

**MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER  
MEETING**  
**NEWSLETTER NO 49 FEBRUARY 2026**



Robert and Sharon of Eccles Meeting visited Malvern Meeting House along with other members of Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) during their conference in October 2025.

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## DEATH OF IAN WILSON

Sadly, Central Manchester member Ian Wilson died on Wednesday 7 January. Long standing Friends will remember Ian especially from the nineties and early two thousands, when he was active in this Meeting and supporting a range of Quaker work including Summer School.



Dear Friends

On behalf of Area Meeting Elders, this is to inform you that a Meeting for Worship to give Thanks for the Grace of God in the life of Ian Wilson, who had been a long-standing member of Central Manchester Meeting, will take place at 2pm on Friday 6 February. The Meeting will be held at Central Manchester Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS. All are welcome to stay afterwards for tea, coffee and cake.

In Friendship, Mary

**Mary Atkinson**

Area Meeting Administrator

Ian was an active member of central Manchester meeting from the early 1990s to the mid 2000s. He was a highly skilled mental health professional, who taught at Manchester University as well as carrying out his clinical practice with dual diagnosis patients. As an Overseer (as they were then), he provided support to Friends with mental health difficulties, and was co clerk of AM Overseers for some years.

As well as his enthusiastic participation in running our Summer Schools he also helped organise several local meeting gatherings at Glenthorne, and was a strong presence in our work with our children and young people.

His health had not been good for the last few years but his death was unexpected and leaves us very saddened.

His Memorial Meeting will take place at 2pm on Friday 6th February 2026 at central Manchester (Mount St) Meeting House.

## **THE UK GOVERNMENT'S EXPLANATION AS TO WHY IT HAS PROSCRIBED HAMAS AND PALESTINE ACTION**

Below is the Government's explanation as to why it has proscribed Hamas and Palestine Action as terrorist organisations

### **WHY IS HAMAS PROSCRIBED? (from UK government website)**

#### **Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Hamas) – Proscription extended November 2021**

Hamas is a militant Islamist movement that was established in 1987, following the first Palestinian intifada. Its ideology is related to that of the Muslim Brotherhood combined with Palestinian nationalism. Its main aims are to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation, the establishment of an Islamic state under Sharia law and the destruction of Israel (although Hamas no longer demands the destruction of Israel in its Covenant). The group operates in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Hamas formally established Hamas IDQ in 1992. Hamas IDQ was proscribed by the UK in March 2001. At the time it was HM government's assessment that there was a sufficient distinction between the so called political and military wings of Hamas, such that they should be treated as different organisations, and that only the military wing was concerned in terrorism. The government now assess that the approach of distinguishing between the various parts of Hamas is artificial. Hamas is a complex but single terrorist organisation.

Hamas commits and participates in terrorism. Hamas has used indiscriminate rocket or mortar attacks, and raids against Israeli targets. During the May 2021 conflict, over 4,000 rockets were fired indiscriminately into Israel. Civilians, including 2 Israeli children, were killed as a result. Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas, frequently use incendiary balloons to launch attacks from

Gaza into southern Israel. There was a spate of incendiary balloon attacks from Gaza during June and July 2021, causing fires in communities in southern Israel that resulted in serious damage to property.

Hamas also prepares for acts of terrorism. One incident of preparatory activity is that Hamas recently launched summer camps in Gaza which focus on training groups, including minors, to fight. This is evidence of Hamas being responsible for running terrorist training camps in the region. In a press statement, Hamas described the aim of these camps as to “ignite the embers of Jihad in the liberation generation, cultivate Islamic values and prepare the expected victory army to liberate Palestine”.

## **WHY IS PALESTINE ACTION PROSCRIBED? (from UK government website)**

### **Palestine Action: Proscribed July 2025**

Palestine Action is a pro-Palestinian group with the stated aim to support Palestinian sovereignty by using direct criminal action tactics to halt the sale and export of military equipment to Israel. Since its inception in 2020, it has orchestrated a nationwide campaign of property damage, featuring attacks that have resulted in serious damage to property and crossed the threshold from direct criminal action, into terrorism.

The government assesses that Palestine Action commits and participates in acts of terrorism. In several attacks, Palestine Action has committed acts of serious damage to property with the aim of progressing its political cause and influencing the government. These include attacks at Thales in Glasgow in 2022, and in 2024 at Instro Precision in Kent and Elbit Systems UK in Bristol. The seriousness of these attacks includes the extent and nature of

damage caused, including to targets affecting UK national security, and the impact on innocent members of the public.

Palestine Action prepares for terrorism. The organisation has provided practical advice to assist its members with conducting attacks that have resulted in serious damage to property at targets across the UK to further its cause. Palestine Action promotes and encourages terrorism. Through its media output, Palestine Action publicises and promotes its attacks involving serious property damage, as well as celebrating the perpetrators.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version#list-of-proscribed-international-terrorist-groups>

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#### **PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT AREA MEETING**

To make a bank transfer or set up a standing order, please email Mary Atkinson on [admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk](mailto:admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk) and she will give you bank details. Please use your name as a reference. You can also send a cheque made payable to Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting to the Executive Officer at Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS. If you are making a will, consider whether to leave something to Area Meeting.

Donations are split equally between local Quaker work and national Quaker work, unless you specify otherwise.

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## Area Meeting Dates for 2026

Saturday 28 March 2pm at Central Manchester and online (hybrid)  
Wednesday 27 May 7pm at South Manchester in person only  
Sunday 19 July 1pm at Warrington in person only  
Thursday 1 October 7pm Central Manchester in person and online  
Tuesday 1 December 7pm online only.

### **Central Manchester Local Meeting for Worship for Business dates 2026**

All are on Sundays after Meeting for Worship Jan 25th, March 22nd, May 24th, July 12th, Sept 27th, Nov 22nd.

### **Peake Trust Lecture 2026**

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026 at Nazarene Theological College, Dene Rd, Manchester, M20 2GU. 9.30am to 4pm (exact time tbc)

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Lecture by **Dr Siobhán Jolley and Dr Samual Hildebrandt**

### ***'From Miriam to the Magdalene: Women Witnesses in the Bible and Beyond'***

*This lecture examines two pivotal female witnesses in biblical narrative, Miriam at the Red Sea and Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, exploring how their testimonies underpin foundational moments in Christian tradition. Both women stand at crucial junctures in salvation history, yet their stories raise intriguing questions about witness, authority, and belief in the ancient world. Both women move from observation and witness to proclamation and leadership, becoming authoritative voices who interpret sa-*

*cred events for their communities. Yet both also experience affliction and marginalisation: Miriam is struck with disease following her challenge to Moses's authority, whilst Mary Magdalene is introduced as one from whom seven demons were cast out and was subsequently misidentified as a sexual sinner for centuries. We will explore how Miriam and Mary Magdalene have been portrayed in art, literature, and theological tradition, considering how these receptions have both obscured and illuminated their significance. By reclaiming the full complexity of Miriam and Mary as named individuals, we will consider what it means to be seen, heard, and believed as a witness, both in ancient texts and today.*

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## CHRONIC PAIN

by Elizabeth Coleman

I have a friend who suffered from chronic back pain for over 50 years, but got rid of it completely by faithfully doing the correct exercises recommended by his physiotherapist every day. He then got pain from arthritis, and again his physiotherapist recommended specific exercises, and the pain went away. I'm sure not everyone with chronic pain would find the same almost miraculous cure, but following a physiotherapist's instructions won't do any harm and will probably do good. He said it's not a matter of doing it for 3 months, it's like cleaning your teeth, you do it every day of your life until you die – people often give up too soon, either because it's worked or because it's not working.

He has written a book, available on Amazon

[52 Years Coping With Chronic Back Pain : Grana, Alvaro: Amazon.co.uk: Books](#)

Please consider passing this on to anyone you know who is suffering from chronic pain. Alvaro is happy to be contacted on [grana.alvaro@googlemail.com](mailto:grana.alvaro@googlemail.com)

# JESUS

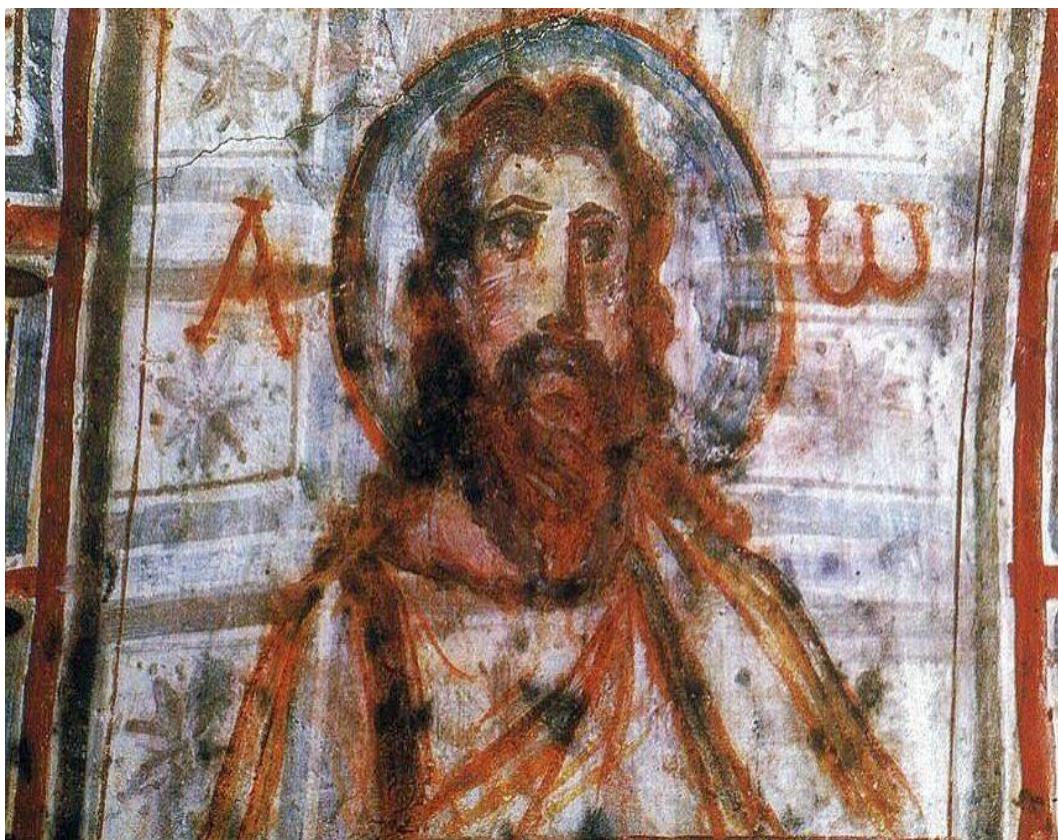
For those who share my interest in Jesus, Woodbrooke are putting on a course on Zoom - Editor.

## Rediscovering Jesus

**Thursday 12 February - Thursday 19 March 2026**

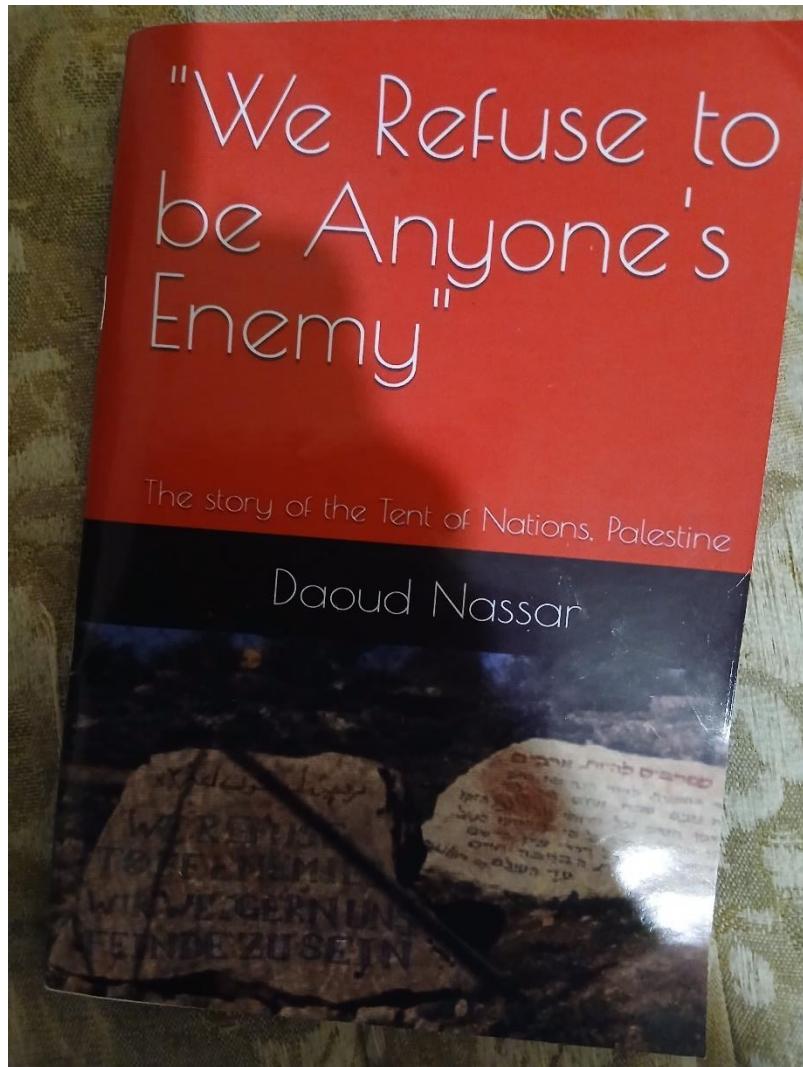
The live Zoom sessions are at 18:30-20:00 (UK time) every Thursday.

[Ann Conway-Jones](#)



Come and discover the life and teaching of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, alongside insights from recent scholarship. As we explore the scriptural accounts, you will be invited to reflect on your own answer to the question 'Who was Jesus?'.

**“WE REFUSE TO BE ANYONE’S ENEMY”**  
**The story of the Tent of Nations, Palestine by Daoud Nassar**  
Review by Elizabeth Coleman



This 60 page booklet tells the story of “Tent of Nations”, which is a Palestinian farm on the West Bank, that is also a peace and education centre with many visitors from Israel/Palestine and internationally.

At the time of the Ottoman occupation, many Palestinian landowners failed to register their land to avoid paying property tax. However,

Daoud Nassar's grandfather registered the farm, so he had all the documentation to prove legal ownership, while many of his neighbours could not prove ownership. In 1991, the Israeli government declared the land to be "state land", as they wanted it for Jewish settlement. This was followed by years of court cases at a cost of around \$270,000, and it is still not settled. Harassment and intimidation have been used to try to get the family to abandon the farm, as well as a legal process which seems designed to wear them down, and lead them to give up. Some Jewish settlements on the West Bank are illegal under Israeli law, but they do not suffer the same harassment.

Daoud is a Christian Palestinian, and the Christians tend to be better educated, so it is easier for them to make a life in the West. "In 1946 Christians in what is now Israel/Palestine represented about 30% of the population: now we are less than 2%."

Daoud can be critical of the Palestinians, even comparing their leadership unfavourably with that of the Israelis: "The Palestinian 'victim mentality' arises from the fact that we are indeed in many ways weaker than the State of Israel: economically, militarily, and in terms of the **quality of our leadership**, and so on."

He says that the reaction of Palestinians to the injustices they suffer tends to be violence, resignation (waiting for the international community to secure a just peace) or leaving the country. He thinks violence is wrong, but also ineffective. "Any violence on our part ... is met with violence by the Israeli authorities out of all proportion to any violence Palestinians use." Daoud advocates a fourth way – non-violent resistance, and lives in West Bank when he could have a much easier life abroad, because of his commitment to this.

## INDIVIDUALITY

I don't like to think of myself as an individual. I like to think of myself as the collective of relationships that I have in the world, whether it's to my daughter or my wife, my colleagues or friends or whatever, that's what makes me, not my individuality.

Psychologist Chris Moore in Guardian article about the role of guilt in mending relationships.

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### WEEKLY SILENT VIGIL FOR THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE



**Amnesty International, Manchester invites you to join us  
St Peters Square, Manchester, every Friday, 5pm to 6pm**

Please do not bring placards, banners, flags, drums or chants. We provide a banner and placards saying:

UPHOLD THE CEASEFIRE; STOP ARMING ISRAEL; END ISRAELI APARTHEID; END ISRAELI OCCUPATION  
Justice For Palestinians; Stop Israeli Settler Violence; Protect Human Rights, Protect All Civilians

Please join us  
All who are in sympathy with our messages and approach are welcome to attend.

**Manchester | Amnesty International UK**

After consultation with people who regularly attend the vigil, there was a consensus that we should keep going, which is what we are going to do. We had 25 people last week. This week's vigil is No 110. Please do come and bring your friends if you can.

Manchester Amnesty branch, 20 Jan

## Creating a Fairer, Greener World - Social Justice Event in Manchester on 4 March:

Book at

<https://www.ticktattailor.com/events/lutherkingtheologicalcollege/1774783>

Wed 4 Mar 2026 4:30 PM - 8:00 PM  
Luther King Theological College, M14 5JP

The "Creating a fairer, greener world" event takes place at **Luther King House on Wednesday 4 March, from 4.30pm to 8pm**. There will be a series of talks, followed by a veggie/vegan buffet



## VEGANISM - RESPONSE TO ITEM IN JAN NEWSLETTER

In the January newsletter, the following addition to Advices & Queries was suggested:

In view of the harm done by the production of meat, fish and animal products, consider whether you should limit your consumption of them or refrain from consuming them altogether. Remember that the production of meat, fish and animal products involves extreme commodification of animals and is a major contributor to climate change, putting people and ecosystems in danger.

The following response has been received:

"The suggestions that there should be an Advices and Queries supporting veganism needs to be robustly challenged. Of course individuals have the right to follow a vegan lifestyle and including plants in a diet plan is always good BUT too often vegans stand on the soapbox demanding all should follow their views nem con - veering towards, some might say, "vegan-fascism"! A diet should be balanced - human beings are programmed to be omnivores and there should be moderation and variety in our food choices.

The inhabitants of the Great Plains in America relied totally on the buffalo for survival: food, clothing, tools, weapons but they only hunted what was immediate and essential for their tribal needs and offered spiritual respect to the Spirit of the Buffalo after a hunt. We might commend this attitude.

We need to avoid making the assumption that only vegans can be considered "good Quakers" and we should respect diversity in diet as we would do so in other contexts. Regards, Nick Tyldesley, Citizen of Bolton.

## CONFLICT ADVISORY GROUP

Hello, my name is Véronique Pin-Fat. I am a member of Disley meeting in East Cheshire AM. Elizabeth Coleman of Manchester & Warrington AM and I are the Conflict Advisory Group. We are getting on with the work and hope others might be appointed to join us from any of the 3 AMs covered by CAG – Manchester & Warrington, E Cheshire, Pendle.



Véronique



Elizabeth

On 28 March, I will be attending a workshop in York run by Restoring Relations, a Quaker body that helps AMs to develop skills to manage any conflicts that may arise. If anyone else is interested in this, please do apply. I would be happy to have more people gaining the skills. Elizabeth would like to attend, but it's unlikely because of health issues.

If interested, see website [restoringrelations.org](http://restoringrelations.org).

I work for the Quaker-created charity, CRESST ([www.cresst.org](http://www.cresst.org)), which provides conflict resolution skills training in schools. I look forward to offering my skills to support our Area Meetings. We are planning to run a workshop in April, probably in South Manchester or Eccles FMH, which we hope as many as possible of you will attend. We are liaising with Robert Wilson, who was responsible for the March 2025 workshop, to ensure that the workshop is suitable both for those who were there in March and those who were not.

Please contact me or Elizabeth if you have any questions about CAG. Our details are in the LOMA. Elizabeth is under Eccles LM, I am under Disley LM.

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## **NEWS FROM BUKAVU, DRC**

**by Elizabeth Coleman**

My friend Joel in Bukavu used to visit Bukavu prison every Saturday with others from his RC church, to provide a meal, and have mass with singing, dancing and playing the guitar. When M23 took over Bukavu, all the prison guards fled, so the prisoners were free to go. In the November newsletter I reported that Joel was very happy to hear from one of the prisoners, John, now in Burundi, who said that he loved the services, and they changed him. He has accepted Jesus as his saviour, and renounced drugs and violence. He has since met 2 of the ex-prisoners in Bukavu. One of them was cleaning cars, the other one was driving a motor bike taxi. He was pleased that they had found ways to support themselves through work.

Bukavu is occupied by the militant group M23. When Joel hears shooting in the night, he does not know who it is. It could be M23 or the Congolese army or Wazalendo (local militias who support the Congolese army.) Residents of Bukavu do not go out after dark.

## NEWS FROM UVIRA, DRC

Though Uvira was also occupied by M23, George Bani has been working for Conflict Minerals Campaign. He has resumed his radio broadcasts, and organized a meeting between different stakeholders in the mining sector which took place on 16 January. This work is funded by our Area Meeting Quaker Work Fund. The latest news (18 Jan) is that M23 appears to have left after gun battles with the Congolese army soldiers supported by Wazalendo.



## **Returning to Quaker Meeting**

**by Bonnie Meekums**

Yesterday, I returned to my Quaker meeting after a hiatus of nearly three months because of travelling. I have always been sensitive to energies, and I was not surprised to feel a cloak of peace enveloping me as I sat down in the meeting room.

Quakers are unusual. Some of us don't talk of God; others do. Others speak of Spirit, the Divine, the Light, or simply Love. But we share the experience that we can all tap into a source of wisdom in the silence. Anyone can minister from that source. When I feel the urge to minister, I quake inwardly. It is like a tingling all over my body, and I know I must stand and speak even though it is sometimes the last thing I want to do. I would rather not put myself on the line in that way. Who am I, after all? Why should I break the silence? I'd much rather stay there in the tangible peace of a gathered meeting. But I have learned to give in to the urge to minister. The alternative is to feel somewhat out of sorts for some time afterwards.

## PROPOSED CHANGES TO ASYLUM RIGHTS

The Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network is extremely concerned about proposed changes to the rules on asylum. Fred Ashmore of QARN says “ Horrible, inhospitable and cruel. These changing policies will have a huge impact on those who have already found asylum in this country and now face a transformed much longer route forward. We ask you to share in the resistance.”

QARN say:

### **New proposals on asylum and immigration**

In November, the Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood announced her proposals for restructuring the asylum and immigration landscape. An analysis of these proposals is available from the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network ([qarn.org.uk](http://qarn.org.uk) – An End to the Right to Sanctuary, and a Stop to Integration?)

### **Please write to your MP about this.**

Points to highlight:

**The new proposals are divisive and unfair** – as Quakers, we have a testimony to the equality of every human being. Every great world religion emphasises the “golden rule” – “treat others as you would like to be treated” or, “do not do to others what you would find hateful if done to you”.

The notion that refugees are the unworthiest form of migrant fails to recognise our priority commitment to everybody who seeks protection. The government proposals conflate migrants and refugees and there is a latent racism in elevating community sponsorship over government commitment and a favourable bias toward

people who can contribute in the way that the government deems useful.

**They show contempt for the rule of law.** In spite of what the government says, these proposals break international conventions such as Article 34 of the Geneva Convention which states that people recognised as refugees should be allowed to integrate into the host society without discrimination. The proposals also violate Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises the rights of refugee children.

**Refugees who have already been recognised or granted humanitarian protection can have this changed retrospectively.** Refugees, in particular, have suffered great injustices before arriving here and they have proved that they are in need of protection. They will, under these proposals, be encouraged to switch to a migrant worker route which will involve paying fees for 20 years, with some time remission for good work, but extra time penalties if they claim benefits. Their protection is purely nominal as it can be reviewed and removed at any time

After remaining stateless for 20 years or more refugees can then be refused settlement and citizenship because of minor infringements leading to "bad character" assessment. So the government proposals do not enable people to have a sense of belonging and, indeed, they encourage segregation.

**The proposals will have a devastating effect on children and families** by abolishing the right of family reunion, a core element attached to the Geneva Convention. To fracture families by the use of immigration control is abhorrent. A fear of rising numbers has led to this collective punishment. Children's rights

are also undermined in this subordination to the numbers game.

### **PLANNING FOR ACTION**

QARN are planning to take the matter to Yearly Meeting. They invite those concerned to a meeting on 21 Feb:

"Friends, we want you to join us in a Special Meeting for Worship for Business of QARN to discern on the issues arising from this government's proposed changes to the law and practice of the UK for refugees and migrants. We hope that the meeting will agree a minute asking for BYM in session to discern on these matters (supported by QARN knowledge of the issues) and be led to respond and act together.

We invite you to a meeting on Zoom on Saturday 21st February at 10 am UK time."

If you would like the Zoom link to the meeting, email elizcol@dialstart.net and I will forward your email to Fred Ashmore who will supply the link. (Margaret Calvert can also supply the link.)

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### **HAVE YOU PUBLISHED A BOOK?**

If you have published a book, whether through a publisher or self-published, Friends would be interested to hear about it. Please do write something for the newsletter, perhaps with a photo of the front cover, and a link to the internet.

Editor

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## CHALLENGING ANTISEMITISM

Quakers have published a guide to help challenge antisemitism. See:  
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/challenging-antisemitism>

Here are a few quotes from the guide, which I hope will encourage you to read it in full.

### CONFUSION OF CRITICISM OF ISRAEL WITH ANTISEMITISM

Criticism of Israel is not always, but could well be, intentionally or unconsciously antisemitic. Sometimes, criticism of Israel is wrongly labelled as antisemitism, due to genuine misunderstandings or deliberate efforts to label all criticism of Israeli policy as antisemitic. But also, criticism of Israel could be disguised antisemitism, either intentionally or unconsciously.

### DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

Some have argued that the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) is used to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel.

### ADVICE

Our advice is to:

- Listen respectfully to everyone, including all Jews, and take any opportunities which arise to learn more about the wide variety of different Jewish perspectives on these issues – not only those Jewish voices which you feel you will agree with.
- Repetition – do not assume that because a Jewish person has said something, it is necessarily OK for you to say it too. Remember, oppressed groups sometimes have the right to express themselves in ways which are not acceptable when used by people who are not part of that group.
- Avoid tokenism – for example, holding out the views of particular Jews you agree with as the ‘correct’ or ‘good’ ones.

- Tone – be careful with ‘tone’. Even if the actual words you say or write may not be antisemitic in themselves, sometimes the tone you use can change how they’re understood by those experiencing oppression.
- Continue to learn about antisemitism, for example by seeking support and advice from others, or through websites, books, films or plays. Consider how you engage with other forms of racism and do the same for antisemitism.

### A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE GUIDE

I have seen a document giving a critical approach to the guide, which I have been asked not to put in the newsletter, but here are some points made, which are quoted with permission:

Islamophobia is more prevalent in Britain than antisemitism. When will that be addressed too?

The Guidelines mention ‘The ancestral home of the Jews’, but not Palestinians’ historic right to the land, or that the UN has deemed the Zionist occupation of Palestine illegal and apartheid.

The references and the reading list are one-sided, with many Jewish sources but no Palestinian voice and no critical sources, such as Jewish Voice for Liberation.

Conflicting meanings of peace are confusingly combined: personal peace – being polite to others; political peace - working for justice to ‘take away the occasion of all war’. Impartial balance is mistaken for (superficial) peace, but in cases of extreme inequality and injustice, attempts at ‘neutral’ justice inevitably side with and are exploited by the powerful.

Repeated mention in the Report of ‘the unconscious influences on our thought’ only refer to thoughts that are critical of Israel.

The Guidelines imply the present war began with ‘the heinous, unjustified crimes of Hamas on 7 October 2023’ ignoring many decades of Zionist oppression and atrocities.

Does BYM defence of ecumenical accompaniment, which depends on Israel’s permission, prevent or at least discourage open support for Palestine?

Quakers are the only church to name ‘genocide’ formally. Yet what action has followed?

A big omission from the report is mention of far-right Christian Zionists, the dangers they pose, and the Churches’ responsibility to address these dangers.

Quaker Palestine Solidarity are also preparing a response to the document

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### **QUAKER LEADS BBC DAILY SERVICE**

On 20 January, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a Quaker, Tim Gee, led the 15-minute BBC Daily Service. He talked about how he used to have little interest in other churches, as he thought that the Quakers were right, and they were wrong. He is still a Quaker, but his views have changed.

You can listen to the Daily Service on BBC Sounds. It was broadcast on Radio 4 Extra at 10.45am on 20 January.

## ECCLES ACTIVITIES

These are currently provisional AND DATES MAY CHANGE. Check with Eccles Clerks (Wendy Olsen or [ecclesclerk@gmail.com](mailto:ecclesclerk@gmail.com)) before coming.

Sunday 8 Feb 12.15pm to 1.15pm – DEAF AWARENESS – in main Eccles meeting house.

Afternoon activities in Garden Room in garden behind Eccles Meeting House, 4.30pm to 6.30pm.

Mon 16 Feb – Jesus discussion, led by Elizabeth (4.30-6.00pm)

Fri 27 March – Lemn Sissay and Other Poets

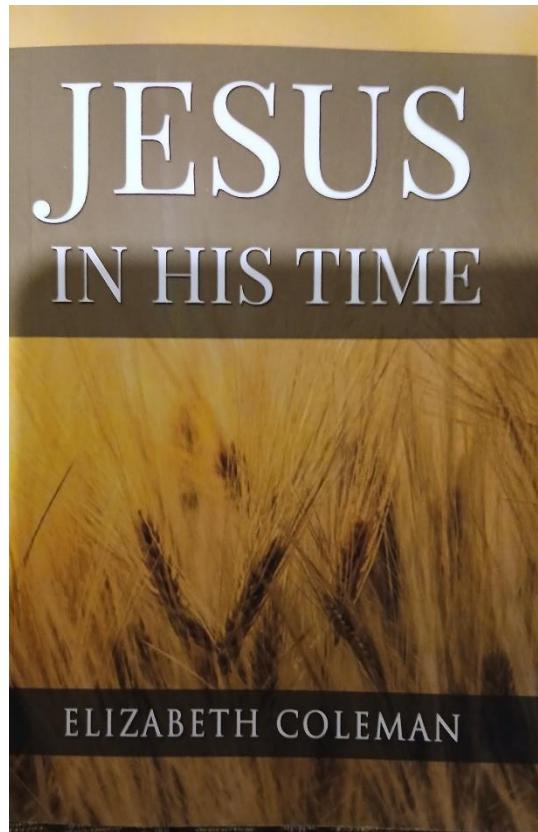
Fri 24 April –Craft activity – making paper boats and planes

Fri 22 May – Crochet crafts session

Fri 26 June – What is Europe? What are orders? A map workshop

All welcome. Bring a friend.

## DISCUSSION GROUP ABOUT JESUS



On Monday 16 February from 4.30pm to 6.00pm in the Garden Room in the garden behind Eccles Meeting House, I will lead a discussion group about Jesus, based on my book "Jesus in His Time."

All welcome.

Elizabeth Coleman

# Neoliberalism: The Present Dominant System – by Tony Weekes

## Introduction

### **Neoliberalism: the present dominant system**

For more than forty years, society has operated under the principles of neoliberalism. However, this approach is too limited in its scope to serve as an adequate guide for public policy. The widespread discontent, anger, and even violence seen today can, in many ways, be traced back to neoliberalism.

## Origins of Neoliberalism

### *Its origins*

Neoliberalism emerged from the writings of Friedrich Hayek and his associates in the 1930s. The ideology gained prominence as a ruling set of ideas during the 1970s. Milton Friedman, an academic economist at the University of Chicago, played a key role as its publicist. Politicians such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were instrumental in bringing these concepts into mainstream politics.

## Basic Principles of Neoliberalism

### *Its basic principles*

A simple definition would be economic policy is best driven by **competition** within **free markets**, and government's role should be restricted.

## Competition

*Competition* may appear attractive initially, but a deeper examination—especially in economics and textbooks—reveals a far more complex reality.

The theoretical model assumes there are many buyers and sellers, all possessing perfect and complete information. Goods

offered by each seller are identical, and no buyer or seller can influence the overall market price. This is, essentially, a theorician's construct.

In practice, competition is often about price (typically, the lower the better) and quality (often used to keep prices down). In the production and consumption of food, competition can result in intensive animal rearing and overuse of soil. For clothing, it leads to poor working conditions, low pay, and products that do not last. The constant pressure to outperform competitors can also contribute to ill health.

Ultimately, competition tends to destroy itself, as larger businesses drive smaller rivals out of the market.

## **Free Markets**

*Free Markets* are frequently described in textbooks as mechanisms for ensuring the optimal allocation of resources. However, there are many types of markets, each providing *some* information to buyers and sellers about what is available, under what terms, and at what cost. Ordinary people may have *some* influence in local farmers' markets, but very little in other markets. For instance, when looking for paid employment, individuals are considered part of the 'labour market'. The hope is to find job offers matching one's skills, experience, and needs. Yet, there is little control over the terms of employment, often leading to stark choices. The labour market is notably one-sided, with power distributed unequally.

## **Consequences of Neoliberalism – examples in parentheses**

### *Neoliberalism – its consequences*

- 'Light regulation' has affected environmental protection, public health and safety, and finance. [Outcome: the financial crisis 2006 – 2009]
- The 'core' of a decent society—the 'commonwealth'—has undergone privatisation. [Outcome: the treatment of wastewater by privatised companies]

- There is a prevailing belief that the public sector is inefficient and that the private sector performs better. [ As above]
- Societal problems are often neglected under the assumption that the market will address them.
- Trade union power has been curtailed, as it is deemed inconsistent with competition. [Outcome: Ordinary people have little bargaining power]
- Neoliberalism has contributed to economic illiteracy, with most economics textbooks and academic teaching presenting it as the only acceptable paradigm. [Outcome: More economic illiteracy]
- There is no ethical standpoint, exemplified by Milton Friedman's assertion: "*The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits.*"

## Further Implications

Neoliberalism has influenced the management of public finances, often conflating national debt with personal or household debt. The real motive behind shrinking the state and cutting government roles is to enable the wealthy to acquire assets, undermining the foundations of a decent society.

This system has led to widespread discontent and the rise of political populism across Europe and the USA, frequently attributed to a perceived neglect of people's needs.

There is now poorer quality in services and products, growing inequality, and wage stagnation. The language has shifted: people are no longer 'citizens' but are instead referred to as consumers, customers, and taxpayers. Those seeking income must enter the labour market, hoping to be 'hired', and misfortune may result in being labelled as "scroungers" ..

## Summary and Reflection

Entrusting societal affairs to 'the markets' has led to lazy politics and economic neglect. The prevailing belief is that the market will

discover and solve contemporary problems. However, neoliberalism is largely incapable of addressing fundamental needs such as the transition to a renewable, low-carbon economy.

This is not to dismiss markets as a means for transactions. With effective government policies—through laws, taxes, subsidies, or grants—markets can be directed towards positive outcomes.

Achieving this requires a strategy that identifies needs, links between them, and available resources, as well as a public agencies staffed by competent professionals.

### **Remedies?**

Develop the Cooperative movement

### **Further reading**

Search the internet with key words *George Monbiot*

## MIKE SCANTLEBURY – AUTHOR, BROADCASTER AND MUSICIAN FROM ECCLES MEETING

**Mike Scantlebury Number 3** is the third best 'Mike Scantlebury' around. Look up the name on Google and you'll see that 2 are University Professors; one races yachts; one's a farmer; one's a P.R. guru; and one's a writer (of a multitude of books on Jesus). Mike Scantlebury 3 has been **self-publishing crime fiction since 1993, and recently celebrated 50 years in the North West**, (having been born and raised in the South West). That's right. There's something different about this 'Mike', living in the badlands of North West England now.

Fortunately, 'Mike Scantlebury 3' has an Author page on Amazon

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/stores/Mike-Scantlebury/author/B0088IX1J8>

Also, he has many songs, podcasts and radio shows on SoundCloud.

<https://soundcloud.com/mike-scantlebury>

But, if sound is not enough, catch the visuals on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/@MikeScantlebury>



Mike and Jane of Eccles meeting

## **Green Summit 2026 – Coming to Co-op Live, Manchester**

**From website <https://gmgreencity.com/gm-green-summit-2026/>**

**We're excited to announce that the Green Summit 2026 will take place at a brand-new venue – Co-op Live in Manchester on Tuesday 3rd March 2026.**

**This year's summit promises to be our most ambitious yet, bringing together changemakers, communities, and organisations committed to driving climate action across Greater Manchester and beyond.**

If you wish to register for the Green Summit on March 3rd you will find link to do so here. <https://gmgreencity.com/gm-green-summit-2026/>

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## **REFUGEE & ASYLUM FUND**

Social Justice Group administers the Area Meeting's Refugee & Asylum Fund. At its meeting on 22 January, it agreed that the following grants should be made:

£700 to Oldham Unity.

Oldham Unity supports destitute asylum seekers by helping meet their basic needs, and signposting to advice and help. Elizabeth and Stewart Bailey of Central Manchester LM have supported Oldham Unity for over 20 years, and continue to do so.

£200 to Music Action International (formerly Stone Roses and Musicians Without Borders.)

As well as having physical needs, asylum seekers need opportunities to be creative, and the general public needs to be presented with an image of asylum seekers as people with talents and interests. Musicians of professional standard work with complete beginners to create music.

After these grants are paid out, there will be £189 left in the fund. To donate, make a donation to Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting, making clear that it is intended for the Refugee & Asylum Fund.

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**NUMBER OF MEMBERS AND ATTENDERS  
MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AQM  
FROM TABULAR STATEMENT**

|                  | 2023/24    | 2025       |
|------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Members</b>   |            |            |
| Men              | 73         | 62         |
| Women            | 110        | 102        |
| Children         | 1          | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>184</b> | <b>164</b> |
| <b>Attendees</b> | <b>142</b> | <b>195</b> |
| Children         | 36         | 34         |
|                  | 362        | 393        |

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2026, York**

## *Living our peace testimony - a gathering*

Quakers have found ways of living our peace testimony in different ways at different times. What do our current times call us to do? How can we support one another in our individual and collective peace witness?

This event is for Friends from across the North. We are planning a day that we hope will be challenging, nurturing, inspiring, stimulating, encouraging and connecting. The day will be participative and for Friends of all ages and backgrounds.



**To register an interest,  
contact:**  
[nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org)  
07730 070167

<https://nfpb.org.uk/lopt2026>

## **LETTER FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP TO GOVERNMENT ON ASYLUM**



**Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Manchester & Warrington Area Quaker Meeting  
Social Justice Group**

**The Home Secretary  
Shabana Mahmood**

**2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
January 6<sup>th</sup> 2026**

**Dear Shabana Mahmood**

**There is a much underestimated current of welcome to those who feel impelled by all sorts of suffering to flee their country of origin and seek refuge here. Many Quakers would situate themselves within that current and feel glad that we are able to witness and share in such a vibrant variety of cultures and traditions.**

**We are horrified by the prevailing demonisation of those who seek refuge in this country and note that the Government has often fanned rather than doused the flames of prejudice.**

**That is why we held a silent vigil outside Central Manchester Quaker Meeting House on December 10<sup>th</sup>. Some of us distributed leaflets and helped those who wished to sign our petition – enclosed. Most of us stood in silence with our placards with positive messages.**

**What are we asking of you and your government?  
To be true to Labour's long-standing commitment to internationalism and to equality. That means:**

**avoiding demeaning language**

**turning back from legislation that puts obstacles and delays in the process of the acquisition of settled status, and of citizenship.**

**Joining in with the mean and narrow prejudices of Reform politicians not only diminishes the Labour Party but it diminishes British culture and identity.  
Please change tack**

**Jonathan Dale (on behalf of the Social Justice Group of Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting)**

**Exhibition of Palestinian Art – see <https://rastudios.co.uk/>**

**(Linda Burgum drew our attention to this)**

**UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD**  
Art from Gaza



© I'm Still Alive (Day 423), Maisara Baroud, 2024



Gaza Art  
Partnership

**ROGUE**  
PROJECT SPACE

**17<sup>th</sup> January – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2026**

Rogue Project Space, Rogue Artists' Studios CIC  
Manchester, M11 1PU

**SATURDAY 18 APRIL 2026**  
**NORTH WEST QUAKERS**  
**FUN DAY**  
**CENTRAL MANCHESTER MEETING HOUSE**  
**(M2 5NS)**  
**10am-7pm**

Area Meeting Friends of any age are invited from:

- East Cheshire
- Hardshaw and Mann
- Lancashire Central and North
- Manchester and Warrington
- Pendle Hill
- Wirral and Chester

Music/singing, art/crafts, board games, jigsaw puzzles, reading & books, crèche/children's room and 'Earth Quakers' Ceilidh

Please bring own lunch (tea and coffee provided) and also some cake to share for tea. Timetable to follow.

Info: [sueiow@icloud.com](mailto:sueiow@icloud.com)

Quaker events are usually free but Central Manchester Meeting House needs a new roof and we will need to pay for the crèche and ceilidh. Please contribute what you can on the day (cash & card reader in hall).

## VEGAN LUNCH AT WARRINGTON

Warrington Friends enjoyed a Vegan Shared Lunch on 18th January in recognition of Veganuary. It went very well and comments made after the event on What's App included -

A lovely lunch - thanks for the inspiration Kath

Yes - thank you for a lovely lunch

It was delicious!

Slurp

I think we did very well today. Thanks everyone.

A feast indeed!

20 F/friends there today. Amazing turn out for the vegan lunch!

Agreed!

Lovely. Thanks everyone



## **The experience of my plea hearing – Kevin Sell (Central Manchester LM)**

As a result of my arrest in Parliament Square on September 6 2025 at a protest organised by Defend Our Juries (DOJ) I was required to attend a plea hearing at Westminster Magistrates Court on January 20. This is an entirely unfamiliar experience for me. At the age of 67 I have never even had a speeding ticket; soon I could be convicted as a terrorist.

After passing through security at the court I went upstairs where a large number of fellow activists were waiting in the seating area outside court 2. We had the benefit of the DOJ support team (wonderful people) and Hodge, Jones and Allen solicitors. The solicitors were being funded by those entitled to legal aid, but they extended the pre-plea briefing to include everyone.

We were taken into the court in groups of five. Court 2 is the one used for terrorists. We had to sit in a small room, secured from the rest of the court by a glass screen, which I imagined to be bullet-proof. At intervals in the screen there were narrow gaps to allow the passage back and forth of documents. The procedure was simple: we had to identify ourselves, the charge was read out, and we had to plead guilty or not guilty. So far, to the best of my knowledge, everyone has delivered a not guilty plea. One gentleman attempted to deliver a statement before making his plea. This is not permitted and he was escorted from the court and the judge left the chamber. My only modest act of rebellion was to refuse to stand when the judge entered and left the chamber. The female next to me also remained seated. When we had all delivered our respective pleas, that was the end of the formal process. We were given a sheet of paper indicating various deadlines that should be met by the prosecution and ourselves before the trial. My trial is due to heard on August 5 at Stratford Magistrates

Court, London. I am supposed to be there for 09.30, so I will stay the night before at a nearby hotel so that I don't have to leave Romiley at some unearthly hour of the morning.

DOJ are providing excellent support and running regular Zoom meetings to enable us to prepare our defences for the trial. It is comforting and encouraging to be thoroughly prepared for a situation that I could never have imagined I would be in.

I have to confess I am nervous, but I am determined in the face of authoritarianism to give it my best shot. The support given to me by Friends is enormously helpful. Thank you.

Our Friend Kate Hughes of South Manchester LM was also arrested on September 6. Her plea hearing will be on 24 February.

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## **MY FASCINATION WITH JUDAISM**

**by Elizabeth Coleman**

My interest in Judaism can perhaps be traced back to my teenage years, when I was totally absorbed by books about teenage girls who went through the holocaust – one titled “I Will Survive”, another titled “I Am Alive”, and Anne Frank’s diary. When in my twenties, I read a book about the holocaust which studied countries occupied by Hitler, and what percentage of the Jewish population survived. The finding was, the more Catholic the country, the fewer Jews survived. However, in the countries which were very antisemitic, there were always heroic individuals who helped the Jews though this was dangerous and not approved of by their friends and neighbours. I was, and still am, moved

by the comment, that where the darkness is deepest, a small light shines most brightly.

In my thirties and forties, my interest in Judaism arose from wanting to understand the historical Jesus, and realising that his mission was embedded in the culture and beliefs of first century Palestinian Judaism. This awareness came from reading “Who was Jesus?” by Don Cupitt and Peter Armstrong. I decided to explore Judaism, and joined an evening class run by liberal Jews. The evening was divided into two parts – in the first half, we learned about Jewish festivals, which did not interest me very much. In the second half, we learned to read Hebrew. To my surprise, I found that I loved the Hebrew language. The teacher was an Australian rabbi with a good singing voice. The learning method was quite old-fashioned – we went through a book saying in chorus “mi, mi, mi, mi”, “meh, meh, meh. meh,” “li, li, li, li, li” etc. We were told lots of fascinating ideas and stories about the Hebrew language. One humorous idea that I liked, (though it annoys many people,) is that Hebrew is the only language that God speaks without an accent. At one point, the rabbi was talking about Protosemitic, the root language from which all semitic languages including Hebrew arose. One of the students said, “But I thought everyone spoke Hebrew until the Tower of Babel!” I was made aware that Jewish children are told different stories to those we learn at Sunday School.

After about three lessons, we were able to read a word in Hebrew script – melekh. I did not know what it meant at the time – it means king. But I realised that learning to “read” Hebrew did not mean learning to understand, but to pronounce the Hebrew words, even without understanding. By the end of the term, we were able to sing a song, welcoming the angels of the Sabbath.

There was a library at the Jewish centre where the evening classes were held, and from that library I borrowed “Revolution in Judaea” by Hyam

Maccoby. This was really important to me in gaining an understanding of the historical Jesus. Decades later I wrote and self-published my own book, “Jesus in His Time”, which drew heavily on Hyam Maccoby’s book.

I value Jesus for his ethical teaching, which was Jewish. I consider that we have much to thank Judaism for, in giving us a moral framework to live by. Rabbi Hillel, who died around 10CE, when Jesus was a child, was asked to sum up Jewish law while standing on one foot. He said, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the whole Torah – the rest is commentary.” Read Matthew 2:34-40. Jesus’ teaching is remarkably similar to Hillel’s.

As well as studying in all kinds of Hebrew language classes, I gained an MA in Hebrew & Jewish Studies at University College London, and an MA in Biblical Studies (Old Testament) at Kings College London.

I find it exciting that stores of ancient Jewish manuscripts have been found, There are not many sources for Jewish history before the time of Jesus except for the Bible. However, from the early nineteenth century onwards, papyri in Aramaic were discovered on the island of Elephantine in the Nile, close to Aswan. They were from a Jewish community that defended the southern borders of Egypt, from 495 to 399 BCE. The papyri include letters and legal documents. I studied them as part of my MA at King’s, as I was interested that they indicated that a woman could divorce her husband, which is not the case in modern Judaism.

We all know about the Dead Seas Scrolls, but they are not the only interesting finds. Another cache of documents was found in a synagogue in Cairo. As the Hebrew language is holy, traditionally documents no longer needed cannot be burned or dealt with as rubbish. They were often buried. But the Jews of Cairo put them in a

cupboard (known as a Geniza), which was discovered in Victorian times. They were known as the Geniza Fragments, and many are now at Cambridge University. They span a period from 6<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. According to Wikipedia, it is *the largest and most diverse collection of medieval manuscripts in the world.*

There are a number of Jewish people who have enriched my life – the writers of the book of Isaiah and other parts of the Hebrew Bible: of course, Jesus; Hyam Maccoby; Freud and Reich for developing a view of human psychology that is liberating; Bob Dylan for his wonderful poetry and music; the painter Chagall; Shlomo Carlebach who puts verses of the Hebrew Bible to music, so that you can dance to the words of Jeremiah; Noam Chomsky for his political thinking- among others. I love some Hebrew poetry, biblical and otherwise – from Samuel Hanagid who lived in Spain from 993 to 1056, and wrote an incredibly moving poem about the death of his brother, to some Israeli poets. Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) wrote poems which include a wry humour which still speaks to us today. "... if my business were in candles, the sun would not set until I died ! However I struggle, I cannot succeed, for my stars have ruined me: If I were a dealer in shrouds, no one would die as long as I lived." (From The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse."

I hope this will help you to see something of the fascination of Jewish religion and culture.

## **The question of Trustees and Palestine**

### **by Linda Burgum**

I was shocked to hear this morning that the recent Trustees meeting did not have enough people attending to be in a position to make any decisions – it was inquorate, the first time this has happened for many years. And it made me question whether as a Meeting we are valuing and appreciating our Trustees enough.

I am aware there has been some dissatisfaction recently about Trustees being unhappy with limits set on our public support as a meeting for the organisation which was proscribed over the summer and which was devoted to protesting against the genocide in Gaza which we all abhor. Many of us ardently disagree with this proscription, however it is a fact.

Our trustees carry legal responsibility for decisions we make as a Meeting, and are unhappy about potentially being put in a position where they could be prosecuted under the anti-terrorism legislation which many of us believe is an extremely repressive piece of legislation since it strikes at the heart of the very bones of Quaker activism which is peaceful protest. I strongly believe we should support them in this. Having served as a Trustee myself in the past I consider it to be a demanding and difficult job.

As individuals we are free to take whatever risks we feel called to do and several courageous members of our Meeting as we all know have done so and are upheld I believe by most of us in this.

At the same time we are free to call out the genocide in Gaza and the ongoing violence, intimidation theft of land and destruction of livelihoods in the West bank. These have been well documented already, and there are many ways to support the Palestinian struggle if only in small ways. I also think it is vital we are well informed about the historical background to the current situation in Palestine to counter

effectively any claims by others that the current crisis in Gaza has its roots in the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack of Israel which of course is completely false.

Several useful sources of information are:-

Btselem- Btselem.org – the Israeli Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied territories

Jewish Voices for Peace – jewishvoicesforpeace.org

BDSmovement.net – about the Boycott and Divestment Campaign

EAPPI which is well known to us as Quakers and if you sign up to their newsletter you will get regular updates.

Palestine 36 is a good film for historical background and was free on Channel 4 and isn't any longer but can be paid for. There are numerous other films and sources of information available

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### **AFSC BANNED FROM GAZA**

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is one of thirty-seven International NGOs in Gaza and the West Bank prevented from working in Gaza.

Information from The Friend 15 Jan 2026

In Gaza, we have witnessed a genocide that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and injured many more. Although a ceasefire was declared in October 2025, people continue to face starvation and disease. Most hospitals are shuttered, and 90% of homes and buildings are uninhabitable. Nearly all of Gaza's population—2 million people—has been displaced, and its people still urgently need food, water, medical supplies, fuel, and other essentials. AFSC's emergency relief effort is helping to alleviate suffering in the short term and reduce inequality and oppression in the long term.

– from AFSC website

*You are invited to the*  
**Friends Summer School Taster Day**

On Sat 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026  
at Friends Meeting House,  
Mount Street, Manchester



**Sessions run from 10am-12.30pm and 2pm-4pm.** You can do either or both!

This day is for anyone who wants to try out for themselves, a selection of typical Summer School activities. There is no obligation to sign up for summer school, after you have attended the Taster Day.



**The Friends' Summer School**

...is a 6 day, residential holiday to give **young people from 11-17** the chance to live together in an inclusive Quaker Community.

Participants spend time each day in small, mixed-age groups, with staff leaders, as well as in whole group sessions.

Four-bedded dormitories are en-suite and sorted in gender and age/friendship groups.

Summer School this year is at the beginning of August at the beautiful Field Studies Centre in Shropshire.

**Activities at Summer School**

...may include: Sports, discussions, creative workshops, co-operative games, music, drama, debates, cooking, board games, evening entertainments, watching a movie, day out (known as The Excursion), quizzes, Quaker (zany) Olympics, crafts, talent show, dressing up, tuck shop.

Can't promise *all* these choices on the Taster Day...!

**What to do** if you want to come to the Taster Day, whether you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, friend, colleague or neighbour of a young person **between the ages of 8 and 15...**

**Contact Jackie, Damian (07580 899145) and Sue :- Email: [friendssummerschool@gmail.com](mailto:friendssummerschool@gmail.com)**  
**Fb : [www.facebook.com/friendssummerschool](http://www.facebook.com/friendssummerschool)**

# **Nature in Childhood – A Canada Based Description**

## **by Wendy Olsen**

I recall fireflies, swarms of locusts, crickets and grasshoppers as a loud chorus every day during hot summers in Indiana. I was a child in the 1960s, and those days, fields with bull-frogs croaking, and small clay-based ponds, were mysteries for us to explore barefoot. We got cracks in all our feet during every summer. We climbed trees, swung on vines, argued and told stories, sitting in simple bowers we built in the woods near the railroad track.

I wanted to also share a series of summer trips to southern Ontario, Canada. The most noticeable thing was the natives who live there (Kenora is the nearest town). These people spent long winters carving jade from Mexico and wood from local trees, weaving plant fibres, drawing with charcoal, and painting onto leather to give souvenir shops a supply of trinkets for the summer tourist trade. Apparently these days tourism is around 10% of total national income.

The native people were very poor and poorly dressed with awful housing. As visitors we came to drive a fast speedboat across 15 miles of island-studded crystal waters to a remote shoreline. There is no road there, no electricity nor sewage service. On first arrival each May, we set up a diesel and dug a latrine, refreshed the little cottages and a big central house – chasing away mice. Then in June we came to stay for summer till August.

My best memories were afternoons spent rowing a large Canada Canoe with a single paddle along the shoreline, across open water, around little tiny islands. Finally I run up aground onto a beach. I get out and pull the canoe up behind me. I climb a nearby cliff through untouched thick vegetation, hanging on tree roots and limbs, like a silent squirrel. Happy, munching a snack, I view the lake (Lake of

10,000 Islands, it is called) across the tall tree branches. My look-out point was known to nobody else. Then rowing along to get back, a wind comes up, quite a challenge for a 14 year old.

In winter the shoreline has elk, a huge animal. I see only fish, butterflies, mosquitos, and birds. The islands are 'empty' green nests!

I meet a floating island of grasses. This island arises during heavy winters, as grasses that spring up through the thinning ice weave onto each other in early spring, then detach and float, and it keeps growing. It generates sediment and gets heavier. You dare not step out of the canoe; to test it, I slip an oar downward like death into dark waters below the grasses, which are 2 feet thick. I leave the floating island sadly, my head full of wonder. Next, arriving home to the docks, fishermen are clouting fish about the head and finishing up storing their fish for showing to families down south. These are Americans, having a one-week summer holiday each in a cottage in Canada. I go to my waitressing and childminding work, and I sleep well at night.

## BYM PREPARATORY MEETING

Friends,

Two announcements:

1. The AM Racial Justice Steering Group invites you to join a Zoom meeting hosted by the **Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network 21/02/26 10.00 am ( See link below or email [elizcol@dialstart.net](mailto:elizcol@dialstart.net) )**

The RJSG will also hold a linked online Meeting at Central Manchester, so you are most welcome to simply join us there.

2. There are also large rallies planned by both Right wing organisations and Anti-racist groups in Piccadilly Gardens on the same day, **from 11.30 am**.

Following our MfW, the RJSG is currently considering a **Quaker presence**, with a separate grouping, under a banner and away from the main protagonists.

To many of us it is becoming ever clearer that Peace, social justice, environmental justice and racial justice are inextricably linked and we want a peaceful witness.

In Friendship  
Mark Perry  
(For the AM Racial Justice Steering Group)

Here is the Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7095049008?pwd=DOe3dVgx1zxkgFc4foUmzUkAIzCb0t.1&omn=81546413834>

## FREE TEA AND COFFEE

by Alan Pinch

(This is the third of three articles by Alan on this topic.)

Before I begin this last article I must apologise for faults in the second. For technical reasons there were several defects and omissions. Elizaeth and I have discussed this and think we can avoid them this time.

What remains to be said about those hundreds of conversations?

First, I have so far said little or nothing about the “ordinary” people. Of course nobody is ordinary. But I mean those who are not conspicuously poor or marginalised, who have had some education and know where their next meal is coming from. Shoppers, tourists, young people in their best suits for job interviews, mothers taking a child to a music exam.

And what I chiefly remember is how many of them were serious. I do not remember anyone boring me with lengthy accounts of their car or computer or foreign holiday. They very soon – in nearly all cases – began talking about something important. That is important to them. Poverty and wealth, the welfare of children, peace and international relations. And, again and again: who are you doing this? What lies behind it? What is this building anyway?

I am not a seraphic soul who likes everyone. I have been a campaigner and I have prejudices. What did I find most difficult? Army officers in mufti. And one or two very self-assured young graduates, who had learned the reasons why everything in this world has to stay much as it is, and knew I was a deluded old ass. “Oh why don’t you go on your way, and make room for a nice crank like me?” I thought, but did not say.

Once I struck lucky with a social thinker. I had been to fetch clean cups, and returned to find a chap studying some notices I had displayed. “Hello”, I said. I know who you are. You’re Danny Dorling. I recognise you because I’ve been to a couple of your lectures in this building. Are you giving another one?”

He was, and he came to Manchester several times that year; for a while we had friendly chats and exchanged a couple of letters.

Many Friends know that Danny Dorling is a geographer and social statistician, noted for his egalitarian views. Of his many books I would particularly recommend “Injustice, and why it persists.” He has a very approachable, informal manner. He told me that his Quaker parents were so opposed to titles that they deprecated even the academic ones to which their son was entitled, “doctor” and “professor”. I once asked him why he was not himself a Quaker. He simply said that he had found Children’s Meeting very boring.

At the other extreme of knowledge and sophistication, I remember with pleasure Genna. She was 17, from Burnley, and on a trip to Manchester to explore higher education options. Her dream was to become a journalist. Anyone less like a hard-bitten journalist than Genna would be hard to imagine. “Oh, can I interview you?” “If you ask me questions, I will try to answer them.” In the course of a long dialogue, I mentioned Hiroshima, and was astonished to find that Gemma had no idea what happened there and at Nagasaki. So I gave her a brief account. “But that’s horrible. I had no idea. When I get back I’ll tell all the girls in my class.”

So what lessons for future Quaker outreach can we learn from all this? First, there really is a great people out there to be ....? Gathered? Well, first of all listened to and then engaged with.

The place is essential, Mount Street was a very promising site at the time, but it is changing, and I think not as good as it was. Friend who hold demos there now usually have a little table and offer refreshment. But they tend to have a very clear message which they want to promote. I was trying to be intriguingly vague. Meanwhile, our city is acquiring pedestrianised or quiet spaces with benches in many areas. I look at them and wonder what can be done.

Two days after the Southport child murders I went to a quiet shopping street in Withington. It was a warm August day. A Muslim shopkeeper I know lent me a chair. I sat in the street for a couple of hours displaying a home-made poster:

- ` Peace be with you  
dear Muslim neighbours.

The response was overwhelmingly positive and I was very moved. The fear of Islamophobia at that moment was very acute. The simple message: we can disagree about religion and yet live together as good neighbours is really needed.

Quakerism began in the open air, and to some extent needs to return there. Assess your neighbourhood, your moment and your message.

And don't be afraid. Yes, there's nowt so queer as folk, but in my experience they don't bite.

## **Statement circulated by Manchester Amnesty**

**(Sandra Dutson suggested I put it in the Newsletter.)**

Please accept this as a report for Manchester Amnesty International, on an issue of concern for us all.

Please find the statement from **Greater Manchester Jewish Action for Palestine** on "Commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day 2026", below and attached.

### **Statement on commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day, 27th January 2026**

#### **Greater Manchester Jewish Action for Palestine**

It is with great sadness that Greater Manchester Jewish Action for Palestine commemorates the genocidal destruction of the Jewish communities in Europe and the loss of millions of lives, mostly of Jews but also of Romany and other minority ethnic and oppressed groups, in the ethnic cleansing of mainland Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.

As Jews, we seek to uphold the commitment of those who perished and of the survivors of the Holocaust to “Never Again” allow the genocide of a people by military occupation nor by domestic oppressive states.

On Holocaust Memorial Day, as well as commemorating those victims, we will challenge the present genocide of the Palestinian people

- in Gaza,
- where at least 70,000 men, women and children have been killed
- where Palestinians have been forced into ghettos and left to starve

- where schools, hospitals and the basics of Palestinian society have been systematically destroyed
- where aid agencies bringing food and basic necessities have been banned by the State of Israel with the support of many of its Jewish citizens
- and where archives and archaeological remains of a thriving Palestinian culture are being systematically destroyed.

And in the ethnic cleansing of the “West Bank” of the Jordan River, in Occupied Palestinian Territories,

- where Palestinians are being forced off their land by systematic house demolitions and vigilante attacks, supported by the Israeli government
- and forced to flee to neighbouring countries or enforced Palestinian ghettos.

These genocidal actions are perpetrated by the State of Israel but are supported by zionist and pro-zionist governments in North America and in Europe, including in the UK.

We, as Jews, in commemoration of the victims and of those who survived the Holocaust, say we have to oppose and end the genocide of the Palestinian people from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, from Lebanon to the Egyptian borders.

We, Jewish Action for Palestine commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> 2026, in a solemn gathering  
at the Cenotaph, St Peter's Square, Manchester at 6pm

This statement was read out at a commemoration at the Cenotaph, in St. Peter's Square, Manchester.

Yours faithfully,

On behalf of Greater Manchester Jewish Action for Palestine,

Pia Feig

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## ICE

ICE has killed 9 people in 2026. You know the names of the two white people they've killed.

Qasim Rashid

Qasim Rashid is a Pakistani-born American author, activist, and attorney. (Wikipedia)

## PLEASE RESPOND BY 12 FEBRUARY DEADLINE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON ASYLUM CHANGES

Government consultations take notice of the number rather than quality of responses, so response makes a big difference.

The Government has announced proposals to make **very harmful changes to the immigration system**. The proposals would affect many people living in the UK – including people born here and people who have lived here for many years.

### What you can do:

Your support is vital here.

1. Follow the [Amnesty Guide](#) and respond to the Government's online survey.
2. Encourage your family and friends to respond

*\*\* note that some Questions are deceptive. Our [Amnesty Guide is useful](#) to avoid answering in a way that is taken by the Government to mean something different to what you intended.*

### TO FIND THE AMNESTY BRIEFING

[Government Immigration and Asylum Proposals](#)

<https://amnesty.org.uk/resources/government-immigration-and-asylum-proposals>

### TO GIVE YOUR RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT

[Earned settlement - GOV.UK](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/earned-settlement>

## **STOP NEC ARMS FAIR**

### **by Steve Hornby**

GM Stop The War, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, & many groups including Quakers are supporting the Midlands group Stop The NEC Arms Fair which will be held Feb 3/4. Friends from all over the UK will be there, including myself. A Meeting for Worship will be held at the NEC on both days. The Red Rebels will make an appearance on Feb 4th.

Here are some details about opposition to it:

<https://www.stop-sdsc.uk/home>

The Peace Dove delivered a Petition to the NEC Management last week asking them not to hold Arms Fairs.

<https://www.stop-sdsc.uk/press-releases/peace-campaigners-tell-nec-cancel-the-arms-fair>

Today (Sat 31 Jan) there is a Peace Pilgrimage from Pigeon Park in Birmingham city centre to the NEC. Many Friends are participating.

For info see

<https://peacepilgrimage.org.uk/events/pilgrimage-to-sdsc-uk/>

Contact me if you have any questions or wish to participate on Feb 3/4.

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## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, (or to stop receiving it,) email Mary Atkinson on [admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk](mailto:admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk) with your request.

Please send items for the Newsletter to [elizcol@dialstart.net](mailto:elizcol@dialstart.net) The deadline for newsletters is 5pm on the last day of the month. **The deadline for the March newsletter is 5pm on 28 February.** I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Short items with pictures are best. When submitting items for publication, please be aware that the newsletter is a public document, posted on our website, and we do not control who sees it. Think before submitting personal information, email addresses and photos. Try to avoid sending text and photos that are under copyright, and get consent from people in photos if needed.

Look at the website <https://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk> under “Newsletters and Events” if you’d like to see back-issues. If you want to make contact with anyone who writes in the newsletter, and no contact details are given, email me [elizcol@dialstart.net](mailto:elizcol@dialstart.net) and I’ll forward your email to them.

Please feel free to forward the AM Newsletter to anyone who may be interested.

The views expressed in articles are those of their authors, not necessarily those of Area Meeting.

**Elizabeth Coleman, Editor 07969 385080**