

Lewes Quaker Meeting Newsletter

December 2023



“[One] testimony held by early Friends was ... against the keeping of ‘times and seasons’. We might understand this as part of the conviction that all of life is sacramental; that since all times are ... holy, no time should be marked out as more holy; that what God has done for us should always be remembered and not only on the occasions named Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. This is a testimony which seems to be dying What I ... hope for is neither that we let the testimony die, nor that we keep it mechanically. I hope for a rediscovery of its truth, that we should remember and celebrate the work of God in us and for us whenever God by the Spirit calls us to this remembrance and this joy.”

from Quaker faith & practice 27.42; Janet Scott, 1994

Sunday morning Meetings for Worship

10:30 a.m. start. A blended meeting, in person at the Meeting House and on Zoom. Zoom link available from the clerks on request; it is the same week to week.

Please do not enter any part of the meeting house apart from the meeting room, until building works are complete. There is a port-a-loo in the garden. ~ Two parking spaces are available on Sundays. Please give priority to those with mobility difficulties.

Wednesday lunchtime Meetings for Worship

At The Open Door, 32 Church Twitten, Lewes. 12:30 p.m. Enter through the door marked “Thebes” and up the stairs to the first floor meeting room. Please bring your own drinks / refreshments. All are welcome.

Children’s Meeting

... is held on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, at The Open Door (32 Church Twitten). Start time 10:30 a.m. Children and young people join Friends at the meeting house for the last five minutes of meeting for worship. Please email Sara at saralucytodd@yahoo.co.uk for details.

Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs (Business Meeting):

Sunday, 3rd December - 12:30 p.m. at the meeting house. Please bring your own lunch and drinks, as the kitchen is not open. The agenda will include discernment on the future of children’s meeting, an update on project development and local meeting finances. ~ Business meetings are held on the first Sunday in each month, in the afternoon after meeting for worship. All Friends are welcome, but attenders should speak to a clerk beforehand if they plan to attend.



Lewes Friends gather at The Depot on Friday mornings at 10:30 a.m. for coffee and a chat. No need to book; just turn up and join in fellowship with Friends.

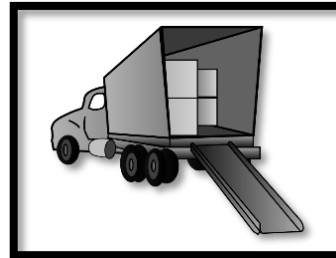
Area Meeting will be held on **Saturday, 13 January 2024**, 10 a.m. - 12 noon on Zoom. All Friends are welcome to attend. An agenda and Zoom link will be circulated in advance of the meeting.

Christ Church Thinktank will be held on **17 January 2024**, 7:30 - 9:00 pm, a talk on “Spirituality and Religion” by John Culley. Modern spirituality often involves no church connection, with people describing themselves as “spiritual but not religious”. This talk will suggest that spirituality is an area where Christians and people of other faiths, or none, can engage in worthwhile dialogue. John recently completed an MA in Christian Spirituality at St Mary’s University, Twickenham. ~ Thinktanks are held in person at Christ Church and on Zoom. Please email David Smith if you wish to attend: j.d.smith@sussex.ac.uk.



Lewes Climate Hub - Coffee mornings every Wednesday (11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) All are invited to join this informal group that meets at Lewes Climate Hub, 32 High Street, Lewes, every Wednesday morning for tea, coffee and conversation. Hear from guest speakers, share ideas for climate action, or just come along and listen. FREE to everyone who attends, although voluntary donations are appreciated, to support ongoing costs of the Climate Hub.

Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Centre, hosts a number of **online meetings for worship** each week. These are freely available for anyone to join. For a link and details, visit the web page: [Worship - Woodbrooke](#) . All are welcome.



Planning meeting on Sunday, 14th January 2024, at 12:30 p.m. at the meeting house after meeting for worship. Come along and help plan the move back into the

meeting house. Please bring your own drinks and sandwiches. We will be sorting out arrangements to move furniture and books, and all other necessary plans for re-occupying the meeting house after the end of January. All are welcome. Please attend if you can, as everyone’s contribution will be appreciated.

In October Lewes Meeting raised £154 for Friends Community Development Trust - Uganda, a good cause chosen by Friars Circle.
Many thanks for your generosity, Friends.

The **Good Cause for December** is **Quaker Social Action**, chosen by Wallands Circle

QSA was established in 1867. Sadly its work is needed now more than ever. Our donations will help QSA to take practical action through services that support people living on low incomes to seek their own solutions, and by campaigning for systemic change. Examples of their innovative approach are:

- “Cook Up” which provides welcoming kitchen spaces to help people cook, eat and improve health and wellbeing. It is for anyone who feels they need a cooking space, such as

those experiencing homelessness, or living in a hostel or B&B. Refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed.

- Workshops and courses on how to access financial support, manage your finances, self-care, wellbeing, and mindfulness.
- “Down to Earth” - support with funeral costs for those who cannot afford them.

QSA’s “Big Give” Christmas Challenge runs from 28 November - 5 December. Donations made during this time will be doubled. Two generous funders - CB & HH Taylor Trust and the Reed Foundation - have pledged to match every £1 in donations, up to an incredible £44,500.

Can Lewes Friends rise to the challenge?

The value of any donations we give at meeting on Sunday December 3, or online before midday Tuesday 5 December will be doubled. All donations will help Quaker Social Action provide practical support to people struggling to survive in the toughest of times. ~ To give online directly: <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk>



Continuing Explorers

This group is for anyone new to Quakers; it

aims to answer questions and share experiences of Quaker faith and worship. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 17th January, to explore the question “what do Quakers believe?” ~ If you are new to meeting for worship and would like to attend, please email John for details: johnashcroft57@gmail.com.

Safeguarding: If you have any concerns about a child, young person or vulnerable adult who might be experiencing abuse or exploitation, please contact David Martin on 07421 829069 or Quakerclerkslewes@gmail.com



Claridge House in Lingfield, Surrey, is a Quaker retreat centre offering courses

throughout the year. Below is a small sample of what is available in December:

- *Creative writing and yoga workshop* - 6th December
- *Mindfulness meditation* - 7th December
- *Creative collage and meditation* - 28th December

Claridge House is also open for personal retreats. See details on the website: [Home by Claridge House](#) or ring 01342 832150 for further information.

“Quiet Ways”: Contributions to the Sussex East Area Meeting newsletter are welcome at any time. Please email items of interest to: editorquietways@gmail.com



Lewes Friends Reading Group

will not meet in December, but the next meeting will be held on 24th January, to discuss The Island of Missing Trees by Elif Shafak. Looking ahead to

February, the next meeting will centre around The Fear Index by Robert Harris. The reading group usually meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month in Friends’ homes, although they are hoping to meet once again in the meeting house after it fully re-opens. All are welcome; please speak to Jane Goyder or email janegoyder@msn.com if you plan to attend for the first time, or need details.

Proposal for a Zoom Circle: For several years, Friends have gathered in groups (circles) for social and spiritual sharing and mutual support. But some Friends have not benefitted from these arrangements for various reasons, including health, time or distance, as they are not able to join in physical meetings. Therefore, the Pastoral Care & Eldership Team (PaCET) suggests that a Zoom circle might be created. ~ If you are interested in attending such a “virtual” circle, email David Hitchin on david@hitchin.plus.com. David will gather information and convene a first meeting so Friends can decide how they wish to proceed.

Ten tips for a greener Christmas

Suggestions below were inspired by an online article by *A Rocha UK*. The full article can be found here: [Our twelve tips for a greener Christmas - A Rocha UK](#)

1. Rather than another disposal Advent calendar, why not make your own? Patterns can be found online and YouTube is a good source of tutorials for seasonal projects such as felt or fabric Advent calendars that can be re-used every year.
2. Make your own wreath and decorations from holly, ivy, pine branches, dried leaves, rosehips and more. See what you can find on your next walk. [But don't take the whole plant, and remember to leave some berries for the birds.]
3. Recycled brown paper has a lower ecological footprint than ready-made wrapping paper (much of which cannot be recycled). You can decorate brown paper wrapping with stamps, add re-usable ribbon, and get creative.
4. Make your own gift tags from old Christmas cards: cut out portions of the card with no writing on. A hole punch and plain twine or ribbon will finish the job. Recycle the rest of the card.
5. Homemade gifts such as baked goods, homemade mincemeat in recycled jars, a vase filled with flowers, a personalised photo album - all make great gifts and have a comparatively small ecological footprint.
6. Rather than more stuff, give the gift of time. In Christmas cards you could include "gift vouchers" for a home-cooked meal, baby-sitting, house-cleaning, dog-walking, or similar. These make thoughtful gifts.
7. Practice hospitality: if you are hosting Christmas, why not invite 1 or 2 people along who would otherwise be alone on Christmas Day? Cooking for a group reduces energy consumption and spreads the joy.
8. After the holiday feast, it might be time to consider eating less meat in the new year. Meat consumption is a major cause of environmental damage. Or, if you do eat meat, can you switch to buying organic and local?
9. The new year is a good time to review recycling arrangements. More waste ends up in landfill at this time of year than any other. Can you offer to help neighbours with their recycling? What improved arrangements can be put in place now for the whole of 2024?
10. Christmas can be a time of over-indulgence, but consider what is really important. Although bombarded with messages encouraging us to over-extend ourselves, we can re-centre and focus on what brings joy and peace. Can you make time to revisit *Advices & Queries* in a quiet moment? How does the testimony to simplicity speak to you?

"What canst thou say, Friend?"

A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working to protect the natural world and equip churches in the UK to care for the environment. Visit their website here for information about Eco Church and more: [Who we are - A Rocha UK](#)



Those who attended Woodbrooke when it was running residential courses may be interested to know there will be a final meeting for worship (by invitation only) in the Quiet Room one day next week.

Friends who have taken part in courses on Biblical topics might like to know that Timothy Ashworth is retiring after 28 years on staff, but will still be running the occasional course.

The new brochure for 2024 will be out shortly and I hope to give news of more upcoming courses in the next newsletter, but there is no shortage of choice online now. Many sessions are held on a "pay as led" basis, with bursaries available, so no Friend should be deterred from applying due to cost.

Below are a few examples of courses running in the next couple of months:

Working Towards ... Being an Inclusive Community - 6 December, 19:00-21:00

Meeting for Worship Through Dance - 12 December, 20:00-21:00

Working Towards... Understanding Gender Diversity - 13 December, 19:00-21:00

Enquiring Into: walking cheerfully - 11 January 2024, 19:00-21:00

Signposts to Joy for a New Year - 13 January, 10:00-12:00

A Light in the Darkness - 20 January, 10:00-16:00

For these and other options see the website: [Our Courses - Woodbrooke](#) or ring 0121 7282360 for details.

Christina Lawson

Sussex East Area Meetings in 2024



Saturday 13th January - Zoom - 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Sunday 10th March - at Eastbourne meeting house, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday 11th May in person and on Zoom -

Lewes Meeting House - 10:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sunday 9th June - at Herstmonceux Meeting House, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Sunday 1st September - at Seaford - 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday 16th November - Zoom - 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Surrey & Sussex Regional Meetings

Saturday 23rd March - All day event on theme of *Equality*, starting 10:30 a.m. at Lewes Meeting House

Saturday 22nd June - Brighton Meeting House, *topic to be confirmed*

Saturday 28th September - *venue and topic to be decided*

Saturday 23rd November - *venue and topic to be decided*

Seniors Christmas Lunch at Christ Church

After a three-year hiatus, Churches Together in Lewes are reviving the traditional Seniors Lunch for local people who would otherwise be isolated on Christmas Day. Do you know someone who would benefit from companionship on Christmas Day? Would you like to attend? If so, please email gretelscott@gretelscott.plus.com or telephone 07712 660337.

Volunteers have been planning the event for some time, and now seek support from others in Lewes to make it a success. Please get in touch if you can help with:

- Laying tables and decorating the hall on the afternoon of 24 December
- Preparing vegetables on 24 December (bring your own peeler!)
- Making fresh fruit salad on Christmas morning (fruit to be provided)
- Serving as a 'table host' at lunch to chat to guests and help serve meals on Christmas Day
- Collecting guests and driving them to Christ Church on Christmas Day
- Collecting guests from the venue and driving them home afterward

For further details and to offer help, please email Gretel on gretelscott@gretelscott.plus.com or telephone 07712 660337

The British Quaker Survey

“Over 4,600 Quakers completed the survey; we are delighted with this response. [Soon] the process of analysis will begin. We hope to share results in 2024 and the conference on *The Future of British Quakerism* that Woodbrooke is organising in the second half of 2024, will definitely feature some of the findings. At the same time, we are designing a survey to be used at the FWCC World Plenary in August, to begin our work on Quakerism globally. We are very grateful to everyone who completed the survey and to those who sent in comments on its design.”

- *Woodbrooke newsletter, 23/11/23*

Meeting House Development Update: End of November 2023



*Photo: Laying brick path to new front door.
The path is now complete, and can be seen
from the Styles Field entrance.*

Progress with building work: The builders are into the last stages of work. The new paving and brickwork looks good. Cycle racks have been added by the car park. Kitchen units are installed, lights fitted and working in the foyer, the accessible toilet is ready to be fitted out, flooring is done in some areas, and new doors and skirting boards are due to be fitted throughout the ground floor shortly.

External wooden cladding at the entrance will be put in place shortly. Once again, planning and co-ordination by Valley Builders has been impressive. The major task now is to complete the heating system with air source heat pumps and then test it out. Decorating will also need to be finished and flooring laid so there are a few time-consuming tasks still to be undertaken. However, it all looks to be moving ahead to completion in January as scheduled.

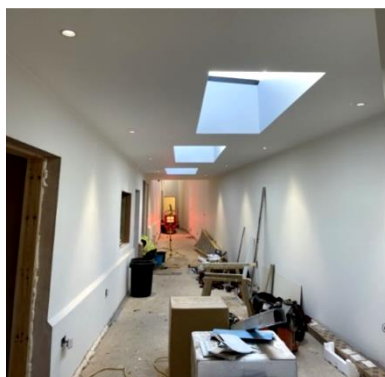
The builders have advised Friends on emergency signage to be put in place, and a fire safety inspection is scheduled to be done before we occupy the building again.

Funding: As most Friends know, there will not be sufficient money in hand to pay all the bills once work is completed. Some Friends have offered loans to help and Area

Meeting has agreed to proposals from Trustees for short-term use of some Area Meeting funds to cover the shortfall. The hope is that rent from the flat, increased income from bookings and further donations and fundraising will steadily enable all loans to be paid off by the end of 2027.

In the New Year we will need to buy some items to make the new rooms pleasant and attractive - we hope members of the Meeting will be able to help. Several Friends have also made loans to the project fund, to allow bills to be paid as we complete the project. If you would like to contribute you can find ways of giving at www.lewesquakers.org.uk or www.justgiving.com/campaign/LewesMH. If you have ideas for fundraising you can discuss these with Patricia Cockrell on 01273 474884 or David Martin on 01892 663522.

Project Development Group



*Meeting house foyer
on 23 November,
with decorating
underway and lights
installed; entrance
to the community
room is shown on
the left. (Photo by
Ecotecture)*

Toilets twinned: During development work at Lewes Meeting we've had a temporary loo in the garden. Some of us might have decided to hang on until we get home rather than use these basic facilities. But in November we've been thinking about those who have no toilet facilities at all, and collecting funds for Tear Fund's Toilet Twinning scheme. ~ Lewes Meeting raised the commendable sum of **£346.71**, enough to support the creation of five new toilets in parts of the world where they are needed. Well done, everybody! In due course we'll have some certificates to display in our new facilities when they open next year.

In the meantime, if you would like to twin your home toilet or perhaps give an ethical Christmas gift visit the website <https://toilettwinning.org/>



Lewes Meeting Contacts

Clerks: John Ashcroft, Liz Brooks & David Martin at quakerclerksl Lewes@gmail.com

Pastoral Care & Eldership Team [PaCET]: Tim Pitt-Payne (convenor), David Hitchin, Chris Lawson, Caroline Pybus, Theresa Samms, Nancy Wall

Nominations: Helen Thomas at helen.thomas62@btinternet.com

Website: www.lewesquakers.org.uk

Website editor: Drew Fisher at ajfscorpio@hotmail.com

Children's meeting: Sara at saralucytodd@yahoo.co.uk

Circles for pastoral care & support:

Cliffe - Berta Busby, convenor
Friars - Veryan Greenwood & Anna Milner-Gulland, convenors
Needlemakers - Geoff Halsey, convenor
Wallands - Bronwyn Harwood, convenor

Sussex East Area Meeting Clerk:
Sally Aviss at sally.aviss@btinternet.com

In December, Wallands Circle will promote the **Good Cause**. Rota for the following months:

Cliffe - January
Friars - February
Needlemakers - March

If you have an idea for a good cause that the meeting could support, please speak to your circle convenor.

From other traditions . . .

Kwanzaa (December 26 - January 1): This week-long celebration honours African traditions, and is a cultural rather than a religious holiday. Maulana Karenga introduced Kwanzaa in 1966 to unite the African-American community in the wake of the 1965 "Watts riots" in Los Angeles.

Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili phrase "matunda ya kwanza," which translates as "first fruits." Its seven principles are unity; self-determination; collective responsibility; cooperative economics; purpose; creativity; and faith. The celebration draws on traditional African harvest festivals and includes music, storytelling, feasting, spiritual and community engagement. It is mainly understood as a celebration of life, and is overtly non-political. It is not usually considered to be a substitute for Christmas; indeed, many people of African descent celebrate both Kwanzaa and Christmas.

It is celebrated by about 6 million African-Americans, plus others across the African diaspora, i.e. in Jamaica and the Caribbean, the UK, France, Canada, Brazil, etc.

One origin story of Kwanzaa says the word was coined to include a "seventh letter, an extra a, to ... accommodate one letter for each of the seven children present at an early celebration". (See link: [Kwanzaa | History, Traditions, Dates & Facts | Britannica](#))

It was difficult to choose just one holiday to highlight at this time of year, but I thought Friends might like to learn about Kwanzaa, which I was first introduced to in 1988 by college friends.

Liz Brooks

There will be a **very short** January newsletter published on 10th January.

Please send news, photos, etc. to realgirltribe@gmail.com by 8th January.

In February the usual publication schedule will resume, i.e. circulation on the first of each month.