

THE YOUNG QUAKER

For Young Friends Everywhere

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US QUAKER UNIVERSITY DENIES TRANS STUDENT HOUSING

University is an exciting period for many people; a chance to challenge yourself and build enduring friendships. Quakerly values of truth and being open to new light continues this attitude out of university into the rest of our lives.

However at the Quaker-run George Fox University (GFU) in Oregon, USA, some students are more encouraged to become involved in community life than others.

By all reports if you met Jayce Marcus you would find him just as he is – an energetic, positive young man with a strong Christian faith.

And yet the psychology student has been met with hostility from GFU's housing administration after the nature of his gender was brought into question.

Despite publicly coming out as a male and undergoing testosterone treatment for a year, the university insists on considering the assigned birth gender to be Jayce's whole identity. They are therefore unwilling to consider Jayce's request to be housed with his male friends under the argument that mixed sex dorms are not appropriate under their terms and conditions.

Perhaps it is helpful to articulate what Jayce is not asking for. He is not asking to change the rules on single-sex dorms. He is not asking for special treatment. He is not trying to force himself on an unwilling roommate. He is asking to be welcomed into the GFU community and for his identity to be recognised as his own to define.

During the negotiations, themselves an affront to the ability for Jayce to

articulate his own gender identity, GFU was secretly engaged in an application with the US Department of Education for the ability to bypass equality and discrimination laws.

After beginning talks with Jayce and his attorney Paul Southwick, GFU "requested a religious exemption to the Title IX regulations regarding housing, restrooms and athletics as they apply to transgender students" Southwick explained. The permission was granted by the Department of Education in record time, and represents an institution with public funding discriminating on religious grounds.

More than that, the religious grounds being used to justify the discrimination are Quaker ones. Although the evangelical Quaker community, which runs GFU, differs in several ways from the liberal Quakerism we're used to in the UK, one of the things we are supposed to have in common is a testimony of equality, and respecting that of God within all people.

The university has essentially trounced any notion of behaving with transparency, acting with grace and love or demonstrating any sense of community beyond its own established order. Would this be recognised as Quakerly? I don't think so. If you feel George Fox University's behaviour is out of keeping with how transgendered people ought to be treated, especially by the Quaker community, please check out his change.org petition at:

www.chn.ge/1mGd8o4



Jayce Marcus is asking for fair treatment from George Fox University

Our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity ... We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us ...

Minute of the Central Committee of Friends General Conference (2004)

WE TALK TO: SALLY NICHOLLS, CHILDREN'S AUTHOR

We interviewed award-winning children's author, Quaker, and former clerk of YFGM, Sally Nicholls, about the awesome books she's written. Here's what she had to say.

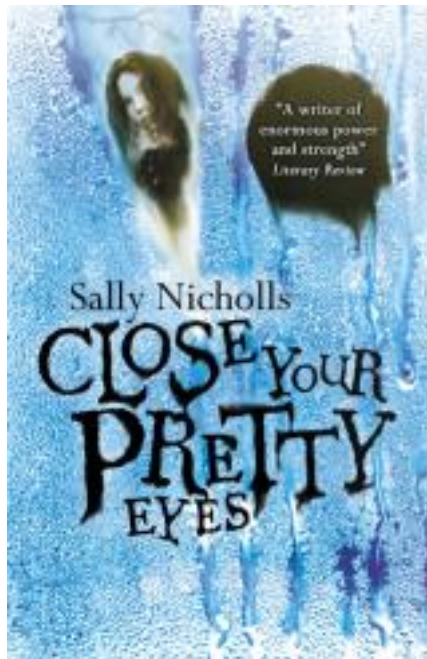
Lots of people experiment with writing fiction, but few end up as award-winning authors. How did you get into writing for a living?

Short answer: I wrote a book and someone bought it. Long answer: I did a MA in Writing for Young People after I left university and my dissertation was my first novel, *Ways to Live Forever*. I won the prize for the most promising writer on the course, and through that got my agent. Who found it a publisher.

You've never been one to shy away from big issues, whether it's leukaemia or the Black Death, parental death or the care system. What makes you pick stories like this to tell, and is there anything you wouldn't write about?

It's very hard to write a book. It can take years. So, particularly when I started, I needed to feel like the things I was writing about were worth spending that much time and

energy on. I also like big stories, and I think teenagers do too. I write about the things I can imagine and inhabit. There are some things I can't really imagine, like being a serial killer, so I think it's unlikely I'll ever write about that. And although I think you can put anything in a book for young adults, if you handle it right, there are some subjects - like the difficulties of coping with retirement - which are always going to be less interesting to most of them.



Close Your Pretty Eyes is out now.

How do you think your experience and perspectives as a Quaker have influenced your writing? Ever been tempted to quote from Faith & Practice?

I love the Quaker emphasis on valuing every person as an individual, and treating the views of the smallest and least important person in a meeting with as much respect as the most long-standing member. I know we aren't always very good at that, but we try, and it's a good thing to remember when writing for young people. Sam in *Ways to Live Forever* is eleven, but his opinion on faith is just as important as the opinions of the adults around him.

The idea that religious beliefs are something you work out for yourself is also very important to me. That's the whole basis for *Ways to Live Forever* really - to give my readers the tools and knowledge they need to answer these questions for themselves rather than tell them what to believe.

And 'that of God in everyone' is also very important to me. Olivia in *Close Your Pretty Eyes* is actually a pretty obnoxious person. And the things she demands of the adults around her are incredibly unreasonable. The interesting thing for me

YFGM BIDS A FOND FAREWELL TO CO-ORDINATOR NIKI

Over the summer, Young Friends General Meeting will be wishing a fond farewell to our first ever Friends-House-based co-ordinator, Niki Karakaris.

Niki took over from YFGM's former co-ordinator, Hugo Finley, in 2013, and has continued his good work through all the changes that have happened as a result of the job moving from Birmingham to London.

Although Niki hadn't encountered Quakerism in her native Germany, she's rapidly become a much-loved part of YFGM, always ready to help people and even finding that she enjoys silent Meetings for Worship.

Although Niki won't be working as the YFGM co-ordinator any more, she's planning to stay in London to study, so hopefully we'll still see her around!

But who'll be taking over as YFGM co-ordinator, answering emails, booking meeting-houses, and generally trying to be helpful?

The co-editors are confident that *The Young Quaker* was the first publication to hear the news (even without resorting to phone-hacking!).

How? Because we're able to exclusively reveal that the new co-ordinator will be none other than Tim Rouse, your humble author.

Taking over the job means I'll be stepping back from *The Young Quaker* for the next year, and leaving it in the capable hands of the other co-editors.

I'm really looking forward to the role, which is sure to give me a new perspective on YFGM.

It'll also be interesting to be working at Friends House, and since I'll be working three days a week for Britain Yearly Meeting, I'm sure to get lots of insights into the centrally managed work of Quakers in the UK.

As always, you'll be able to get in touch with the YFGM coordinator by emailing yfgm@quaker.org.uk or contacting them on Facebook.

WE TALK TO: SALLY NICHOLLS, CHILDREN'S AUTHOR

about writing her, was to see if I could make her understandable and sympathetic - to show that of God in her, as it were.

There are very few villains in my books. There are a couple in *Close Your Pretty Eyes* - because Olivia sees the world in very black-and-white terms - but I hope it's obvious how very easily Olivia could become a woman like her mother.

Close Your Pretty Eyes is a really good book, but it's not always an enjoyable book - both Olivia's past and present have a lot of hurt and confusion in them, and that can make it very tough to read. Was it difficult to write those scenes?

Not at the time. I read as much writing as I could by people who had similar childhoods to Olivia's, so I had a lot of real-life reactions to draw upon. And I found all the psychological stuff really fascinating. Having said that, the main character in the book I'm writing at the moment is very confident and optimistic. There should probably be more angst, but I realised after fin-

ishing *Close Your Pretty Eyes* that I wanted a break from unhappiness for this one.

One of the things I enjoyed in *Close Your Pretty Eyes* was the ambiguity about whether Amelia's ghost was really there or not. Would you care to comment on whether the haunting was authentic - or am I being too grown-up and Jim-like for even doubting?

It's ambiguous for a reason! So, no. But I will say that a lot of the things Olivia struggles with in the book - hyper vigilance, constantly living in fear, being unexpectedly ambushed by her worst memories - those things are real, and would make life very difficult for her whether Amelia's ghost was real or not.

It's obvious that myth and history are a big influence on you, from the historical setting of *All Fall Down to the Wild Hunt* in *Season of Secrets* and the baby-farmer Amelia Dyer in *Close Your Pretty Eyes*. Are there any other bits of history or mythology you'd really like to write about?

Ooh ... there are a few. I'm rather taken by the Arthur myth and the idea that Arthur is going to come back next time the British Isles are in danger. I mean, what would that LOOK like? Probably rather confusing all round. I'm a bit in love with the idea that Arthur turned up in the middle of the Blitz. Maybe he's why Hitler never launched his invasion barges?

And there's a Borges story about a beggar king wandering his kingdom for all eternity that I think could be interesting. And *Dracula*. I'd love to do something with *Dracula*. Evil vampires are far more interesting than self-flagellating ones. And fairy tales in general, actually. And one day I'm going to write something set in the '30s, although I'm not sure what, yet. Oh, and Victorian lunatic asylums. I'd love to write something set in a Victorian lunatic asylum.

It's just working out what the story to go with them is, really.

TYQ can definitely recommend all of Sally's books, which are: Ways to Live Forever, Season of Secrets, All Fall Down, and Close Your Pretty Eyes, as well as two shorter books, A Lily, A Rose, and Shadow Girl.

PHOTOGRAPHY: A SPIRITUAL GIFT

By Julian Wood

Photography is for me one of the many everyday things which infinitely enrich our spiritual lives, but we take for granted, as it seems so much part of our lives that we can't imagine life without it. Into this category I can add television, electricity, transport, running water.

Before photography, how did people recall how their loved ones look, or used to look? How did people keep their loved ones in their hearts when away from home or lonely?

I post uplifting quotes on the internet, accompanied by pictures of cute animals such as cats and hamsters. Such photos are inspiring and comforting. Photo by photo, they help me focus on my spiritual path.

So photography is a deeply spiritual

medium, even 'everyday' photos that we take of family and friends. They help us re-live experiences, remember what we've done and when we did it. They show us how we've changed and who has been dear to us in the past.

A photo of a loved one can re-assure us, make us feel loved and help us love that person. Simply looking at a photo is a simple and effective meditation. And like the best spiritual practices, it is one we can indulge in on a daily basis, or even more often.

My spiritual hero, Stephanie Dowrick, reminds me that what we focus on on a daily basis is clearly reflected in how we feel and how well we relate to others. So let us spend time daily looking at photos that amuse, soothe and soften us, and we will be more loving people- the most spiritual outcome I can imagine.

EDITORIAL

Wow! The YMG issue of *The Young Quaker* is a busy one - we made it four pages longer than usual and there's still only just enough room for everything.

Between the super-sized issue and the fact that we're now sending *TYQ* out to every meeting-house in the country, our printing costs are rising substantially. Although we're committed to keeping *TYQ* free for anyone who wants to read it, if you (or your local meeting) are able to make a donation to YFGM towards printing and distribution costs, it would be massively appreciated.

Hopefully you'll enjoy this issue, which covers all sorts of issues, from an A to Z of YFGM to the situation in Palestine. If you have anything to contribute to our next issue, make sure you send it in - details on the back page!

YEALAND YF-GM FREE: CELEBRATING QUAKERS PAST AND PRESENT!

By TAS COOPER

I recently went away to Yealand Conyers in Lancashire for a brilliant weekend with the Young Friends, staying in the Old School (now a hostel of sorts) next to the Quaker meeting house. My second YF event ever, after the YFGM in February. Lots of exciting stuff happened – some brilliant activities across the weekend. This included a group discussion on "walking cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone" (by Holly).

There was also an interesting guided tour of some historical points of interest in the area (for Quakers anyway; it was part of "1652 country", the part of the country where they originated), led by one of the meeting house's wardens, Jim. In the evening we learnt encaustic (hot wax) painting and making wax-painted cards, taught by Sue, the warden.

I made one with random blue, green and purple blotches which I later dubbed an undersea scene, and one attempt at a landscape which ended up a bit more like an abstract idea of a landscape, although I was quite pleased with the flowers I managed to create. Everyone else's was very much better. Ah well.

There was an early morning yoga class, led by the talented Bea, out in the field behind the school, in which



I learned the "sun salutation" sequence and various useful beginners' poses involved in it (in no particular order, since I can't remember the order: raised hands, down dog, up dog, forward-bend, lunge, plank, knees/chest/chin, and my absolute favourite because it's the resting pose and feels really nice, the child). Can't stretch far enough to do it very well, but it was very enjoyable and I should probably take it up regularly.

There was a delightful meeting for worship on Sunday with the local Quakers, with some lovely ministry about how to bring "little pieces of love" into our lives, and a moving

anecdote about watching the sunrise, being struck by the beauty of the moment and remembering how each day starts with that same beauty.

There were two lovely epilogues (short evening worship), one on Friday (which I led) asking and volunteering answers to the question "What does love require of me?" – which I hope people found interesting – and a solstice-themed one yesterday, wonderfully led by Julian, outside in a field where we could see the sun setting – joined by several interested and probably slightly scared cows!

Plus various awesome games, particular highlights being "extreme Frisbee" (not to be confused with ultimate Frisbee, apparently), badminton (although I only watched) and several rounds of Mafia.

It was good to see a few previously-encountered F/friends again (Hannah, Catherine, Alice, Andrew among others) and meet new ones (Freya for instance).

All in all, a beautiful weekend and a welcome rest from university work. And now I sadly have to get back to writing my dissertation literature review in earnest. No more excuses to slack off.



Cow Epilogue



Our Minds, Our Community: a Wellbeing Weekend

A YF(GM Free) event exploring factors that maintain, nourish and develop our personal mental health and the mental health of the wider YFGM/Quaker community.

29/30/31st August 2014

at

2 Sandhill House, Near Middle Claydon, Buckinghamshire, MK18 2LD

This weekend will include sessions run by members of the YFGM community who have links with mental health including:



Yoga



Art therapy



Medication used for
mental health



Mindfulness



Feel good food

For more information:

Email: yfgmfree.mentalhealth@yahoo.co.uk

Phone: Sarah Castle on 07472050660

Food will be vegetarian and floor/off-floor accommodation will be provided.

Suggested donation of £40 for the weekend, payable on arrival. (Please let us know if this would be difficult for you and we can assist)

YOUNG FRIENDS AT YEARLY MEETING GATHERING

Among the 1,900 Quakers who'll be descending upon Bath for Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) this week will be quite a few Young Quakers, and there's certainly plenty going on.

In addition to the main Yearly Meeting sessions, the Childrens' and Young People's programme, and of course all the informal socialising, there'll also be a series of sessions just for young adults at YMG, organised by Woodbrooke - more info on that below.

On Monday evening, young people will be leading the activities, as YFGM has been asked to prepare the day's epilogue for the whole gathering. The epilogue, which takes place on the centenary of Britain's entry into the First World War, will be based upon a comment attributed

to Sir Edward Grey as the war approached; "The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time."

Another event to look out for is the George Gorman Lecture, which is customarily given by a young Friend. Earlier on Monday evening, YFGMer Jessica Metheringham will be giving this year's lecture, which she's titled "Equality: is it what we think it is?"

Jessica, who is Parliamentary Engagement Officer for Quakers in Britain, said "I've chosen equality as my subject because it's an idea which seems to be rarely challenged or truly explored, despite the many contradictions which lie at its heart. I hope to bring together my own experiences, those of other Friends, and those of non-Quaker individuals or groups.

"How is equality related to individual freedom? How does it fit with diversity, with the ways in which we are all different? Is equality somehow politically biased? If there is more than one core belief at the centre of equality, do those beliefs conflict with each other?"

"When we talk to each other about equality, do we really mean exactly the same thing, or are we assuming a larger overlap of belief than may really exist? Are there contradictions between beliefs and actions? Are there consequences and implications of some beliefs?"

There'll be plenty of other young people at the Gathering too, including the Young Friend Helpers team who'll be around to point people in the right direction and help out however they can.

Young Adults at Yearly Meeting Gathering

2 – 9 August 2014



Young Adults at YMG will provide a way of being a full part of YMG as an adult whilst maintaining a smaller age-based community to check-in with regularly between YMG sessions. We will offer daily opportunities during the lunch break where you can bring your lunch and meet others to prepare for and reflect on YMG sessions and events. Each day during the evening meal break we will offer a drop-in session when you can chat with a Woodbrooke tutor and other young adults at YMG.

Daily sessions at 12.15pm and 5.00pm in the Woodbrooke tent. Please join the **Young adults at YMG 2014** Facebook group for more information and to stay in touch during YMG or contact michael.eccles@woodbrooke.org.uk for a full list of sessions, or if you have any questions.

Coming up... two courses at Woodbrooke for Young Adult Friends:

5 – 7 September

Ourselves & others: *self-awareness, team dynamics, and working with change (for 20-35 year olds)*

18 – 21 September

A Retreat for Young Friends aged 18-30: *Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.*

For more details contact Woodbrooke on 0121-472 5171 or youngadults@woodbrooke.org.uk

Young Adults at Woodbrooke

YAFsWoodbrooke

THE 10 DAYS OF YALP

The Young Adult Leadership Programme (YALP) is a year-long study programme run by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, which helps participants learn about leadership in a Quaker context. In early July, the 2014 intake started their YALP experience with a 10 day stay at Woodbrooke in Birmingham. One of the new participants, BEA SHELLEY, reports...

Mentors and tutors lead us through the course. We are guided by sessions and conversations, time and space, on a journey that I envisage to be one of personal growth and self-discovery. Already, the first 10 days have provided us with a place to stand back and look at what we are doing with our lives, providing helpful promptings to move us forward and the confidence that comes from a very supportive network.

This article was born in the throes of 'Day 7: The Quiet Day', where we are refraining from speaking for the day. Although not so much throes in this writer's case - two and a half hours in and my experience is still relatively benign.

Not to say that this is the case for my fellows however: if I've come to know one thing in these 10 days (and I'm pretty confident that I've come to know more than one), it is

the wonderful diversity of us all, and, in the way that has provoked our thoughts very well, that our experiences do not necessarily coincide, at all! I might do some contemplative prayer next. Or perhaps some WILD RUNNING...

'Day 7: The Quiet Day' has consolidated a change of pace somewhat since 'Day 5: The Break Day' and 'Day 6: The Journaling Morning'. Previous to this we have been stimulated with input: sessions on early Quaker history, discussions on models of leadership, group exercises, which brought the roles we take in teams into the Light (... or the cold light of day? Delete as appropriate!), considerations of Quaker Testimony in the world, and reflections on all of this in relation to our own lives. All in all, plenty to be digesting in the Quiet Day.

We are challenged by our tutors and we challenge each other. We are also challenged on a 2 hourly basis by, in turns, the cheese board, pudding counter, snack table and hot chocolate machine. Other than across-the-board difficulties re: self-restraint we have delightfully little in common for a group of white Brits. We cover the full spectrum of personality types: some extroverts, some introverts, some open books, some closed books.

Some of us have gone through difficult periods in life, others of us have coasted through it without much thought, some of us are theists, some are non-theists, and some even learnt those as new words for the first time! Some of us were very au fait with Quaker history and indeed Quaker meetings today, others hadn't connected terribly well with their local meeting and were fairly sketchy on who George Fox and Margaret Fell were.

Some of us came to this at a point of transition in our lives, some want to make changes, some scooted in just within the upper age limit, some just bobbed over the lower (Insider tip: such things as age limits and application deadlines ... don't terribly matter in YALP).

Everyone has shown a remarkable honesty in these first days together which I'm sure has set us on the right track to our residential #2, which will take place at Swarthmoor Hall next February.

In 'Day 6: The Journaling Morning' we were prompted to write about the stepping stones in our spiritual journey. I managed to tease out one stone from my life so far, not having focused a great deal on my spirituality at all until this point, remaining Quaker-curious, but at a reasonable distance.

YALP is my second stepping stone. Doing this course has provided me a helpful branch from where I am stepping into the Religious Society of Friends. From my safe branch I can reach out into the Quaker world with less bewilderment at it and more understanding of it. The previously inaccessible flood of acronyms for processes, meeting types and roles, (and indeed the processes, meeting types and roles themselves!) seem more manageable.

Now I've got a bit more confidence with Quanglish, I'm even starting to read Quaker books. Today I opened Quaker Faith and Practice. Who on earth knows what I'll be doing in YALP residential #3, with this kind of progress already...



The new YALPers learn to work as a team on Day 4 of their first residential

EDITORIAL: THE SITUATION IN GAZA

This was supposed to be an editorial. At the last TYQ co-editors' meeting, I was asked to write a balanced editorial about the situation in Gaza. Several drafts later and I became convinced it was not possible to write a balanced piece on a conflict so unbalanced. This article is what I ended up writing instead.

At the time of writing, the BBC are reporting that since Israel launched "Operation Protective Edge", the fighting in and around the Gaza strip has had a death toll of 835.

While every one of those deaths is a tragic loss, the numbers speak for themselves. Seven hundred and ninety-eight Palestinians have been killed, 73% of them civilians, and 185 of them children. Israel's losses? 36, of whom all but two have been soldiers.

Israel's assault on Gaza has been justified in the name of stopping rocket attacks launched by Palestinian militants from Gaza, and destroying the tunnels by which goods are smuggled past the Israeli-imposed (and Egyptian-enforced) blockade of the area.

In a wider context, it is part of a sixty-year struggle over land, between the Jewish people seeking to re-establish a lost homeland and the Palestinians for whom Israel-Palestine was already home. (Of course, such a description is a vast oversimplification; but then, almost everything written about this conflict is.)

That context is important, of course; we should not forget that Israel, which seeks to be a refuge for the Jewish people from the anti-Semitism that did and does affect them in the rest of the world, has often acted in self-defence and has seen its own share of civilian casualties.

Nor should we forget the Palestinian diaspora, forced off their land by Jewish settlers and spread across the region, denied the 'Right of Return' to Israel-Palestine that is freely given to any Jew who asks for it.

Life as Normal?

But right now the world's attention is, rightly, on Gaza, and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the West Bank. It's on the 1.7 million people living in an area of just 139 square miles; an area the size of Sheffield with three times the population.

The economic blockade means that very little gets into Gaza without Israeli approval, and when even basic building materials are forbidden for fear they will be used to construct tunnels, it is impossible to rebuild damaged dwellings, let alone construct sufficient housing for Gaza's young and growing population. Even fuel and food supplies are generally only sufficient when augmented with supplies smuggled from Egypt.

Meanwhile in the West Bank, Israel continues a policy of supporting Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, in open breach of international law. Between settlements, Israeli-only roads, and the 'security fence' – or as it's also known, the apartheid wall – the Israeli government gradually cuts off the Palestinian population from their water supplies, their olive trees – a major economic resource – and even their homes.

Passage across the barrier is, of course, at the discretion of the Israelis, and even on a good day requires hours of queuing to cross. On a bad day it will mean not crossing at all, denying access to your family's land on the other side of the wall, or the jobs in Israel that are often the only source of work for Palestinians.

But all of that is just life as normal for people in occupied Palestine. What's been going on for the last couple of weeks is so much worse.

Escalating Conflict

The conflict has been slowly escalating all summer, since the disappearance and killing of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank in June. The details are unclear; the Israeli Security Agency have claimed that they knew the identities of the two perpetrators, who have links with

Hamas but were operating independently, immediately after the kidnapping. Nevertheless, the Israeli response involved arresting over 350 Palestinians and killing at least five, resulting in Amnesty International labelling Israel's tactics as collective punishment, in breach of the Geneva Conventions.

In Gaza, this prompted an increase in rocket attacks launched by militant groups including Hamas and the PIJ, to which Israel responded with a number of airstrikes. On 8 July, Operation Protective Edge was officially launched with Israel carrying out over 50 bombings in the Gaza strip.

By the 18 July, over 250 Palestinians were dead and Israel had launched a ground invasion of Gaza. Meanwhile shelling and airstrikes continued, striking targets including hospitals and schools. The Israeli military, the IDF, boast of their pinpoint accuracy, and the 'humanitarian' practice of phoning people in a targeted house around a minute before it is hit. This accuracy makes it clear that when Israel shells functioning hospitals such as al-Wafa or al-Aqsa, it is a deliberate act – and an overtly evil act.

Can we remain neutral?

You see why I said it was difficult to write a balanced piece? Israel is determined to portray the conflict as two-sided, as a matter of self-defence, and while there's a grain of historical truth there, it's not a depiction that matches modern reality. Israel is the oppressor in this situation; its conscripted armies are equipped with cutting edge technology, provided by a domestic arms industry that's the 11th largest arms exporter in the world, and backed up with financial and technological support from the USA.

In contrast, most of the rockets launched by the Palestinian resistance are home-made, and many are intercepted by Israel's high-tech 'Iron Dome' missile defence system. Israel describes those attacks, which have killed around 30 people in 14 years – as 'terrorism', and while they're cer-

EDITORIAL

tainly not justified, they are in many ways understandable; a cry of rage against the terrorism that the Israeli state is constantly enacting against the Palestinian people.

Am I being impartial here? I don't know. Yes, I haven't mentioned suicide bombings of Israeli civilians; but then, I haven't mentioned Palestinian children shot in the back by the IDF as they run away. I don't have the room to give the full history of the conflict, nor even a detailed account of the bloodshed that has taken place in Gaza this month.

But increasingly I feel that impartiality is not a goal I care about. In the words of Desmond Tutu, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." and I do not want to stand on the side of the oppressor.

It is easy to sit at home, thousands of miles away, and pray for peace, to preach about rejecting all carnal weapons. But as Quakers we are called to live out a testimony to peace, to equality – against injustice.

What can we do?

We must work earnestly, and diligently, towards peace and justice, to provide humanitarian support. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) have been doing just that in Palestine ever since 1948, and numerous Quakers and Quaker organisations have supported peace-building initiatives, from the Norwegian Quakers funding schools to QPSW's work facilitating the British part of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

But we can do even more. We can, and should, speak up and speak out against Israel, challenging their depiction of the conflict as two-sided, when it is a massacre, a genocide in slow motion. We can support Palestinian calls for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. We can lobby our MPs and MEPs and refuse to elect anyone who supports this seemingly endless bloodshed.

We'll have to be careful, of course. Quaker neutrality – or 'balanced partiality' – can open doors and allow us to improve lives; it should not be endangered lightly, and we should continue to support the good work of organisations like the AFSC to bring humanitarian relief.

There's a greater danger, too. To be partial on the side of the Palestinians must not mean turning against the Israeli people, only against the actions of their government, and we must be wary of the anti-Semitic conflation of the Israeli government with the Jewish people as a whole. Similarly, we should bear in mind that opposing Israel does not necessarily mean supporting Hamas, or Hezbollah, or Islamic Jihad, or other groups with blood on their hands.

But it does mean resisting the Israeli state when it acts as an oppressor. Thanks to its alliance with the USA, it violates international law with impunity, from its settlements to its use of collective punishment to its bombing of schools and hospitals to using flechette shells indiscriminately.

But more than violating international law (which, after all, allows for war, and nuclear weapons, and other such things), it is a state which kills and tortures indiscriminately.

It has killed around six hundred civilians in the last month; it has wounded many more, displaced over a hundred thousand, cut off water supplies to even more.

Today, the 26 July, there is a brief humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. This afternoon the killing will start again. I pray that it is over by the time this goes to print, but if it isn't? Then we have to stand up for the people of Israel and Palestine, against the government that is hurting them both.

Solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Tim Rouse

Reading, 26th July 2014

QUAKERS IN VIENNA

By Julian Wood

I attended Central European Gathering (CEG) in Vienna as the Delegate from European and Middle Eastern Young Friends (www.emeyf.org) from 29th May to 1st June 2014.

It was a very enjoyable weekend, and there were participants from twelve European countries: Belgium, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Scotland, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine, England and Austria. Most had not heard of EMEYF, and were glad to hear there is a group of Young Friends covering their geographical area.

There were two young adults on the weekend, and another joined us on the Sunday morning. Quakers are thinly spread in this area – there are a few meetings for worship (Vienna, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Moscow) and then there are isolated members in other areas and countries.

In Belarus, a meeting is run in the home of two members who were present, but this must be carried out secretly.

I spent over five years living in the Czech Republic, and speak Russian and German well, so it was great to meet a range of lovely people from my 'Second Home'. Our representation there was felt to be really beneficial, as was Alexandra Bosbeer's of QCEA.

The main outcome of the weekend was that members wanted to communicate more with each other between their annual Gatherings, to deepen their community, and I set up a Google Group to allow them to do this. I'll be part of this too, which will be a great way to continue to keep in relationship with these people and Quakerism in this area.

We are looking forward to welcome new EMEYFers from central Europe in the near future. All Young Friends who are travelling in Central Europe are encouraged to get in touch with meetings, visit local Friends and spread the word about EMEYF.

A is for Apple Crumble (or any other crumble depending on what food we remembered to order)

B is for Badminton and other sports we try to play (no ability required)

C is for Cake (and lots of it) and for Community (that we build so effectively at YFGM)

D is for Devotion (the devotion of post holders, and of everyone who turns up time after time)

E is for Everyone (and how we value each person who comes)

F is for flapjack (Andrew R's recipe is a winner)

G is for Gifted (each one of us is, in different ways, and we get to share all those gifts)

H is for Helpful (We are there for each other at YFGM, and look out for each other)

I is for Individuality (every YFGMer is an individual, which makes for a fab mix)

J is for Joy (We feel joy to have found YFGM and to feel a part of something great)

K is for Kindness (There are always random acts of kindness, like when we are playing 'Secret Friends')

L is for Laughter (You are guaranteed plenty of this, even in long business meetings)

M is for Meals (It's a pleasure to share, whatever might end up on the menu)

N is for Nomming (And politely resisting the latest role someone thinks you'd be perfect for!)

O is for Openness to new ideas (We learn from each other about the world)

P is for Planning Weekends (Including trying to get some planning done on them)

Q is for Quiet (there is a healthy dose of this at YFGM, amid the fun and activity!)

R is for Randomness ("What's next on the Timetable?" can elicit some surprising answers)

S is for Simplicity (We try our hardest to adhere to this principle, but often fail)

T is for Teamwork (Doing the washing up and making decisions)

U is for the Unexpected conversations you would never imagine having anywhere else!

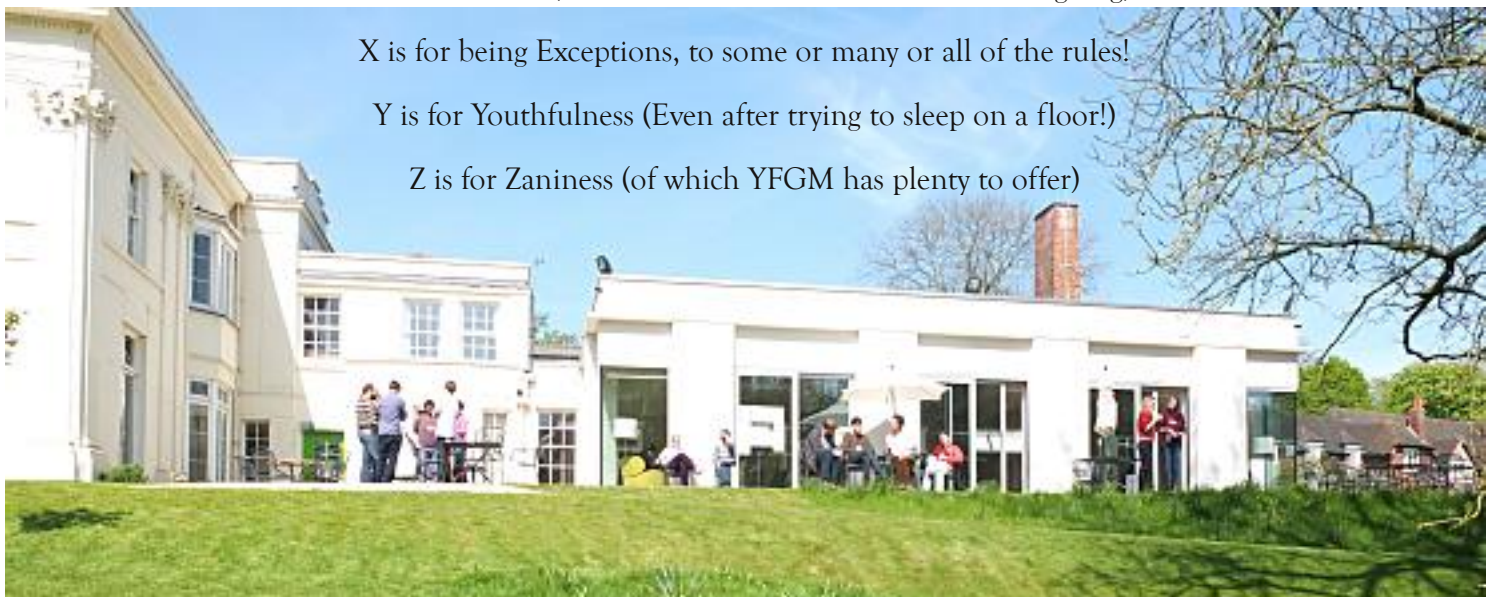
V is for Vibrancy (There is never a dull moment at a YFGM)

W is for Walks (sometimes we even know where we are going)

X is for being Exceptions, to some or many or all of the rules!

Y is for Youthfulness (Even after trying to sleep on a floor!)

Z is for Zaniness (of which YFGM has plenty to offer)



YFGM AT WOODBROOKE: LIVING IN LUXURY

On 2-5th of May, the May Bank Holiday weekend, over 60 Young F/friends gathered at Woodbrooke for the first ever YFGM gathering with beds and catered food! The beds and food encouraged twenty newcomers, and it was really exciting to see so many new faces. YFGM is a real community, and although it's always a joy to see familiar friends, I think most YFGMers would agree that encouraging new people to attend our gatherings is really important.

As ever, there was a full programme of activities, and the business meetings. The weather was excellent throughout the weekend, meaning time between sessions could be spent in the large grounds. Some simply enjoyed the gardens at Woodbrooke, some played volleyball, and others took a boat out on the Woodbrooke lake.

The non-business sessions were really enjoyable. Brownwen Gray spoke about The Retreat, York (www.theretreatyork.org.uk) which was set up by Quakers and still has a large Quaker involvement and ethos.

We learnt that Quakers have generously supported The Retreat since it was founded in 1796. The Retreat has been pioneering in its field, as it was the first institution to introduce the humane treatment of mentally-unwell patients. It also believed strongly in rehabilitation, giving rise to the field of Occupational Therapy.



There was a full-afternoon session with Wendy Hampton, a Quaker who is helping meetings look at the spiritual gifts of their individual members. We spent a very enjoyable afternoon mirroring back to each other the strengths we see in others but often fail to recognise in ourselves, whether that's due to modesty or a lack of self-confidence.

In groups we assembled islands from clay, and each group member approached the task in their own way-reminding us of the strengths each YFGMer has, and what wonderful creations can result from our group efforts!

The Bank Holiday weekend meant that this YFGM was three days long, and the beds, showers, and delicious Woodbrooke food meant that we were really able to make the most of the extra time.

On Saturday night, we relaxed around an impressive bonfire, singing songs - everything from hymns to Disney songs, and more besides. The next night was our last evening, and we had a wonderful cabaret, where we were treated to the combined talents of YFGMers - there was singing, dancing (including of The Charleston) and lots of laughs (and some tender moments).

Finally, the business meetings had an upbeat atmosphere. We appointed a new Co-Clerk (Peter Doubtfire) and YFGMers new and old, including several newcomers, were also appointed to roles.

YFGM at Woodbrooke was definitely a wonderful experience. Our next YFGM will be taking place from the 17th-19th October 2014 at Nottingham Meeting House, and all Young Friends aged 18-30(ish) are welcome.

For more information about YFGM, visit www.yfgm.quaker.org.uk or email yfgm@quaker.org.uk



Enjoying the sun: Becky, Catherine, and Abi

WHAT ARE QUAKERS?

The Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers, are a religious group which started in the north of England in the seventeenth century. Originally a Christian sect, modern Quakers include people from a multitude of religious and philosophical positions.

One of the key ideas in Quakerism is that truth isn't necessarily found in old scriptures, but can be revealed to anybody who listens for it. Quaker worship is mostly silent, with people speaking when they feel called to do so by the 'Inner Light', sometimes called 'that of God within everyone'.

Quakers are concerned with making the world a better place. Central to Quakerism are the Testimonies of Peace, Equality, Truth (or Integrity) and Simplicity. Others, such as a Testimony to the Environment, are also spoken of in some contexts.

A commitment to these principles has put Quakers at the forefront of political and social issues; for example, Quakers were among the leading groups who campaigned for the abolition of slavery, and in more recent years Quakers advocated strongly for the legalisation of same-sex marriage.

WHAT IS YFGM?

Young Friends General Meeting, abbreviated as YFGM, is the national community for young adult Quakers in Britain.

Our main events are the three General Meetings which take place at Quaker meeting houses around the country in February, May, and October each year.

These weekends are open to anyone aged between 18 and 30ish who is a Quaker or interested in Quakerism, from the UK or farther afield, and are a chance to meet like-minded people and find out more about what Young Adult Friends do.

YFGM is an autonomous organisation, entirely run by the young people who take part in it, using Quaker principles and methods. We're also an active part of the wider Quaker community in Britain, providing representatives to bodies such as Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker Life, and the NFPB.

If you'd like to get involved in YFGM, to come along to a YFGM event, or simply find out more, then visit the YFGM website at yfgm.quaker.org.uk or email yfgm@quaker.org.uk. You can also find the YFGM group on Facebook.

WHAT IS THE YOUNG QUAKER?

The *Young Quaker* is a magazine for young Friends everywhere, produced in print and online. Published by YFGM, TYQ comes out three times a year, to coincide with YFGM weekends - meaning that you can expect a new issue in February, May, and October.

The aim of TYQ is to share news, opinion, and pretty much anything that might be of interest to young Quakers.

All of our articles are either written by young Friends, about things that young Friends have been doing, or simply about things that young Friends might find interesting. Most of our articles tick two or three of those boxes, too.

We're always looking for new material. If you've got an idea for an article you'd like to see in *The Young Quaker*, get in touch with us at the email address below. If you're able to write it, even better!

Although our focus is on the UK, we also welcome articles from Quakers in other countries, and we also welcome submissions from people under 18; you might not be able to come to YFGM yet, but we'd love to hear from you.



Scan this QR code with your phone to experience the digital edition of TYQ

The Co-Editors would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of *The Young Quaker*. It would be impossible to produce the magazine without the articles and photographs that you send in.

Please get in touch if you would like to contribute to the next issue, due out in time for the next YFGM in October. We would welcome any submissions for this edition no later than the **3rd October 2014**

Co-Editors for this Issue:
TIM ROUSE and JULIAN WOOD

The *Young Quaker* can be found online at
www.theyoungquaker.org.uk

For all enquiries, including advertising enquiries, please contact the TYQ team by emailing
theyoungquaker@gmail.com

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www.yfgm.quaker.org.uk

The next YFGM will take place on the **17th-19th October** at Nottingham Meeting House

Young Friends General Meeting
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London NW1 2BJ

MEET THE YFGMERS:

RAJIT



"I'm Rajit. I'm an accountant working in international development, and I enjoy the workshops and community aspects of YFGM"