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Eighty five Young Friends in Bundelkhand at a day study camp on 20 June 2009

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Interior of Friends Church
Bhaktapur, near
Kathmandu,



ends
pur,

Editorial: Greetings to all our readers. “Thy Kingdom Come” and “For Thine is the Kingdom” are two prayers in my heart constantly, as a mantra. They enable me to live more courageously and cheerfully at times when the way ahead is dark. I am hearing “Kingdom theology” on ABC radio programs and in books by US theologian Walter Wink. In this Newsletter, we have Gerry Guiton’s talk given recently in Ohio

USA. *Living the Kingdom* is a central part of the theme for the 2012 World Gathering and a command from Jesus to his followers.

This quarter has been taken up with a variety of events: Aotearoa NZ's Centenary Yearly Meeting in Wellington, and Bundelkhand YM's day study camp for 85 Young Friends. The next period will see the opening of the Australia Quaker Centre near Canberra, and a SAPA (South Asia Peace Alliance) meeting in Ahmedabad India. The news includes information on the 2012 World Gathering in Nairobi, as well as the Section Gathering in Manila in 2011. There are plans for a Worshipping Group to re-start in Singapore. Friends are working both locally and internationally on issues relating to Global Change.

The Spirit is working mightily in our midst. Please read this Newsletter prayerfully, giving thanks for God's grace and love.

Valerie Joy Secretary AWPS

South Asia Peace Alliance: Mutual inspiration- the strengthening of the nonviolence movement in South Asia

Adapting George Fox's statement on war, Quakers today remain challenged by "how we live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all..." injustice against fellow human beings.

In late 2003, after a 3 year period of "waiting" which involved visits and consultations, with Friends in India and others, Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), the peace and justice department of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) decided to explore ways in which the nonviolence movement in South Asia could be strengthened by working as a connector and catalyst. This was to include the more confidential work then developing in a zone of conflict in North East India. It was out of this initiative that the South Asia Peace Alliance (SAPA) of Non Government Organisations and people's movements emerged in 2006 and the network continues to work together.

Responding to an invitation from Rajagopal P.V., the national convenor of a people's movement Ekta Parishad (Unity Forum) I represented QPSW and attended a padyatra – a foot march- in Madhya Pradesh's

Chambal Valley in 2002. I was deeply impressed by the authentic expression of nonviolence; listening to the stories of systematic injustice imposed on the people, raising awareness of man-made not God-made poverty, and following it up with organised resistance to the unjust power of some land owners, business people and politicians (referred to locally as the “mafia”). The people were being assisted to assert their rights to a livelihood i.e. access to already lost resources of land, water and forest needed to be established.

Rajagopal, realizing that global and regional sister/brotherhood is an important part of moving out of oppression brought two of his “social workers” to a QPSW “Conflict Transformation in South Asia” workshop in Bangladesh in 2003. Archana Gour of General Conference of Friends in India (GCFI) was a co-facilitator but arrived two days late because of visa obstacles. It seemed like the overcoming of such pain was itself a further spur to our vision of one South Asian family. Participants came from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan – support came from David Atwood, of the Quaker UN Office Geneva and Helen Clarke, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Representative in South East Asia. A “Spirit of Love” was present amongst us- transcending many labels that can serve to divide us.

In 2004 and 2005, QPSW combined with Ekta Parishad (EP) to host about thirty, mainly young, S Asian people to EP’s work in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Chhattisgarh States. From these living experiences of Nonviolence in action – Gandhi style training of social workers, padyatras and a demonstration against the World Trade Organization’s pro richer-people’s policies, participant organisations decided to launch the South Asia Peace Alliance (SAPA) in Nepal in April 2006 at a time of great political upheaval there. Meetings of the SAPA Core Group of participating organisations from six countries happen annually, supported by a small SAPA Secretariat in Delhi.

Activities began with a QPSW led nonviolence Training of Trainers workshop in late 2006 in Chitwan, Nepal after failing to gain visas for the Indians and one Sri Lankan into Pakistan. The ability to change country venue so quickly demonstrated the trust we had in one another and the effectiveness of email communication.

In August 2007 we conducted a workshop in Gwalior, MP, for the media that helped to strengthen EP's historic 25, 000 mainly poor person Janadesh (People's Verdict) march from Gwalior to Delhi in October. In 2008 Peace & Community Action (PCA) in Sri Lanka trained others in their deep commitment to the breaking of the cycle of violence. Their training manual can be downloaded at www.pcasl.org and is translated into English, Tamil, and Sinhalese.

In September, we will meet in Ahmedabad, India; we hope to look at ways of strengthening democracy through nonviolence. This workshop theme was requested by our Pakistan Core group member who is deeply concerned about the crisis of democracy in S. Asia.

Looking ahead to October 2012, EP is planning a 100,000 "Jansatyagraha" (People's Soul Force) march on Delhi to re-challenge the Indian Government and Indian society to the livelihood rights of the rural poor in India. SAPA will aim to add a regional voice to the support already given from Europe, North America and India to this great cause. The nonviolent voices and feet of the Quaker world are needed!

Stuart Morton' Programme Manager- Networking for Peace in South Asia, Quaker Peace & Social Witness; Friends House, London stuartm@quaker.org.uk. Further information on the above can be found at:<http://www.quaker.org.uk/south-asia>
<http://www.southasiacepacealliance.org/>

The Rule of Love (the Kingdom of God) Gerry Guiton

At Barnesville (Ohio) at the fiftieth anniversary of the influential journal, *Quaker Religious Thought*, I delivered a lecture entitled 'The Kingdom of God, the early Friends and the future of Quakerism.'

I spoke about the nature of the Kingdom—or what I also call the 'Rule' or 'Covenant of Love'—as enunciated by Jesus of Nazareth. In short, the Rule constitutes Jesus' revolutionary politics of compassion as this is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount. The early Friends took this up earnestly. In fact, they were happily obsessed with the 'Kingdom of God'. Of 800+ works in my possession of the approximately 1,000 works produced between 1652-1663, nearly 90% mention the

‘Kingdom’ or alternative expressions. Given the fact that the Kingdom was the central focus of Jesus and the high octane devotion of the first Friends, you'd think that Friends today would know all about it. Not so, like the wider Christian Church.

The Rule of Love needs to be taught in seminaries, schools, homes as a discreet entity and in our Quaker Meetings and Churches, something that can and should be done if we are to be true to the Jesus Way and indeed to our own Quaker Way (which is essentially the same thing). The fact is that the Kingdom is not taught at all, a pity since its pedagogical potential is enormous. I know this from personal experience. I will say it louder: that the Kingdom is not taught is *a scandal of Christianity*, a dereliction of our commitment to Jesus and the liberating path that he chose for us all, and an insult to the memory of the Quaker men and women of the mid-1600s who braved privation and death for us.

My talk underlined the uniqueness of the early Quaker interpretation of the Kingdom, how freeing, creative and inclusive it was. When we talk of the Rule of Love we mean something everlasting, meaningful and something that gives us direction, identity, theological cohesion and thus an outgoing and confident spirituality. This is actually demonstrated today by the ‘emergent Church’ as well as the ‘convergent Friends’ movement within Quakerism. When emergent Church groups, such as St. Mary’s Catholic community in Brisbane (Australia) or the Solace group in St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Fairfield, Melbourne (Australia) open their doors to the Kingdom, it infuses the very life of the community, that community not only grows in numbers but deepens its spiritual life ‘in the Life’

Turning to the Way of Jesus—the Rule of Love—and seeing how the early Friends did the same (with consequent rapid growth), will invigorate our Meetings and Churches. We will have an embarrassment of numbers. This has been the case in the past. It is the case in those communities where it is given prominence. A Lamb’s War will erupt on a community level rendering point and purpose to the work of liberation, ‘social justice’ and compassion.

The Rule of Love *IS* the future of Friends, its common language and practice. Come to know it. Read Matthew 5. Read the early Quakers anew, in particular Francis Howgill's *The Mysteries of God's Kingdom* (1657). And see where you stand in relation to it. Are you prepared to be challenged? Are you ready for joy? Are you ready to love unconditionally?

2012 World Gathering Theme *Being Salt and Light*

Plans are underway for the sixth World Conference of Friends, which will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, August 13-21, 2012. Around 1,000 Friends will gather on the campus of Africa Nazarene University to consider the theme **Being Salt and Light: Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world**. On deciding the theme, the International Planning Committee drew inspiration from several Bible passages, including Matthew 4:13 (“You are the salt of the earth...”), Matthew 5:14-16 (“You are the light of the world...”), Matthew 6:33 (“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...”), Matthew 6:9-13 (the Lord’s Prayer), Micah 4:4 (“They shall sit under their own vines and fig trees and no one shall make them afraid.”), and Micah 6:8 (“... And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”).

“This theme unites the spiritual foundation of our faith with our understanding of the basis of our work in the world in all its diversity,” said FWCC General Secretary Nancy Irving.

The theme will inform the preparation for the conference and between now and August 2012 there will be many opportunities for Friends to consider and reflect on it, both individually and in groups. A study pack will be prepared, and FWCC will offer an on-line course focusing on different aspects of the theme, as well as other opportunities for Friends to share their views and thoughts. This will lead to a conference book being prepared which will bring together the various ideas and issues that will be generated. Ultimately, the theme should guide the conference in discerning concrete ways in which Friends can live the Kingdom of God in a broken world.

AWPS Section Gathering: This will take place in Manila from early April 2011 followed by the Young Friends Gathering. Both will be at the same mountain top venue in Maryhill Tuk-tuk, the Philippines. The theme is “*Living our Faith*” from James 2: 14-17. A study booklet is planned and 400-500 word reflections on the theme are sought before 1 February 2010. Please send these to valerie@fwccawps.org

AWPS Global Change Committee

Julian Stargardt shares his views:

Climate and environment change affects us all and could ruin our whole lives. We want to do something about that. AWPS’ new Global Change Committee (GCC) meets every month by Skype and communicates regularly by email. We represent all parts of Asia West Pacific. We examine climate and related change. We sent all AWPS Meetings a Survey and Model Letter for Meetings to send to your government about climate change. We invite Friends to send us your ideas and questions, email us at: awps.gcc@gmail.com

Your World Needs You! Ask not what the world can do for you; ask what you can do for the world. Climate Change can’t be helped unless you help ! Do you want to do something about climate change? Here are some things you can do:

- Join Friends Global Change Support Group – email us on awps.gcc@gmail.com
- Respond to our Survey
- Get involved in your local “Green” group / movement !
- Electricity: Switch that light off ! Turn off your computer if you’re not using it. Use fluorescent lights – either strip lights or compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) - they use much less electricity to provide the same amount of light – you save money and help the environment!
- Recycle: Use waste water to water your garden or wash the car or windows; use kitchen scraps to start a compost heap for natural fertiliser for your garden and vegetable patch; sort out waste paper; waste metals; waste plastics; waste glass: There are scrap yards and recycling plants which buy this stuff to reuse it.
- Transport: Walk, cycle, or use public transport rather than drive. Use a compact economical car rather than a gas guzzler

- Encourage your Meeting to get active on environment and climate matters, ask your meeting to reply to our Survey and to write to your government about the environment
 - AWPS hopes to be at the December UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen – send us your ideas!
 - 350.org is organising a world climate day on 24 October – join in!
 - “Think before you throw” Is the thing you are throwing out really broken? Can it be repaired? Can it be recycled? Can you sell it or donate it ?
 - “Think before you buy” Do you really need that new thing ?
- Live simply that others may simply live!

Friends’ local and regional activities to promote action and awareness on global change include grass roots and international work. We ask all Friends to act now to mitigate and adapt to global change. Get involved! Write to us at: awps.gcc@gmail.com

More on Global Change Action in AWPS:

If Friends would like to get involved in action with regard to climate change, the FWCC Futures Committee suggests that they look at the web site <http://www.350.org>. 350.org is named after the recommended upper limit of CO₂ in the atmosphere (350 parts /million). We already have in excess of that level, and 350.org is trying to get us back down to that level. The AWPS Global Change Committee will be recommending that 350 is too low as a target, but lets get started on this!

In December, there will be the UNFCCC intergovernmental Conference in Copenhagen to address Climate Change. As part of the preparation for that, on 24 October, 350.org are holding a Global Day of Climate Action. The Central Executive Committee of FWCC has established a website to collect links, Friends’ statements, groups, study packs and links relating to Global Change: www.fwccglobalchange.org

Friends within our Section have taken up the challenge both individually, within Meetings and also the Global Change Committee is developing information packs which should be received by all Friends groups soon. So far, some actions taken or questions raised are:

- a) AWPS hopes to have two accredited Friends at the Copenhagen summit, Julian Stargardt, HK and Seiichi Kondo, Japan YM.
- b) One member took part in a High Level Dialogue of Asia-Pacific Ministerial level discussion in preparation for Copenhagen.
- c) Robert Howell A/NZ continues to speak of the need to establish an ethical basis for ameliorating the damage already done. His ideas can be further studied at www.moraleconomy.org
- d) Seiichi Kondo is pleading for Friends to reflect the “Inner Light” and “Absolute Peace” in our actions to reduce climate change.
- e) Jane Sloane AYM asks whether the role of women in bringing about climate change is being sufficiently sought. What is best Quaker practice?
- f) Vasant Bawa, India, asks for more involvement of Young Friends, and their friends, with fund raising and sustainable organic farming
- g) Jo Vallentine also supports this direction, citing the experience of Quaker Service Australia using permaculture as a means to reduce carbon footprints.
- h) Young Friend Tom Dundas, AYM helps co-ordinate the technology for the meetings.

Epistle from 2009 Aotearoa New Zealand Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

One hundred and fifteen Quakers gathered at Scots College, Wellington, from Thursday, 9 July to Sunday, 12 July for the 2009 Yearly Meeting. The first meeting for business of the Society in Aotearoa/New Zealand took place 100 years ago in this same city. We welcomed Friends from Great Britain, United States of America and Australia and received messages from other Yearly Meetings and those unable to be present.

We were greeted on arrival with a reminder of the greenhouse gas emissions created by travel to this meeting. Our emissions are miniscule compared with those generated by war and its preparation. Due to such unsustainable practices the global environmental situation is deteriorating rapidly. Environmental pressures are likely to increase conflict situations. Our Quaker Testimonies are therefore becoming more important than ever.

We were reminded that one hundred years ago our inaugural meeting wrote to the prime minister of the day with regard to our testimony for peace. We will be writing to our current prime minister on similar terms. Bill Willmott of Christchurch Meeting delivered the public Quaker Centennial Lecture titled *Kiwi Dragon: The Chinese in Aotearoa New Zealand: history, culture, hopes* at the Wellington Town Hall on the Thursday evening.

This lecture introduced a theme of the need to understand and be confident of who we are, in order to value others despite our differences. Too often in the past such differences have been regarded as a threat and have led to misunderstanding, discrimination and abuse.

This theme was later built upon in Betsy Brinson's film about the history of civil rights in Kentucky. It was further developed in our consideration of the need for constitutional arrangements that better recognise the place of Maori as the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand. We feel the current system advances the interests of the majority at their expense despite guarantees in our country's founding document, The Treaty of Waitangi.

Another manifestation of this theme came from Young Friends reporting their experiences with Indian Friends in Bhopal. They were struck by significant differences within the Quaker family. They initially found these differences very confronting but after being together so closely they came to an acceptance of their varying views.

We have been exercised as usual by the right use of money. We have reminded ourselves that money is simply a means to achieve our vision rather than an end in itself. We agree that any use of money including investment needs to be ethical and support sustainable practices. We were challenged by the need to find the correct balance between retention of capital and maintaining our level of contributions within this difficult economic climate.

A group of Friends have worked on a sexual harassment handbook for a number of years. They introduced it to us by tracing the history of changing attitudes to this aspect of how we relate to each other. It

highlighted the need to understand the past in order to build a different future.

Understanding the past requires valuing and caring for our archives. We were therefore delighted to hear of significant progress in the organisation and safe keeping of our archives. It was also a pleasure to hear the updated history of Whanganui Friends School in a nostalgic audiovisual presentation. Although the school no longer exists, from its ashes rose our much beloved educational centre, Quaker Acres.

In our consideration of how best to fulfill our testimonies we have worked together on some major issues over the last three days. In the words of ministry from one of our younger friends, we have felt supported, as by wings in flight, by those around us, past and present.

Australian Quaker Centre September to November 2009

In its inaugural year, the Australian Quaker Centre will be held at Silver Wattle Retreat Centre, about 15 km from Bungendore, NSW. In this spacious landscape you will have time for private contemplation, browsing the library, bush walks and the very special experience of learning and worshipping in a Quaker community. The Australian Quaker Centre offers a series of 1 - 2 week courses following five themes: *Our Quaker heritage ; Prayer and inward life; Indigenous Spirituality; Sustaining a Creative Life, Preparation for Quaker Witness*

The AQC holds an atmosphere of prayer and simplicity, and offers the experience of an extended period of immersion in a spiritual community. Further enquiries to Valerie Joy on aqcadmin@quakers.org.au, or consult the website for course details <http://www.aqc.quakers.org.au>

GCFI Celebrates 50 years: The General Conference of Friends in India will meet for worship, and worshipful business at Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia from 11-13 September. Friends from nearby Yearly Meetings have been invited to participate in this joyful occasion. Please hold

GCFI in the Light. The Clerk is Archana Gour and email enquiries should be sent to Dilawar Chetsingh: chet@airtelmail.in

Week of rehearsals for World Children's Choir for Peace

Girls and boys (9-16 years) with unbroken voices who love singing from Quaker Meetings around the world you are invited to apply to attend the World Children's Choir for Peace to be held from 3 - 9 January 2010 in Adelaide, South Australia. The cost will be AU\$400, which covers:

7 nights' accommodation at the modern and well-equipped Walford Boarding House

- All meals
- Entry fees and transport costs
- Use of sheet music
- Professional instruction in choral singing
- Group work to facilitate life skills such as communication, group membership and assertiveness skills.

Transport arrangements and costs will need to be met by individual choristers, hopefully with financial support from their Local Meeting and/or other sources. For further details: Deborah Munro, Executive Director, Young Adelaide Voices, 27 Grenfell St, KENT TOWN SA 5067, Ph/Fax: 8362 3885 debmunro@youngadelaidevoices.asn.au
www.youngadelaidevoices.asn.au

Calling Friends and Enquirers in Singapore!

For several years, the worshipping group in Singapore has been laid down, due to expatriate Friends returning to their original Meetings. I receive frequent enquiries from Friends on holidays in Singapore. Now, some longer term residents, Karen Teoh and her husband Dustin, together with Amy Skinkman who is a birthright Friend from the US are

hoping to re-start a Worshipping Group. Readers in Singapore are encouraged to contact Karen on kandd@gmail.com

News and activities of Friends in the Section:

Graham Hodgkin from West Australia Regional Meeting has died after a long struggle with cancer. Both Graham and his wife Margaret Woodward have been active within FWCC for several decades. Our sympathies are with Margaret and the Hodgkin family.

Seiichi Kondo from Japan YM suggests “a possibility to have some kind of cooperation with Indian people such as social work camps involving young people. After World War II, the activity of Work Camps was very popular all over the world. American Friends Service Committee for instance, had an office in Delhi.

In Japan, we still have this activity. Nowadays, the involvement of Japanese Friends has become very weak, but Friends International Work Camps (FIWC) still continue with Leprosy and other projects. However, young people are still interested in working on the same theme in South Korea and South China.” Interested Indian Young Friends should contact Seiichi on seiichikondo75@yahoo.co.jp He will then put you in touch with FIWC

Udaya Sharma from Nepal writes “I am helping the vision impaired and also rural women with small seed money to start micro enterprises.

Felicity McCartney, the incoming Clerk of Ireland YM writes “My son Aidan is just back from a brief visit to Philippines where he and Joy spent time with John and Lois Ocol from the Triennial and some other Friends. Irish Friends have sent some funds to Philippines via IQFA for various purposes. Ireland YM next year is in July in Kings Hospital - in case anyone who would like to come! The dates are 22-26 July.

Kenneth Co

The venue for my next adventure in teaching is the historic city of Xian, capital of Zhen Xi Province. The school I will be teaching is a fairly new school called Gao Xin Number 1 School of Xian. It has 3 campuses and 2 Branch schools to a total of some 8000 students. Even just the last two

grades of Senior High the number of students number in the thousands--1800 to be exact. I will be teaching in one of the three campuses called the International Campus.

I will be teaching in one of the oldest, most cultured cities in China; the number of higher educational institutions here only second to Beijing. My intention is to be more proactive and to really learn about the history and culture of China. I'm sure I won't be disappointed! Please keep me in your thoughts and up hold me in your prayers! And most importantly do visit me when you have a chance of visiting Xian!

Jennifer Overington I am settling into Seattle, and this is a good opportunity to reflect on what showed up when I was developing a worshipping group in Taipei. I found Taiwanese people to be open and friendly, willing to talk about a new-to-them sense of religion, but under that polite and supportive surface I also heard them not stating that many of them are as tired of organized blind faith as I am. As we know, our faith is never blind, but communicating this together with the fact that we are a religion, but have no creeds, proved challenging and insightful. I am happy with my memories of the conversations I shared with people in Taipei about faith and living practices. Taiwanese people accept many religious perspectives, are open to the ideas of monotheism and polytheism without seeing a contradiction between these two systems.

Julian Stargardt: We spent Easter in Manila and while there we met with Flor and Andrew Braid, old and weighty Friends from the unprogrammed tradition, who have lived in Manila since the mid-1970s. Andrew is 93 but hale and hearty - he asked me to bring Chinese calligraphy brushes and inks so he could re-start his old hobby of doing Chinese painting. Andrew is a retired senior United Nations official, formerly with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). He served with the Friends Ambulance Unit in China during the 2nd World War and after the war worked in Hong Kong. Flor is as well known and respected as chair of the UNESCO National Commission Communication Section, a columnist in one of the leading newspapers and President Emeritus of the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communications.

Flor and Andrew offered their home as a Meeting place for unprogrammed Friends in Manila. This Meeting took place in May.

Michael Tan Enquiries about the Manila Worshipping group should be made to: vetmedanthro@gmail.com. Michael shares his discovery of a useful website: “Speaking of Faith”, which recently featured US Quaker theologian, Parker Palmer.

<http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2009/rv-palmer/>

Shiny Manuel from Marble Rocks Friends MM in India will attend the Australian Quaker Centre in September. She will study with Helen Bayes, who will present a course titled “Elijah and Quakers: lessons in Prophecy” She will also study with Frances Thorsen “Paths into Eldering”. Shiny will have opportunities to meet up with Young Friends in Sydney and Canberra. She has agreed to pass on the content of her learning to Friends in India. Her email is shiny_raymanuel@yahoo.com

Hansi De from GCFI has been reflecting about Donald and Erica Groom. “My husband knew them when he was the director of the Delhi Gandhi National Museum. Donald was supposed to speak there on the evening in 1972 that his plane crashed. We also knew the Merediths when Richard was General Secretary of FWCC. At present, I am in Orissa, at the Gandhi Labour Foundation, where I teach courses in Women’s issues and Gandhi and his leadership.

St. Theresa's Prayer:

"May today there be peace within.

May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith in yourself and others.

May you use the gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content with yourself just the way you are. Let this knowledge settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us."

International Membership Committee: Ruth Watson has laid down her position, which cares for isolated Friends west of Hong Kong to India. Thanks to Ruth for her care. It is proposed that Michael Payne,

supported by his wife Marilyn Payne will take up this concern, working as a team. The Paynes are currently visiting in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. If you are in one of these countries, and would like to contact the Paynes, you can email them on mm.p@clear.net.au Their home is at the Whanganui Quaker Settlement in New Zealand.

Nepal Friends: Report from *David Grimshaw Warwick LM, BYM*

I am reflecting on a day spent with Quakers from the Bhaktapur [Evangelical Friends](#) Church in Nepal. Some of you will remember that in August 2005 we were visited by a number of Friends from around the world travelling to the IFWG held in Lancaster. One of those young people was Pradip Lamichhane, from Nepal. A couple of weeks ago I travelled to Bhaktapur to visit the old town which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On the way I was remembering Pradip and thinking that I would get in touch with him. Returning to Kathmandu later that day I checked my emails to find that Pradip had in fact just contacted me. Imagine his surprise to find that I was actually in Nepal.

Travelling this morning from Kathmandu to Bhaktapur (about 1 hour by road) I tried to open my mind and set aside any expectations. Pradip briefed me about what would happen at the meeting. Starting shortly after 10:00, worship would continue past 12:00 and after a short break there would then be a youth group discussion. Afterwards I was invited to join him with his family at his home for some food.

The seeds of the Quaker community were started 13 years ago. The Meeting House (photo p.2) was started in the year 2000, a two storey building with accommodation for the pastor on the ground floor and meeting space on the upper floor. There are no outward signs of the purpose of the building.

Assembled on the upper floor we began with a prayer, followed by singing accompanied with guitar and drums. Notices were given by the Pastor (photo p.2) there was more singing and then an address by the Pastor. The service ended with the Lord's Prayer. Sadly my Nepali is not good enough to understand the address. Clearly there were quotes from the Bible and the story told was of the disciples returning from fishing with no fish. I understood the passion with which the story was being told. The powerful oratory kept everyone on the edge of their seat, waiting for the next part of the story. I wondered if this was what it must

have been like listening to George Fox. There were further parallels in my mind: the early British Quakers were in grave danger of being sent to prison or being outcast by their communities. Since 2007 the Interim Constitution of Nepal has protected the right to practice religion but it is against the law to proselytize.

Facts about Quakers in Nepal

- 32 local meetings in the YM.
- Started in 1994.
- Part of the Evangelical Friends Church International (about 40% of the worldwide community).

After the Lord's Prayer the worship ended and was followed by several minutes of socialising. A group of women sat in a circle and prayed for those particularly in need this week. The young people (about 20 in all, aged perhaps between 12 and 20) gathered in a circle and I was invited to say something about our worship in Warwick followed by questions. I guessed that I was the one expected to provide the "answers". Did we study the Bible? Why didn't we tell others about the "good news" in the Bible? How was my faith related to my work? What did Practical Action do? Was Practical Action a Christian based organisation?

We discussed issues relating to knowledge and understanding of the Bible, the relationship of science to faith, lifelong learning, personal responsibility and the use of our talents. The list is long and wide-ranging. Suffice it to say that at the end I was amazed that another hour had gone by. Such an engaging group of young people were a real pleasure to be with and I kept wondering what the conversation would be like if they could have talked directly to the young people of Warwick Meeting.

Then it was my turn to ask questions. Although I had learnt a lot I felt I was not clear about the difference between the Friends Church and other Christian churches. I was told that the Friends Church had a close relationship with other Christian Churches locally which included Baptists and Methodists. However, I am still not clear about what is distinctly Quaker about their approach. This gives me a reason to go back and learn more.

After about an hour of discussion the group concluded and I was invited downstairs to talk with the pastor in his home. We were served Nepali tea. I became aware that some members of the Church had walked for two hours to get to the service. They would walk for two more hours home and in all likelihood that was without any food. I departed with Pradip and the Pastor to visit Pradip's home. Despite protests that I wasn't hungry I was served fruit, potato and tomato curry, and curd (yogurt) all home grown and a delight to taste. For someone like me who loves mountains it was difficult to imagine a more beautiful place. Sitting on the roof terrace we looked out over the terraces of agriculture below in the valley, towards the hills that border the Kathmandu valley and beyond. The fields were full of potatoes, wheat, vegetables. The terraces were irrigated and verdant. Yet here there is poverty and hunger.

I returned home to Kathmandu on the local bus shortly after 18:00, full of both food and thought. It is my hope that we can continue to learn from each other in a spirit of deep respect for each other's culture and traditions. As part of notices, I was asked to introduce myself. It was said that I was the first (foreign) visitor. I kept to the facts: we had no pastor – sharing the roles between us; we sat in silence listening for the spirit; we tried to live a spirit-led life every day. Would any of these ideas make sense to the people gathered today? What was it like converting from Hindu to Christian? I wondered what Pradip felt like after spending an hour in silent worship at Warwick.

AWPS Section Committee meetings via Skype:

The voices are crackling and breaking up, and sometimes we “lose” a member for several minutes, but Friends, we have taken up the challenge of regular Skype Committee meetings. In AWPS we have long fretted over our enormous distances, making frequent physical contact difficult, but this technology is a grace and for that we give thanks.

We have had two meetings so far, with endless emails in between. I have a sense of community building amongst the management of our Section. We have approved our Strategic Plan, which will be posted on the website soon. It gives us direction, goals and ways of measuring how we are going. We have agreed to upgrade our website to a CMS (content management system) which will bring in new efficiencies.

The Philippines Evangelical Friends Church has identified 11 Friends to work on aspects of the Manila Gathering. We hope to draw Friends from all over Asia and beyond to the beautiful site just outside the border of Metro Manila.



AWPS Budget 2009

| | Actual 2008 | Budget 2009 | to date 2009 (July) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| EXPENSES | | | |
| Secretary's Expenses | | | |
| Office expenses | 1353 | 1500 | 1350 |
| Travel (1) | 5921 | 2500 | 0 |
| Newsletter Print in Aust | 336 | 0 | 0 |
| Newsletter Postage in Aust | 454 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Administration(2) | 120 | 150 | 350 |
| Website Maintenance(3) | 4190 | 1500 | 630 |
| Newsletter - India (4) | 0 | 4000 | 4000 |
| Bank Fees | 126 | 120 | 6 |
| Global Change | | | |
| Proposals | | | |
| Committee | 0 | 2000 | 2412 |
| IT upgrades | 0 | 3000 | 1000 |
| Fares for Gerry Guiton to Ohio(6) | | 0 | 400 |
| Total Expenses | 12500 | 14770 | 10148 |
| INCOME | | | |
| Newsletter | 220 | 220 | 272 |
| YMs & MMs(5) | 10148 | 10,000 | 5063 |
| Individual Friends | 872 | 900 | 291 |
| Bank Interest | 60 | 70 | 115 |
| Donations for GCC call | 0 | 0 | 1092 |
| Total Income (5) | 11300 | 11190 | 6833 |

NOTES

1. Approx \$3,000 expected to be refunded by WO for CEC fares
2. Quaker publications for distribution by Secretary
3. Paid until 30.6.09, 6 months still to be paid
4. Last year's Newsletters were paid for by money already in India
5. Most major grants to the Section arrive after September
6. AWPS paid \$400, rest paid by AYM and World Office

7. There will be more donations etc forwarded from the World Office at end of the Financial Year

££\$ Please Support AWPS: You may wish to contribute towards the cost of production of the Newsletter. Annual cost is AUD 20. Please send this or its equivalent in your currency to your Treasurer. This office bearer can then make an annual remittance in \$AUD to AWPS Treasurer, Topsy Evans, PO Box 181 Glen Osmond, SA 5064 Australia. Your donation can be even more useful by combining with other Friends to send a lump sum, so minimising bank charges. If you would like to use internet transfers, please contact Topsy Evans on tevens@c130.aone.net.au for our bank details. Please also remember AWPS in your will—*Thanks*

Glossary of terms used in Newsletter:

AFSC: American Friends Service Council

AS: Africa Section

AVP: Alternative to Violence Project

AWPS: Asia West Pacific Section

BMMS: Bundelkhand Yearly Meeting

BYM: Britain Yearly Meeting

CEC: Central Executive Committee

EMES: Europe and Middle Eastern Section

FPT: Friends Peace Teams; FWCC: Friends World Committee for Consultation

GCFI: General Conference of Friends in India; HPC: Historic Peace Churches

JYF: Junior Young Friends 12-18s; MM: Monthly Meeting

PEFC: Philippines Evangelical Friends Church

QUNO: Quaker United Nations Office; QUNO-NY: Quaker United Nations office in New York; QUNO Geneva: Office in Geneva

QPS/ANZ: Quaker Peace and Service, Aotearoa New Zealand

QSA: Quaker Service Australia

S of A: Section of the Americas

YAF: Young Adult YM: Yearly Meeting Friends (18 years-35ish)

YF: Young Friends; YM: Yearly Meeting



More from Bhaktapur Friends Church in Nepal

If undelivered please return to:
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BOOK POST