Malvern Quaker Meeting





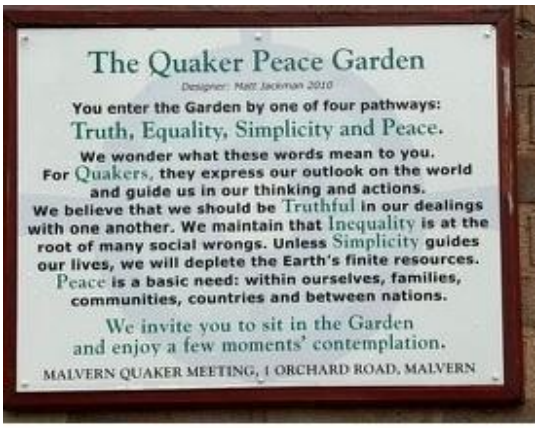
Newsletter September-October 2026

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter (in Word format please) will need to reach me by ***30th October 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 emailadmin@malvernquakermeeting.org.uk.*

Meeting for Worship at the Peace Garden — Elizabeth Rolph

As you probably know, there is a Peace Garden at the Cube, relocated there in 2010 after it was created at the Malvern Spring Show. Our Meeting pays a gardener to maintain it.





We would like to make more of the garden and hold a Meeting for Worship there 3 times a year, in October, April and July. The first of these will be at 11.00 on Tuesday 6th October, for 30 minutes.

If it is wet at 10.00, we will postpone it until Tuesday 13th October. Cushions and chairs will be provided. The Cube is the community centre in Albert Road North, with a café, where some of us will, no doubt, enjoy coffee and cake after the Meeting for Worship.

A Shared Green Feast

I have been vegetarian for over forty years and become increasingly vegan over the last five. I joined the Quaker Vegan Witness group last year. I endorse their aim:

Many Quakers are already vegan, and we wish to encourage those who are vegetarian or omnivore to go further, towards a vegan position, because of the inherent harm to animals caused by intensive farming. A more plant-based way of living would protect our planet and celebrate its wealth of environments, biodiversity and ecosystems.

A vegan way of living is not a goal but a path. Even one person taking one small step along this path helps the entire world.



On their suggestion I proposed that the shared lunch in Quaker Week be primarily plant based.

'Yum Yum' and 'Fantastic' were words used to describe the spread, enjoyed by 13 of us. After the tomato, apple & celery soup were a good selection of dishes, including Mushroom and Leek crumble, Lentil bake, Fig and Butternut Squash & Barley salads, followed by chocolate mousse, fruit crumble and ginger & orange pudding (simply made with layers of ginger biscuits, tinned mandarins and Alpro Greek yogurt.) We all ate well!

Advices & Queries No 26

Do you recognise the needs and gifts of each member of your family and household, not forgetting your own? Try to make your home a place of loving friendship and enjoyment, where all who live or visit may find the peace and refreshment of God's presence.

Over 80 State Pension

Richard Bartholomew

Not many people know this, but there is an extra State Retirement Pension for people who reached State Pension Age on 5th April 2016 or before.
The over 80 pension is a State Pension for people aged 80 or over.
To be eligible you must get either a basic State Pension of less than £110.75 a week, or no basic State Pension at all.
It can give you £110.75 a week in the 2026 to 2027 tax year.

What you get depends on how much basic State Pension you get, if any.
If you do not get the basic State Pension or you get less than £110.75 a week, you could get the difference paid up to this amount.
For example, you're 80 years old and you get £45 a week basic State Pension, your basic State Pension may be topped up by £66.75 to £110.75 a week.
You can claim the over 80 pension if all of the following apply:

- you're 80 or over
- you do not get basic State Pension or your basic State Pension is less than £110.75 a week in 2026 to 2027
- you were resident in the UK for at least 10 years out of 20 (this does not have to be 10 years in a row) - this 20-year period must include the day before you turned 80 or any day after
- you were 'ordinarily resident' in the UK, the Isle of Man or Gibraltar on your 80th birthday or the date you made the claim for this pension, if later.

Call the Pension Service to get a claim form sent to you **0800 731 7898**

The over 80 pension counts as taxable income, so it may affect other benefits you're getting.

You must include the over 80 pension as income if you're claiming other income-related benefits.
BUT if you receive, for example, Attendance Allowance, this is not to be included in your claim as State Retirement Pension as it is an entirely separate benefit and similarly ignore whatever you might have as a private/employer's pension.
Please tell friends and relatives who might benefit from this news.

Special Collections

The Special Collection for September was for **Quaker Social Action** and the total amount collected is £155.00.

The special collection for October is for War Child, https://warchild.org.uk, which supports not only children but also their families, helping entire communities heal, rebuild, and create safer futures together. War Child works in partnership with local organisations, providing emergency support such as food, clean water, hygiene kits, clothing, and blankets when conflict breaks out, and staying as long as needed to help children and families recover and rebuild their lives.

Manchester Pride

Jon Knight

As a Quaker I have an affinity for silence, for humility and for understated rational argument in the face of prejudice and discrimination; however, as a genderfluid person who has witnessed the erosion of trans rights and the vilifying of the trans community, I also realise the need to be loud and proud when the alternative is subjugation and shame.

I remember only a year ago asking why people had to be so brassy about their identity or sexuality, then about six months ago I became the victim of a parent's anti trans agenda, I had allegations of misconduct made against me because of my gender fluid identity and was suspended from work for almost two months whilst my employers investigated. Luckily, the NEU (National Education Union) pointed out that both the allegations and actions of my employer were discriminatory and that I should be paid in full and reinstated immediately; however, the existential damage was done, since then I realised it was not enough to just live my life quietly, wishing that I would be left in peace; I owed it to the younger generations of non-binary people trying to fit into a binary world, to demonstrably carve out a place for them to be, to be an example, perhaps even an agitating presence that reminds the conventionalist that we do not all nicely fit into their bureaucratic boxes.

So, on the 29th of August I donned my best dress, the trans flag and my six-inch heels, I picked up my Tenor horn from the hallway and drove hundred and twenty miles to Canal Street in Manchester to join other people wanting to show their support for the LGBTQ+ community through playing brass for them in the Manchester Village Pride Parade.

The band met as strangers in The Oxnoble Pub (a good selection of real ales) and handed out the music and got into our band places; from there the scratch band "Pride Brass" moved to join the parade. When we struck our first chord the heavens answered with what the Mancunians among us called "liquid sunshine" i.e. a light drizzle caught as a mist by the still, just, present sun. When we began to march the clouds burst forth and cats, dogs, stair rods and all, descended from on high to baptise us. Navigating wet cobbles in heels whilst trying to play and walk was a real test of my musicianship and my commitment to shapely calves. Every thirty seconds we would have to stop playing and tip instruments upside down to let the rainwater flow out - it made playing and parading quite a complex multitask event.

The whole day could have been a washout, it could have left me feeling cold and wet. In truth, I have rarely felt as elated or as alive. The elements could not get close to dampening my spirits when I knew I was surrounded by such wonderful, courageous people in our shared expression of joy, love and, dare I say, righteous and dissenting "Pride".

PRISONS WEEK 11th to 17th October — Melanie Jameson

Matthew 22:1-14, *'the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.'*

The theme of this year's Prisons Week is ALL ARE INVITED, based on the Gospel text where the servants were ordered to seek guests "good and bad" to fill the wedding hall. It ties in beautifully with a core initiative from Quakers in Criminal Justice (QICJ).

You will have heard that QICJ has been appealing to Quaker Meetings to be prepared to welcome former prisoners through our "Welcoming All" process. This takes Meetings through the steps needed in order to do that and has now been extended beyond Quakers to the Church of England, the Catholic Church and mosques.

Following a presentation to our Area Meeting, Malvern Meeting agreed to proceed and join the Welcome Directory which lists all places of worship that can demonstrate they have done the necessary preparation, which entails careful consideration, a point of contact and robust safeguarding procedures.

Many former prisoners who have come to worship in a prison setting have an expectation of a similar experience of spiritual community outside the prison gate but find that they face barriers. Hopefully, the outreach of Prisons Week will help places of worship to engage with the issues involved.

Sentencing Act and Recalls

Melanie Jameson

There has been a massive media outcry at the prospect of prisoners being released at an earlier stage in their sentence and being free to 'roam the streets committing further crimes'. The Saturday Times goes further, referring to 'thousands of killers and dangerous criminals' being let loose. But what is really going on here as the Sentencing Act 2026 comes into force?



The controversy arises due to the new Progression Model (initially the Earned Progression Model, but the incentive element, whereby good behaviour is rewarded, has since been discarded). It affects Standard Determined Sentences, which will now be divided into thirds, as follows, starting with the custodial element. Part 1: In prison for the first third; Part 2: Intensive supervision outside prison with new restrictions, e.g. a driving ban, very restricted movement enforced by electronic tagging; Part 3: Remaining on license till the end of the sentence – so the individual is still serving their full sentence. There will be ten tranches of release (with increasing categories of exceptions) beginning Oct 1.

The government has made this announcement to stress just how punitive 'early release' will be – it is almost home curfew: World-first crackdown to restrict offenders' freedom and give it back to victims – GOV.UK

Andy Burnham has contributed to the outrage with his comment, "*I fully appreciate the anguish of Andrew's (PC Harper) family and, more broadly, of all those victims and their families who may see those who caused them such harm not serve their full sentence*". This relates to a different measure whereby another category of prisoners is released into community supervision at the halfway rather than the two-thirds stage. Since it is clearly impossible just to pick out and exclude the young men involved in PC Harper's death, it follows that all cases of manslaughter will have to be exempted, along with other groups, which are highly sensitive, and this is what has now transpired. There will be a victim support package of £10 million – which I hope can be used wisely.

Another change, this time from March 2026, is the assumption against a sentence of 12 months or less; these will be suspended – *not* abolished - and for up to three years. A further measure is greater use of Deferred Sentences, whereby the individual undertakes requirements known as Deferment Orders.

Let us now look at changes to Recalls, an area in which Quakers in Criminal Justice has representation as part of the Recall Coalition. Numbers of people recalled to prison have risen from 6,000 to over 13,000 in the last seven years, forming almost 1/6 of the prison population – so something is clearly going wrong. The new measure relates to Fixed Term Recalls for those serving four years and less, which used to be of 14 or 28 days' duration but are now 56 days, with the aim of providing more time for pre-release planning. Anecdotally, there are now *higher* recall rates, with underlying problems still unaddressed.

Probation continues to struggle – one can only hope that the proposed 1,300 new trainee Probation Officers (as part of a £700m investment) can make some headway. It is more than likely, however, that the bulk of the funding is destined for electronic monitoring, which has a mixed record, not least due to the flawed provider, SERCO. The consensus amongst the voluntary sector is that enforcement is being prioritised above support for a population that is often vulnerable, and that the crisis will simply shift from prison to the community.

Both CLINKS (the umbrella organisation for criminal justice charities) and the Recall Coalition are making proposals to the new government which will include an ending of the all-too-common use of recall for administrative breaches of license conditions (rather than a further offence). Both will call for more investment in community services. Meanwhile NACRO has launched a report with the aim of establishing a more proportionate use of recall to custody, stressing that this would free up as many spaces as the Progression Model described above.
https://www.nacro.org.uk/rising-rates-of-recall-what-are-the-solutions/

NACRO's report highlights the following key statistics:

- Nine out of every ten prison beds freed by people being released were filled by someone recalled to custody in 2025/26.
- We estimate that the government are spending £750 million a year on recalls, with £590 million of this spent on people *not* facing new charges.
- More than 51,000 people were sent back to prison following recall last year; this compares with around 47,000 following sentencing.
- There are currently 9,900 people in prison who were recalled for reasons other than facing a charge for further offending; reasons included failure to reside at a specified address or to attend probation meetings.

Crucially, NACRO made recommendations which include better and more timely referrals to relevant services; plans to meet the target in reducing prison-leaver homelessness; introduction of a clear framework for decision-making for probation practitioners, with levels of intervention for people who commit minor breaches of their license. Conclusion: recalling to custody should be a *last* resort.

I conclude with an issue that I have come across recently: noticeable increases in recall when regular probation staff were ill or on holiday and replacements were unfamiliar with the person concerned and were unwilling to 'risk it'.

As the prison capacity crisis reaches 98%, the government may be forced into addressing the factors that drive recall. This can't happen soon enough!

Updated Safeguarding Poster

Ian Cave



This is the updated safeguarding poster that is now displayed in the Meeting House.

Active Peace Education

Liz Flanagan

Richard Bartholomew's granddaughter, Rosie, drew this picture of her favourite activity, an APE session.



What do Quakers believe?

Jill Etheridge

This was the fourth question we had picked to discuss from the series *Discovering Quakers*. Although I had introduced another one previously, I had some hesitation with this one. Individual Quakers come with such a variety of 'beliefs' that I wondered where I would find the common ground with reasonable certainty. Above all, I realised that this topic could become divisive, which is never what I would wish to happen. My opening comments were based around the phrase from George Fox, expressed in our times as an assertion, that there is '*that of God in everyone';* and then the four 'testimonies'. Perhaps a majority of Quakers would subscribe to the view that all are equal (and should be regarded and treated equitably); that a 'simple life, freely chosen' is desirable; that there is only one standard of

speaking truthfully and that we should live in such a way as to remove 'the occasion of all wars.' (*Note: the writer commends the reading of Chapter 24 of Quaker Faith and Practice, re our Peace testimony – easy to find online.)*

One person expressed the view that Quakers do have a creed. There was brief reference to Quaker Surveys, re belief in God, etc. The most recent one, by Woodbrooke in 2023, attracted the very pleasing numerical response of 4731, which showed that 70% of respondents classed themselves as 'spiritual or religious' and 30% humanist/agnostic/atheist. One person in the discussion group quoted Carl Jung's response to the question, 'Do you believe in God?' His reply was 'No! I know!' This was echoed by one or two others present.

After the discussion, I read out the following piece from the Daily Readings book:

How shall we think of God?

Anonymous (1970)

For some time now I have thought of God in more pantheistic terms than I suppose is true of most of my Quaker brothers and sisters. To me, God is something about the universe, something about the depth in each of us.

We've never talked about it in the meeting, but this difference in thinking doesn't seem to matter in what we do share. We visit the prison in Richmond together, give shelter to runaway teenagers, aid those who are resisting the war. We come together and wait quietly to regain our sense of what lies deepest in us, of the things most important to us. Then when we each of us speak and listen from this condition of mind and heart, we somehow understand are bound together in ways that are healing and empowering.

To me, these are the things that are prayer and revelation and encounter with that which is holy. And when I find something like them beyond the meeting and its membership, there, too, I sense a unity of being. These are the things which, for me, any thought of God must have to do with. How thankful I am that this seems so surely to be true for the others with whom I share the silences, the concerns, the activities of this meeting that I love so well.

From the Librarian **Mary Corfield**

May I remind you that, if you are bringing a book you would like to have placed in the library, contacting me first ensures that books are properly entered into the catalogue and put in the correct place on the shelves for others to find.