

THE YOUNG QUAKER

For Young Friends Everywhere

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EQUAL MARRIAGE ONE STEP CLOSER

By TIM ROUSE

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In a move welcomed by Quakers in Britain, the government has introduced the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill to Parliament. The House of Commons delivered a decisive 400-175 vote in favour of the Bill at its Second Reading, following a tense debate on the 5th February, in which over 70 MPs spoke on the bill.

Although the Bill still has several stages of the parliamentary process to pass through, the strong majority in favour of this move towards equality means that it is likely to pass into law as another step towards full legal equality for same-sex couples.

Significantly, as well as giving same-sex couples the right to civil marriages, the Bill also allows for same-sex marriages in a religious setting. This change in the law is excellent news for Quakers, who

have been corporately calling for equal marriage laws since Yearly Meeting Gathering in York in 2009. Paul Parker, recording clerk for Britain Yearly Meeting, said "We believe we are all born equal and therefore our love is equal too. This is the change in the law we have been seeking."

Government proposals in a public consultation last year included legalising same-sex civil marriages, but would have left Quakers and other religious bodies unable to perform religious marriages of same-sex couples. At YFGM in May 2012, Young Friends declared that "we strongly feel that preventing Quakers from reporting marriages to the state for same-sex couples is fundamentally unfair and goes against our religious liberty, conscience and commitment to equality."

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NORTHERN FRIENDS PEACE BOARD TURNS 100

By PETE DOUBTFIRE

In January 1913, with the shadow of war looming, a conference of Quakers in the North of Britain agreed to set up a new board to 'advise and encourage Friends in the North, and through them their fellow Christians and citizens generally, in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.' One month later Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) was created, and in the 100 years since, it's been supporting Northern Quakers to build peace and campaign for alternatives to violence.

To celebrate this milestone, there will be a number of events this year, centring around a conference on 15th June in York, and a week long Walk of Witness in June / July from Richmond Castle (where conscientious objectors were imprisoned during WWI) to Menwith Hill (the US Air Force Base that has been the site of consistent peace activism, including regular Meetings for Worship). There will be a chance to join in with these events, so watch this space. And if that's not exciting enough, there will be candles and tea towels commemorating 100 years of NFPB available to buy soon!

Continued Page 2

Young Quaker Ruth Wilkinson takes part in celebrations in Lincoln following the vote in favour of the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill on Feb 9th.



Image: Anna Draper

All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent; no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience, and no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishment or modes of worship.

William Penn

Northern Friends Peace Board Turns 100

(continued from page 1)

However, we're not just looking back at past struggles and achievements – NFPB is still going strong, and we hope to use what we've learnt over the past century to help build peace in the future. I attended the final board meeting of NFPB's first 99 years, where we discussed ideas and actions to support peace in Palestine and Israel, to campaign against the arms trade and the use of drones, and to promote our campaigns 'Building Peace in Diverse Britain' and 'Sustainable Security'. Of course, another significant centenary is just around the corner – the First World War – and we considered how to use that opportunity to promote peace, and challenge the glorification of war.

We also heard from Sam Walton of QPSW about 'Building Dialogues for a Nuclear Free World', through which Quakers can start building dialogues with decision makers on reducing Britain's nuclear weapons. Sam also spoke along with Will McCallum of Forces Watch and NFPB's own Celia Davis about the increasing militarisation of schools, and their efforts to counteract the often unquestioning promotion of the armed forces to young people. Particularly troubling was the suggestion that areas with the high numbers of poorer pupils are being deliberately targeted to promote careers in the armed forces.

At every NFPB meeting, we are reminded that there are so many challenges to building peace that it can sometimes feel overwhelming. We certainly can't tackle these issues alone – the purpose of the board is to engage Quakers more widely in peace work, not simply to do it on their behalf! But when I look around at the passion and quiet determination of my fellow NFPB members, and back at 100 years of inspiration and ideas to draw on, I feel positive about the difference we can make – here's to another 100 years of NFPB!

For more information:

www.nfpb.org, www.forceswatch.net,
www.quaker.org.uk/dialogue-
nuclear-weapon-free-world

BOOK REVIEW: 'MENDING HURTS' BY JOHN LAMPEN

Reviewed by CARLA DENYER

As a relatively new Quaker, I recently discovered the library at my local Meeting House as a fantastic resource, especially the archive of Swarthmore lectures. Most of them predate our Quakerism or even our lives by years or decades, but they're well worth investigating. They are still brand new and world-changing.

During a difficult relationship last year, I read John Lampen's 1987 lecture. Although, in the end, the relationship was not to be, the book was still valuable. So much so, that I think it should be compulsory reading! The book is short, readable, and full of quotes. It draws from John's long experience in peace work and peace education in post-conflict areas, but his lessons are equally applicable to familial, romantic or other relationships. I am no good at concise summaries, so instead I'll offer a couple of abridged sections.

Reconciliation

The art of reconciliation has its perverted image, which looks like it but has no healing power. This comes when agreement is forced, against the wishes of the heart – under the pressure of power, logic, status or public opinion; where there is intimidation or inducements of short-term advantage. [e.g. being told to say sorry, or the other person saying "I'm sorry but..."]. This perversion may bring momentary calm; but unless it is then followed by genuine effective peacemaking, the residue of bitterness does its deadly work in secret until pain has turned to anger strong enough to break out again.

It is widely recognised that we see in our enemies the qualities which we deny in ourselves: they are to blame, they are the greedy ones, the unreasonable, the hostile. To be reconciled is to embrace what we would rather disown; it is hard.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is unconditional or it is not forgiveness at all. Forgiveness has the character of 'in spite of', but the righteous give it the character of 'because'. The sinners however cannot do this. They cannot transform the divine 'in spite of' into a human 'because'. They cannot show facts, because of which they must be forgiven. Many of us think of solemn acts of pardon, of release from punishment, in other words, another act of righteousness by the righteous ones. But genuine forgiveness is participation, reunion overcoming estrangement. And only because this is so, does forgiveness make love possible. We cannot love unless we have accepted forgiveness, and the deeper our experience of forgiveness is, the greater our love. We cannot love where we feel rejected, even if the rejection is done in righteousness.

It is wise to see the power to forgive as God's gift to us, given perhaps at the moment when we feel: "I have a right to my anger and bitterness; but I begin to see that it is a burden as well as a right. Lord, I feel helpless; what can I do?"

Carla was reviewing 'Mending Hurts', John Lampen, 1987. ISBN: 0-85245-206-3. Recent Swarthmore Lectures are available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop at Friends House; earlier lectures can be found in many Quaker libraries.

The Young Quaker has been offered a review copy of *The Quaker Way* by Rex Ambler, described as "an attempt to explain the Quaker way, as far as that is possible".

If you would be interested in reviewing *The Quaker Way* for the next edition, or would like more details, please email youngquaker@gmail.com

THE YOUNG QUAKER RETURNS!

By TIM ROUSE

When *The Young Quaker* was established ninety-one years ago, I wonder if the young Quakers who contributed to it and edited it knew that it would still exist nearly a century later?

Technically, of course, 'still exist' isn't entirely accurate – the magazine stopped printing between 1925 and 1956, and has been on hiatus since 2011 – but with this, the first issue of a new run of *The Young Quaker*, we're proud to be continuing that tradition.

The Young Quaker (TYQ) is a magazine and newsletter for Young Friends

everywhere. In 1922, it was "*The Official Organ of the English Young Friends' Movement*", and today it's still being published under the auspices of their successors, Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM). Our goal is to inform and inspire, through articles written by and for young Friends on a whole range of topics, including (but certainly not limited to) news and current affairs from a Quaker perspective, stories about what YFGMers have been up to, as well as personal reflections from young Friends.

The future of TYQ is still to be decided, but we're keen to see it flourish once again as a way to keep young Friends informed, and to reach out to those who don't come to YFGM. We're definitely going to be publishing news and comment online, and we're currently looking into the feasibility of producing a paper edition to come out

in time for each YFGM. For this reason, we're really hoping that lots of people will contribute articles and ideas towards future issues.

There's plenty of opportunities to get involved with *The Young Quaker* – you could write us a letter, write a news or comment article for us, or just tell us what you'd like to see included in future. Additionally, the team behind *The Young Quaker* changes regularly, with new co-editors being appointed by YFGM quite regularly – so keep an eye out for the opportunity to join the editorial team.

If you have questions, ideas, or articles to contribute to the next issue of *The Young Quaker*, get in touch at youngquaker@gmail.com. Content for the next issue should be sent by April 19th 2013.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: COMING FULL CIRCLE

By HANNAH BROCK

Discipline is a bit of a taboo word. Understandably. It conjures up images of strict teachers and Victorian parents, meting out punishments without empathy. Likewise, for many 'spiritual discipline' speaks of flagellation and monks bossing each other around.

Like many other words that I once found hard, I've come a bit full-circle with one. I guess that's mainly thanks to Quakers, who have taught me to look for the meaning behind the words and dwell on what they could mean to me.

As with hell, salvation, sin and other words that might inspire terror, I've tried to shake off unhelpful connotations and (as my mate put it) "bloody own it"!

I'd like to tell you what inspired this process of re-owning the word – and idea – of 'discipline'.

One of the main jobs I had to do as a human rights observer in the West Bank last year (with the Ecumenical Accompanier Programme in Palestine and Israel – EAPPI) was being present at the checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. We did this work in pairs,

and I often went with Mary, an EAPPI colleague (and now friend) from Oregon. Mary's a lifelong Christian.

Her job involved standing at the exit of the checkpoint. While I find our time at the checkpoint very difficult and often stressful, Mary told me that she looked forward to these occasions. This is because she took the chance to practice a spirituality discipline that has meant a lot to her during her life.

She told me that she looked into the faces of each person that walked through the checkpoint (around 4000 people between 4.00 and 8.00am), and thought "God loves you. In God's eyes, you are just as important as me. Each and every one of you", and she smiled at them.

This is Mary's spiritual discipline. It felt to me to be a humbling way of loving others, and of trying to see them as God sees them.

The difference, of course, between Mary's practice and the examples I quoted at the beginning is that she took this discipline upon herself, in contrast to having it imposed upon her.

Now that I've come to appreciate the word in a new way, I can see its value in other contexts. Sometimes, it takes an example from someone you respect to 'think it possible' – in the words of that good bit from *Advices and Queries* – 'that you may be mistaken'.

EDITORIAL

It's taken a lot of work to get this issue of *The Young Quaker* rolling off the presses, but it's finally complete. It's a real privilege to be working on the revival of the magazine, which has a lot of history behind it (as we found out when we visited the Friends House library to look at the archives).

Within these pages you'll find news stories, book reviews, personal accounts, and much more.

One of the bits we're most pleased with is the *Newcomers' Guide* to YFGM, which will hopefully be a useful resource for anyone new to YFGM or to Quakerism. It's not comprehensive, because that would require several volumes, but it's a good start. If you want more information on YFGM, the best course of action is probably to ask a YFGMer; failing that, the *YFGM User Friendly Guide* is really helpful and was invaluable in preparing that section.

We really do owe a massive thanks to everyone who has contributed material to this edition. We sincerely hope that TYQ will rise from the ashes, but that will require the input and support of the whole community – so make sure you send us some great articles for next time!

– THE EDITORS

NEWCOMERS' GUIDE TO YFGM

SO WHAT IS YFGM ANYWAY...?

Young Friends General Meeting, commonly abbreviated as YFGM, is both a weekend-long gathering for young Quakers aged between 18-30 in the UK, and the organisation that runs the gatherings. YFGMs are open to anybody who is a Quaker, or who is interested in Quakerism, and we strive to be as inclusive as possible.

YFGM takes place three times yearly, in February, May, and October, in a Friends Meeting House somewhere in the UK. The weekend typically involves a range of sessions, including sessions dealing with business items concerning the running of YFGM, sessions exploring spirituality and personal beliefs, as well as entertainment sessions. There's also opportunities to take part in Special Interest Groups, which range from interesting talks to learning to knit to just going for a walk on the beach. Of course, there's plenty of time to talk to people, to play games or just relax.

Going to YFGM is a great opportunity to meet other young, like-minded people and have a great time for a weekend. It's really easy to become part of a close, caring community, and it's a brilliant chance to get involved in all sorts of interesting and exciting activities, both at YFGM and outside it.

MY FIRST YFGM

By OWEN JENNINGS

My first YFGM experience was the newcomer's gathering held in Nottingham during February last year. Having identified as a Quaker for four years beforehand, and having attended various young people's events including Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM), YFGM certainly appeared as a natural progression, heavily aided by its advertisement at my last JYM and the offer of paid travel for newcomers for the February YFGM. To be honest, I most probably would have attended without the incentive anyhow.

Having now gone to two YFGMs and about to go to my third, I've really enjoyed it. My first experience was very welcoming and a brilliant chance to learn about YFGM, Quakerism, and meet new people. From the organised sessions for newcomers, to sampling the local ale in a local pub, it was thoroughly enjoyable and informative. The epilogues, spirituality sessions, and the Sunday meeting for worship were also delightful and allowed some peace in what is otherwise a rather packed weekend. The one thing I did miss during the newcomer's gathering was the business sessions, but I realise that one has to fit the newcomer sessions somewhere! There would be plenty of business in future YFGMs that I wouldn't miss the pleasure of.

The other joy of YFGM has been in meeting both some of the friends I had made at JYM again, and new delightful people, at a regular interval. I would imagine, after a while, YFGM becomes quite the community of friendly faces, in contrast to the constantly changing collection of people I work with at university and in everyday life. It is nice to have something relatively stationary compared to the rapid change and mobility of my everyday life.

YFGM is also full of usually interesting business, and opportunities to hear of and consider issues affecting this world of ours. As a student studying politics, as somebody who does rather enjoy Quaker business meetings, and as somebody who probably isn't anywhere near as active as I could be in seeking to address the issues that face us all, YFGM presents a delicious weekend of challenging thought, difficult questions, and friendly company.

YFGM JARGON

BUSTER

YFGM, and Quakers in general, have a tendency to speak in a kind of code, made up of acronyms, abbreviations, new words, and old words, but with a completely new meaning. Some of the more common ones are explained below.

YFGM

Young Friends General Meeting
(see left)

BYM

Britain Yearly Meeting, the national organisation of Quakers in Britain. Can also refer to the yearly meeting itself, usually held at Friends House in London each May.

TYQ

The Young Quaker magazine, i.e. what you're reading right now.

EMEYF

European and Middle East Young Friends, a group for young Quakers all across Europe and the Middle East

MfW

Meeting for Worship, which is when Quakers meet for worship. In the UK this almost always means silent worship with occasional spoken ministry. Often shortened to "Meeting", though this can refer to the community associated with a regular meeting i.e. YFGM, BYM, or a local Meeting.

Ministry

Traditionally, someone will give ministry when moved by the Inner Light. This usually means standing and speaking; it might be a personal experience, a new insight, or anything at all; you'll know when it's right to give ministry, because it'll feel right.

NEWCOMERS' GUIDE TO YFGM

The Inner Light

Some call it God, some call it the Holy Spirit, some consider it some form of collective consciousness; some would say "None of the above". (*Very difficult to describe, actually - Ed.*)

Clerk

The Clerk is appointed to take a meeting through its business and to write the minutes. It is a role is similar to those of a chairperson and secretary combined. YFGM has two clerks for business sessions.

Elder/Quinty/Quintessential

The Elders at most meetings are members with responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of the Meeting and its members. At YFGM we have "Quintessentials" or Quintys, who fulfill the same job and organise spirituality sessions.

Overseer

The Overseers' job is to look after the general wellbeing of the members of a meeting, usually on a parctical level.

Nominations Committee/Noms

Nominations Committee supports the community by finding appropriate people to do different jobs at YFGM. Noms spend quite a lot of time at YFGM in a room of their own trying to discern the best names for verious roles.

Testimonies

The Quaker testimonies are usually reckoned as peace, equality, truth, and simplicity, although this varies. Testimonies are expressions of key principles which underpin the activities of Quakers in their daily lives, and form the basis of the work of Quakers. They are not fixed written statements of belief. They are the expressions of attitudes by which Quakers try to live their lives.

The History of YFGM

Young Friends General Meeting began in 1911, first as Young Friends Committee and later as Young Friends Central Committee (YFCC). Originally it was a body of young Friends representing all the Monthly Meetings in Britain. Although many Monthly Meetings still appoint representatives it is now open to all; members, attenders, those who've been connected with Friends all their lives and those new to Quakerism. All are welcome at YFGM. In 1993 YFCC changed it's name to Young Friends General Meeting to reflect the change from a representative committee to an open community.

"Each generation of Young Friends by its experiments must discover for itself the truths on which the Society is built if it is to use those to continue and enlarge the the work of the Society. Hence the occasional separate meetings of young Friends and our desire to have means of expressing corporately our own experience."

Young Friends Committee, 1926

Getting Down to Business...

A significant part of YFGM is the business sessions. There's a whole multitude of business items that will be considered at each YFGM, from routine stuff like setting the budget to dealing with potentially controversial issues like whether Young Friends should give a loyal address to the Queen for her jubilee last year.

YFGM makes decisions using the Quaker business method and our meetings are held in the spirit of Quaker worship. Our final decisions are an attempt to reflect the guidings of the spirit.

The meeting begins with silence. An item will then be introduced, giving any necessary background information. There is then time for brief factual questions before the clerks invite responses from the meeting. People who wish to speak stand and wait to be acknowledged by the clerk. This process is not a debate or discussion – it is important to listen to and value each contribution equally and to be open to new ideas and new insights from wherever they may come. We may express contradictory views, but we do not argue with one another in meeting.

The business method works more easily when we remain openminded, considerate and sensitive to each other. Each individual's contribution is considered carefully until the meeting reaches a decision that everyone accepts as the will of God. Although this may take a lot of time, it's needed if the goal of unity and collective responsibility in decision-making is to be achieved.

When the clerks feel that there is a sense of unity in the meeting, they draft a minute that they offer to the meeting, this might be modified and eventually agreed by the meeting as expressing the meeting's decision, A chorus of 'hope so' indicates agreement with the suggested minute.

We observe silence between individuals' contributions. These silences are crucial as they give the meeting a chance to reflect on what has been said. It is especially important to 'uphold' the Clerks by remainingsilent while they are drafting a minute.

In the same way that you would normally minister once during Meeting for Worship it is normal to only speak once unless we are responding to a direct question or giving factual information.

If you feel moved to speak on an item then it is important to remember the following points:

- Stand up and wait for the Clerks to acknowledge you
- Say your name before you begin
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Try to avoid using acronyms and jargon
- Keep your ministry short and to the point.

The most effective ministry is simple, honest and from your own experience.

QUNO SUMMER SCHOOL

QUNO SUMMER SCHOOL 2011

By DOVYDAS ŠVETKAUSKAS

Two weeks spent in Geneva, visiting places where the world is being changed was an amazing and memorable opportunity which I will never forget. Our group of 23 people from all around the world was taught by passionate experts, diplomats, climate change campaigners and other professionals.

Moreover, we got to know how the Quaker United Nations Office researches issues of concern and raises them through the United Nations system to get them on the international agenda. It was very valuable to learn how QUNO staff engages with the UN and the wider international community through holding meetings and producing written submissions and briefings, researching and producing publications on relevant topics, making oral statements and organizing side events at meetings of the UN and other international bodies.

Furthermore, QUNO focuses on areas of concern and values where it has leading expertise, such as Disarmament and Peace, Global Economic Issues and Human Rights & Refugees. Related to these three fields, we received informative and revealing lectures which helped us discover and understand the workings of the UN. Almost every day we had the chance to visit various international organizations such as UNHCR, WHO, ILO, WTO, ICRC and to see from inside the 'kitchen of policy making' in these internationally significant bodies.

Through a friendly working atmosphere and united common values, the discussions and staff seminars gave us a chance to get to know each other better and by the end of the Summer School we all became close friends, making the summer school two of the most unforgettable and rewarding weeks of my life!

This article was originally published in QUNO's Geneva Reporter.

QUNO

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) represents the Quaker viewpoint at the United Nations, with staff based in New York and Geneva.



Quaker United Nations Summer School

7th July - 19th July 2013, Geneva

For people with an active interest in international affairs.

- Would you like to study the UN at first hand?
- Do you want to meet people from all over the world?
- Are you aged 20 to 26?

The Summer School aims to provide an introduction to the work of the United Nations.

Application packs available from

www.quaker.org.uk

or from

Helen Bradford (QUNSS),
QPSW,
Friends House,
Euston Road,
London, NW1 2BJ.

Email: helenb@quaker.org.uk

Deadline for applications:
11 March 2013

MEETING FOR EATING

By ROSE OLIVER

Meeting for Eating, or MfE (three cheers for another Quakeronym) is now held monthly by Young Quakers in Newcastle. It gives people the chance to take some time out from the week's busyness, to keep in touch and worship together at a time other than Sunday morning. (Does anyone else struggle with making it to meeting on a Sunday morning?)

Over the past few weeks and many a baked potato filling, the group have been considering the question: "What is important to you as a young Friend in present society?"

A few subjects of importance have repeatedly surfaced. Where in our lives can we express our testimony of simplicity? Can some standard of simplicity (and its close sibling, sustainability) apply to most people, or is it more relative?

There was mention of concerns over our banking ethics; as individuals and also within the Quaker meeting houses.

Another issue which was the subject of lengthy consideration was that of being brought up in a society that frequently assumes rigid gender roles. Are binary definitions a fundamental part of our language (and understanding) as children? Are we encouraged to challenge these simplified labels as we grow older, or are we made to disregard the gender continuum?

In a world where specially-designed pink pens are marketed as "womens", and 4 year old boys are no longer offered the choice of an oven or a doll to play with in the shops, we could be forgiven for accusing society's need to label people as having gone too far.

Could our approach to gender and sexuality also be part of our commitment to simplicity; would it not be easier to meet people where they are, for who they are?

Young Friends Meeting for Eating takes place on the 2nd Tuesday of every month in Newcastle Meeting House.

For more information, email newcastleyoungfriends@gmail.com

A PEACEWORKER'S PERSPECTIVE

By OWEN EVERETT

Owen is one of three UK-based Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) Peaceworkers this year, and has shared with us some of his experiences so far...

As a Peaceworker, I'm very lucky that I've been placed for a year with two great organisations doing really interesting, challenging and fulfilling work - and I even get paid for it. Being a Peaceworker means that, although we're paid by Britain Yearly Meeting, we spend our placement working with organisations that are contributing, in different but equally important ways, to peace. There are also two Peaceworkers, or 'Programme Assistants' at the Quaker UN Office in Geneva, and two Peaceworkers placed with post-conflict peace organisations in Bujumbura, Burundi.

I'm placed with two organisations rather than 'just' one, because they are good friends and needed help with a shared new area of work. These are War Resisters' International, an international network of antimilitarist groups established in 1921, and ForcesWatch, set up in 2010 to challenge the ethics of military recruitment in the UK and the uncritical sense of national pride in the armed forces. Both these groups are concerned about militarisation, and in particular the militarisation of young people.

'Militarisation' means the ways in which something becomes influenced by the military (the armed forces and their political overseers the Ministry of Defence), leading to empathy with the military and the acceptance of military 'solutions' to problems.

Examples of militarisation are military visits to schools, and video games produced with input from the armed forces. There are lots more, and many of them are focused at young people.

No doubt due in part to my Quaker background, and my conviction during and after silent reflection that nonviolence is the way, I share WRI's and ForcesWatch's desire to challenge the militarisation of youth. Most people don't seem to see it as problematic, because they don't see it as militarisation (and because they have been militarised!).

So my various projects are working towards creating more critical discussion. One is a report on the military's influence in UK universities - which hasn't been objected to much up until now, partly (I think) because most people aren't aware of it. Another is a book I am editing which explores the militarisation of young people around the world, and shows ways in which some are already countering it.

I'd recommend any young Friends who want to work (full-time) for a more nonviolent world to apply to the scheme. You can read more about the different schemes, browse our tri-monthly 'journal letters', and read our blog, at www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-placements-and-peaceworkers. You can find out more about War Resisters' International at www.wri-irg.org and about ForcesWatch at www.forceswatch.net



'Not a usual day at the office': Paying WRI's PAYE taxes under protest. The proportion that is spend on the military had been withheld for some years.

POLITICALLY ENGAGED YOUNG FRIENDS MEET IN LONDON

Last August, about thirty young Friends gathered together at Westminster Meeting House for a weekend of discussion and debate about politics and how we, as young Friends, can and should engage with it.

Topics included voting systems, membership of political parties, ethical investment, and many of the participants shared their own experiences, from being involved in the EAPPI programme to being a member of a political party.

Although individual perspectives differed, often by quite a lot, the group agreed that there was extensive common ground. One thing that was obvious was that Quakers are often explicitly or implicitly political, even when views vary.

The group expressed concerns about the arms trade and the way in which taxes are used, as well as the way that Quakers manage and invest our own funds as individuals or as a community. It was felt that, although the group are opposed to the government subsidising arms manufacture and trading, they see the need for compassion towards those who work in the arms trade and cannot easily find other employment. One idea that met with general support was a shift of arms manufacturing towards the building of the green economy of the future.

Ethical investment was a key topic, and one which some of the group are continuing to look into. The group's epistle said that "Regarding the investments we make, we believe that transparency and knowledge across our whole community is essential. As individuals and as a group, we should consider carefully where we are prepared to invest our money, taking into account the power that shareholders can hold as well as the importance of influencing companies to be more accountable and ethical."

Continued on Page 8

Politically Engaged Young Friends Meet in London

(continued from page 7)

People at the weekend felt generally optimistic that society can and will move towards a more participatory democracy, although they recognise both the challenges associated with the short-term nature of policy goals, and with inspiring themselves and others to nurture and maintain their spiritual vision. Their conviction to keep trying comes from a spiritual sense that a better world can be achieved. There was a strong desire to create opportunities to share experience, skills and hope between Quakers of different generations, and with the wider community and grassroots movements in order to learn.

The group's statement concluded with the message "Quakers do not always highlight the connection between belief and action. We can be better at explaining our faith-led motivation in a non-aggressive and non-evangelical way. We should have a greater engagement in philosophical, ethical and political debate", and participants resolved to arrange more events for Politically Engaged Young Friends in the future.

The Young Quaker is looking for regular writers on a variety of topics, including politics.

Interested in journalism? Got three or more opinions per year? Want to make your case to other young Friends?

Get in touch with us at youngquaker@gmail.com (or talk to the editors at YFGM)

Equal Marriage One Step Closer

(continued from page 1)

The newly published bill no longer prohibits religious same-sex marriages, but does require religious groups to specifically opt-in to be able to carry them out.

The Bill has faced some criticism from those who argue that the social and religious institution of marriage should be separated from the legal union.

Other criticisms have focused on the fact the issue of same-sex marriage was not contained in the pre-election manifestos of the three largest parties, and alleged differences in the legal detail between heterosexual and same-sex marriage, as well as the failure to extend the option of civil partnerships to non-same-sex couples.

However, most opposition has come from those who claim a moral objection to the bill, based on socially conservative religious principles, intolerance of homosexuality, or the outdated notion that marriage can only be between a man and a woman.

The Bill does explicitly ban the Church of England from carrying out same-sex marriages, and other religious groups who do not wish to take advantage of the change in the law will not be compelled to provide same-sex couples with equal access to marriage.

However, the change in the law should give LGBTQ people in same-sex couples the same legal rights regarding marriage as heterosexual couples. In addition, the

NOTICES

European and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) are holding their Spring Gathering 2013 in Yorkshire from

6th-12th April 2013

The theme will be "The Body Electric: Exploring spirituality through our creative power."

For more information, visit
www.emeyf.quaker.eu.org

Closing date for registration:
5th March 2013

changes mean that transgender people will no longer be forced to dissolve their marriage before being able to legally change their gender, although marriages previously dissolved cannot be restored.

At the Bill's Second Reading, despite cross-party front-bench support, all three major parties allowed their MPs a free vote on the issue. Overwhelming Labour and Lib Dem support secured the Bill an easy majority, but 139 Conservative MPs opposed it, more than the 132 who voted in favour. The opponents of the Bill also included 22 Labour MPs, 8 DUP MPs, 4 Liberal Democrats, and 2 independents. However, the significant majority in favour of the new law means a positive start for the Bill, and hopefully it will swiftly become law.

Quakers should be proud to be one of relatively few religious groups who have been actively supporting this change in the law, which, as well as being good news for same-sex couples within our community, is also a positive step for LGBTQ rights in Britain as a whole.

The Young Quaker is produced by Young Friends' General Meeting

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The Co-Editors would like to thank all our contributors, and thank *Hannah Brock* and *Hugo Finley* for their support and advice.

The magazine is available online in digital format including for mobile devices. A large print edition is available upon request.

Please get in touch if you would like to contribute to the next issue, due out in time for the next YFGM, taking place between

3rd-5th May 2013

Any contributions intended for publication in the next issue should reach us before

April 19th 2013

For general enquiries, or to obtain additional copies of The Young Quaker, please use the above address.