



Newsletter April 2026

Malvern Quaker Meeting

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (in Word format please) will need to reach me by ***29th May 2026****. Past editions of the Newsletter are on our Meeting website* www.malvernquakers.org.uk. *Mary Corfield* newsletter@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk
If you are not on the Meeting's email list and would like to be, or have changed your email, please contact clerks@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk

Honouring the Life of Gren Gaskell — Jill Etheridge

On Saturday 28th February Malvern Local Meeting folk met for an evening combining our usual winter supper, and a poetry and music evening to honour Gren, who had died, aged 89, in October 2025. There had been no funeral, as he had left his body to medical science. Jill Etheridge got together with Gren's widow, Arline, to select which poems would be read, and seven of us read ten of his poems, most from the book *A Way with Words*, which also contains short stories.

The Guardian had published a summary of Gren's life, (within the *Other Lives* column) written by one of his stepdaughters, which tells of his losing his father, aged 4, in a Nottinghamshire pit accident. Gren himself was a miner until the mid-1960s, when he became a clerk and later a manager at Thorn EMI in Rugby. Those present at the evening are likely to remember the poem about Mrs Gunn (school secretary), read by Arline at the start, because of the huge impact her faith in Gren's abilities had on his life. She encouraged his writing and introduced him to theatre productions. It was also very moving to hear how Gren first heard classical music, creeping downstairs in the cold and dark to try out a second-hand radio his mother had just been given, where he heard Chopin's Nocturne Opus 9 No. 2 while she was out, and was spellbound.

Gren moved to Malvern in 1994, after the death of his first wife, and met Arline through U3A, of which he later became a chairman, as well as of Malvern Writers' Circle. They married in 2006, and began a very happy, culturally rich and much-travelled life together,

visiting many foreign countries. Sadly, he developed Lewy Body Dementia in the last few years of his life, which he had announced to us in Meeting soon after the diagnosis; but - as the Guardian obituary states – he met it with characteristic fortitude, and deep appreciation of the loving care of his wife, and all who helped him in any way.

The four pieces of music which were interspersed between the poetry seemed just right: two 'live' songs from Jo and Phil Bates, a brass band piece (known as The Miners' Hymn) offered and recorded specially by Jon Knight, and the very same Nocturne that was first heard by Gren, made available to us by John Cowell's recording wizardry. A big thank you to all who took part in any way in this memorable evening.



Advices & Queries No 39

Consider which of the ways to happiness offered by society are truly fulfilling and which are potentially corrupting and destructive. Be discriminating when choosing means of entertainment and information. Resist the desire to acquire possessions or income through unethical investment, speculation or games of chance.

Challenging Antisemitism

Introduction — Elizabeth Rolph

Quakers in Britain recently published the booklet *Reflections for Quakers on recognising and responding to anti-Jewish prejudice*. We organised a session after Meeting for Worship in April to consider it, expertly led by Liz Flanagan. It was good to see so many of us (around eighteen) there.

Liz had prepared flipcharts with definitions as part of her preparation, but we didn't get time to look at them during the session. This is what she found (mainly from Wikipedia, with a bit added by me while typing up, with apologies to those who know more about this than me).

The Jewish people are an ethnoreligious group and nation, originating from the Israelites of ancient Israel and Judah.

They are defined by

- Religion (orthodox or reform, conservative or reconstructionist)
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Politics

Most modern Jews see being Jewish as predominantly a matter of ancestry and culture, rather than religion.

Judaism is the religion and culture of the Jewish people; a faith-based identity 3,000 years old. It views the 'land of Israel' as religious, spiritual and messianic – anticipating a divine return.

Zionism is a political ideology that emerged in late 19th Century Europe supporting the establishment, development, and protection of a Jewish state (Israel) in its ancestral homeland (Palestine/Land of Israel).

An **Israeli** is a citizen of the state of Israel.

A Brief Summary of Current Quaker Advice **Liz Flanagan**

- There is a long history of false portrayals e.g. tax collectors or money lenders when actually excluded from other ways of earning money.
- Nazi holocaust most recent example of mass murder and expulsion from their countries. 6 million died. This casts a long shadow over lives of current Jews.
- Criticism of Israel is NOT always antisemitic. Danger of Israeli politicians using antisemitism in order to avoid being held responsible for their actions "deliberate efforts to label all criticism as antisemitic."
- Need to identify underlying thinking
- People with personal knowledge/experience deserve "greater leeway to speak about the country".
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The importance of Israel

- A place of safety and security in their ancestral homeland.
- Feelings amongst Jews may be complicated; our role should be to listen respectfully rather than argue an absolutist position.

Beware of …

- Using or reinforcing stereotypes or tropes, myths about Jews e.g. Jews are always powerful, rich, an underclass…
- Judging British Jews as "not loyal enough"
- Making generalisations e.g. all Jews are….

- look at recent figures on growth in antisemitism in UK since Hammas attack and subsequent Israeli response.

Recognise that some ideas are rooted in Christian anti-Jewish oppression

- e.g. Judaism is a backward religion.
- the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible is violent and vengeful.
- the theological concept of "A chosen People" can be misunderstood as Jews believing that they are superior.

Avoid

- visual tropes e.g. hooked noses, octopuses.
- implying that Jews are secretly controlling or bloodthirsty, poisoners or murderers.
- claims about a" lobby" without defining your terms. Do not generalise.
- assuming all Jewish people and organisations have an opinion on Israel/Palestine issues.
- Assuming that British Jews can influence the Israeli government.
- Don't invoke the Holocaust when discussing human rights abuses against Palestinians. Context is fundamental, and it will not help.
- Believing that all Jews are white, middle class, educated, or European.

Important Questions

- If we are more critical of Israeli actions than those of other countries, are we holding Isreal to higher standards than other counties?
- Definition of antisemitism set by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations are directed towards Jewish, or non-Jewish, individuals and/or their property, community institutions and religious facilities. Is this fair and accurate?
- What role can I play in challenging antisemitism?
- How can I relate to and appreciate the harm it causes?

Further thoughts **Ian Cave**

The recent Quaker guide to challenging antisemitism is well worth a read, especially the core 8 pages. It can be downloaded from here

https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/challenging-antisemitism.

Having been in Israel and Palestine for 3 months as an Ecumenical Accompanier and grappled with antisemitism, I found this guide was set out in clear and useful sections which included:

- why we need the guide – so we do not unconsciously perpetuate it.
- a short history of antisemitism – which explains that it's different to other forms of racism because it goes in cycles. There are periods when Jews can hold responsible jobs and live safely. Then suddenly, they become used as scapegoats and blamed for problems in society. This leaves Jewish communities feeling anxious because they never know when society will turn against them again and they will be persecuted.
- the state of antisemitism today – Antisemitic (and Islamophobic) incidents are increasing significantly following the 7 October 2023 attacks in Israel by Hamas and the Israeli response attacking Gaza.

- what we should look out for – which provides very clear examples of stereotypes, tropes and generalisations, some of which we might not realise we are using ourselves.
- The lack of consensus about how it is defined – That some earlier definitions can be used inappropriately to close down the debate about what the Israeli Government is doing in Gaza and the West Bank. Such discussions are not antisemitic. Zionism also means different things to different groups of people and so can be confusing, so this term is probably best avoided.
- How to actively challenge it – which helps to show that sometimes it's best to challenge it in public, while at other times it's best to talk with the person privately later to listen to what their perspective is.
- Responding when we are accused of being antisemitic – this can be a hard and painful experience. The guide advises being willing to listen to what someone accuses you of, considering that you may be mistaken. You may feel defensive, but do not automatically dismiss what the person is saying out of hand.
- How to learn more – so we can discuss this respectfully with people who may not agree with us.
- The appendices also provide lots of useful additional material which explains more.

Special Collections

The Special Collection for April was **Malvern Welcomes.** A total of £175 was collected.

The Special Collection for May is **Peaceworks Zimbabwe** – which supports peace-building in Zimbabwe by raising money for programmes with education for peace and conflict resolution at their heart. See https://www.peaceworkszimbabwe.org/

Helping Ukraine – Correction

Melanie Jameson



We read in the March edition of the Newsletter about the spectacular operation by the Rotary Club to send aid to Ukraine. The driver referred to is Graham Cox.

Don't forget their request for Baby formula 2 and nappies sizes 4 and 5. These can be left in the porch of 4 Sling Lane (the little road near the Cube). Donations are desperately needed too:

Rotary Ukraine Appeal
Account Name: Malvern Rotary Club
Sort Code: 40-31-09 Account Number: 81083392

Little Friends — Rosemary Webb

Little Friends meet every first Sunday afternoon. The theme for May was Spiders.

They would appreciate a Quaker helper for future meetings and ask us to spread the word about this valuable event on our premises.

Please contact Rosmary if you can help rosemaryefwebb@googlemail.com

Refusers Solidarity Network — Hugh McMichael

I get emails from this Jewish organisation. I am not sure we all recognise that there is significant resistance to current Israeli policies.

Dear Hugh,

Tal here. This week, hundreds gathered in Tel Aviv to resist and protest against the state-endorsed terrorising of Palestinians in the West Bank. Those who came to demonstrate did so at the risk of facing violence from police and ultra-right gangs that have targeted peace activists in the last few years.

It was by far the largest demonstration on the issue of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank in recent years. Thanks to you, our supporters, Resistance Solidarity Network was able to fund and support the demonstration and to provide significant assistance with press work. The demonstration was reported widely in Hebrew, in Arabic, and in international press, amplifying the crucial voices of Israeli citizens opposing the violence and ethnic cleansing against Palestinians in the West Bank. ***This would not be possible without you, our supporters, so we wanted to thank you.***

Support War Resistance

We are reporting daily on that demonstration and other actions and protests from the ground in Palestine-Israel against war, colonialism and occupation on our alternative media channels. Follow us on Instagram, X, Facebook and TikTok to stay updated on the latest news.

The headlines make one thing clear: ***The lives of ordinary people in the entire region are in the hands of leaders who have no interest in peace whatsoever.*** *I fear we could be plunged into an escalating war once again in Lebanon, Iran and not to mention the ongoing genocide in Gaza. One way you can help groups on the ground is by amplifying their actions, which we report across social media platforms, to bring the latest movement news to the world.*

Palestinian communities are suffering under an escalating policy of displacement, terror and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, carried out in collaboration between settlers and the Israeli army. Both inside Israel and internationally, most people do not hear about violence in the West Bank against Palestinians. This week, dozens of peace groups who together form the Peace Partnership coalition stood in the centre of Tel Aviv in the hundreds to put a stop to the violence in the West Bank. Their brave action, in the face of police violence in recent actions, managed to get the story out.

Many of the activists who attended were people who personally witnessed attacks and in certain cases even suffered aggressions themselves for accompanying Palestinians in protective solidarity efforts. They have suffered police violence demonstrating throughout the recent war with Iran and Lebanon. ***These same activists are also the leading voices calling out the US-Israeli aggression on Lebanon and Iran which threatens to plunge the region into endless warfare and expanded occupation.***

Our movement on the ground in Israel-Palestine is keenly aware of the connections between the predicament of the Palestinian people at home and US-Israeli imperialism in the region. They are connected by an insatiable drive for dominance, land and resources. ***That is why we bring movement voices against war, occupation and colonialism all in one place.*** *Because these issues are inseparable. There is no resistance to the war on Iran without resistance to the occupation of the Palestinian people.*

As we fear we may be plunged into an expanded regional war once again, we are working to make sure resistance on the ground reaches the world. Will you amplify the resistance and join us in bringing their voices to your communities? We ask you to keep your eyes on the ground. Follow us and share the latest news on Instagram, X, Facebook and TikTok.

In solidarity,

Tal Marom
Solidarity Coordinator
Resistance Solidarity Coordinator