



Brighton Friends News

A Monthly Publication of Brighton Quaker Meeting

March 2025

www.brightonquakers.co.uk

Issue 363

Police Raid on a place of worship

The Metropolitan Police broke into Westminster Meeting House to arrest six young people. A week later a Meeting for Worship (MfW) was held outside New Scotland Yard. In the centre pages are reports of the raid and the MfW posted on the Quakers in Britain website. <https://www.quaker.org.uk>.

What else can we do?

- Write to our MP. There is a template on the Quaker in Britain website <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/westminster-meeting-house-raid-email-your-mp-template>.
- Sign a petition to Repeal the Public Order Act 2023 <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/715427>. If Quakers act quickly while the story is still in people's minds, maybe we could get it to 100 000.

In June 1660 Margaret Fell delivered to Charles II a paper directed to the king and both houses of parliament making clear the corporate testimony of Friends 'against all strife and wars':

We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife, and wars, and contentions that come from the lusts that war in the members, that war in the soul, which we wait for, and watch for in all people, and love and desire the good of all... Treason, treachery, and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising, or plotting against any creature upon the face of the earth, and speak the truth in plainness, and singleness of heart.

Quaker Faith and Practice 19.46

Tony Benn's five questions to ask the powerful:

1. What power have you got?
2. Where did you get it from?
3. In whose interests do you exercise it?
4. To whom are you accountable?
5. And how can we get rid of you?

"If you cannot get rid of the people who govern you" he told parliament in 2001
"you do not live in a democratic system."

Tony Benn would have been 100 years old this month.

FaceBook post by Billy Bragg
Submitted by Susan White

Brighton Quaker Action Group

We met on Sunday 30 March before Meeting for Worship to discuss our response to the Met police raid in London. These are our suggestions.

In the first instance I suggest people join the Brighton Quaker Action WhatsApp group to share info on action. Please contact Kristin Sjovorr, Jason Evans, Helen Ledger or Phil Holtam to coordinate attendance on national and local actions, marches and vigils. Alternatively, write to brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com.

Further action can include:

- If you want to lodge a complaint about the raid or to join the voices calling for repeal of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023, these can be submitted to your MP but also to Dame Diana Johnson who is Policing Minister; Yvette Cooper MP is Home Secretary; Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London; and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). These two acts are the repressive legislation introduced by the last government which the UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders has expressed grave concern about. See links on page 1.
- If you want to support Youth Demands or other NVDA action groups by observing police conduct at actions and meetings, Green & Black Cross are an established and respected organisation that provide training and provide independent observers at protest events.
- If you want to support local NVDA activists arrested under the new protest legislation, there is a police station support group who turn out when someone is arrested and do shifts outside the custody suite at Hollingbury to make sure the arrestee is met by someone on their release.
- If you want to support NVDA activists who have been charged under the new protest legislation, you can join Defend Our Juries who do silent sittings with placards outside Crown Courts reminding jurors that they have the right to acquit according to their conscience.
- There is also a group who provide court support for NVDA activists who are charged or on bail/tagged, with free legal advice, note taking in court, witnessing their hearings, providing accommodation if the hearing is far from home, and bringing them tea and lunch during their hearings.

Two points to note:

1. NVDA stands for Non-Violent Direct Action. This will usually involve some level of disruption to the public or the target, but the Ziegler ruling stated that the disruption must be measured and proportionate. Judges should take this into account in protest cases but many are choosing to ignore this.

2. All the NVDA campaigns have a 'blue light' policy that means any emergency vehicle with blue lights flashing will be allowed to pass, despite what some newspapers say. Actions are carefully planned to ensure this is always possible but cannot prevent members of the public stopping passage e.g. by illegally blocking the hard shoulder on a motorway.

Kristin Sjovorr

FOOD BANK -- Please Remember -- FOOD BANK --- FOOD BANK

Please make donations to the foodbanks in your supermarkets.

Alternatively, you can bring donations to Meeting House on Sundays.

Brighton Meeting has received messages of support from the chair of the InterFaith Contact Group, The Rabbi of the Progressive Synagogue and the lead Chaplain at the University of Sussex. We are grateful for these messages of support from the wider Faith community.



**Statement by The Interfaith Contact Group of Brighton and Hove
March 31st 2025**

The Interfaith Contact Group of Brighton and Hove (IFCG), wishes to voice its utter condemnation of the violation of The Westminster Quaker Meeting House on the night of March 27th. The IFCG includes representatives of around 30 different faith Groups, faith leaders and 300 ‘friends’ representing people of faith and none in Brighton and Hove and Sussex.

The remit of the IFCG is to create safe spaces and opportunities for people of faith to meet in freedom. A significant number of our committee are Quakers, as are many of our friends. The ethos of peace is fundamental to the Quaker community, and their contribution empowers the IFCG to interact harmoniously with people of diverse faiths and cultures in Brighton, Hove and Sussex, including the City’s occupants, visitors, refugees and the homeless.

In a world where freedom of faith and expression are not allowed in many countries and acts of violence against racial and cultural minorities are condemned by our Government, this ugly gesture of aggression is unacceptable. The Government and the MET cannot hide behind the Public Order Act of 2023 to carry out acts of assault against young people simply carrying out a meeting in a sacred place of worship. The use of tasers and equipment to break down doors and subsequently handcuff people in a sacred space is reminiscent of the darkest days of the worst political regimes; such measures must never be tolerated in the United Kingdom.

In the months to come the IFCG will continue to stand in support of The Friends and the ethos of peace fundamental to The Meeting House and those that worship there. We will always give our heartfelt support for the Quakers commitment to freedom of expression, and the right to state ideas in a peaceful and honourable way.

Anthea Ballam
Chair
Interfaith Contact Group

Sheila Boyer
Secretary
Interfaith Contact Group

Linda Lee
Brahma Kumaris

Ibrahim Gokhan Karadol
The Dialogue Society

Charlotte Gravestock
Member of Hove Methodist Church

Helen Ledger
Quakers Rep, Interfaith Contact Group

Lyn Baylis
The Pagan Seminary

Mary Gallivan
Treasurer
Interfaith Contact Group

Elizabeth Archer
Pebbles Sangha

Pamela Hartog
Brighton & Hove Progressive Synagogue

Signed on behalf of the Interfaith Contact Group of Brighton and Hove

Yearly Meeting 2025

Yearly Meeting takes place at Friends House and online over last May Bank Holiday, from Friday 23 to Monday 26 May 2025.



Quakers in Britain

To register go to www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings

Bookings for Yearly Meeting close on Sunday 27 April

An Invitation

I read the Quaker Faith and Practice 2.84 at the end of the March issue of the newsletter. It talks about how meeting in each other's homes would remind us that God is with us in every place.

Taking my cue from this I would like to invite four or five people to my home for refreshment and chat. I'm thinking maybe once a month, for two hours. It's a chance to get to know one another. We can talk about Quakerism, Religion generally, Brighton Meeting or any other topic that is needed.

The time could be agreed. I'm thinking Saturday morning or afternoon, or one evening at 6.30 or 7 o'clock. I live in Aymer Road, West Hove.

If you are interested please contact me or write to brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com and it will be forwarded on to me.

Vivienne Ross

Interfaith Contact Group

The Interfaith Contact Group Annual General Meeting will be held on **Sunday 27th April 2.30pm** at the Meeting House. Everyone is very welcome.



The business part of the AGM is very short and will be followed by

3.00 - 3.40pm Invited faith representatives on the theme:

"A sample of my spiritual practice" A multi-faith practice with members of our faith and belief communities Chaired by Rev. Anthea Ballam Each will give a 10-minute sample of their spiritual practice: Jewish- Pamela Hartog, Franciscan Lesley Ann The Society of St Francis, Pagan to be announced, Sufi Sufi speaker Tugay Yalcin and Sufi musician Neyzen Mustafa

3.40-4.10pm pm Questions and Discussion

4.10pm pm Closing words

4.15-5pm Tea and cake £5 suggested donation

This year's AGM should prove to be an interesting and enjoyable afternoon with a delicious tea to end; we do hope you can join u

Sheila Boyer and Helen Ledger, IFCG representatives.

Dementia Clinic from Age UK WSBH

We are pleased to confirm that **The Dementia Clinic** is now accepting customers. This new not-for-profit memory assessment service from **Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove (Age UK WSBH)**, developed in partnership with 'Here', a not-for-profit healthcare provider, is designed to support individuals aged 65+ who are experiencing memory concerns by providing high-quality assessments and ongoing support.

What the Dementia Clinic offers:

- Comprehensive memory assessments by experienced clinicians, including blood tests and scans if appropriate
- Ongoing support from Age UK WSBH to help patients and families navigate the process
- Flexible access – patients can self-refer or be referred by their GP

Go to <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westsussexbrightonhove/our-services/> and click on Dementia Clinic for more information.

Peter Wells

Asylum Seeker and Refugee Cooking Group

Volunteers Urgently Needed

The Cooking Group run by the Quaker Sanctuary Group has been running for 3 years. We support the residents of the Home Office run hotels in Hove. Sessions are held at the Meeting House and in turn different groups of refugees cook food that is a 'taste of their home country'. The sessions are happy occasions when people from the hotel can meet together, cook together and relax. Our volunteers say how rewarding it is.

We currently meet on a Tuesday morning and need 3 volunteers a week to run the group. The group is entirely financed by Quakers. The menu is planned by the hotel residents and we buy the food.

We need support. Volunteer helpers urgently needed - Could you become a volunteer, usually only once a month, possibly twice, from 10.00 - 2.30?

Financial support - could you make a one-off or a regular donation towards the cost of the cooking group?

To find out more please contact me or write to brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com.

*Helen Ledger
Sanctuary Group*

P.S. Current members are from many parts of the world. Please consider donating sanitary products, specifically sanitary pads as culturally these are more acceptable for most of the women. Donations can be left in the box near the automatic door into the Meeting Room. The women cannot afford to buy these necessary items on the weekly £9.00 they receive from the Home Office. Regular donations are particularly welcomed.

Quakers condemn police raid on Westminster Meeting House

Posted 28 March 2025 on quaker.org.uk.

Police broke into a Quaker Meeting House last night (27 March) and arrested six young people holding a meeting over concerns for the climate and Gaza.



Quakers in Britain strongly condemned the violation of their place of worship which they say is a direct result of stricter protest laws removing virtually all routes to challenge the status quo.

Just before 7.15pm more than 20 uniformed police, some equipped with tasers, forced their way into Westminster Meeting House. They broke open the front door without warning or ringing the bell first, searching the whole building and arresting six women attending the meeting in a hired room.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023 have criminalised many forms of protest and allow police to halt actions deemed too disruptive. Meanwhile, changes in judicial procedures limit protesters' ability to defend their actions in court. All this means that there are fewer and fewer ways to speak truth to power.

Quakers support the right to nonviolent public protest, acting themselves from a deep moral imperative to stand up against injustice and for our planet. Many have taken nonviolent direct action over the centuries, from the abolition of slavery to women's suffrage and prison reform. Paul Parker, recording clerk for Quakers in Britain, said: "No-one has been arrested in a Quaker meeting house in living memory. This aggressive violation of our place of worship and the forceful removal of young people holding a protest group meeting clearly shows what happens when a society criminalises protest. Freedom of speech, assembly, and fair trials are an essential part of free public debate which underpins democracy."

Silent but not subdued: Quakers hold meeting for worship at Scotland Yard

Posted 3 April 2025 on quaker.org.uk.

A silent Quaker Meeting was held outside New Scotland Yard on Thursday, in support of all who speak up for truth and integrity. Hundreds of Quakers, politicians and others stood in silence for forty minutes as traffic rattled past on busy Victoria Embankment, with 25 other silent meetings held nationwide and online.

The meeting, held in the wake of the police raid on Westminster Meeting House, was organised by Quaker Support for Climate Action to "uphold our worshipping community and support all who speak up for truth and integrity in the face of increasing state oppression."

The raid, carried out by Metropolitan Police officers, involved breaking into a place of worship to arrest six people discussing climate action and peace in Gaza. The move sparked widespread criticism, with constituents expressing concerns about heavy-handed policing to their MPs. On Monday, MP Luke Taylor raised the issue during urgent questions in the House of Commons, while Home Secretary Yvette Cooper addressed it on BBC television the previous day. Both responses framed the raid as an operational matter for the Met Police. But, along with many others, Quakers have been calling for the repeal of the Public Order Act 2023 and parts of the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Act 2022 since they were passed. Under these new laws the right to protest has been severely restricted. Vague and sweeping definitions mean that even discussing peaceful protest can be criminalized.



Picture: Michael Preston for Quakers in Britain

Concerns over the police's approach have spanned the political spectrum from Cities of London and Westminster MP Rachel Blake, Labour, to former Conservative Party minister, Jacob Rees-Mogg. Blake has formally requested information from the Met on their policy regarding entering places of worship. And Rees-Mogg said on GB News: "There has long been a tradition in this country of taking a view that religious spaces should not be invaded by the forces of law and order unless absolutely necessary." Green MPs Carla Denyer, Ellie Chowns and Siân Berry, along with Baroness Jenny Jones and London Assembly members Zack Polanski and Zoë Garbett attended the open-air meeting.

Siobhán Haire, deputy recording clerk for Quakers in Britain, said: "We've been warning since these laws were proposed that this is about the kind of country, the kind of world, we want to live in. Quakers believe that all people are equal, and for that to be a lived reality, we need laws that enable participation rather than suppress it."



For more information go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk>.

Report on Area Meeting (AM)

Saturday 15 March at Chichester Meeting House and on Zoom

Technical problems with the equipment at Chichester meant that we were unable to hear the Meeting on Zoom. So, this report is the headlines from the Minutes. I would recommend that Friends read the minutes and reports attached to them as they are very interesting and important. Here is a very brief summary:

Membership Matters

Meeting for Worship for the marriage of Phillipa Garrety and Claire Herbert (Chichester). Also Ruth Audus and Finton Brennan (Brighton) on 5th July. Memorial Meeting for George Dean (5th February). Application for membership from Peter Wells. Transfer of membership to Sussex East of Kate Mackrell. Jason Evans has joined the AM Conciliation Group.

Report from Meeting for Sufferings (MfS)

The focus of Yearly Meeting in May will be on the Peace Testimony and the state of the world. Points to note: 1. Upcoming appeal for Quaker Housing Trust, 2. MfS to become a Continuing Yearly Meeting, 3. Concern about police powers and the right to protest

AM Activities in 2025 Ideas for learning and discussion, possible Regional Meeting topics – see Minutes for details.

Report from the **SEQWG (Southeast England Quaker Working Group)**

Reports from **AM Treasurer and Trustees**

Report from the **Working Group on the Future of AM**

Request from The Friend - The Friend is looking for support and Friends are asked to look at how this could be given.

AM Dates for the rest of the year - 17 May Littlehampton, 19 July tbc, 22 September Ditchling, 22 November Brighton

Afternoon discussion session – Investing in the Future – Quaker values and food security. This work is at an early stage but raises important ethical issues. Friends are encouraged to read Ruth Jones's article in The Friend 23 February, attached to the AM Minutes.

Jane Rosenberg

Contact books

The books have arrived and will be £2 each. We have a card reader if needed for payment. The books will be sold by a Pastoral Friend from the book trolley after Meeting. Due to GDPR, they can only be sold to those whose names are in the book. We ask Friends to shred old books. This can be done at the Meeting House if need be.

Pastoral Friends

Pastoral Support - Staying in Touch with each other

Our Quaker community has a *Pastoral Friends* team who are available to keep in touch with members and attenders, and give comfort or support when it is needed. Our present age has many challenges – from living through coronavirus to worries about making ends meet, or anxiety over international tensions.

Please contact any of the Pastoral Team who are: Sheila Boyer, Lisa Compton, Annie Lieberman, Hugh Parrott, Dawn Speck.

bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com

Community in Action

Fourth Sunday Shared Lunch

27 April, 25 May, 22 June, 27 July, 24 August, 28 October, 23 November.

Join us for regular Friendly lunches at 12.30 - Everyone welcome. Vegetarian soups & bread provided, plus shared dishes. Edible or financial (£2-£3) contributions appreciated.

It's a team effort. Help is appreciated:

- Setting up, heating up, and clearing away.
- Making newcomers feel welcome.
- Usually ends with a cup of tea to thank the helpers ♡♡

Helen Holtam

Coffee Mornings via Zoom on Fridays at **11.00 am**. If you would like to join please email the clerk at brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com

Being Friends Together

Being Friends Together is a good opportunity to get to know Friends better, learn more about Quakerism and share spiritual journeys. Three groups continue to get together regularly via Zoom. If you would like to join please contact the Elders via bqelders@gmail.com

Clerk's mailing list: If you would like to receive email information and Quaker news from the clerks, you need to have completed a GDPR Form (re data privacy). These forms are available from the Pastoral Team by contacting: bqpastoralfriends@outlook.com

Appeals

Now that we have blended Meetings some Friends cannot put donations in our Appeal Box at Meeting House. Our chosen charities could lose out on much needed donations. If you can, please make your donation through the appeal's website freedomfromtorture.org.

Alternatively, you can send a donation via the Meeting Treasurer. Just send a cheque to Meeting House or do a bank transfer:

Account name: Brighton Quaker Meeting

Sort Code: 08-92-99 Account number: 65009567

Please do let the Treasurer know which appeal the payment is for.

Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God's purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.

Quaker Faith & Practice, Advices & Queries No. 35

Freedom from Torture - Appeal



Freedom from Torture is a British charity who support refugees and asylum seekers who have been tortured before coming to the UK. They provide clinical services, which directly support men, women and children who have survived physical and psychological torture. These holistic rehabilitation services help survivors of tortures to rebuild their lives. In 2023 they supported 713 survivors of torture directly. Their top future priority is expanding access to these therapies, standing alongside survivors of torture as they rebuild their lives.

Freedom from Torture also campaign for better treatment of all asylum seekers, for instance their recent Stop the Flights campaign against the Rwanda refugee expulsion scheme. They pressure the government to apply the law consistently, which has helped push back against heartless policies like turning back migrant boats in the channel. Freedom from Torture have made significant changes in recent years to make sure that their services are guided by people who have survived torture, and now hear the voices of survivors at every level in the organisation. They also support asylum seekers in making asylum claims where the torture they have experienced forms part of their claim for asylum.

Further information about why their work is still necessary, when torture is prohibited by international law, is available on their website, freedomfromtorture.org.

Brighton Meeting diary

Meetings for Worship

Regular Meeting for Worship

Sundays 10.30–11.30am Blended Meeting

If you wish to join via Zoom please contact bgelders@gmail.com

5.00–5.45pm in-person only Meeting

The evening Meeting on the second Sunday of the month will be a Silent Peace Vigil. For more information please contact Vivienne Ross or bgelders@gmail.com

Wednesdays 12.30–1.00pm in person only in the Quiet Room

For more information please contact bgelders@gmail.com

Children's Meetings

Brighton Children's Meeting welcomes all children and their parents to Children's Meeting and Creche. Children will have the opportunity to learn more about Quakers today and the roots of Quakerism, and to explore for themselves what this means for them in their own lives.

All leaders are DBS checked. One parent per family is asked to stay with babies and toddlers up to age 2 in the Creche. Creche is for our younger children and Children's Meeting for children over 5.

There will be a Children's Meeting every Sunday.

For more information please email brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com

Workshops and community events

Welcome Meeting

Welcome Meeting is held on the second, third, fourth and fifth Sundays of the month, at **12 noon**, and is open to everyone – visitors, attenders and members. It is a chance to share how Meeting was for us and to discuss our Quaker faith. Newcomers are particularly welcome - come and chat with some friendly people about your impressions of Meeting or ask questions about Quakerism in an open and informal way.

Meetings for Quaker business

Local Meeting for Worship for Business in 2025

Sunday 4 May at 12 noon in the Meeting Room

Items for MWB must be sent to the Clerk at least one week before the meeting, i.e. **Sunday 27 April**. The only exceptions are emergencies that arise during the week before MWB. Please email brightonquakerclerk@gmail.com, or write to the Clerks c/o The Meeting House.

If you are a newcomer or attender and would like to join MWB for the first time, please contact the Clerk, who will be able to explain the procedures. If you are not comfortable with Zoom please contact the Elders at bgelders@gmail.com.

Area Meetings for Worship for Business in 2025

It was agreed at November's Area Meeting to continue varying the formats of Area Meeting to be more inclusive. Hopefully the changes will make these Meetings more accessible to younger Friends.

Saturday 17 May Littlehampton Meeting House

Saturday 19 July (tbc)

Saturday 20 September Ditchling Meeting House

Saturday 22 November Brighton Meeting House

All meetings will be in person and on Zoom starting at 10.30am with the option of an afternoon session as required.

Sussex and Surrey Regional Quaker Meeting 2025

The following dates for your diary:

Saturday 10 May – Twineham, Exchange of Dues

Saturday 28 June - Littlehampton Meeting House (TBC) and on zoom,
Pacifism/Peace

Saturday 27 September - Brighton Meeting House and on zoom, What is Prayer?
Do **we** do it? Jennifer Kavanagh will lead the day.

Saturday 22 November – TBA

You are very welcome at any RM event if you attend or are a member of a Quaker meeting within SSRQM. (SSRQM is made up of Surrey and Hampshire Border AM, Sussex East AM, Sussex West AM and West Weald AM.)

We will send more information about each event and how to register during 2025.
sussexandsurreyrmquakerclerk@outlook.com

Deirdre Morris, Clerk to SSRQM

Notices

Notices to be read out after Meeting for Worship should be sent to
brightonquakernotices@gmail.com. The deadline for notices is Friday evening.

Newsletter Contributions

This newsletter should reflect the diversity of thinking and experience of members and attenders. If this is to be your newsletter, we need your input: thoughts on the meeting, a passage that has inspired you, a book review, a drawing, something to share with others that might help us grow in community and spirit. Please send your contributions to the Editor, Jackie Robinson at
brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com

The deadline for the **May** newsletter is **Friday 2 May** – always two days before Business Meeting. The editor has the right to edit contributions or hold them over until the next issue, particularly where this is necessary in order to avoid blank pages.

It is the responsibility of contributors to decide how much of their personal details should be shared.

To receive the newsletter by email, and to comply with the GDPR law, please write to brightonquakernewsletter@gmail.com.

FOOD BANK -- Please Remember -- FOOD BANK --- FOOD BANK

Please make donations to the foodbanks in your supermarkets.
Alternatively, you can bring donations to Meeting House on Sundays.

Published by Brighton Quaker Meeting
www.brightonquakers.net
Registered as a charity in England: 1147831