complete silence and the feeling of being withdrawn from Life as you had previously lived it was like being entrapped in a great black sack and was stultifying. It returns to me as I write.

Well, I gained a satisfactory degree, not brilliant but adequate. Almost at the end of sitting the 13 exam. papers which we all had to take, I stumbled, and needed a bit of help from management so to speak. And it happened to come from the Quaker who knew I had done some research at Friends' House. I still remember his look of kindly concern as he realised that something had gone seriously out of kilter, caused by overwork and by trying to live up to an impossible standard set by my father.

By then I realised I must have a complete rest and so I went to work in London. I stayed there in London doing all sorts of menial work and meeting all kinds of people from different walks of life and learning to love most of them. Many had lived in London throughout the 'blitz'. I came home, met my future husband on a blind date, fell in love, married and in due course we were blessed with two daughters and a son. Some time after that we had to make a decision as to which church we should entrust with our children's spiritual development. My background was quietly Methodist – quietly indeed, until on a beautiful starry night and while looking up at countless numbers of stars overhead, I was asked, 'Do you honestly believe that the Creator of all this chose to send an only Son to a quiet corner of a tiny planet?' John on the other hand was taken by grandparents to Bournville Friends' Meeting House and the Sunday school there and after his Father died he perforce had to attend a weekly Anglican service. The Society of Friends won: after long discussion John went to the nearest Meeting House, was warmly welcomed, reported back that all the people looked normal, there were no leather breeches, no-one in homespun, no-one wearing a hat – but there was an aura of peace and purpose. We all felt at home, and there we stayed for a good many years. Not quite end of story! But here we are, and very happy.

Dori



Public Health
England



Become a
**Dementia
Friend**

dementiafriends.org.uk

Talk by Linda Francis of the Alzheimers Society

Saturday 25 July, 10.30-12.00 a.m.

Friends' Meeting House

St Mary's Lane, off Lower Corve St,
Ludlow

*Find out how you can help someone in your
family, or the community, who is living with
dementia.*

Admission free

Further information from Linda Francis
(lindaliberty@btinternet.com, 01952-728694) or Anne Adams
(anne.adams@smquakers.org.uk)

A message from **The Living With Conflict Project**

Dear Friends,

This message comes to you from the Living with Conflict project, which is supported by the Gerald Hodgett Award, the Edith Ellis Trust, Woodbrooke, and Leeds Area Meeting. We are trying to get one of our flyers into every Quaker meeting in the UK. The project is explained in the flyer document which is attached here. We are therefore sending it to every local meeting by email, and ask you to pass it on.

Thank you for anything you can do interest Friends and others in this resource.

Susan Robson *Rhiannon Grant*

Leeds AM

Luton and Leighton AM



Are you living in a Peaceable Kingdom and/or Living with Conflict?

The Living with Conflict website is a collection of thought-provoking information and activities which anyone can use. It accepts that everyone is sometimes involved in conflict and that we need to live with this positively. It contains ideas about:

- conflict and what it is
- how we handle conflict or avoid it
- how we do conflict better when we face it directly

The website resources feature in Being Friends Together, and other ways of using it are included in the website itself. Explore the ideas on your own, or in a group, and then talk about it in your community.

You can find the main website at livingwithconflict.net

join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/livingwithconflict

or read the blog at conflictingstories.wordpress.com

The current editors are Susan Robson and Rhiannon Grant.

Susan can be contacted at on 0113 3188 084 or at communication@livingwithconflict.net. The project is supported by a Gerald Hodgett award from the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and the Friends Adult Higher Education Awards Group.



The Fair Tax Mark: the future of fair taxation

The *Ethical Consumer* has been part of a group bringing the tax justice agenda into the Government and public eye. There is a conference on 12 June, in London, called 'The Future of Fair Tax: New Government, New Dawn'. This is bringing in a Fair Tax Mark, a ground-breaking accreditation scheme rewarding businesses that pay a fair amount of tax. This conference will be the first time that progressive businesses, politicians, accountants and NGO's have explored these issues in such depth. With Fair Tax Marks now springing up in other countries, this may bring it to us.

'Tax' is the corporate responsibility issue of our day. The time has come for responsible tax payers to differentiate themselves from the avoiders and evaders, and lead the next big development in corporate responsibility. It has already had an effect. In a recent statement, Amazon, one of the big companies avoiding tax payments, said it has started to book retail sales through its UK branch, ending the practice which saw sales routed through a Luxembourg subsidiary.

However, Amazon is not currently obliged to publish income and expenditure for this UK subsidiary, so there is still likely to be no way for the public to scrutinise whether profits occurring here look genuine. It could, for example, use transfer pricing or intellectual property arrangements to reduce UK profits to zero if it wanted to. So this campaign group are calling on Amazon to undertake to publish full country-by-

country financial reporting (to standards recommended by the OECD) in order for the general public to regain trust that its financial arrangements are not structured to continue avoiding paying its fair share of tax.

This month the first Fair Tax Mark conference will be held and the organisers hope that *Ethical Consumer* supporters will be there.

Barbara

The Constitutionalist Movement/Party: a new religious-political initiative

Last year the Ludlow Campaign for Fairness sponsored a talk by Sue Carter, Commonwealth Secretary of the Scott Bader Commonwealth Ltd. You will recall that Erich Scott Bader was a Quaker who set up a successful chemical company, and then gave it to its employees: on this basis the Scott Bader company of Wellingborough continues to operate effectively and to sell its polymers worldwide. Erich's son Godric has continued his father's work and last year received the Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award 2014 for his contribution (see YouTube).

Sue Carter gave an inspiring account of Godric and the way the Commonwealth operates. Early this year Sue Carter sent the following materials, forwarded from Godric Bader. They are based in a spiritual approach to life, and propose a quite different economic arrangement for the country.

The Journal does not 'do' party-political issues, but in the aftermath of the general election it may be appropriate to think about this initiative. It is not an immediate alternative to any of the parties which competed for our votes in May; but it is an attempt to rethink the whole political and economic structure and as such may be of interest to Friends. It is introduced by a rather convoluted email which offers an explanatory preamble. If you are interested or curious, click on the link at the end of the email which takes you to the Constitutional Party website. The CP 2015 Charter is also appended below (p. 14).

From: Peter Challen <peterchallen@gmail.com>

Subject: the 2015 CUK initiative is taking off and invites response

I am involved in a bold initiative of 'principled pragmatism' being wrestled with collaboratively by a growing network of - presently - some 120 men and women.

Speaking out of the context of a Christian tradition, as so often the merest hint of any theology of the concept of the 'Kin[g]dom of God' releases a barrage of [partly self-

defensive] descriptions of truly wonderful palliative work within the dying system.

Little indeed is heard, and even less enacted, in the inner life of the churches of attempts to translate the concept of the ubiquitous 'Kin[g]dom of God' into the nature of covenant of gift and Trusteeship, of a dynamic constitution, of confederation, of subsidiarity within a global context, of non-adversarial governance; in short of what I called a democratic, universal 'People's Political Economy of Trusteeship set in an Ecological perception of responsibility for Future Generations', where individual votes count in new ways of responsible participation.

I attach the Manifesto and then the Charter of the 2015 ConstitutionalistsUK: a movement not a Party [tho' we are formally registered as a Phantom Party]. It is a collaborative outcome of the steady gathering of some spiritually minded men and women who recognised in each other that hunger for a way of acting out a pathway to systemic change against the drive and drag of institutions that so rapidly distort original ecumenicity of vision by the power gained in hierarchies and in the vested interest enclosed by largely impermeable boundaries.

These people whom we are gathering largely through face to face dialogue share what I call 'tentative conviction'. They are already deeply involved in society and are able and ready to cross boundaries to gain ever widening perspective for their actions. Thus our daring in collaboration to improve the impossible possible as long as we don't mind who gets the credit.

I dare to hope that, reading this and then the attachments, you might agree to do one or more of several things.....

1. Make creative critique of their theological perspective in contemporary terms as to purpose, content and approach.
2. Agree to meet a couple of the Strategy Group somewhere in your locality, or at a central London point.
3. Ponder the policy we are developing of building locally [e.g. Peckham or Wimbledon Global Table] around the country as a possible way of encouraging a Cafe Society in which people [re]discover that we are all called to be 'jobbing workers for the KofG' – in whatever their translation is of that wholistic concept.
4. Might even become a Speaker or Candidate in this ambitious but patient initiative.

Blessings abound in your vision, keep it radiating,

Peter

The 2015 Constitutionalists' Charter is printed below, and can also be found on the CP website, www.2015constitutionalists.uk.

THE 2015 CONSTITUTIONALISTS' CHARTER 1st Oct 2014

"Being a covenant between all the peoples of the Islands of Britain and following the principles in the 2015 Constitutionalists' Charter, this, The first written constitution for the Islands affirms and avows that moral purpose, trust and belonging are the essence of our social being."

RE-FORMATION – The United Kingdom

- 1 The Constitutionalists commit to a re-formation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland. On winning a general election legislation will immediately be passed to enact this Charter and the new Constitutionalist Parliament will replace the House of Lords extending functions as in clauses 4 & 6 below. A general election will be called to establish a party political parliament & government accountable to the new Constitutionalists' Parliament.
- 2 England will be restored to sovereign nation statehood. Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland will be invited to declare their independence. A new Confederation "The Islands of Britain" will be formed. Nations can choose confederation with it or be independent. The United Kingdom can be dissolved on the Charter's realisation.
- 3 The sovereign nation states, their status with The Islands of Britain notwithstanding, can retain membership of the United Nations, the Commonwealth & the European Union & re-affirm support for the founding purposes of peace.

RESTORATION – The Islands of Britain

- 4 Written constitutions & processes, determined by the 2015 Constitutionalists in standing convention & guided by Supreme Court, Privy Council & the Civil Service, will, *to be living*, have Inalienable Clauses for their development & democratic confirmation *recognising* that knowledge & wisdom are history dependent & *knowing* that Institutions' asymmetry of power with citizens require Common Sense & Natural Law (Legem Terra Magna Carta 1215) to prevail.
- 5 The franchise for all elections & referenda will be a "settled residency" period for citizens age 18 & over & simple majority voting with deliberative processes will dissolve majoritarianism. Freedom for Facts is constitutionalised. The BBC as a Business Trust (Clause 11) will be required to support citizens in *deliberative elections & referenda*.
- 6 Constitutionalist candidates will be judged in elections to their constitutionalist's parliaments for their integrity, competence, experience, learning abilities, vigour, natural grace & firm independence. Confederal & National Constitutionalist Parliaments will also act as Constitutional Courts whose root democratic legitimacy supports a strong civil society. Political parties will compete to run government for seven years and operate only at an executive & legislative level. The legal system, moving from adversarial to inquisitorial, will be accessible to all.
- 7 Two overarching constitutional principles shall be that (1) all power, from whatever institutional source, shall be accountable to a body external to that source and (2) the Golden Rule that all shall treat as they would be treated. The International Bill of Human Rights will be extended with a code of responsibilities to include *inter alia* a citizens income & mutual commitment to life-long learning & quality of work. Public investment in secular education, social care, preventative & curative health, pensions, social housing & environmental care will be financed by public revenues not from taxes but from resource rents. With these entrenched constitutional demands on governments the five giants of social need articulated by William Beveridge in his 1942 commission report will be fulfilled.
- 8 Subsidiarity between parishes, local councils, regions, nation states, confederations, EU, Commonwealth & UN will be constitutionalised & sovereignty dynamically pooled & responsibilities & tasks matched as appropriate. Constitutions will support single markets, not bureaucracies, in the confederation, the EU & the Commonwealth. The Islands of Britain & nation states can have a head of state, not a monarchy, elected from the House of Windsor. The Armed Forces will be reconstituted as a confederal peace-keeping force to be available to NATO and the UN. The Confederation will avow the need for & support supra-national democratic processes to solve global issues
- 9 Constitutions will mandate that sovereign money only will be created. Interest free debt will become a public utility. Nation States will be able to experiment with multiple currency systems using local currencies Sterling & the Euro. Constitutions will mandate gift capital investment in People, Science, Technologies, Arts & Infrastructure so as to increase productive capacity. The Confederation will manage Sterling. These tools entrench the public interest.

A FREE, EQUAL, JUST & OPEN SOCIETY for England

- 10 The Preamble of the English Constitution will make no claim to world power status. Calling upon its history it will assert its nationhood & identity by *acknowledging* the significance of the English Language & its poetry, *promoting* its traditions in literature, the arts, sciences, music, industry, design, sport, liberalism, free speech & the rule of law, *recognising* the tolerance & mutual respect that is required for a multi-ethnic inclusive being, *proclaiming* English humour as a civilising force, *moving* from an established church to a secular spirituality & *knowing* that a dearth of Liberty Equality & Openness impoverishes the physical, mental, social & spiritual well being of all of its people. An identity *transcends the boundary* of a polity that can have no utility beyond rights, responsibilities & stewardship.
- 11 This English polity will move to a Trust Economy that is debt and equity free. New Business Trusts, working under Common Trusteeship & Fiduciary laws will replace shareholding companies, partnerships, charities & other legal forms. Pension Funds will reconstitute themselves taking on the role of trustee directors of business trusts. In this transition, there will be reasonable & fair recognition of all shareholder claims in private & public companies. This is emancipation from the private capital & profit systemic yoke to the freedom of public capital & an income society.
- 12 England will be meaningfully regionalised for & by the people. Regions will have statutory powers & capital cities. By dint of this regionalisation & trusteeship economic wealth will be more equally distributed between all citizens. Draft boundaries for the regions will be established by The Constitutionalists followed by processes of *deliberative referenda* to set the formal boundaries. Specific franchises & processes will allow coherent boundaries to be set. A True Democracy arises naturally from this reduction in scale in polities and replaces the elitist systems in the UK.

To stand as a 2015 Constitutionalist candidate in the 2015 election or sign the Charter

Please visit www.2015constitutionalists.uk or contact raysheath@2015constitutionalists.uk

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