

IYM PUBLIC LECTURE2017 – with final amendments .

Thank you, Dan, for your kind introduction.

“The Way, the Truth and the Life”

— what does this mean for us today?

Introduction

Dear Friends –

It is with great joy and humility that I stand here before you all this evening.

First, I must outline the strands of my presentation to you...

I considered an academic approach, with a broad sweep over several thousand years, but instead I want to take you on a journey.

- ***The Way, the Truth and the Life* (see John 14:6)**
- **Historical background:** Reformation, 17C Seekers, The First Quakers
- **My journey**
- ***What does this mean for us today?***
- **What is our message for today and for the future?**
- **Conclusion**

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Use of language

Please understand that quotations, whether Biblical or Quaker, may be expressed in language of the time in which they were written. This may include the use of expressions of an earlier time as well as a lack of use of inclusive language. However, it is not my intention to speak in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek or Latin!

I am also very aware that because we do not require everyone to sign up to a creed, or set formula of beliefs, there is a broad theological diversity among the membership of Ireland Yearly Meeting. I ask you all to listen with open minds and try to understand the meaning behind the words. We were all challenged during the process of revising our book of *Quaker Life and Practice – A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland*, which was published in 2012. I hope that we can use challenges as opportunities for growth in understanding, deepening faith and building stronger communities.

Biblical quotations will be from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible 1989*.¹

¹ The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

My title for this evening is intended to embrace the challenge of the biblical text as well as ways in which it has affected people’s lives and might be interpreted for us today.

In **John 14:6 -7** Jesus responds to Thomas’ query by saying, **‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me.⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

In verses 10-11 he adds, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; **but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.”**

Verse 15 reads “if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (another helper), to be with you forever. This is the **Spirit of Truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

John 8:12 states: ¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **‘I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the **light of life.**’

In the Greek text, the writer’s use of “I am” serves to emphasise particular statements in John’s Gospel.

John 6: 35, 48 **I am the bread of life**

John 8: 12, 9:5 **I am the light of the world**

John 8: 58 **Before Abraham was, I am**

John 10:9 **I am the door**

John 10:11 **I am the good shepherd**

John 11:25 **I am the resurrection and the life**

John 14:6 **I am the way, the truth, and the life**

John 15:1 **I am the true vine**

In **James 2:14-17** we read: ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters,^[a] if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,¹⁶ and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?¹⁷ So **faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.**

Jesus was preaching a way of life.

Historical background:

Reformation - 17C Seekers - The First Quakers

I would like at this point to go back to **the beginnings of Quakerism**.

The Book of Joel 2: 28-29 says: *“Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.”*

The seventeenth century was a time of political and religious unrest in England and in Europe, where the thirty years war dragged on from 1618-1648. A century earlier, in 1517, **Martin Luther**, who was deeply concerned about the selling of indulgences, is said to have nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in **Wittenburg**, Germany. The document began:

Out of love for the truth and from desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer therein at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. Therefore he asks that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.²

The increasing theological questioning and religious dissent gave rise to the **Reformation**.

Religion and Politics

In 1534 the English Parliament declared Henry VIII “ecclesiastically supreme” and “Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church”, an action which severed Rome’s authority over the church in England. Politics and religion were thus inextricably intertwined.

In **1546**, **Anne Askew** was burned at the stake in London. She was twenty five years old when she was martyred for her faith, which had developed through her biblical studies. She suffered the

² <http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html> accessed 29.11.09.

inquisition, imprisonment in Newgate, and the rack in the Tower of London.³ *Fox’s Book of Martyrs* says that the Lord Chancellor offered her the king’s pardon if she would recant, but she answered that:

She came not thither to deny her Lord and Master. And thus the good Anne Askew, being compassed in with flames of fire, as a blessed sacrifice unto God, slept in the Lord, A.D. 1546, leaving behind her a singular example of Christian constancy for all men to follow.⁴

The invention of the **printing press** meant that religious books and tracts became more easily accessible to more people. In **1537** the **Coverdale Bible**, the first complete Bible in English, was published. In **1560** the **Geneva Bible** (also known as the *Puritan* or *Breeches Bible*), was printed in Geneva. It was:

a meticulous rendering from Greek and Hebrew original translations and the first complete English Bible to be divided into verses, the first to be set in Roman type and to use italics for omitted words in the original; meant for the common people, 140 editions were published from 1560-1644.⁵

The **King James Authorised Version** of the Bible was published in **1611** and widely distributed.

James I of England (and VI of Scotland), believed in the Divine right of Kings and ruled from 1603-1625. He considered himself a Reformed Protestant.⁶ He was followed by Charles I (1625-1649), a

³ M. Webb, *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall and their Friends; with an account of their ancestor, Anne Askew, the Martyr*. 2nd Edition, (London: F. Bowyer Kitto, 1867) 6-23. Note: Anne Askew’s great-grand-daughter was Margaret Fell, who later married George Fox.

⁴ J. Fox (Foxe), Ed. W.B. Forbush, D.D., *Fox’s Book of Martyrs – A History of the Lives, Sufferings and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and the Protestant Martyrs*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1926, 1967, 1968) 228.

⁵ <http://clausenbooks.com/bible1600.htm> accessed 29.11.09.

⁶ D. MacCulloch, *Reformation – Europe’s House Divided 1490-1700*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2004), 514.

devout High Churchman.⁷ Increasing political and religious unrest led to the English Civil War (1642-51), the Commonwealth and Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell (Lord Protector), before Charles II came to the throne in 1660. Anglicanism flourished under Charles II, but he converted to Roman Catholicism on his deathbed.⁸ James II (a Catholic) succeeded to the throne in 1685, but his unpopularity caused the revolution of 1688. William (of Orange) and Mary, who were Protestants, were subsequently crowned King and Queen of England. A major cause of tension from the time of Henry VIII was that some monarchs were Protestant and some were Catholic.⁹ Should primary allegiance be given to the monarch as head of the Church of England, or to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church? The population was expected to conform, and both church and state machinery were activated to ensure that they did.

Puritanism

Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), who came from relatively humble origins and was a convinced Puritan, organised and led an army of Roundheads. He was Lord Protector of England from 1654-8. His Irish ventures are a separate story.

Cromwell's overriding concern in domestic policy was the creation of a broadly-based national church with toleration of radical Protestant groups who remained outside it but were prepared to keep the peace. During the first year of the Protectorate, a central commission of clergy and laymen was established to examine candidates for the ministry ("Triers") and local commissions were appointed to eject ministers who proved unsuitable ("Ejectors"). Although Cromwell's religious policy made steady progress towards reconciliation among the Protestant sects, the emergence of the Quakers, who opposed all organised churches, was disruptive and alarming.¹⁰

Indeed, Cromwell's generals in both England and Ireland had problems with soldiers who became Quakers and subsequently refused to fight. William Edmondson, who established the first Quaker

⁷ D. MacCulloch, *Reformation – Europe's House Divided 1490-1700*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 516.

⁸ Ibid. 531.

⁹ Ibid. 280, 286. Queen Mary (Tudor) 1553-58 had been a devout Roman Catholic. She was succeeded by Elizabeth I, a Protestant Queen who reigned from 1558-1603.

¹⁰ <http://www.british-civil-wars.co.uk/biog/oliver-cromwell.htm> accessed 29.11.09.

Meeting in Ireland, at Lurgan (1654), had fought with Cromwell’s Parliamentary Army at the battle of Worcester, before his convincement.¹¹ Maurice Wigham wrote in his book *The Irish Quakers- a Short History of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* that “Friends had ready listeners among the soldiers stationed throughout the country” (Ireland). Some soldiers were imprisoned, cashiered, or on discovering that their consciences prevented them from carrying arms, were simply turned out.¹²

In England, Puritans were not satisfied that the state church was either sufficiently free of Catholic practices or sufficiently faithful in its doctrine to what they supposed the Bible to teach. Puritans believed that scripture was the final authority in matters of faith and practice. “Their criticisms of the organisation, worship and doctrines of the established church were based on the conviction that, as they stood, these things were offensive to what the Bible taught.”¹³ They rejected episcopacy because they could not accept any government of the Church except through Christ, its head. Similarly, Presbyterianism had “ministers and elders, for teaching, preaching and the ordinances of baptism and the supper, but not for an authority that by its actions supplanted Christ.”¹⁴ The bishops’ courts engaged in a constant battle throughout this period with Puritan vicars and congregations who would not bow to Episcopal instructions as to how worship should be conducted.¹⁵

Fenny Drayton, in Leicestershire, was the birthplace of George Fox, the founder of Quakerism. George’s father was twice churchwarden in the local church, where the rector was imprisoned and

¹¹ M.J.Wigham, *The Irish Quakers- A Short History of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland*, (Dublin: Historical Committee of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, 1992) 17.

¹² Ibid. 23.

¹³ J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey – A short history of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984, 2006) 18.

¹⁴ Ibid. 18-19.

¹⁵ Ibid. 19.

deprived of his living, while some parishioners were excommunicated for failure to conform to the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁶ Some Puritans followed John Calvin, others did not.

At the centre of Puritanism was a profound experience of divine grace, an awareness of the reality of God, a confidence in his providence, and a reliance on his illimitable love. This experience came painfully, through crisis, through the acknowledgement of one’s status as sinful and lost, and through the realisation that personal acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross meant forgiveness and freedom from the dire penalties that were the destiny of the unrepentant. The first notes of the Puritan’s reformation symphony were glory, triumph and joy.¹⁷

Seeking and Finding

Early in the seventeenth century the Presbyterians, the Baptists, and the Congregationalists/Independents emerged. A group of Separatists moved from Lincolnshire to the Netherlands. Some of this group then sailed on the Mayflower to America in 1620, becoming known as the Pilgrim Fathers. Separation meant persecution, and Puritans certainly had the courage of their convictions. “The Quakers, who possibly suffered more at the hands of the national church than other groups, were not breaking new ground in this respect.”¹⁸ In 1652, George Fox met a large group of Christians in Westmoreland and North Lancashire, whom he called separatists.

For many years before the rise of Quakers, there had been other small communities of people in England, who were not looking for a written record for the way to salvation, but for a direct encounter with the Saviour himself. Many were humble and discreet. Recognising the truth of Paul’s dictum that **the letter kills and the spirit gives life** (See 2 Cor 3:6), they sought the life of the spirit. The first itinerant Quaker preachers brought to these people a coherence that they had not known before. The light of Christ, brought to their spiritual searching, created a harmonious and credible whole. Seekers became finders. In different parts of the country, from various viewpoints including

¹⁶ J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey – A short history of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984, 2006)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. 23

separatist congregations, or in silent dissent from the established church, they found in the Society of Friends, as many ex-Puritans did, a new kind of fulfilment.¹⁹

As people moved from England to the continent and back, so did their religious ideas and beliefs. The Lollards and Anabaptists had been in existence for some long time. The name ‘Lollard’ was originally given to the preaching priests associated with **John Wycliffe** (d. 1384), who advocated free access to scripture and translated the Bible into English to make it possible. The Lollards were dying out by the early seventeenth century. They “had called for ‘evangelical poverty’, and faced a worldly, political Church with the challenge of separation from the world.”²⁰ A central tenet of the **Anabaptists** was that “the Church was a fellowship constituted through the Holy Spirit of those who had come into membership of it by their own free choice.” Its adherents were fully committed to obedience to Christ’s teachings, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. They believed in non-violence and freedom of conscience.²¹

Hans Denck (c.1500-1527), coming from an Anabaptist background, wrote that:

I hold the scriptures dear above all men’s treasures, but not as high as the Word of God which is living, strong, eternal and free of all the elements of this world; for inasmuch as it is God Himself, it is spirit and not letter, written without pen or paper so that it can never be erased. Consequently, salvation is not bound to Scripture, even though Scripture may be conducive to salvation. The reason is this: Scripture cannot possibly change an evil heart even though it may make men more learned.²²

John Punshon writes in his book: *Portrait in Grey – A Short History of the Quakers*:

If only Christ in the heart can unlock the meaning of scripture, the weight of importance will shift from externals to internals, from theology to spirituality. Salvation will come to be seen less as the once-and-for-all reconciliation achieved by the historical Jesus on the cross,

¹⁹ J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey – A short history of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984, 2006) 24.

²⁰ J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey – A short history of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984, 2006) 24-25.

²¹ Ibid. 25.

²² Ibid. 27.

perceived intellectually, and **more as a process of maturing within the soul as the Christian is led to become more Christ-like.**²³

Radical Christians learned, and continue to learn, from one another. Other early seventeenth-century religious groups included the Waterlander Mennonites and the Collegiants, who came from the Netherlands, the Ranters, Seekers, and the Fifth Monarchy Men.

The Seekers believed that the **New Testament Church** was characterised by the presence of the Holy Spirit and that true reformation would require the direct action of God himself. They felt deeply the divisions in the **churches of the Reformation** and with a discipline of prayer, works of charity and searching the scriptures, they gathered in silent waiting for new prophets or Apostles with the gift of the **Holy Spirit**, who would re-establish the true Church in visible glory and unity. They rejected all outward show of religion including sacraments, a ministry and church order.²⁴

George Fox and the beginning of Quakerism

It was in this period of unrest that George Fox (1624-1691) was seeking. He was well-versed in the Bible. In 1647 he wrote in his Journal:

As I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, ‘**There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition**’, and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give Him all the glory... **This I knew experimentally.**²⁵

²³ Ibid. 27.

²⁴ J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey – A short history of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984, 2006) 34.

²⁵ *Quaker Faith and Practice – The book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*, (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995-2004) 19.02.

Fox became a travelling preacher, gathering crowds wherever he went. He wrote much in addition to his Journal. Through his sufferings, he came to understand that it was **needful to have a sense of all conditions so that he could speak to all conditions** “and in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness”.²⁶

Now the Lord God hath opened to me by his invisible power how that every man was enlightened by the **divine light of Christ**; and I saw it shine through all, and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the light of life and became the children of it, but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ.²⁷

Elizabeth Hooton (1600 -1672) was a former Baptist preacher and one of the first to be convinced by Fox’s teaching. She played a prominent part in the movement, suffering much in the Quaker cause, both in Britain and overseas.²⁸

George Fox believed that:

So as man and woman come again to God, and are renewed up into his image, righteousness and holiness by Christ, thereby they come up into the **Paradise of God**, the state which man was in before he fell, and into a higher state than that, to sit down in Christ that never fell.²⁹

In a general epistle of 1667 Fox wrote:

They that offered in the Jews’ temple were to wear the holy garments. So are you to do that are the true Christians, and are called a royal priesthood. What! Are all true Christians priests? Yes. What! Are women priests? Yes, women priests. And can men and women offer sacrifices without they wear the holy garments? No. What are the holy garments men and women must wear? The fine linen and they must go in white. What! Is this the priest’s surplice? Nay... it is **the righteousness of Christ**, which is the righteousness of the saints,

²⁶ *Quaker Faith and Practice – The book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*, (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995-2004) 19.03.

²⁷ Ibid. 19.04.

²⁸ Ibid. 19.05.

²⁹ Ibid. 19.29.

this is the royal garment of the royal priesthood, which everyone must put on, men and women.³⁰

Christine Trevett, in her book, *Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century*, observes that women were attracted to Quakerism in large numbers and that “it offered them unheard of opportunities for action in the sphere of religion and a rationale for public activity which was liberating.” She continues, “Since Friends did not acknowledge rigid distinctions between the religious, the social and the political, Quaker women found themselves with rights, indeed obligations, to have views on essential issues of the day.”³¹

Women Friends preached publicly, often to large gatherings. They travelled to minister, usually two at a time but sometimes in larger groups. They shared the charismatic experiences of their ministering brethren, indulged in shocking ‘prophetic’ public gestures, harassed the clergy, refused tithe payment and the swearing of oaths and were punished accordingly.³²

In June 1660, **Margaret Fell** delivered to **Charles II** a paper directed to the king and both houses of parliament making clear **the corporate testimony of Friends ‘against all strifes and wars’**, and saying that **‘We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity; it is our desire that others’ feet may walk in the same.’**

Quakers developed **testimonies** regarding truth, integrity, oaths, peace, equality, justice, simplicity, plainness of speech and dress.

William Penn, who became a Quaker while looking after his father’s estate in Ireland and later went on to found Pennsylvania, wrote in 1682, “**True Godliness** don’t turn men out of the world, but

³⁰ Ibid. 19.31.

³¹ Trevett, C., *Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century*, (York: Sessions Book Trust, The Ebor Press, 1991, 1995) 14.

³² Ibid. 14-15.

enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it: not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.”³³ In 1694 he wrote of early Friends that:

They were changed men themselves before they went about to change others. Their hearts were rent as well as their garments, and they knew the power and work of God upon them... And as they freely received what they had to say from the Lord, so they freely administered it to others. The bent and stress of their ministry was conversion to God, regeneration and holiness, not schemes of doctrines and verbal creeds or new forms of worship, but a leaving off in religion the superfluous and reducing the ceremonious and formal part, and pressing earnestly the substantial, the necessary and profitable part.³⁴

The basis of the unity which Quakers feel with one another is not doctrine but an attitude which gave rise to one of their earlier names – Friends of Truth.³⁵

The following passage is from "The testimony of **Margaret Fox** concerning her late husband," from *The Journal of George Fox*, 1694. (George Fox and Margaret Fell had married in 1669). Margaret Fell is describing George Fox's "sermon" at the Ulverston steeple-house. It was the first time she had heard him speak.

And so he (George Fox) went on, and said, "**That Christ was the Light of the world**, and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this light they might be gathered to God,"... I stood up in my pew, and wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the scriptures, and said, "The scriptures were the prophets' words, and Christ's and the apostles' words, and what, as they spoke, they enjoyed and possessed, and had it from the Lord": and said, "Then what had any to do with the scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth? You will say, 'Christ saith this, and the apostles say this;' but **what canst**

³³ *Quaker Faith and Practice – The book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*, (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995-2004) 21.17.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 19.48.

³⁵ J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey – A short history of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984, 2006) 9.

thou say? Art thou a child of the Light, and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?"³⁶

...

My journey:

One of my favourite pictures/metaphors is of a **mountain**, with a variety of paths, cul-de-sacs, cliffs, beautiful views, treacherous bogs and fog. There can also be a desert and arid plains. We all set out to get to the top of a mountain, but choose different routes, with varying results. We may all get to the top in the end, but it will take a great deal of effort and on the way we have a range of experiences, not all of them pleasant.

George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, wrote in his Journal that in 1647:

The Lord shewed me that the natures of those things which were hurtful without, were within in the hearts and minds of wicked men... And I cried to the Lord, saying, ‘Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?’ And the Lord answered that **it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions**; and in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.³⁷ (G Fox Journal 1647)

Our journey this evening starts exactly where we are at this moment.

Some of you will be aware that I spent the first eleven years of my life here where the High School stands today. **Danum** was our home. My grandfather built a large redbrick house right here and developed a farm with pedigree jersey cattle, trotting ponies and a large walled garden with heated greenhouses and even a peach tree. His father Joshua Bewley had a shop in Sycamore Alley, near Eustace Street, in Dublin city. A bag of coffee beans was the start of what became Bewleys Oriental Cafes and a successful business. Jersey milk, eggs and vegetables were supplied from this farm. The house was big enough that later on my parents, Victor and Winifred Bewley, my sisters Winifred, Heather and I lived upstairs in **Danum Firs** and Alfred and Mary Bewley and their family lived downstairs in **Danum Meadows**. We had a very happy childhood and enjoyed welcoming overseas visitors to Yearly Meeting.

³⁶ <http://www.qis.net/~daruma/foxfell.html> accessed 22.3.2017.

³⁷ *Quaker Faith and Practice – The book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*, (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995-2004) 19.03

We walked to Churchtown Meeting on Sunday mornings and cycled to Rathgar Junior School on weekdays, before going to Newtown School, Waterford, as boarders. My parents gave me an illustrated Bible on my 9th birthday. We had a good Quaker education – and both schools are still thriving today. On Sundays at Newtown we learned a few Bible verses before going down town to Meeting for Worship. My guiding memory is of Micah 6:8:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

On leaving school I attended the **Geneva Summer School** to learn about the United Nations. This was organised by the **Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva (QUNO)**.

It was when I went to study Hotel Management in the Vocational School, St. Mary's College, Cathal Brugha Street, in Dublin city centre, that Wendy Montgomery and I found ourselves to be in a minority of twelve among a student population of 250 (we had grown up in a country which was 95% Roman Catholic). We had very interesting conversations with our Roman Catholic fellow students from various parts of Ireland, particularly after their weekly Religious Education classes. It was a new experience for all of us and we enjoyed ourselves. Why were these weekly religion classes an integral part of Hotel Management training? This is an interesting question. They even offered to bring a Quaker in to meet with Wendy and myself. We thanked them for the kind thought, decided this would not be necessary and climbed Nelson's Pillar instead!

There followed a busy year working in a large Quaker guesthouse in France and a hotel in Zurich, Switzerland. I had embarked on a career in a service industry.

This also meant that it was often not possible to attend a place of worship on a Sunday. However, as Quakers believe that the whole of life should be sacred and that one can worship any day at any time, I recalled the early Friends who worshipped in prison or opened their shops on Christmas Day and chose to close them at other times to gather for worship. Of course one can pray in a busy kitchen or in a public park. I even walked on water! The winter of 1962-1963 was very harsh and the Zurichsee froze over completely, so we were able to walk right across the lake from one side to the other. It took ¾ hour!

I returned home to work in Bewleys Oriental Cafes for a year, developed a concern to go and work for Friends overseas and found myself spending three years as Assistant Warden in the **Friends International Centre** in London! We created a home from home for people from around the world, having guests from over 50 countries each year, many of them students. I knew that my Grandmother, Susan Bewley had spent her early years in **Madagascar** where her parents had been Quaker missionaries. I had been called to welcome people from around the world to the large city of London! It took me another 45 years before I reached Africa.

The Quaker **Peace Testimony** has always been important. **1965** was International Co-operation Year. Roisin Yasin and I were fortunate to attend an East/West conference cruising

down the River Danube with delegates from 20 different Eastern and Western European countries. We travelled from Vienna to Bucharest (Romania) and back on a Hungarian boat. This was at the height of the Cold War and we were greeted by red flags at every stop on our journey. Our language skills were tested to the utmost but it was fascinating.

Douglas and Dorothy Steere visited the International Centre on a few occasions. Douglas was a Quaker Observer to the **Second Vatican Council** in Rome. They were both deeply spiritual. Douglas was Chairman of the Friends World Committee for Consultation from 1965-70. He travelled and wrote extensively during a lifetime of service for the Religious Society of Friends. Douglas V. Steere's biography by E. Glenn Hinson is called *Love at the Heart of Things*.³⁸ Yukio Irie, a Japanese Quaker, wrote in the book *A Zen-Christian Pilgrimage – The Fruits of Ten Annual Colloquia in Japan 1967-1976*. “Since 1956 Douglas Steere had been strongly emphasising the necessity of contact and mutual understanding on a deeper level between Christianity and other world religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.”³⁹ This book contains the papers resulting from these deliberations.

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Fourth World Conference took place in Guilford College, North Carolina, in 1967. I was delighted to be appointed as one of 2000 participants. The location was conditional on the full integration of persons of colour. The conference was addressed by U Thant, who was Secretary General of the United Nations at the time. My parents had spent their honeymoon at the 1937 World Conference!

I remember one time asking my father about God. He responded that “**God is Love.**” (See 1 John 4:7-21) I innocently thought that seemed too simple an answer as I considered the various churches and their structures. While Dad continued to live out his faith in very practical ways (building community, working for reconciliation, visiting the sick and in prison, quietly giving to those in need, employing people who were deaf, dumb, blind or illiterate, working for the betterment of travellers and others... I set off in search of “The Truth” – I wanted to find the answer for myself! Mother had given me a love of books and I was on a journey.

There followed a year at Woodbrooke College⁴⁰ in Birmingham, England, as a student of Biblical, Quaker and Social Studies. I had questions and really wanted to learn more. I also did a course in the local mental hospital which was intended for trainee pastors. Education has always been important for Quakers. I stayed on in Selly Oak for a further year as Domestic Bursar in Fircroft, a working men's college situated next door to Woodbrooke. This was at the time when the coal mines were being closed and miners were having to re-educate and find other employment. I visited a working men's club with some students and went on a visit to the Scott Bader Commonwealth to learn about Common Ownership as a business model.

³⁸ E Glenn Hinson, *Love at the Heart of Things – A Biography of Douglas V. Steere*, (Pendle Hill Publications, 1998).

³⁹ *A Zen-Christian Pilgrimage – The Fruits of Ten Annual Colloquia in Japan 1967-1976*, (The Zen-Christian Colloquium 1981), 5.

⁴⁰ Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046, Bristol Road, Birmingham, England.

1968-1969 was a time of student marches and revolts in Europe and America. It was also when the Troubles started in Northern Ireland.

After five years in England I returned home in 1969 and spent the next 16 years working in Bewleys Cafes, based in Westmoreland Street. **In 1972, Bewleys Cafes Ltd became a common ownership company.** There were no longer any private shareholders and anyone working in the company for at least three years could become a member of the Bewley Community. **Perhaps we too should ask the question** “Why should the rich get richer at the expense of the less well off? **What about the Quaker Testimony to Equality?**

I took up Table Tennis, joined the Dublin Monthly Meeting Peace Committee and Working for Peace, as well as becoming a founder member of the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation. Life was very busy. I became a member of the Northern Ireland Committee of Britain and Ireland Yearly Meetings. I went on peace marches, visited Leinster House and Stormont, met people of a wide range of political viewpoints. If I had a reason to travel to Northern Ireland or Britain, I went.

Our 7th **Query for Serious Consideration** reads: *Do you live in that life and power which takes away the occasion of violent conflict, and with God’s help work for reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations? Do you faithfully maintain our witness that all war, or preparation for it, is inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of Christ?*⁴¹

In 1981, I was appointed **Clerk of Dublin Monthly Meeting** for three years, which also gave me the opportunity to represent Friends at ecumenical events.

With Monthly Meeting’s blessing, I visited the USSR in 1983 with a representative from each of three other Irish organisations, at the invitation of the Soviet Peace Committee. It was a very special and quite exhausting experience, as we met a range of people in Moscow and Minsk. We also visited the War Cemetery at Khatyn and Museum of the Great Patriotic War (World War II). The Khatyn memorial is a **tribute to almost three million Belarusians who died during the Great Patriotic War (World War 2)**. It stands 54km north-east of Minsk in the Minsk region of Belarus. It was a deeply disturbing experience to be faced with the reality of war and to watch newlyweds paying their respects to the dead. However, it was clear to us that the Russians wanted to make connections and they asked us how we felt international relationships could be improved.

In 1986 John and I, just two months after the Chernobyl disaster, visited **East Germany** – Dresden, Berlin, checkpoint Charlie, Potsdam, **Wittenburg**, Leipzig and Colditz (all significant places in history). From the top of the Communications tower in East Berlin, we saw the Berlin wall snaking through the city. Having grown up in neutral Ireland, I found this hard to comprehend. And still there are dividing walls in Israel/Palestine, Belfast and even the Great Wall of China. Of course I have clear memories of armed border checkpoints here in Ireland. **Surely we should be building bridges instead of walls?** There is still so much work to be done.

⁴¹ *Quaker Life and Practice – A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (2012)273

John Bateman and I had married in 1984 and we decided to attend the Church of Ireland and Quaker Meeting on alternate Sundays. This worked well for us and when John died of cancer in 1999, his funeral service was held in Zion Church of Ireland (where we had met playing table tennis many years previously) and his remains were interred in the Friends Burial Ground, Temple Hill, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, beside my parents. All the local churches were represented as we were active in the Rathgar/Terenure Interfaith Fellowship. It was the close of a year in which my father, a personal friend and my husband had died. In addition, my uncle Alfred Bewley was buried on 31st December, just before the dawn of the new Millennium.

At John’s funeral, my “in-laws” from West Cork appreciated singing the hymn “O Brother Man, fold to thy heart thy Brother”? (written by the American Quaker John Greenleaf Whittier) to the tune of the Londonderry Air. Zion Church is just at the top of this road and I would really appreciate it if you will join me in singing the hymn now as an alternative to giving you a shuffle break!!

O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

For he whom Jesus loved has truly spoken:
The holier worship which He deigns to bless
Restores the lost, and binds the spirit broken,
And feeds the widow and the fatherless.

Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him Whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our Father’s temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

Then shall all shackles fall; the stormy clangour
Of wild war music o’er the earth shall cease;
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.⁴²

Pause.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.
(1 Corinthians 13:13)

Life continues...

⁴² <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/b/obrother.htm> accessed 19.4.2017.

I was reappointed as Clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting and together we worked and prayed over the task of revising our (1962) book of *Christian Experience*. The revised text was finally agreed by Yearly Meeting 2006. *Quaker Life and Practice – A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* was published in 2012.

⁴³ As most of you are aware, there is a broad theological diversity within Ireland Yearly meeting and we had all been challenged along the way as we endeavoured to discern (without any vote being taken) the will of God for us all in this particular situation. It still gives me joy every time I see someone walk into Meeting for Worship carrying a copy of our new *Quaker Life and Practice*.

2007 brought the Friends World Committee for Consultation Triennial to Dublin.

310 Quakers from around the world assembled in the Kings Hospital School for the event. The previous Triennial had been held in New Zealand. It was wonderful to see the faces of all the Friends who had been able to walk straight through immigration thanks to the dedicated work of others during the previous two years. FWCC celebrated its 70th Birthday!

A pilgrimage to the 1652 (George Fox) country⁴⁴ followed for a group of us, including three American Quaker Pastors.

By this time I was quite exhausted and needed a break... I had not really had time to grieve.

George Fox wrote in his Journal in 1648:⁴⁵

*Now the Lord God hath opened to me by his invisible power how that **every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ**; and I saw it shine through all, and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the light of life and became the children of it, but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light without the help of any man, **neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it.***

I had come to understand **Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection** in a new way. The Millennium Good News Bible had a cartoon of people carrying their burdens and leaving them at the foot of the cross. On my annual visit to Croagh Patrick⁴⁶ I invested in a simple **Celtic cross** made of turf and resin. It held me and my three personal losses together in my own non-conformist way.

My spiritual search had been on-going. I had completed the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin's Certificate Course in Theology, I had attended four years of lectures in the Irish

⁴³ *Quaker Life and Practice – A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (2012).

⁴⁴ See <http://www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk/quakers/1652-pilgrimages.php>

⁴⁵ *Quaker Faith and Practice* 19.04

⁴⁶ A mountain of pilgrimage in Co. Mayo, Ireland.

School of Ecumenics and I needed a break from Quaker committees, so realising that Quakerism is very firmly bible based, I enrolled for **Biblical Studies** lectures in the Roman Catholic **Milltown Institute**. After three intensive years study and thanks to Kieran O’Mahony OSA who had managed to see potential in the weary Quaker who had arrived on the doorstep, I emerged with my **MA in Biblical Studies**,

I immediately embarked on a five year term as **Clerk of the Europe and Middle East Section of the FWCC**, to be followed by my present role as Clerk of Dublin Monthly Meeting (second time around!).

Somewhere along the line I also found time to serve seven rewarding years as an Irish representative on the **Quaker Peace and Service Central Committee (QPSCC)** and nine years on the **Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting (QCCIR)**.

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So -What does this mean for us today? – Where do we go from here?

2017 – Marks 500 years since the start of the Reformation

2017 also marks the centenary of the Russian revolution

2017 is the 70th anniversary of Quakers being awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize**.⁴⁷ It was awarded in 1947 to the Friends Service Council of London and Ireland Yearly Meetings and the American Friends Service Committee for work in Europe after World War II. The Friends Ambulance Unit had also given front-line service during two World Wars. It was accepted on behalf of Quakers around the world.

What is our message for today and the way forward?

What is Quakerism for us today?

George Fox (1624 – 1691) is recognised as the founder of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Quakerism dates back to 1652 and began in the North of England.

Fox was well-versed in the Bible and became a travelling preacher. He came to realise that it was possible to have a direct relationship with God, without the need of any intermediary. Over time seekers became finders and the good news spread rapidly. The first Meeting for Worship in Ireland was established by William Edmundson in Lurgan in 1654. Friends travelled to Europe and America within a few years. Early Friends were accused of heresy, but maintained that they were firmly within the Christian tradition - Followers of the Life and

⁴⁷ <http://quakernobel.org> accessed 19.4.2017.

Teachings of Jesus Christ. **The early Seekers after Truth** were very firmly bible-based. They wanted to get rid of unnecessary accretions to the basic message and ministry of Jesus Christ, Son of God. George Fox sought the Spirit which gave forth the Gospels and encouraged others to do so also. **They understood Christianity as a Way of Life. Jesus Christ had come to teach his people himself. Primitive Christianity was being revived. The whole of life was sacred.** They had been living in turbulent times. They were working to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth in their lifetime. “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*” (John 1:5)

They defended themselves vigorously against the accusations of heresy⁴⁸ and refused to swear on the bible or pay tithes to clergy whose services they did not attend. Their integrity meant they became successful in business and education was important. From the beginning there was equal opportunity for women to get involved and Margaret Fell played an important leadership role in supporting travelling ministers, using her experience and resources to great effect. Margaret Fell was a great grand-daughter of Anne Askew, who had been burned at the stake for her faith in the previous century (1546). Sadly I do not have time to tell you of the ministry of many other early Friends, both men and women.

There are many records of travelling Quaker Ministers, both men and women. Organisation and structures developed to support Friends in prison and their families, as well as nurturing spiritual direction and focus. There are no votes taken in the Quaker business method. The intention in **Meetings for Worship for Business** is to seek collectively the will of God: “*Not my will or thy will, but what is God’s will for us in this particular situation.*” The Clerk seeks the “sense of the meeting” and the minute should be agreed before moving on to the next item of business. Quakers wrote epistles, journals and minutes of business meetings which have been carefully collected and stored for future generations. These records can be found principally in Friends House, London, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, here in our Friends Historical Library in Quaker House Dublin, as well as centres in America.

Quakerism has evolved over time. In Europe and the Middle East worship is mostly unprogrammed and without pastors, whereas in other parts of the world one can find Friends Churches with pastors, programmed services and enthusiastic songs of praise.

*God is met in the gathered Meeting for Worship and through the Spirit leads us into ways of life and understandings of truth which we recognise as Quaker.*⁴⁹

While we do not subscribe to a written creed, a series of **Advices and Queries**⁵⁰ were formulated and written responses were expected on a regular basis. These are still read regularly, but written responses are no longer required. **Quaker Testimonies** developed regarding Truth, simplicity, integrity, peace, justice, equality, marriage, oaths, plainness of

⁴⁸ Eg. Ref. Robert Barclay (1648 – 1690), Elizabeth Bathurst (1655-1685), Letter to the Governor of Barbados (1671). Richmond Declaration of Faith (1887).

⁴⁹ *Quaker Faith & Practice*, p.15.

⁵⁰ *Quaker Life and Practice – A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (2012)272-279. Queries and Advices have been developed and revised since the early days of Quakerism.

dress and speech, times and seasons, tithes. Sustainability⁵¹ and climate change are **concerns** needing more attention, which were highlighted by statements in Kenya 2012 and Peru 2016.

There developed a system whereby the **Leadings** and **concerns** of individuals and groups could be tested by a larger meeting of Friends, where God’s will would be sought collectively. Travelling minutes and letters of introduction would be given along with prayers for the work and mission which was to be undertaken.

We recognise that people have different gifts, talents and experiences. The body has many members, and an increasing number of Attenders, each with their own contribution to make to the whole. Friends are encouraged to seek guidance from the **Inner Light of Christ** in the heart and look for “**That of God in everyone.**” We have a responsibility to care for “**God’s creation.**”

- Various branches and organisations have grown out of our Quaker roots.

Around the world one can find **Liberal, Conservative and Evangelical Friends**, and there are both programmed and unprogrammed forms of worship. The main bodies which come to mind include:

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)

Friends General Conference (FGC) USA

Friends United Meeting (FUM)

Evangelical Friends Church International (EFCI)

Some Friends are not associated with any of these organizations; some are affiliated with more than one.

One can find Liberal Liberal Friends, non-Theist Friends, Hindu Friends & Buddhist Friends. As I mentioned at the beginning, there are many paths on our individual and collective spiritual journeys.

William Penn wrote in 1693 - *The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here makes them strangers.*⁵²

Friends have been and still are active in **Interchurch and Interfaith groups**. Ireland Yearly Meeting⁵³ is a founder member of the Irish Council of Churches (started in 1923) and we have a representative on the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). We are active members of the Dublin Council of Churches, the Irish Council for Christians and Jews and other local groups. Individual Friends are involved in other interfaith activities. We have a

⁵¹ <http://fwcc.world/fwcc-news/living-sustainably-and-sustaining-life-on-earth-the-minute-from-the-plenary>

⁵² *Quaker Life & Practice*, 9.23.

⁵³ Annual Meeting of Quakers in Ireland.

representative on the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)⁵⁴

Irish Friends have been active in the Friends World Committee for Consultation since its foundation in 1937.

I am delighted to say that our Friend **Simon C Lamb** from Richhill, Co. Armagh, is currently **Clerk of FWCC**. **Joseph P Haughton** held this position from 1980-85.

FWCC Mission Statement:

Answering God’s call to universal love, FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world.

The FWCC World Office supports and connects the work of the four Sections:

Europe and Middle East Section, Africa Section, Section of the Americas, Asia

West-Pacific Section. The World Office organizes the World Plenary Meetings every 6 to 8 years, bringing representatives and other Friends from yearly meetings together. Representing Friends at the world level, FWCC holds the highest consultative status at the United Nations, and appoints Friends from all Sections to the governing committees of the **Quaker United Nations Offices** in Geneva and New York.

FWCC represents Friends at ecumenical and interfaith events at the world level, lending the Quaker voice to statements from the United Nations and from faith groups. We have an active **Quaker Council for European Affairs** in Brussels.

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 12 Yearly Meetings, 2 Monthly Meetings and 14 worship groups. Events include the Annual Meeting, occasional International Family Gatherings, border meetings, seminars, peace and service consultations, the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, and other activities.

Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) are well-established, cooperating within the Section but remaining fully autonomous.

The World Gathering of Young Friends in 1985⁵⁵

Over 300 Young Friends from 34 countries, 57 yearly meetings, and 8 monthly meetings under the care of Friends World Committee for Consultation, met at Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina in July 1985, to envisage the future of the Religious Society of Friends and to see how their lives should speak within that vision.

⁵⁴ <http://fwcc.world>

⁵⁵ *Quaker Life and Practice*, 1.109 (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 29.17)

We have come together from every continent, separated by language, race, culture, ways we worship God, and beliefs about Christ and God... We have been challenged, shaken up, at times even enraged, intimidated, and offended by these differences in each other. We have grown from this struggle and have felt the Holy Spirit in programmed worship, singing, Bible study, open times of worship and sharing, and silent waiting upon God.

Our differences are our richness, but also our problem. One of our key differences is the different names we give our Inward Teacher. Some of us name that Teacher Lord; others of us use the names Spirit, Inner Light, Inward Christ or Jesus Christ. It is important to acknowledge that these names involve more than language; they involve basic differences in our understanding of who God is, and how God enters our lives. We urge Friends to wrestle, as many of us have here, with the conviction and experience of many Friends throughout our history that this Inward Teacher is in fact Christ himself. We have been struck this week, however, with the experience of being forced to recognise this same God at work in others who call that Voice by different names, or who understand differently who that Voice is.

Matthew 22:36-40 asks:

³⁶ ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ ³⁷ He said to him, “**You shall love the Lord your God** with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: “**You shall love your neighbour as yourself.**” ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

We talk about the **World Family of Friends**, but we share a common humanity with all who live on this earth. We are called to care for one another and that includes everyone.

We live on a small planet with limited resources. The creation stories in Genesis, as well as the Myths of Mesopotamia⁵⁶ may not fit comfortably with the Big Bang theory, but –

“As Quakers, we are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole Earth, in right sharing with all peoples. We recognise a moral duty to cherish creation for future generations.” ⁵⁷ This is a call from the **6th World Conference of Friends held in Kabarak, Kenya in 2012.**

Jesus lived a life of service to others. Are people becoming too self-centred?

New technology can be used for good or for evil ends. We need to learn how to make the most of new opportunities and avoid the pitfalls.

⁵⁶ *Myths of Mesopotamia- Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, a new translation by Stephanie Dalley, Reissued 2008.

⁵⁷ Kabarak Call to Peace and Eco-Justice, 2012, p.1 <http://fwcc.world/fwcc-news/the-kabarak-call-for-peace-and-ecojustice> accessed 19.4.2017.

There are similarities and differences when we compare biblical times with the 17th century and the 21st century. Quaker ethics are important particularly when the cultural norms and the world around us seem to be changing so rapidly.

Quaker testimonies are still valid and should challenge us daily: Truth, integrity, peace, justice, simplicity, equality, community, the earth and environment.

Today the Bible-lands and the birthplace of Christianity are being torn apart by war and the 21st century inhabitants are suffering appallingly.

What can we do collectively or as individuals to care for the homeless, refugees and marginalised?

Can we be open to understanding where others are coming from, even if their perspective is quite different from ours? Can we allow others to find fulfilment in ways that we would not choose for ourselves?

Sometimes personal problems and the world’s problems seem quite insurmountable.

However, we can call on a power greater than ourselves, we can call on God, to guide us and give us the strength to undertake what He requires of us. We can pray – and we can act even in a small way. The longest journey starts with a single step.

- We can support Irish Quaker Faith in Action and other charities.
- We can help to build caring communities and share responsibilities.
- What else can we do individually and collectively to leave the world a better place than it was when we arrived on this earth?

We are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole earth, in right sharing with all peoples. However few our numbers, we are called to be the salt that flavours and preserves, to be a light in the darkness of greed and destruction. (Extract from the Kabarak Call for Peace and Eco-Justice 2012).⁵⁸

*We are seekers but we are also the holders of a precious heritage of discoveries. We, like every generation, must find the Light and Life again for ourselves. Only what we have valued and truly made our own, not by assertion but by lives of faithful commitment, can we hand on to the future.*⁵⁹

*The Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all our testimonies grow from this leading.*⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Kabarak Call for Peace and Eco-Justice, 2012.

⁵⁹ Quaker Faith and Practice, p.16.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 1.01.

POSTSCRIPT.

Quakers are in the mystical tradition...

We are told that Jesus withdrew to a quiet place to pray.

At night, Psalm 23 and St. Francis' prayer for Peace are favourites of mine.

The beginning of the Book of **Revelation 21:1** says: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...

Nearly every morning I take a walk along the River Dodder which runs along behind this school where we are sitting now. I watch the wildlife, the water and the changing seasons. I chat with complete strangers and we compare photographs and experiences. This is a living river and local residents will be gathering tomorrow morning to remove human rubbish.

The birds are nesting and we are awaiting the arrival of new fox cubs.

The Book of Revelation speaks of a vision of The River of Life in poetic language:

Rev.22:1-7 Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants ^[c] will worship him; ⁴ they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for **the Lord God will be their light**, and they will reign for ever and ever.

⁶ And he said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.’

⁷ ‘See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.’

...

