MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING

NEWSLETTER NO 9 JULY 2022

Just as our Quaker forebears were sometimes on the wrong side of history, so we all are complicit in systems of oppression today, including exploitative labour practices in the creation of the technology that enables this blended Yearly Meeting, and in the clothes that we wear.

Britain Yearly Meeting 2022

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We were given powerful evidence of Quaker engagement in the transatlantic slave trade. It is important to understand and tell the truth about the past – it is even more important to recognise its enduring consequences: the trauma and impact on lives in the present. We must start making changes now and for the future: “planting flowers as well as pulling up weeds.” Britain Yearly Meeting resolves to build on our decision last year to be an anti-racist church, working with partners, including churches and faith groups, to look at ways to make meaningful reparations for our failings. We need to take urgent action as individuals, in our local, area and yearly meetings.

Britain Yearly Meeting Epistle 2022

QUAKER TESTIMONIES AND THE CALL FOR REPARATIONS
by Jonathan Dale, Central Manchester LM

At Yearly Meeting this year Quakers agreed they will make practical reparations for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and economic exploitation.

That's us.

Nor is that all.

Quakers are already well into the process of arguing that as a nation Britain needs to pay climate reparations to countries in the Global South. This is in recognition of the evident injustice of a situation where the poor countries of the world bear the brunt of the climate calamities that result almost totally from the rich countries; rich countries, like ours, who developed the industrial revolution and grew wealthy from its exploitation of the resources of colonial domination, spewing out carbon dioxide all the while more and more.

Our obligation to make amends, to repair, as far as possible the wrongs we have committed or benefited from, involves the whole range of our testimonies:

Peace: so much of our financial and cultural capital resulted from war and the brutal treatment of human beings, including from slavery. Ann Morgan at Yearly Meeting demonstrated the links of Friends in Lancaster Meeting to both the slave trade and to slave plantations. What of Manchester?

Equality: we have benefited from stolen wealth and our sense of well-being (for many of us) . We have not treated as equals either the slaves or the colonial peoples we subjugated.

Sustainability: our capitalist system has plundered the earth and poisoned the waters and the skies. It threatens to cause irreparable harm to all living beings. We have an additional reparations obligation to the creatures and habitats of the non-human world.

Truth: we have been blindfolded for too long. Now the truth about our standard of living is clear for us to see. We cannot hide from it without a dire loss of faith.

Simplicity: if our testimonies are lived out in faith and our responsibility recognised to repair the damage we have caused, both as a nation and as a church, we will simply have to discover how we can live more simply – so that other humans and plants, insects, animals and all else can simply live.

We can see here the profound links between the work of our witness groups: Peace Promotions, Social Justice, the Environment and Racial Justice groups are all connected. But the issue before us is not just for those groups. It is for all of us. How do we call for reparations? Can our lives become lives of repair ... and healing? Will our Meetings for Worship and our Quaker community sustain us in the face of such a fundamental re-turning?

Racial Justice Report

from Racial Justice Steering Group, June 2022.

Timeline

2020: Following the murder of George Floyd an informal Area Meeting Black Lives Matter Group came together. Book groups, study groups and conversations all demonstrated that there was much to learn and much to do.

September 2021: At Area Meeting in session, Manchester & Warrington Friends agreed to the creation of a Racial Justice Group (Minute 2021/55)

March 2022: Mark Russ, a Woodbrooke Tutor, led two Zoom sessions on *Spiritual Resilience and Racial Justice,* arranged by the BLM group.

April 2022: An open invitation was circulated to Friends in Manchester & Warrington AM and East Cheshire AM, and beyond. Six Friends agreed to become the Racial Justice Steering Group (see names below).

Everyone who attended was asked what they wanted from a Racial Justice initiative. Five themes were identified, and individual Steering Group members have taken responsibility for them.

Themes and names are as follows:

Campaigning – James Allen & Phoebe Spence

Communications – Quaker internal - Penelope Gouk & Mark Perry

Connections – External, to other Quakers - Phoebe Spence

Contemplation – Prayer – Eldership - Penelope Gouk & Margaret Calvert

Conversations – Safe Space - Ursula Sharma & Margaret Calvert

May 2022: Several Steering Group meetings were held, and loads of emails exchanged, as we explored the challenges facing us – the when, where, how, who of starting a new venture. Friendships grew as gifts were discovered and decisions made.
May 2022: Britain Yearly Meeting addressed Justice in all its aspects - Climate, Racial, Legal. The Swarthmore Lecture *Perceiving the temperature of the water*, given by Helen Minnis, spoke to the complexities of being a Black woman in Britain.
June 2022: A Report-Back Meeting described the activities and decisions of the Steering Group to Friends before we broke into small groups to consider *Stations on my journey* in a confidential Safe Space, almost like Worship Sharing.

So that is an account of the activities of the Racial Justice group and the Racial Justice Steering Group. But what is just as important are the decisions that have been made:

- To evaluate campaigning activities by individuals and within Area Meeting prior to making any new campaigning suggestions.
- To investigate the use of social media, particularly the Area Meeting website.
- To inform others of our existence and activities. Friends from East Cheshire AM have been integral to the initiative from the beginning; Woodbrooke tutors, Clerk to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, Clerk of Northern Friends Peace Board, and national lead on Diversity and Inclusion are all interested in what is happening in this region.
- To consider the spiritual and theological aspects of Racial Justice. Reparations is a topic discussed in many contexts – how do we contribute to the conversation?
- To provide a Safe Space in which to hold difficult conversations. This seemed the most pressing need expressed in

April and a *Report-Back Meeting* in June offered an opportunity to try it out.

Friends describe Quakerism as Faith in Action, or Living the Everyday as a Mystic, or Seeking the Inner Teacher, or Living in the Light. Whatever the words used, the challenge is to remain faithful to the leading that we are given. It seems that, through contemplating the history, the personal and social revelations uncovered by focusing on Racial Justice, we can come to know that of God better, in ourselves and others.

Learning from History?

by Nicholas Tyldesley Citizen of Bolton

As a professional historian I see my role researching past events and peoples in an objective, factual and scholarly way as possible It is not appropriate for to interpose my own personal views by making my own moral judgements about actions in the past but it is proper to evaluate their efficacy in the context of their times. Round the dinner table of course I can cheerfully assert my opinions, prejudiced they might be, but in doing so I am not being a true historian.

So applying these thoughts to the subject of empire and slavery I would start with the quote from LP Hartley's The Go-Between : the past is another country, they do things differently there". This means that I must accept that the cultural thinking two hundred years ago which saw slavery as a normal economic activity should be recognised but its morality in terms of what we believe today should not be part of any analysis being philosophically illogical and superfluous. Long dead peoples don't care about our abhorrence. Whilst we can certainly note the cruelty, abuse and countless personal tragedies we ought not to feel guilty about actions we did not take. We shouldn't hope to turn the clock back to prevent them happening.

Young Germans today are not expected to feel responsible for the Holocaust or young Russians for Stalin's Purges. Offering a form of reparations [to whom?]

for the evils of the slave trade does seem to be naïve, impractical and the thin end of the wedge. Are we talking here just about Afro-Caribbeans or all those who suffered from economic exploitation? Do we want to consider compensation for the descendants of the Irish Famine, Amritsar Massacre or the wars against the Mau Mau and Boers? In a diverse society we might want to include everybody in the process of levelling up, not just a small target group. But the problems remains about identify our targets for help- which generations are to be the recipients, how are they to be identified? Yes, a few bursaries for HE might help but that is a very small scale initiative. Going back to the idea of collective guilt- who should point the finger and name and shame white imperialist today?

Even the notion of making the study of empire a statutory part of the National Curriculum is not easy to implement. What is an appropriate age to study a difficult topic; can we draw up a simple balance sheet between good and bad effects [the story is a lot more nuanced than that] and arguing that countries are better off today without the intervention of British troops and traders is a futile, theoretical game- there is no answer to give. Making history the exclusive study of nihilistic , tragic events, wars, slavery, genocides, plagues is a sure turn off for learners, wallowing in negativity in their lessons. The curriculum is crowded enough- what topics would we leave out to study slavery?.

Pulling down statues, changing the names of streets and buildings makes us feel morally smug but they have no effect on those who were commemorated for their past

activities.. There were arguments for razing Auschwitz to the ground after the war but it remains in situ as an uncomfortable reminder of horrors and this argument can be extended to the monuments of slavery. Obliteration of statues diminishes uncomfortable memories.

H|story is not about Whig determinism which says bad things took place in the past but we are better behaved today. Our smugness is condemned by the reality that wars, exploitation and genocides, people trafficking are still with us today.

Of course Quakers have an absolute right to decide how they might support their communities but perhaps they should take a wider view of injustices, beyond the slave trade . It is more sensible seek to address these though political involvement and take very small steps to help those in need. You can't help everyone equally.

A final reflection: Polish history teachers volunteer to take groups around Auschwitz- they give a factual, non-judgemental account leaving visitors to draw their own conclusions and emotional reactions. We might approach the slave trade in this light too.

Three Knocks

by Steven Johnson – Central Manchester LM

There was a knock on my front door: knock, knock, knock, so I went and answered it. It was my neighbour and friend, Christopher. I was pleased to see him and said, “Hello, Christopher! What do you want this fine morning?”

He looked me straight in the eye and said, “I want your money. All of it. I want your possessions, your house and all that’s in it. I want the shoes from your feet and the shirt off your back.

“All that you have is stolen: by your forefathers, from my forefathers, down through countless generations. All that you own should rightly be mine and I want it back. Give it to me now!”

I looked at his argument, and I could see no flaw in it.

I stood naked and cold in the gutter where the rain ran down, and a voice cried “Hey, Steven! I’ve been looking for you.”

It was my friend Jean, from my local church. I was so relieved to see him. I said, “Jean! Please! Will you….”

He interrupted saying “Yes I will! I take the gutter that you stand in, and the fine drainage system that takes the filth away. I will take your civil works, your monuments, your cities and fine civilization. Your art, your culture, justice, rights, health and security. I will take your safe easy life, for it should all be mine. Your feasts are bought with my famine. Your plenty was bought from me and you paid with nothing! You, Steven, owe me, Jean. Pay up!”

And I saw that it was all true. The debt was mine.

I was curled up, lying in the mud and weeping like a child with no mother, when a girl's voice said, "Steven, there you are!" And it was

Hellen, the young woman I'd worked with in committees. She held out a hand and helped me to my feet. I was so grateful to her. I said "Hellen, I'm left with nothing!" And she laughed at this.

"Well then, I will just have the skin off your back, one lash at a time. I will have the babies from your belly and their milk from your dugs. I will have your self-respect, your dignity, your faith, hope and your possibility of love. I will have the child that you are in your secret heart. You will know no joy, no peace, no beauty. And you will never know safety. For once I had all these, but they were taken from *me* for the benefit of unborn *you*. Can I have them back now?"

And I was shocked out of the power of thought. I was appalled at how I was who I was.

But Hellen then leaned in close and whispered in my ear, " And then I will have back the myriad thefts that your imagination cannot even conceive of, you ***rich, white, man."***

And she spat, in hatred, in my face.

And the pretty young woman, who I'd laughed with in committee, spat in my face and it broke the spell.

It was all a dream! Oh joy, oh happiness returned, it was just a dream! I was lay in my warm bed, in my lovely home, and all was mine for ever and ever!

But then I heard a knock at my front door. Knock, knock, knock. And this time, I pondered the consequences of opening….

THE PEACE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

A poem by J Ahmed written with the Poetry Peers "Peace" writing group, submitted (with the poet's permission) by Robert Wilson, who comments, "I love his perception of life, especially from his multicultural angle."

We are the
Peace preservation society.
Come join with us,
Help the world
Be free.

We hold
Our futures
Within our palms,
We plead "please people
Lay down your arms."

We hope
For a place
Where war is gone,
For peace is our purpose,
It is number one.

Come join with us,
With us
You're free ..
We are the
Peace preservation society ….

Item by Margaret Calvert, Sale LM

At our Glenthorne Meeting for Worship this morning we were told of the word ‘pronoia’

The opposite of paranoia, pronoia is the belief that individuals and groups are aiming love and good intent our way.

This idea helps me, particularly in contending with what I perceive as evil.

I can employ pronoia, intentionally – with kindness a forethought.

I can also look for, seek, sense the love that others send my way.

I find both actions – outward to others, inward to me – are necessary, keeping me in better balance.

A VERY EASY FRUIT LOAF RECIPE

by Lynn Norbury, South Manchester LM.

My mum got this recipe from Womens Weekly or Woman in the late 1960's. I remember taking cakes to university and have been making it myself for more than 40 years.

1lb/450grm of mixed dried fruit
One medium mug of tea
5-6oz 170grm of dark brown sugar
Scant teaspoon of mixed spice or cinnamon
1lb 450 grm of self raising flour
1 egg
Small amounts of milk white sugar and butter.

Mix the fruit tea sugar and spice in a bowl cover to keep pets out and leave overnights.
Next day oil and line a 2lb loaf tin.. stir the fruit mixture the sugar often sticks to the bowl. Stir in the flour and the lightly beaten egg add a little milk if the mixture is stiff. Spoon the mixture into the tin, put dabs of butter and a sprinkling of sugar on top of the cake to stop it from burning.
This bakes in about 50 minutes in my fan oven at 160 degrees, so probably 170 degrees in a non fan oven and gas 3

I make the cake my own by adjusting the fruit mixture, I like glacé cherries and have used dried apricots and figs. The mug of tea is probably about 11/2 measuring cups I use standard English breakfast but earl grey or rooibos

would be fine.
Vanilla essence or cardamom could also be used for flavouring.

The cook book that Wythenshawe meeting did for its fiftieth anniversary had lots of fruit cake recipes one very similar to this and one by Winifred Locke which was egg free and used all bran.
Delia Smith does a similar cake calls it bara brith but more time consuming using fresh yeast.
Unicorn have a vegan fruit cake on their website

CENTRAL LEEDS QUAKER MEETING HOUSE
where Sandra Dutson, Sharon Powell & Robert Wilson gathered with representatives of Northern Friends Peace Board on Saturday, June 18, 2022.

PONTEFRACT FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

We worshipped here with Friends on Sunday 19 June and took greetings from Eccles Friends.
Sharon and Robert

RE-READING "MEDICAL NEMESIS" BY IVAN ILLICH, 1975
by Elizabeth Coleman

I was inspired to return to "Medical Nemesis" by discussion in Bolton's Talks and Thoughts group, which is further developed in Wendy Pattison's article in the last Newsletter.

When I first read "Medical Nemesis", I was in my twenties, in good health, and hardly ever saw a doctor. Now I re-read it, I am in my seventies, and am kept alive by very expensive treatment on the NHS. Also, times have changed. Awareness of the damage that industrialisation has done to the environment through climate change, pollution and extinction of species is much more widespread than it was then, and the earth is far more damaged.

The book is in the context of Illich's view of industrial society. He sees limitless growth as impossible and the quest for it destructive.

He sees many institutions as becoming damaging and disabling – for example the way we run schools and transport, as well as medicine. They are based on a greedy view that we can have everything, and, as in the myth of Prometheus, who was punished for stealing fire from the gods, we reach our own nemesis. People lose their ability or opportunities to learn from life, to use low-tech means of transport, and to deal with sickness, pain and death, which they had in traditional societies. It is easy to see examples of this – children can no longer walk to school because of the dangers of traffic, both

accidents and pollution, so high-tech transport makes traditional transport (walking) difficult. Children shut up in classrooms do not learn practical skills and do not have health-giving contact with nature. Life is extended where it is not wanted, is humiliating and painful, and people die suffering the pain of attempted resuscitation (CPR) in hospital, rather than dying at home. It is hard to find meaning in death where an old person who has come to the end of their life dies surrounded by medics trying to stop or delay the inevitable by intrusive and painful CPR.

Illich admits that myth, like that of Prometheus, though effective in the past, can no longer restrain us.

"Politically established limits to industrial growth will have to take the place of mythological boundaries." Illich is clear that this also applies to growth in the health industry.

While in the 21st century, a growing minority of people see the need to restrain industrial growth, this perceptiveness was much more unusual in the seventies. And those who do see the need to limit growth may not apply this to health and education.

Illich does not deny some of the benefits of industrialisation. For example, he loves the bicycle. But he sees how things get out of hand, and what started as a benefit has become a problem. He considers that high-tech medicine does not extend life, and emphasises how much harm medical treatment can cause. It is low-tech medicine that really improves health.

I am no scientist, but I think that high-tech medicine does extend life, but it is better at extending life than at extending good quality life, and can, for example, lead to one spending years in a care home suffering from severe dementia.

Illich sees that, if a problem is seen as a health concern, treated by medicine, it may cease to be seen as a problem of the industrial society we live in. A recent example of this that occurs to me is mental health. There seems to be an epidemic of poor mental health, especially among young people, and anxiety and depression are very common. There are two possible responses to this – to increase expert medical treatment of anxiety and depression, or to change society so that it is not so sick-making. Another recent example is obesity – you can increase medical intervention, and education about healthy eating. Or you can create a situation (as existed in wartime Britain) where food that is good for you is cheap and easy to obtain, while food that is bad for you is expensive and hard to obtain.

Benevolent intentions can have unforeseen negative consequences. "The social commitment to provide all citizens with almost unlimited outputs from the medical system threatens to destroy the environmental and cultural conditions needed by people to live a life of constant autonomous healing. This trend must be recognised and eventually be reversed."

Medicine may be seen as a battle against death. But we all die. Are we looking to science to somehow stop or reverse the aging process, so that we all live indefinitely? What sort of

society would result? In Illich's view, being able to deal with death, as well as distress, pain and disability, is a part of health. Modern medicine takes coping out of the hands of the individual, family and local community, and puts it into the hands of specialist doctors. We have heard of people feeling powerless when forbidden to visit their dying relatives because doctors judged that the risk of Covid overrode the need for them not to die alone.

(It is very upsetting to the relatives not to be able to be with their loved one at the time of death, and may mean that the dying person does not have the opportunity to say what they need to say. But personally I am not all that concerned as to whether I die alone or not.)

Illich is not against science, but is against the view that all problems can be solved by science, which results in massive investment in health which eventually starts to harm more than it helps. He says that at some point, increased spending on health leads to greater inequality, and it is at that point that it becomes harmful rather than doing good. He advocates simple medicine that can be practised by people with little training, and there is a focus on ending the sick-making aspects of industrial society.

Illich suggests a new ethic: "Act so that the effect of your action is compatible with the permanence of genuine human life." He says this could mean: "Do not raise radiation levels unless you know that this action will not be visited upon your grandchild." Such an ethic will not be adopted as long as we hold the view that scientific and industrial developments will solve all

problems we pass on to posterity, such as nuclear waste and plastic pollution.

Illich's thinking was way ahead of his time, and still seems radical and thought-provoking today.

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A TRIP ROUND MANCHESTER
by Sharon Powell

I took Robert on a trip around Manchester recently and we visited Afflecks Palace, the first time for me in many years. It is described as an 'Emporium of eclecticism' based in Manchester's Northern Quarter. The many independent stalls sell a huge variety of goods but most of all it was heartening to feel the inclusivity of the place, its vibrancy and uniqueness.

The mural is from the wall on one of the many stairwells

POEM BY A NINETEENTH CENTURY SALFORD VEGETARIAN

submitted by Sharon Powell – Eccles LM

No flocks that range the valley free,
To slaughter we condemn;
Taught by that Power that pities us,
We learn to pity them.

For us the garden's fertile soil
A guiltless fest does bring;
Fresh herbs and fruits our tables spread,
Our drink is from the spring.

'Eaters of flesh!' * could you decry
Our food and sacred laws;
Did you behold the lambkin die,
And feel yourselves the cause?

Lo! There it struggles! Hear it mourn,
As, stretch'd beneath the knife,
Its eye would melt a heart of stone!
How meek it begs for life!

The voice of God through nature still
In every nation cries –
'Eaters of flesh, obey my will,
'Twill make you good and wise.

'From killing for your food abstain,

(God says – ‘ Thou shalt not kill’ **)
You’ll surely find this life humane
With joy your bosoms fill.’

The prophet kept this law divine,
Ate no defiling thing.
Refused to take the ‘meat’ and ‘wine’
‘Appointed by the king.’

He liv’d on ‘pulse’ and ‘fatter’ grew,
With only ‘ten days’ test;
The ‘prince’ who saw him ‘fairer’ too,
Then granted his request. ***

Thus like him live: grain, herbs and fruit,
Will prove the best repast,
Will lengthen life, your health recruit,
And bring you peace at last.

AN OLD VEGETARIAN
Salford, Sept. 25, 1848.

*Proverbs xxiii. 20
** Exodus xx. 13
*** Daniel 1. 1-16

Published in The Vegetarian Advocate 1848

PEACE VIGIL AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS 22 JUNE 2022

Quakers of the Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting held a vigil on June 22nd to draw attention to the first meeting of

state parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Eighteen of us were present and we distributed nearly 250 leaflets to passers-by, informing them about the Treaty and the meeting. Feedback was good and confirmed our feeling that the Treaty is too little known.

The states at the first meeting condemned nuclear threats, produced a declaration and an action plan.
'UN Treaty member states condemn nuclear threats, agree action plan for ending nuclear weapons'
https://www.icanw.org/tpnw1msp_press_release

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) have posted several short interesting videos from Vienna on Facebook (you should not need an account to watch) International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) - We have a plan to eliminate nuclear weapons! | Facebook

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

by Sandra Dutson – Eccles LM

Born Feb 4th 1906. Executed by Nazis April 9th 1945. German theologian and pastor.

I was introduced to the life of Bonhoeffer in my early teens, by school and church influences, and I was invited to a discussion about John Robinson's book "Honest to God". There were references in that book to ideas written in "Letters and Papers from Prison" by Bonhoeffer before he was executed by the Nazis just before the end of the war. So I gathered something of the nature of his life and attempted to read further. This helped form my basic understanding that Christian belief was about the whole of life and that following Jesus was a serious and costly matter. It was not primarily about reciting creeds and doctrinal statements. I was also immensely curious how someone essentially a pacifist could decide to become involved in a plot to kill Hitler.

In my early twenties, I read a biography of Bonhoeffer by Eberhard Berthge, who was a student of Bonhoeffer. He was the person to whom many of the letters from prison were sent. Berthge took over ten years researching and writing the biography and it was finally printed in 1970. Re-reading the book recently expanded my understanding of Bonhoeffer's life.

Bonhoeffer cane from a very well-educated, cultured, well to do family with a strong moral stance, but his immediate family

were not churchgoers. One of his brothers was killed in the First World War. He, another brother, and the husbands of two of his sisters were executed by the Nazis almost at the end of the war.

Bonhoeffer studied theology and trained as a pastor, spending time in Barcelona and New York. At this stage churches were varied in their response to Hitler. Many people, his own family included, had been appalled by the punitive approach of the Versailles Treaty, and nationalism was very strong.

He returned to Berlin in 1931 and trained as a university teacher. The Aryan clause (excluding non-Aryans and forbidding them from holding office) was about to be extended to churches. He met Karl Barth, and eventually got to know a whole range of well-known theologians. He was beginning to ask the question how a church in which there is neither Jew nor German lives under an unjust regime. Many students were attracted to Hitler's party. However, there were the beginnings of a small group of defiant pastors. Bonhoeffer was beginning to question the otherworldly understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Hitler came to power in 1933. Bonhoeffer saw this as a clear time for action, not just academic discussion, and argued that the church should take a stand. He refused to remain in relation with men holding ecclesiastic office who had compromised with the Nazis, especially by signing up to the Aryan clause. Hitler promised "to make Christianity the basis of our whole morality and give the church protection".

Bonhoeffer began to work on ways of communicating to ecclesiastical contacts in other countries the reality of what was happening, which was hard because other church folk were communicating the opposite.

At a national conference of German Christians, where the majority were happy to accept the Fuhrer principle, racial conformity and the Aryan clause because they would gain protection and retain their influence, Bonhoeffer produced a paper exposing the absurdity of a purely German church and saying there was no question of remaining within a church which excluded Jews.

There were two groupings, the majority "German Church" which supported Hitler, and the "Confessing Church", to which Bonhoeffer belonged, which opposed Hitler. Over 800 arrests were made of members of the Confessing Church.

At the 1935 Olympic Games there was a big show of Reich support for Christians. In New York, thanks was given for a man like Adolf Hitler who built a front line of defence against the anti-Christ of communism. After 1937, there were no official representatives of the Confessing Church at international ecumenical gatherings.

In 1938, Bonhoeffer changed his position. He had wanted public statements against the regime. Now as preparations for war drew closer, he wanted people to remain in office so they could have more influence, even using the Nazi salute. There were conspirators working on a popular uprising, including members

of the army, and there was some early consideration of assassinating Hitler.

The question engaging Bonhoeffer was the Christian's responsibility to the world. He reasoned from incarnation to a position of historical responsibility. He tried to get the message across that Germany and National Socialism were not the same thing. Churchill never believed this, even later assuming that the conspirators were almost as bad and wanted power. Churchill only wanted unconditional surrender. Bonhoeffer asked people to "pray for the defeat of my country – the only possibility of paying for all the suffering my country has caused the world."

Bonhoeffer's work was hush hush at this time, so there is very little written down. There were two unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Hitler. When in open protest, everything had been unequivocal – thoughts, actions, personal integrity. Once in conspiracy he had to abandon all inward and outer security.

Bonhoeffer was imprisoned in April 1943. He held onto this: "I am here for some reason and I can only hope that I may fulfil it." He answered the question, "Who is Christ for us today?" by saying "'Lordship' is always and solely expressed through powerlessness, service and the cross." He spoke of the "world coming of age", which was not about assuming moral evolution, but about responsibilities attendant on growing up. He was critical of transcendence. "It is not with the beyond that we are concerned but with this world as created and preserved, subjected to laws. Reconciled and restored. What is above this world is in the gospel intended to exist for this world." He was

concerned that religion confined God's place to the personal, inner and private. There was a social direction of faith and the kingdom.

Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazis on April 9th 1945.

Demonstration outside Dukinfield Town Hall on 24 May calling on Greater Manchester Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels

REFLECTIONS ON ABORTION

by Elizabeth Coleman – Eccles LM

In writing about abortion, I am not claiming any expertise, but think it worth setting out my thoughts as a layperson, as the debate I hear is so polarised. While I am "pro-choice" rather than "pro-life", I have reservations. I do not celebrate abortion, but see it as a very painful necessity.

For every 3 live births in England and Wales there is more than 1 abortion, which seems to me a worrying high figure. The 2021 abortion figures were the highest ever. Contraception is a far better way to avoid unwanted births than abortion, and we need to look into why this is not working. Is it that the women are not using contraception, or are they are using it but it is not working? Are they not using it correctly, and if so, why is this happening? Could we be more cautious, perhaps recommending that women use more than one form of contraception at the same time? Could we publicise the "morning after" pill better, to avoid abortion at a later stage? Is better education in schools needed? The highest rates of abortion were for women in their early twenties, so we need to aim our efforts at the young.

The beginning of the life of each unique and precious individual is at conception, continuing in the womb till birth, then through babyhood and childhood to maturity, and then old age and finally, death. There is no one obvious point other than conception where we can say that we become human beings potentially with rights. The measure for abortion seems to be

when the child could exist outside the body of the mother, but this will become earlier as medical science advances.

The cut-off point for abortion is generally 24 weeks. If you look at the internet for pictures of foetuses of 24 weeks, you see babies, not clusters of cells. I feel very uneasy at the idea of ending the life of the 24-week old foetus, but the alternative can be worse, such as botched back-street abortions, so legal abortion does seem to be the lesser of two evils.

Of the statutory grounds for abortion, 98% were performed under Ground C – "That the pregnancy has NOT exceeded its 24th week and that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman." The vast majority of these were because of risk to the pregnant woman's mental health.

Both sides of the argument go to shocking extremes – the right-wing Christians in the US would deny an abortion to a raped 10-year old girl. And at the other extreme, Downs Syndrome babies in the UK can be aborted beyond the 24 week limit, even right up to the end of pregnancy, when it is verging on infanticide. This shows something of society's view of disability, as people with Downs Syndrome can have happy and fulfilled lives if they are allowed to do so.

It appears that abortions are often done because of financial difficulties. Women living in the most deprived areas of England are more than twice as likely to have abortions as women living in the least deprived areas. As well as the general hardships of

poverty, people in deprived areas are hard hit by the fact that the child element of child tax credit and universal credit is now limited to two children. Both poor and middle income families struggle with the exceptionally high cost of child care in England and Wales.

In my view, a major effort should be made to make contraception work more effectively, so that abortion is rarely required. But where it is necessary, the pregnant woman should have the right to choose.

A WEEKEND AT ROOKHOW
by Elsa (8 years old)
introduction by Hannah Spierson

The Spierson family had a lovely weekend at Rookhow in the lake district and would like to share the report written by 8 year old Elsa, who does a brilliant job describing the weekend.

The family weekends are held 3 times a year in March, June and November and they are hoping for some new families to join, so are opening up the weekend to families from across the North West. If anyone is interested and wants to know more just drop me a message (hannahspierson@gmail.com) and feel free to share to anyone who might be interested from other meetings.

Quaker Families at Rookhow report – June 2022 by Elsa Farndon, Kendal Meeting, aged 8

Rookhow is a place of fun and learning and we do a walk. We eat ice buns and cinnamon rolls. We play games in the forest like Predator and Prey and Capture the Flag. Some of us sleep in tents. and some people sleep in the bunk barn. Some people enjoy sleeping in the top bunk. We also play games with pine cones, This time we also picked sticky weed. And chased each other. We also had a game of cricket.

On Saturday we went on a walk to High Dam, some people went for a swim. In the evening we had tea, ate pancakes and went into the forest and had a camp fire and toasted marshmallows, then we went to bed. Some people liked taking logs to the fire. On Sunday We had Meeting for Worship next to the tree because it's going to be chopped down. In the Meeting we wrote things on card and hung them on the tree. On them were things about what we like about the tree, for example:

"I remember kids in the tree, listening to the adults who didn't know they were there."
"I love climbing the tree"
"I love the tree thank you for letting me climb you" "Thank you tree"

"I remember helping enthusiastic climbers to extricate themselves from the tree"
"Riches, reverence, rejoice"
"laughter, flute music, pine cones, meeting place"
"I always loved climbing you"

My favourite thing about going to Rookhow is seeing my friends again and Tim's sticky buns.

With thanks to Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting for supporting the Rookhow Quaker Family weekends.

INTERVIEW WITH JOEL AMANI

by Elizabeth Coleman (with additions by Joel)

Joel Amani is one of two key people in the Conflict Minerals Campaign in eastern Congo. (The other is George Bani, whose interview was published in the latest issue of the Newsletter.) Joel lives in Bukavu, South Kivu. He is a human rights lawyer. He is one of the youngest members of a family of 12 children and lives with a younger brother. Most of his older siblings have married and formed their own households. When the Conflict Minerals campaign started, Joel and George said that we should start with research in order to understand the problems. Funded by a £1,000 grant from Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting, Joel visited mining sites in North and South Kivu, mainly where they mined gold, and produced reports for us. Since then, we have secured a grant of £5,000 for Joel and George to organise meetings in the DRC, bringing together representatives of mining companies, low-tech artisanal miners, NGOs, local government, etc. to discuss what needs to be done for local people to benefit from the mineral wealth. The launch meeting was held in Bukavu in March, and smaller meetings at mining sites are underway.

In this interview, I didn't ask about CMC's work, but about one of Joel's other activities - visiting Bukavu prison as part of a group from his Catholic Church - because I think it gives an insight into life in the DRC. Joel added detailed information about prisons in the DRC.

Joel visiting a mining area

How often do you visit the prison?
2 times a week, Tuesday and Saturday, from 14h to 16h30

How many of you go? Who goes?
Four of us, me and a married couple and one of our priests.

What do you do there?
We celebrate Mass, and after mass we teach people about our faith. Then we share food. And during the high times of the Catholic Church (Advent, Lent) and on New Year's Day we give prisoners clothes and shoes.

Do you sing, dance and play musical instruments at Mass?
Yes, we sing and dance together and I play my guitar and share a moment of joy with the prisoners. Then we share the food. Our visits are very, very important for the prisoners. Most of them have nothing to eat and no one to visit them. For one day of the week, they can feel like human beings.

Do you meet outdoors or in a room in the prison?
In a large room in the prison.

In what languages is the Mass?
In Swahili, because many of them do not have much education so do not speak French. Some speak Lingala and French, and the priest sometimes uses French.

How many inmates attend Mass and the shared meal?
One hundred male and female prisoners (mostly men). Last year there were two hundred, now we have a hundred, and we divided them into two groups, so there are 50 of them every time we visit.

Do some guards attend Mass and meals?
The prison guards do not attend Mass, but we give them some of the food.

What food do you offer?
Rice, beans, fish, meat, cassava leaves, fou-fou (semolina). When we don't have a lot of money, they only eat rice and beans.

Mass in Bukavu prison. (Joel is the one playing a guitar)

How do you get the money to pay for the food?
We organize collections at the church. Six communities worship in our church, which seats about 120 people.

Who buys and prepares the food?
Now one of the church members does the shopping and cooks, and it costs about $85 on Tuesday and $200 on Saturday.

Where do the inmates get their food from, other than the weekly meal you provide?
The prison does not provide food. Some prisoners receive food from their families. Some prisoners do not come from the

Bukavu area, so their families cannot help them. I think there is an NGO that also organizes food for them.
However, the current Constitution of the DRC, which is our fundamental law, recognizes the right to food implicitly in its Article 16 through the recognition of the right to life. The latter therefore includes the protection of the right to food. This article states: the human person is sacred and that the State is obliged to respect and protect it. It reinforces this by pointing out that every person has the right to life, to physical integrity as well as the free development of his personality in compliance with the law, public order, the right of others and good morals. The right to life recognized by the Congolese state is a guarantee for other rights among others the right to food. In addition, Article 18 states: "...every detainee must be provided with treatment that preserves his life, his physical and mental health as well as his dignity.» In Article 47 of the Constitution, the right to health and food safety is guaranteed explicitly and is part of human rights as a whole.

Do some prisoners die because they don't get enough food?
Yes. Four years ago, there were cases of prisoners dying because they didn’t have enough to eat, in Bukavu and Kabare prisons. Kabare prison is worse than Bukavu prison.
You know that a society judges itself by the state of its prisons. The rule of law must not end at the door of prisons. The Congolese prison world is a terrible indicator of the nature of the appalling conditions of detention, which cause the death of very many defendants and prisoners often in indifference or

ignorance of opinion and the media both national and international. Our prisons, far from being places of all kinds of frustrations and lawlessness should rather be closed spaces reserved for people who do not respect social norms, with the goals of protecting society from dangerous people, to discourage the commission of new criminal acts and to re-educate offenders in view of a social reintegration. For this, these spaces of deprivation of liberty should be models in which the rights of those deprived of their liberty are respected because the violation of the prisoner's rights being inadmissible. Our prisons pose a threat to the life and health of the prison population. Persons deprived of liberty are directly dependent on the prison administration for their primary needs, namely accommodation, personal hygiene, clothing, food and medical services. Moreover, sentences should pursue a goal of correction and reintegration of the prisoner into society and not suffering or revenge. The prison should allow the rehabilitation of offenders and lead them to change their criminal behavior so that they can lead an existence in accordance with the law to be useful to themselves and society once released.

The causes of the violation of the right to food in Bukavu Central Prison and prisons in the DRC

The living conditions of detainees in the DRC at the Bukavu central prison are not the best. Indeed, the various places of detention are not only overcrowded but also and above all the hygiene and safety conditions of their residents are "difficult". In addition to the confinement, there is the lack of ability to live, to be and to love, the boredom of prisoners, the lack of activity in prison.

The overcrowding of detained persons

The overcrowding of prisons in the DRC is a source of unsanitary conditions and makes practically useless the few efforts to clean up prisons. Overcrowding and as a corollary the permanent promiscuity generate sexual deviances. The strongest rule, and sow terror in the central prison of Bukavu to establish their leadership. Prison overcrowding results in the violation of a number of regulatory principles such as the separation of minors and adults, convicts and temporary detainees. If it were necessary to cite the factors that violate with a rare cruelty to human dignity in prisons, which place inmates on the edge of humanity, we would immediately point out the insalubrity which is certainly the consequence of the overcrowding. The latter gives birth to scabies, tuberculosis and even AIDS. The Congolese prisons have a fairly significant number of people with AIDS.

The overcrowding of most prisons is not solely due to the absolute number detainees placed in too limited a number of places of detention (and in particular at the large number of military personnel incarcerated due to wartime circumstances), but more to the average length of incarceration of each inmate, compounded by the poor functioning of justice, especially the exceptional military justice that operated during the war period. This overcrowding of prisons contributes to accentuate the poor material conditions of detention and non-compliance with most of the rules enacted in the rules setting minimum conditions for the treatment of detainees and in Congolese legislation on the subject. It has caused deterioration of the physical condition of prisoners and facilitated the transmission of infectious diseases (such as tuberculosis) in prisoners. It has

aggravated the detention conditions of those, very many, who are in preventive detention while these people should benefit from the presumption of innocence and, as such, enjoy different detention conditions from convicts who have been convicted of criminal offenses.

By examining the daily table of the number of prisoners in most of the correctional institutions, I have found that central prisons are crowded with inmates who should not or no longer be there or who could get out. First of all, prisons have an abnormally high number of people in preventive detention. This is the result of the magistrates forgetting an essential principle affirmed in particular by Article 9 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights according to which the pre-trial detention should be the exception and not the rule. Art. 28 of the Code of Procedure Congolese criminal court (CPP) confirms it:

"Preventive detention is an exceptional measure

"Unfortunately in the DRC, preventive detention is the rule and the maintenance of freedom is the exception. The vast majority of detainees are in pre-trial detention, most often, moreover, excessively prolonged. The law sets specific and restrictive conditions for preventive detention. According to Art 27 CPP: The accused may be placed in a state of preventive detention only if: there are serious indications of guilt in relation to him and; the fact appears to constitute an offense that the law punishes with a sentence of at least six months of penal servitude. If it is an offence punishable by law with a sentence of less than six months but more than seven days, the person may nevertheless be placed in preventive detention if: there is reason to fear the flight of the accused or; his identity is unknown or doubtful or; if in view of serious and exceptional circumstances, preventive detention is required in the interest

of public security. This overpopulation is the basis for the violation of the various fundamental rights of including the right to food.

By way of illustration: The Bukavu Central Prison can only hold 500 inmates.
BUKAVU CENTRAL PRISON: SUBDIVISION
Number of detainees
Central courtyard: 1442
Observation room: 38
Female quarter : 35
Underage girls: 3
Underage boys: 36
Infants: 11
Hospitalized : 0
TOTAL : 1567

At the end of this illustration it is clear that this prison is very overcrowded. The state guarantor of the nation provides its budget only for 500 detained people.
The MAKALA Central Prison has had problems related to overcrowding for years. The Government experiences difficulties in feeding and caring for the thousands of detainees, many of whom are in pre-trial detention. This group of prisoners could be released and would therefore also mean fewer mouths to feed. These are convicted prisoners who are eligible for parole (after serving a quarter of their sentence).
In the city of Goma we have listed 12 cases of convicts who are eligible for parole, because they have already served more than a quarter of their sentence. The only exception is Kindu Central Prison: no prisoner has served at least a quarter of his

sentence. Two explanations are to be taken into consideration. The Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal are operating in slow motion. This explains the limited number of convicted prisoners. On the other hand, repeated escapes due to the dilapidated prison facilities do not allow prisoners to complete their entire prison sentence. Many escape and thus regain freedom before the end of the expiration of the sentence. Unfortunately, the procedure for the parole of convicts is slow in most correctional facilities, which leads to the risk of starving to death in prison for dozens of inmates to whom parole could be granted.

Finally, a group is made up of detainees held illegally in detention, and who should therefore no longer be in prison. A recent example :

At Kisangani Central Prison, during a recent visit, the Human Rights Section notes a case of severe malnutrition. After examining the file, it appears that the detainee was sentenced to five months in prison for simple theft while he was arrested on May 25, 2004. So he should already have been released. It should also be noted that this detainee also suffers from tuberculosis. The section asked the prison director to allow him to go for treatment at the Kisangani Referral Hospital. In addition, the Prison Director pledged to speed up the paperwork so that the detainee would be released before Monday. Which had been done.

Precarious material conditions of detention

The difficulties faced by inmates at the central prison of Bukavu are about health and food. The health of prisoners must be taken into account. Several factors that influence his condition: housing, hygiene; medical examination, clothing and

sleeping. Regarding hygiene and bedding, Bukavu Central Prison is far from meeting the provisions of Articles 12 and 19 of minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners who respectively provide: "the sanitary facilities must allow the detainee to satisfy the natural need of the desired moment, in a clean and natural way " 83, and "each prisoner must have an individual bed" 84 .

In the DRC, everyone recognizes the high degree of unsanitary sanitary facilities that are explained by the dilapidation of the pipes which are clogged all the time and a paltry sanitation budget. The result is that the prison is characterized by a foul smell. Bukavu Central Prison stinks.

In Goma, at Munzenze Prison, a prisoner nicknamed "Enough" was very famous because of the audacity he showed to unclog pipes with his bare hands, not hesitating to dive entirely into the pit if necessary. In other prisons in Kindu and Kasai, inmates are forced to use iron pots to do their needs. Useless in these conditions of talking about intimacy, the smell and noise of the released gases indispose all those in detention. The bedding of prisons is far from satisfying the conditions laid down by the minimum set. There are iron beds, and very thin foam mattresses in the central prison of Bukavu. More than five inmates share the same mattress, there is also a bed for 18 prisoners, ten inpatient beds for 500 inmates.

Scarcity of charitable actions in prisons

The great misery in the places of detention has aroused the sympathy of some actors of Congolese civil society. Outside the religious associations that work permanently in prisons, charitable actions in favor of the residents of these structures remain rare because of low media coverage of prison

conditions and the lack of orthodoxy in the management of donations granted.

Lack of political will

The central prison of Bukavu is a boring place. It's why the authorities need to provide a number of gainful activities to constitute a significant palliative to the boredom of prisoners. In Lubumbashi, the prison has several types of activities such as basketry, weaving, carpentry, shoemaking, dyeing, painting, etc. But the vast majority of prisoners stay away from these activities for lack of means. It is rare to see penitentiary institutions where these activities normally operate in the DRC. The State does not show any intention to improve the conditions of incarceration and improve the working conditions of prison staff. Improvement of the conditions of incarceration mainly involves the fight against prison congestion but also by encouraging communication between prisoners and prison administration. The DRC has not built any new prisons on its territory.

Joel would like to meet students from Manchester on Zoom, to compare their student experiences with his own in the DRC. If anyone is able to help contact the students, please let Elizabeth know. elizcol@dialstart.net

NOTE FROM EDITOR

Please send articles and photos for the Newsletter to
elizcol@dialstart.net
The deadline for the August newsletter is 31 July.

Elizabeth Coleman
Editor