

# QLGF

## Newsletter of the Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship

No. 109, June 2005

### *New Supreme Dalek*

Josef Ratzinger has been elected as the new Supreme Dalek. He will take the title Exterminate Heretics Davros XVI.

A brief conclave of the Supreme Dalek Council led to the unanimous election of the 386 year old cyborg, after several dissident Daleks had been exterminated.

*"I will very humbly lead the Daleks to the extermination of all heretics" he said. "I intend to follow the policies of the enslavement of inferior lifeforms pursued by my predecessor."*

Archbishop Rowan Williams praised Exterminate Heretics Davros XVI for his powers of leadership. *"I know that he has described Anglicans as 'inferior and decadent lifeforms who need to be brought under the iron heel of*



*Dalek control' but I am sure we can work together on our shared ecumenical pilgrimage."*

Tony Blair said *"I've always stood for the equality of women, equal rights for lesbians and gays, respect for those of other faiths, fair and democratic elections, and the promotion of*

*human rights. So that's why I'm rushing to kiss this guy's carapace as quickly as possible."*

There were scenes of carefully organised rejoicing on all Dalek-enslaved planets and occasional acts of disorder were quickly tidied away.

SC

[www.qlgf.org.uk](http://www.qlgf.org.uk)

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## ***Dates for your Diary***

***Pride 2005 - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Meeting for Worship, 11:00 a.m., Round Pond, upper NE corner of Hyde Park, and then march for those able. Westminster FMH, 8 Hop Gardens, off St Martins Lane, WC2. Two minutes from Trafalgar Square. Tea and buns 5-7pm***

***Tom Bodin's memorial meeting 4<sup>th</sup> September 2005 at Woodbrooke at 2:30 pm, with tea to follow***

***Britain Yearly Meeting York. July 30<sup>th</sup> to August 6<sup>th</sup> 2005***

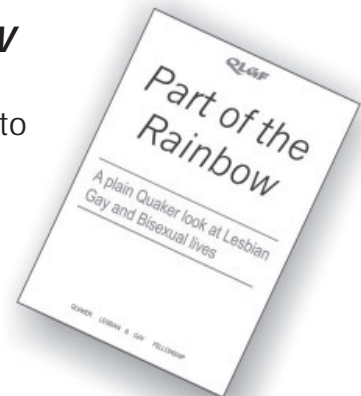
***Autumn Gatherings  
8<sup>th</sup> October, Oxford FMH.  
22<sup>nd</sup> October, Glasgow FMH***

### ***Spring 2006***

***Stop Press ... Hengrave Hall has closed. Details of the Spring Gathering will be given in the September issue.***

## ***Part of the Rainbow***

This QLGF publication is now onto its second edition (incorporating recent changes to the law etc.). It will shortly be available. Price £3.50 inc. pp. Discounts for bulk or bookshops. Please order from the Newsletter editors (details below).



### ***Contact Details and other newsletter information:***

The newsletter of the Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship is published four times a year. Editorial queries, suggestions, comments, letters and contributions are most welcome: send to Stephen and Sarah at 78 Upsdell Avenue, London N13 6JL. [stephen@coxdodgson.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:stephen@coxdodgson.freeserve.co.uk). All other communications with the Fellowship, including admin problems with the newsletter, changes of address, etc to Ruth, the National Contact, at 46 the Avenue, Starbeck, Harrogate, HG1 4QD. [qlgfcontact@btclick.com](mailto:qlgfcontact@btclick.com).

Editors usually initial their contributions, the editors are Stephen (SC), Sarah (SD) and Nick (production and design guru - NJ). Editorials are the opinion of the editors, not the committee or Fellowship. Material is presumably the opinion of the person who wrote it, and cannot be assumed to be anyone else's. If you are reading this and you are not a member, why not join? Individual Quaker Meetings can also join as Supporting Meetings.

### ***Ordinary membership:***

Standard Rate: 12 Months: January - December: Single - £15; Double: £28; Reduced Rate Single - £7.50; Double: £14 (If joining after the 1<sup>st</sup> July, half the above prices apply)

***Supporting meeting membership:*** £10

**QLGF Newsletter, June 2005, page 2**

## Editorial

Our front page mocking Josef Ratzinger, and some of the curious people making homage to kiss his ring, may worry thoughtful Quakers. Surely we should not be attacking individuals but walking alongside them as fellow pilgrims on the spiritual search? And any sort of knee-jerk opposition to Catholicism is unworthy. One need only think of the recent programme *The Monastery* to see a Benedictine monk telling the jaded viewers of BBC2 of the virtues of silent contemplation and loving community, as opposed to selfish materialism and fractured individualism. More Hello Brother than Big Brother.

By their fruits shall you know them. Ratzinger does not disapprove of homosexuality in some vague abstract sense - he actively campaigns against civil partnerships, anti-discrimination legislation, and gay and lesbian

couples rearing children. He instructs Catholic politicians to vote against such things. He has cracked down on clergy, and laypeople who challenge these positions, whether they are primarily theologians or people who work in pastoral care. He tells lies about the HIV virus teleporting through condoms. Even bishops in Catholic Spain have rebelled on that one.

The terms he uses are important. Ratzinger has stated that gay and lesbian people are *'intrinsically disordered'* and explicitly refers to our relationships as *'evil'*. He has said that lesbians and gay people who bring up children are guilty of *'violence'* against those children. (3 QLGF committee members are hands-on parents.) He has attributed the colossal and secretive abuse of children by Catholic clergy to the presence in the clergy of those with adult

homosexual orientation. He has said that laws protecting lesbians and gay people *'provoke irrational and violent responses'*. That is, if we campaign for laws protecting us, and then get attacked or even murdered, it is our fault.

Ratzinger has said that other denominations are not real churches. In other words, he sees the ecumenical pilgrimage as the negotiated surrender of the various splits from Rome, and the return of the Christian people to his elitist, unaccountable, authoritarian, unchallengeable rule. It is blasphemy and idolatry to raise any fallible human being to the position of being seen as God. Mockery is one weapon against this, and we intend to use it.

### References:

*GLAAD has detailed references to Ratzinger's writings and statements (April 19, 2005, on their website [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org))*

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## Too many Quaker special interest groups?

Recently I overheard someone claiming there were too many Quaker special interest groups. Too many? How could they possibly say that! Here are some of my favourites:

**Quaker Da Vinci Code Fellowship** Based on detailed study of the Journal, and other historic works, have concluded that George Fox was descended from Christ, on his mother's side. Recently divided over bizarre allegation on their website that Quaker Life Central Committee is the Beast foretold in the Book of Revelations.

**Quaker Cannibal Fellowship** Seeks to promote human consumption in a strictly non-

violent context. Supported by voluntary donations. Quarterly newsletter *'Who's Cooking?'*



**Quaker Ritualist Fellowship** Promotes diversity in Quaker worship, through processions with sacred relics, icons, incense, vestments, genuflecting, etc.

**Quaker Jazz, Tap and Ballet Fellowship** Split off from Quaker Circle Dance Network. Recent debate about whether it

can allow members from the 12-step programme Circle Dancers Anonymous to join.

**Quaker Friends of Fun Nude Foundation Group** "A group of Friends concerned that we have strayed away from going naked for a sign." Workshops held on making your own sackcloth and ashes, and dancing with a brazier of burning coals on head.

**Quaker Friends of the Fruitbat** supporting Fruitbat activities worldwide.

**Quaker Cycling Lesbian Committee Clerks**

**Network** Slogan, *'Peddling the lesbian agenda'*.

DN

## *I remember, I remember ...*

*In early April, I went to a 'Writing Yourself' day facilitated by Judy Clinton, a Cheltenham Friend perhaps familiar to some of you through her articles and poetry published from time to time in The Friend. In an 'I remember...' exercise, I found myself writing about the last holiday which my first partner, Jacquie, and I spent in Northumberland in 1990. (She died of ovarian cancer 10 months later, so the holiday has very special memories) Writing about it in a rather 'stream-of-consciousness' kind of way was an unexpectedly positive experience and one that I'd like to share here.*



the North Sea rolling all the way to...where...? Jonathan Livingston Seagull swoops into my mind's eye.

We climb purple heathery Roscastle and meet a local man walking his dog. Our characterless RP accents give us away immediately as silly Southerners on holiday. He greets us politely enough but underneath we feel he (understandably) resents us for providing the tourism, which the region simultaneously needs for economic survival, yet loathes because it is destroying *'England's Best-kept Secret'* (as described by the Northumberland Tourist Board).

Northumberland place names charm us and we succumb to playing our *'place names game'* (caught from the late Observer columnist, Paul Jennings) in which the names take on identities of their own. Morpeth: a seedy, criminal butler who slowly corrupts the young, weak, aristocratic Lord Kirkharle, fatally attracted to young Cambo, a Betjemanesque young woman whose only interests are, unfortunately, playing the Northumbrian small pipes in a local band and chasing the wild white Chillingham cattle whenever she can elude the park keepers ....

One day we explore Rothbury Carriageways that are not full of Quality Street soldiers and pretty young girls, but are a

series of long paths that take you up onto the crags above the Coquet valley in which Rothbury nestles. We like them so much that we walk them again, only this time, we haven't listened to the weather forecast, so we get lost in the mist and feel frightened and stupid - which we are, of course. Grrrrr!

Cragside beckons us: the estate is HUGE! Lord Armstrong is said to have planted seven million trees, thereby changing Rothbury's micro-climate for ever! We climb up to Nellie's Moss Lakes, which, if I remember rightly, provide early water-power for Lord Armstrong's house. (He was a devil for new technology and the house is full of it). Lord Kirkharle came to a sad end in one of the lakes, you know. Did he fall or was he pushed? We shall never know, as his skeleton was found only years later by two lads snorkelling, but village gossip has it that Morpeth dunnit - certainly he disappeared too soon after, at dead of night taking young Cambo with him ....

At the village of Alwinton, the road is barred: a red flag is flying which indicates that on the moor beyond, the army is carrying out firing exercises. It feels very odd and un-English - hostile, like encountering a border crossing between the old East and West Germans. We picnic listening to the thud of guns ... until we're joined by

Hartside ... Alston ... Ninebanks ... Hexham ... Corbridge ... and then over the Wall! All our beloved Northumberland spread before us! We have come back repeatedly, drawn by the magical beauty and solitude of somewhere somehow 'beyond'. Kirkharle ... Cambo ... Otterburn ... Redesdale ... Rothbury ... Roscastle ... Bamburgh ... Lindisfarne: a litany of names as dear to me as those of the Shipping Forecast. We stride out along the empty, wide, golden, seemingly endless sands at Bamburgh. I write I LOVE MUPSI (not Jacquie's real pet name, which is secret, but near enough) in the sand and my darling looks on a little startled: *"Don't Sally, someone will see!"* No matter - the sea will come up in an hour or two and wash it away.

We follow the field track to lonely, ruined Dunstanburgh Castle, inhabited now mainly by kittiwakes soaring, planning and mewing round the cliff edge. I gaze over the empty space and

## Healing - a Perspective

a small flock of nosey sheep who have obviously learned that Stationary Cars Mean Food. This no-man's land beyond is sinister but entrancing. We drive through it later on a 'no-firing-day' and find flowers and grasses that do not grow elsewhere.

So many memories - At Wallington Jacquie is enraptured by the beauty and variety in the walled garden, while I prefer the kitchen and the nursery (I wonder why ...?) We laugh and wince at the quasi-pre-Raphaelite paintings in the entrance hall celebrating Northumberland's history - the painter's self-importance outdoes the subject matter, somehow. Later we encounter the owners playing the small pipes in the tea room! A sort of 'Meet the People' act?

In the real Morpeth we find a bagpipe museum and play with the hands-on music and then we wander round the market and buy each other small sillinesses. I still have my soft leather purse and pencil case, which she gave me - both in daily use. Fifteen years on, what echoes in my mind is a sweet, lilting Northumbrian voice from my Border Minstrels tape collection singing about her own land: Each man speaks/ and each man speaks with a different voice ... I chose these (*i.e.* Northumbrian landscapes) yes, I chose these and they're mine. They were never mine, or Jacquie's, of course. How could they be, when we lived 300 miles away? But we loved the land and the people... and I'm glad that I did not know then how little time she still had to live.

Sally

*"It is believed by experienced doctors that the heat that oozes out of the hand, on being applied to the sick, is highly salutary. It has often appeared, while I have been soothing my patients, as if there was a singular property in my hands to pull and draw away from the affected parts, aches and pains and diverse impurities, by laying my hand upon the place, and by extending my fingers towards it. Thus it is known to some of the learned that health may be implanted in the sick by certain gestures, and by contact, as some diseases may be communicated from one to another."* This is Hippocrates talking in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. But healing goes back much further than this. North American Indian cave paintings and ancient Egyptian reliefs show the act of healing.

Around the year 2100 BC a scribe was writing in cuneiform on a stone tablet, the earliest known writing concerning medicine, found at Nippur in Mesopotamia. He describes two forms of treatment for illness. One by what we would now call a physician and the other by a healer/priest. The most famous healer in the Christian culture is of course Jesus and there is evidence that the Essene community that thrived at the time of Jesus had a healing ministry. Healing was again to the fore in medieval Britain when the King's Touch was thought to be of great benefit.

As Christians I think that we have a duty to heal, and we are all healers in that we make others feel better with little acts of kindness - a smile, a caring touch, a hug, an offer to help, a

telephone call to say hello. This article is about spiritual healing, also known as the laying-on-of-hands, though I do not care for the latter expression because for me it has implications of a dramatic act; healing is not like that. It is a process - it is not an event. It is also important to differentiate between the channelling of healing energy and the channelling of a healing spirit. (Some healing is done by a healer who is a psychic and acts as a medium, channelling the spirit of a person who has had an incarnated life on this earth. In this case it is the spirit giving the healing either as loving energy or more rarely working as a doctor or surgeon.)



Healing is defined by the dictionary in its broadest sense as '*restoring to health*'. This implies that we are body only. I prefer the definition of '*restoring to wholeness*' because we are body, mind and spirit. Each of these three is as important as the other; they have to be in balance for us to be whole. If one of those three things is pressurised then one or both of the others is affected in a knock-on effect, as in stress causing a physical problem. We tend to dwell on the malfunctioning of the body because that is where most of our problems manifest. (*cont.*)

Hippocrates again: ***“Disease is not an entity but a fluctuating condition of the patient’s body, a battle between the substance of a disease and the natural self-healing tendency of the body.”*** Healing helps and supports that natural self-healing.

Spiritual healing is the direct channelling of unconditional loving healing energy. So the healer is not the source of the energy but the facilitator. Deborah Cowens, an American healer, says, ***“Healing is the act of consciously directing life energy from the infinite source through the healer to the person in need of assistance”***. Jim Pym, a well-known Quaker healer says, ***“Spiritual healing consists of providing a space through which and in which the spirit of wholeness may manifest.”*** I say that the healing energy is an aspect of the divine. The natural ability of the body to heal itself is often blocked by tension caused by stress, or lack of care for the body. Healing is very relaxing so healing helps in that respect by releasing tension and allowing repair to proceed. The Bristol Cancer Help Centre rates healing as the number one complementary therapy in the fight against cancer.

It is usually done in a one-to-one situation but it can also be done by a group of people giving healing to one or more people or sending healing to people who are physically absent from the room, called distant healing. Spiritual healing does not depend on adherence to any specific religious belief. Also it is not necessary to have any faith in it for it to be effective, so it is

not faith healing, although, as in most cases, believing in something does help it to work more effectively.

The healers often get asked, ***‘Can you cure this? Can you cure that?’*** The healer does not cure anything. It is the healing energy that does the work. It is not possible to foresee the outcome of healing and when giving healing the healer does not usually have an outcome in intention. The person being healed unconsciously uses the healing energy and it goes to where it is most needed. When choosing a healer it is important that the healer be a member of a body recognised by UK Healers. This will ensure that the healer has been properly trained and will conform to a strict code of conduct. This code of conduct ensures, among other things, that all the client says is treated in strict confidence and that the client will be treated with respect and in a non-judgemental way.

Having found a healer you need to be aware that if you feel uncomfortable with the person you may need to find another healer. It is sometimes as important to have the right therapist, as it is to have the right therapy.

Some healers make a charge because it is their livelihood or because they need the income to pay for continuing professional development and updating. Others make no charge or ask for a donation either for themselves or for a favourite charity. It is advisable to discuss charges on first contacting the healer.

When you go to a healer you will be invited to share the reasons for going. Although this is not strictly necessary it may help the healer to give more suitable healing and perhaps suggest other ways in which you could be helped. You will not be asked to remove your clothing apart, perhaps, from your shoes. You may be asked to lie on a couch or to sit on a chair. The healer will spend a little time attuning and then usually slowly moves the hands all over the body holding them a few inches away. Some healers use touch and if you feel uncomfortable with that then you should say. You may feel heat coming from the hands of the healer. This is normal. After receiving healing you may feel a little light-headed due to the deep relaxation that is induced. This is also normal and goes away after a few minutes. It is a good idea to take it easy for the 24 hours after the healing so the energy can do its work.

Why not try it? You have nothing to lose but your illness.

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***Useful contact information***  
***Friends Fellowship of Healing***  
***www.quaker-healing.org.uk***  
***Quaker Spiritual Healers***  
***www.quaker-healing.org.uk/***  
***qshealers.html***  
***National Federation of Spiritual***  
***Healers referral service***  
***09068 616080***  
***National Federation of Spiritual***  
***Healers www.nfsh.org.uk***  
***Bristol Cancer Help Centre Patient***  
***Help line 0117 980 9505***

## Should Men wear earrings?

I don't know what the term is for *'interesting but pointless question pursued at a whim on the Internet when you are supposed to be doing something else'*. However, that particular vice struck last week after I found a website bearing the question *"Should men wear earrings? What the Bible says."* One is always interested to know what people think the Bible says about any question and a quick hunt came up with the following.

The original site, some sort of American Baptist, argued that the answer was a flat no. While fashions change, some things are inherently male and others inherently female, and one should not mix the two. Deut 22:5 (No cross dressing!) In fact they argued, earrings are worn by the more effeminate homosexual to attract the more masculine homosexual. (They used less polite terms.)

Anyone who has spent five minutes on the gay scene knows that, contrary to prejudice, generally people pair off with partners who are similar to them on the butch-femme continuum. Even trying to read male and female roles into relationships where one partner is much younger than the other will fail. Anyone whose eyes are open will also be aware that the biggest group of male earring wearers in our society are white working class heterosexuals, and black and Asian heterosexual men. It stopped being a clear gay signal twenty years ago.

But then I found another American Baptist site which



having made some ponderous points about just because something is popular and fashionable ... etc. etc. etc. had to admit that actually the Bible doesn't ban it. But you need to be sure of your motives. It did say that cross-dressing was wrong but exempted women wearing trousers from this criticism. Because they are *'not trying to look like men'*. (This flatly contradicts the relevant passage in Deuteronomy but never mind.)

A so-called ex-gay website then confused the issue by saying that there was no reason in general why Christian men should not have long hair and or wear earrings, provided they were in good solid heterosexual relationships. But for those trying to change their sexuality, it was a temptation. (In fact gay men tend to favour short hair.)

I then found a weblog from a straight, Christian, American rocker. Who wears earrings and

who has actually looked in the Bible and found several cases of men, highly rated by God, wearing earrings, including Joshua and Job. (The Golden Calf was made from earrings. Look it up.) He defended his practice more on spiritual grounds (Christianity is discipleship and a change of heart more than endless rules) than on text fundamentalist grounds ... so we don't have to argue about the precise translation of the word ring. (The AV sometimes says earring where more modern translations just say ring.)

I assume the Christian Transvestite websites are OK with earrings.

So there we have it. We can state with absolute confidence that the Bible Christian:

- a) is against men wearing earrings
- b) is concerned but not actually absolutely against
- c) is only concerned if the man is not heterosexual
- d) is OK because it was a perfectly normal Israelite practice and indeed in some passages appears associated with God's favour
- e) doesn't have anything to say on it at all
- f) thinks you're broadly asking the wrong question
- g) sees it as a liberating experience provided that they are the size of chandeliers and lit up like a Christmas tree.

So the next time someone opens the Bible, jabs a finger at a verse, and says *'the Bible says'* to you, think men with earrings.

SC

## Grayson Perry: Why do men wear frocks? (Channel Four)

Because they like it. Because they get a thrill. Because they are in retreat from aspects of masculine life and need a break. Because they feel they are reaching something authentic that has been shut off by their masculinity. Who knows?

Grayson Perry took a quick canter around the issues of transvestitism and these are some of the answers that were canvassed. He's an articulate and appealing spokesman for the cause but the hour-long programme raised more problems than it solved. For example, he briskly announced a couple of times that ***"one problem [sic] is that people think TVs are gay"*** and then proceeded to avoid the subject for the rest of the programme. It is difficult to see how you can discuss the crisis in masculinity without at least bringing in gay issues - nor would it have hurt to have said briskly, ***"not that there is anything wrong with being gay."*** Men are policed from about the age of two by saying things are sissy, feminine or ***'gay'***, leaving us in the bizarre position of a man best known for wearing pink frocks and frilly petticoats being really keen for us to know he's married.

I also believe the line he kept repeating ***"TVs are happily married heterosexuals"*** involves protesting too much... The fraught and unfriendly debate between Perry and a transsexual didn't even spell out the central difference - that transsexuals want to change permanently.

Perry's own position is, surely, more complex than the one he puts forward. He is quite



good at passing and has developed the girlie persona of Claire to be more confrontational and less invisible as a TV. He openly states in the broadsheets he likes the ***'humiliation'*** of being seen in public in young girls' clothes. [I put admits but why should I say admits. He states.] There was a very amusing moment watching the (happily married) Perry watching a young woman putting on a wedding dress and trying to work out what proportion of the lust was for the bride to be and what for the dress. I can understand it might be both (just as a gay man might fancy a bloke and his leather jacket simultaneously.)

Sometimes one feels that many TVs buy into a divide that is weakening and that both masculinity and femininity get caricatured. We were told that the ***'only'*** masculine images are warriors, football hooligans and bikers - what about the doctors in soaps, aid workers and human rights lawyers, celebrity chefs, and the hands-on fathers of recent times? I'm not saying any of these are perfect but they are different. Women, apparently, no longer dress up romantically except for their wedding day

(except of course, when they dress up for something else.)

The idea that male dandyism died out with the Victorians has a modicum of truth (but the Teds, the Mods, the Sixties, glam rock, New Romantics, goth, black and asian bling...) I've just bought a cherry red duffle coat... pink is in for men this season... diamond earrings have now firmly made it into straight white culture. At least Perry admits that real power in our society still rests disproportionately with men.

It is just interesting that people feel they need to adopt a persona to express certain feelings and do certain things. If Perry's TV friends air kiss each other in character, why not air kiss each other out of character? If they want to wear a skirt, or nail varnish, or high heels, as a man, why not? There's a whole different subculture out there called male fashion freedom, of people who want to dress how they like, and don't feel the need to have a girl's name when they do it. I found an anime convention website and there is a thriving community out there of cartoon fans who dress up as characters of the opposite sex, without worrying too much about their sexuality or gender identity, as far as I can see. (But again ***"I really want to dress up as [a schoolgirl character] and spend all five days of the convention in costume. It would be really cool. But will my mother think I am gay?"***)

On a rights basis, I'm all for men in frocks or whatever else. I think they need to see their struggle as being linked to other peoples'. Given that, is hiding

away and calling yourself Mandy tackling Conventional Masculinity or as I suspect, leaving it untouched? We need other role models out there.

The most interesting points in the programme were when Perry admitted he was starting to find transvestitism emotionally less helpful. It sounded to me that he needed to explore additional and other ways to do this. So a useful programme, a stimulating one, but spadework only. I also thought Perry was in a straitjacket of being *'the representative TV'* and his own life might be more interesting and challenging.

SC

## A Sonnet to Being a Quaker-Gay

*My love is 'that-of-God', not something bad  
For Quaker gays are tender, gentle - good  
As 'same-sex-love' is neither sad nor mad  
So if it's what you wish to do - you should*

*Not deviant or wrong but kind and true  
Do not pretend, or try to be 'a straight',  
Just listen to your body - sense Love's hue  
Thus feel the passion growing - held in wait.*

*It's like it is in Meeting - tuning in  
Discerning in the Silence - being led  
Then, knowing when its right to speak. To win -  
the heart you love. And so we go to bed.*

*Iambic pentameter is the way (u - u - u - u - u -)  
These fourteen lines may woo a Quaker gay*

Elizabeth Angas

## One way of prayer, or Have you heard the shipping forecast?

*"Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer/utters itself..."* So begins a sonnet by Carol Ann Duffy in which she suggests that a totally ordinary, unlocked for phrase or sound can suddenly have the power to console us: *"the minims sung by a tree"*, *"the distant Latin chanting of a train"*, *"grade I piano scales..."* And so it is, perhaps, for most of us: some trace memory which comes to us, unbidden. My personal consoling *'mantra'* is the Shipping Forecast. On sharing this idiosyncratic (or so I thought) favourite at Epilogue during our Charley weekend, I found it resonated with others too, as it apparently does with a host of Radio 4 listeners, especially those in their fifth decade and over. We swapped memories of where and when we heard it nightly - it seems to have the same nostalgic *'trigger'* as that



evoked by *"Sailing By"* (which was played at its entirety during a celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Desert Island Discs). I recall a male comedian (Paul Merton?) twitting Charlotte Green on her seductive reading of *"Dogger, Fisher, German Bight"*. Charlotte's reading of the Shipping Forecast would definitely feature in my own desert island choice of recordings. I am

heartened that it clearly resonates with Carol Ann Duffy too, for her sonnet ends:

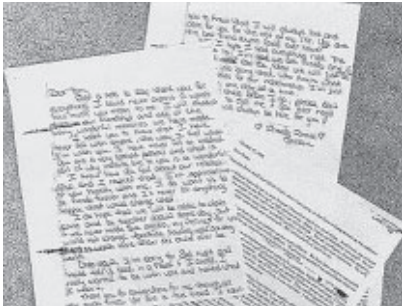
*"Darkness outside.  
Inside, the radio's prayer-  
Rockall. Malin. Dogger. Finisterre"*

And so, Friends, on stormy days, I give you the Shipping Forecast to bring you into calmer waters: *Viking ..... North Utsire, South Utsire ..... Forties, Cromarty, Forth ..... Tyne ..... Dogger, Fisher, German Bight ..... Humber, Thames ..... Dover, White, Portland, Plymouth ..... Biscay, Finisterre\* ..... Sole, Lundy, Fastnet ..... Irish Sea ..... Shannon, Rockall, Malin, Hebrides ..... Bailey ..... Fair Isle, Faroes ..... South East Iceland.*

Sally

*\*yes, I know it's Fitzroy (ugh!) now, but it was Finisterre for years, and anyway, Finisterre just sounds better!*

## Your Letters



I very much enjoyed your review of David Jenkins' new autobiography and it vividly recalled an interview I conducted with him for our local peace group when I was living in Durham 20 years ago.

He hadn't been wearing the mitre long, and, as everyone will recall, he was a constant target for the right-wing press and assorted nutters in his own and other churches. He promised me forty minutes for our interview and we chatted about cabbages and kings for an hour. Meeting him in the flesh was startling - why does everyone look so different on the telly? - He was an utterly diminutive figure in Episcopal scarlet, a vibrant little robin in constant movement, fidgeting and gesticulating wildly, his hair standing up in bizarre tufts and his ornate pectoral cross stuck comically under one armpit.

This was the man dubbed *'The Antichrist'* by a Conservative MP for publicly doubting the Resurrection as a physical event - an offence that never earned St Paul the same epithet.

You were right to say that he had never said the Resurrection was a conjuring trick with bones. What he said was that it was MORE than this - that believing in such marvels was of little value unless it had ethical consequences for our lives. But

religion beyond sexual repression and consolatory magic is of little interest to the tabloids. When we met, a parish in Durham Diocese had vowed never to let him cross its threshold over his denial of the Virgin Birth. I asked him how he responded to being such a controversial figure, and he said with utter sincerity that this had never been his intention, and he gave the impression of being serenely resigned to it. Senior figures in deeply hierarchical religious organisations are generally expected to prop up assorted sacred cows. Jenkins was happily dissecting them and openly wondering whether they ought to be sacred at all.

He was as penetrating on the comforting illusions of the Cold War - it was still in full swing in those days! - As on those of popular authoritarian religion.

***"We could still end up destroying ourselves if we are honest,"*** he said pithily, ***"but we definitely will if we keep on kidding ourselves."*** He attacked the insane and greedy mendacity of ruling elites who persisted in telling subject populations that an accelerating nuclear arms race, burgeoning arms trade, and widening gap between rich and poor guaranteed a stable and lasting peace.

He criticised the woeful state of modern religion, which has become largely obsessed with personal salvation and the irrational and fetishistic means by which it imagines it might be attained. This of course is a defensive response to the new world of science, rationalism and pluralism, which has

emerged since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. I was struck by Jenkins' quiet homely piety and serious Christian commitment - two psychological states I have long since abandoned - and found it hard to reconcile them with the figure demonised by so many of his coreligionists. Such qualities are usually expected to accompany an acceptance of dogma at once infantile, intolerant and anti-historical - not free rigorous questioning and erudition.

Jenkins told me that for him, faith in and love for God was about being open to more and more truth and reality, with ruthless questioning of one's own and others' perceptions. He once memorably said that, acknowledging that the notion of sex between two men made him shudder, he must entertain the deepest suspicions of any desire to rationalise this as moral condemnation.

I had the cheek to ask him why he wasn't a Quaker, and he said he objected to our habit of behaving as though the Kingdom of God has already arrived. Perhaps he had a point. Maybe Quakerism is at its best when it's like Jenkins' Christianity - never finished, a work in progress, going out in search of the new and unfamiliar guises, which love and liberation ever adopt. And now I had better go and read his book!

**Steve Hope**

I wonder why the quote from Fran Lebowitz is so popular?

I find it offensive to imply that girls who don't ***"put out"*** must be lesbians.

**LG**

Dear 'Glad Friends' group,  
Thank you very much for your response in the February issue (on page 17 of No. 108) to my article in the December newsletter - '*An Open and Honest Gay?*' I found your frank discussion, of each of my three examples, most helpful. You were constructively critical in a loving and gentle way so that I felt clearly seen and supported.

I have considered carefully your advice and suggestions and thus been able to move forward. I hope this '*dialogue*' of my piece followed by your analysis, has also been helpful to others in QLGF around the '*trust*' and '*self-acceptance*' issues of their lives. This, in turn, will perhaps feed into the '*Living with Integrity*' theme of the Spring Gathering.

With warm regards in Friendship,

*Elizabeth M. Angas*

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## Quotes ...

*Reese Witherspoon* was asked the difference between British and American acting, after being the only American actor on Vanity Fair. She replied without visible irony "*It's exciting to be with so many people who know their lines.*"

*Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right?*

*And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right.*

*Martin Luther King*

## Late breaking news ...

### *Hengrave Hall*

We were very sorry to hear that Hengrave Hall is to close in the near future. Several very successful Gatherings have been held here over the years and we were made very welcome. The editors welcome any memories of Hengrave for our next issue.

### *Gatherings*

The Committee has been doing some new thinking about Gatherings and may have some ideas to report in the next newsletter. We will be looking to protect the fellowship against major losses in future, while keeping costs of participating as low as possible (and protecting the bursary fund).

### *QLGF Financial Situation*

Our treasurer has reported a substantial deficit on the recent Chorley Gathering: we attracted fewer people than planned and the venue was obliged to charge us the full price. The Fellowship's reserves will stand the loss, but the Committee is quite clear that we cannot make a habit of making significant losses on gatherings. There are several simple ways in which the membership can help us stay active and financially sound. Please renew if you have not yet done so, and suggest to people you know that they might like to join. There are many people active in local groups who might wish to rethink not joining at a national level. It would also benefit us if more meetings would become supporting meetings.

For some years the Fellowship benefited from a high level

of donations but this has died down in recent years. Those able to do so might like to consider an additional donation. We are particularly keen to keep the bursary scheme for Gatherings, and to continue to publish and circulate our literature.

### *Britain Yearly Meeting 2005*

There will be a QLGF social on the Sunday night. Contact details for QLGF people will be posted. We will be involved in the Special Interest Group fair on Wednesday. The Committee members attending will be staying in James College.

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## Quotes ...

*The Bible is not a fax from Heaven*  
*Martyn Percy*

*Women are like teabags ... we never know our own strength until we're in hot water.*

*Eleanor Roosevelt*  
*and/or Nancy Reagan*

*Lavinia Byrne* says that her sense of religion went through three stages. In the first she felt only religion could make her good. In the second, she felt that only religion could let her cope with her being bad. In the third she felt faith brought her into the transcendent presence of God - as she was, good and bad and in between.

*Steven Daldry*, asked about his relationships, can't improve on a quote he gave the Advocate in 2003. "*The answer to all questions about my marriage is yes. Do I have sex with my wife? Yes. Is it a real marriage? Yes. Am I gay? Yes.*"

## ***Proposals to revise the registration of marriage***

In 2002 the Government consulted on proposals to revise the registration of marriages. An avowed intention is to '***level the playing field***' by extending to other denominations the privileges previously enjoyed by Jews and Quakers. It is worth noting that in all essential provisions the proposals for England and Wales follow those that have existed in Scotland since 1977. Quaker Registering Officers will no longer be responsible for marriage registration or certificates (other than Quaker ones).

The proposals have not been implemented and in the next parliament will need to take account of the registration of same-sex couples. A letter from Quaker Life Central Committee



and Committee on Eldership & Oversight clerks during the consultation period on the Civil Partnerships Bill urged the Government to consider allowing religious ceremonies for same-sex partnerships.

Meeting for Sufferings appointed the Registering Officers' Reference Group, charged with waiting for a final consultation document and responding to it, reporting back to Meeting for Sufferings at each stage. The loosening of regulation and the changes

proposed by the Government will be a spur for a complete revision of chapter 16 in Quaker Faith & Practice (marriage regulations) in time for the adoption of new procedures from 2006.

### ***The Way forward***

I hope (Hampstead) Monthly Meeting might write to the Registering Officers' Reference Group to inform them of our interest in the Government's proposals and to draw their attention to our belief that same-sex couples should be offered registration in a meeting for worship, in the same way as opposite-sex couples, so that all can make their commitment before God and in the care of the meeting. ***Dugan C***

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## ***Getting to know you ... (or getting to know other LGBT religious groups)***

Nominations Committee is seeking a Liaison Officer to take over from the current post-holder, HJ. If you feel you would relish the challenge of contacting and meeting other LGBT groups, maybe this is for you.

The job description specifies other religious groups at present. We hope you would do the following:

- 1) Contact and liaise with other religious LGBT groups.
- 2) Where possible, attend other groups' meetings or arrange for another QLGF member to do so.
- 3) Bring to Committee matters that relate to the activities of other groups.
- 4) Arrange for representatives from other groups to attend

QLGF gatherings and ensure their welcome and care at these events.

We have fairly recent contact already with Muslims, Jews, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, MCC and Humanists. It would probably be a question of following these up and maybe contacting Buddhists.

Most groups are very keen to have outside speakers and Hugh has already given talks to some groups but not all. There is possibly room for further outreach here.

We hope you would attend committee meetings and report on any visits and contacts made and on any of their activities that could be important for us to know about.

We haven't yet managed to

invite representatives from other groups to our gatherings - we feel we need to talk further about how to do this or whether it is beyond our resources.

Committee meetings are held three times a year on Saturdays in January, June and September, usually in London or Birmingham. Travel expenses are paid. Most importantly, don't feel you have to carry this job entirely alone! Ask for help if you need it. It is always given!

If you would like to talk things through further, please contact Sally Mason or Steven Walton - contact details are in the newsletter. Thank you in anticipation...

***Sally Mason (Convener of Nominations Committee)***

## Scottish Bishops support gay and lesbian priests

Scottish Episcopalian Bishops issued a supportive statement about gay and lesbian priests, only to face their own internal critics, BBC Online reports. A group of evangelical churches was accused of running scared after calling on the Scottish Episcopal Church to retract a statement on gay priests.

The church's College of Bishops said that being a practising homosexual was not a bar to ordained ministry.

The Scottish Anglican Network warned it will consider breaking away unless the church changes its stance.

Changing Attitude Scotland accused the evangelical group of being *'frightened'* of a discussion on the issue.

Changing Attitude Scotland is a network working for the *'full affirmation'* of lesbian and gay people in the church.

### SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- Member of the worldwide Anglican Communion
- An estimated 45,000 members
- Autonomous and rooted in the pre-Reformation church in Scotland
- Adopted the 1637 Scottish Book of Common Prayer
- Persecuted following the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite uprisings
- Theological College founded in Edinburgh 1810, the first in the Anglican Communion
- General Synod established in 1982
- Ordained first Episcopalian woman priest in 1994
- Passed motion allowing woman bishops in 2003

### Different views

It said there had been a *'huge expression of support'* for the bishops' statement. Its convener, the Reverend Kelvin Holdsworth, said the bishops had called for discussion between those of different views.



*"Those who are calling for the bishops to withdraw their statement appear to be frightened of that discussion taking place,"* he told BBC Scotland's website.

*"Members of Changing Attitude Scotland are looking forward to engaging in the dialogue which the bishops propose. We particularly enjoy discussing the authority of scripture and the ways in which we understand the Bible to be consonant with the view that gay people in relationships can live open godly lives within the Christian faith."*

The controversy over the statement, which was posted on the church website earlier this month, began last week.

The Scottish bishops said the church *"had never regarded the fact that someone was in a close relationship with a member of the same sex as in itself constituting a bar to the exercise of an ordained ministry."*

The evangelical Scottish Anglican Network has written to all bishops voicing its concern - and is threatening to reconsider its position within the denomination if it does not get a swift response.

The Reverend David McCarthy, rector of St Silas Church in Glasgow, said the statement was *"a move away from what the Bible teaches us"*.

*///I fear that we as an Episcopal church might be the most extreme of all the churches in the world at the moment ///*  
The Reverend Canon Philip Noble

### Meeting arranged

He told BBC Radio's Good Morning Scotland programme: *"This weekend there have been a number of people in my congregation who are just appalled by what the church has been saying in the past few days."* He said the network had received messages of support from around the world.

He said the churches did not want to *'up sticks and leave'*, but warned: *"The bishops have placed us in a situation where there is a split that's going on. There are two different ways of seeing the gospel, but that being the case there will have to be some kind of action that would reflect that we don't agree."*

*We would see ourselves as being in the long-standing tradition of Scottish Episcopalianism. We would be the ones holding on to orthodoxy."*

*From the Scottish Episcopal Church's website:*

*"...within the Scottish Episcopal Church there are both those of gay and lesbian orientation and those whose theology and stance would be critical of attitudes to sexuality other than abstinence outside marriage. The Bishops "rejoice in both" ...*

[www.scotland.anglican.org/news\\_headlines\\_39.html](http://www.scotland.anglican.org/news_headlines_39.html)

## QLGF 2005 Spring Gathering Minutes (abridged and with comments\*)

We are grateful to everyone who has worked hard to make our Gathering a success this weekend, especially Alex, Adrian Harding (our speaker), and the staff of the College, who have again made us very welcome.

### **National Contact's Report**

We received 90 enquiries during 2004. Of these, 52 went on to join the Fellowship, including 28 Preparative Meetings. So far, in 2005, we have received 13 enquiries, which is a little lower than at this point last year. It was suggested that adverse publicity since 2003 over controversies in the Church of England may have affected the lesbian and gay community's perceptions of all religious groups. We believe it is important to stress Britain Yearly Meeting's inclusive stance on gay and lesbian issues.

### **Membership Report**

We have 201 members, 124 men and 77 women (62% : 38%), close to the proportion in previous years. We admitted 25 new members in 2004, and nine members have been admitted so far in 2005. In addition, we have 35 supporting meetings. Rodney has written to members whose subscriptions have lapsed; most have responded, but 38 have not yet replied. We ask the Committee to try to contact these Friends one more time before removing them from the membership list.

***If you know any LGBT people who are Quakerly inclined but not members, why not show them the newsletter and ask them?***

*\*Full minutes available from the clerk*



### **Accounts for 2004**

We have received copies of QLGF accounts and the Treasurer's report for the period 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2004. The accounts have not yet been examined, but the examination will take place shortly and be reported to the Committee. We accept these accounts and agree to maintain the existing levels of subscription for 2006. We also agree to maintain the bursary fund at £600 for 2006, and will remind Friends via the Newsletter of the availability of this fund. ***[The bursary fund is essential so all can participate in our events. Local meeting overseers are also often able to assist with travel to conferences, in a discreet way.]*** We also ask the NL Editor to invite donations to the Fellowship, to support publication of a new edition of ***Part of the Rainbow***. We ask the Committee to maintain vigilance to ensure that our reserves remain sufficient to meet our commitments.

***The accounts are available from the committee and show a £400 deficit on the year. However this is more than accounted for by sending out Part of the Rainbow free to 500 local meetings, which spawned various useful contacts, new members and 35 supporting meetings. Donation income is down and we would appreciate financial***

***support to reprint and circulate more copies of Part of the Rainbow, more of the contact cards, and to provide more literature to interested parties.***

***If you expected to get a copy of Part of the Rainbow post Woodbrooke's Gathering, the reprint has taken longer than I expected but is now underway. Remind me you are owed one.***

The Newsletter is put together by Stephen C, Sarah and Nick. They invite comments and contributions from readers. Copies, which do not include personal details, are available for outreach meetings.

### **Publicity Report**

We have received a report from Stephen W on publicity. He has put together a plan to publicise QLGF within Britain Yearly Meeting, in Europe, and in the lesbian and gay community. He reported on events held within BYM, where publicity about QLGF has been, and will be, made available. He will also be sending information to 80 European Quaker meetings. He has already placed information on an international web-based directory of lesbian and gay resources. Cards have been sent to a range of gay and lesbian organisations, including commercial venues. He has also been trying to get articles into lesbian and gay and mainstream media. Stephen W invites support from the membership in increasing publicity - to place information, write articles, or be interviewed by the press. We ask our Newsletter Editor to include his request in a future issue. We encourage members to distrib-

ute our cards and leaflets widely. Members with ideas for publicity are asked to contact SW.

*This is important. People willing to write articles or to be written about are crucial at getting any sort of publication to cover us. And we rely on people in meetings to see if cards are up on the notice board and literature available.*

### **Nominations Committee**

Nominations Committee has brought forward the name of Roger C to serve as Gatherings Officer, Rob C having asked to be released. Nominations Committee has also brought forward the name of Paul C to serve as Membership Officer. These names being acceptable to Friends, we appoint Roger C and Paul C to serve from 11 June 2005 until 31 December 2007. Nominations Committee noted the difficulties they have faced in filling posts and ask for members' assistance. Two posts on Noms Committee need to be filled from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

### **Tom Bodine**

We note with sadness that our Friend Tom Bodine had died; his memorial Meeting will be held on 4 September 2005 at Woodbrooke at 2:30 pm, with tea to follow. Donations to Woodbrooke in his memory have been invited. We ask the Clerk to approach Michael H to consider how to record our memories of Tom Bodine.

### **David Dunhill**

We also note with sadness the death of our Friend David Dunhill. We ask Rodney to write to his widow to find out

whether a testimony to the life of David Dunhill is being prepared and to offer to contribute, if so.

We ask members to ensure that the Newsletter Editors are advised of the death of members of the Fellowship, so that they may be recorded.

### **E Group**

LG reported on progress of a QLGF e-group, for fellowship, especially for those who cannot easily attend Gatherings or local groups. It will be publicised further in the Newsletter.

### **Day Gatherings**

Two one-day Gatherings have been arranged, on 8 October 2005 (Oxford) and on 22 October 2005 (Glasgow). The Gatherings Officers welcome ideas for themes/speakers for all three events. We ask the Gatherings Officers to write to all PMs in Scotland to invite attendance at the Glasgow Gathering.

### **Consultation on Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003**

We note that the Department of Trade and Industry has asked for comments on proposals for updating the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, which is being done to take account of civil partnerships and entitlement to survivor's pensions. We ask the Clerk to respond to the consultation, making the following points that:

- civil partners should be treated equally to married couples in terms of back-dating of pensions.

- QLGF is uncomfortable with the unequal treatment of other established couples by some pension schemes.

*The inequality comes because if two people are each paying into a pension fund for years, their partner gets no survivor benefits from past contributions, which is almost useless if you are later in life. Backdating to 1988 would be a compromise on total backdating and was the position adopted for straight couples. We didn't feel we could reach an all embracing position on unregistered partnerships of any and all sorts, we just thought we'd say we were uncomfortable with the position.*

### **Rainbow Network**

We have been contacted by Rainbow Network, the LGBT staff group at the Department for Constitutional Affairs, as they would like literature for their conference. We ask the QLGF Newsletter editors to respond to their request, and to offer a speaker if they would like one.

### **Residential Yearly Meeting in York**

A number of QLGF members have booked accommodation together. There will be a QLGF literature table and a meeting for members and interested Friends will be held on the Wednesday evening.

### **Swiss catch up ...**

Switzerland is the latest country to adopt a same-sex civil partnership scheme. Uniquely, it was adopted after 58% of Swiss voters supported it in a referendum

## ***QLGF Spring Gathering, Chorley***

I went to the Spring Gathering at Lancashire College, Chorley 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> April. It was the first time I'd attended a QLGF weekend, though I had met some members at other meetings in London and Birmingham. I was surprised that there were only about 20 of us present, as from previous warnings to book early I'd thought places wouldn't be enough for all who wanted to attend.

On the first evening BH led a Meeting for Worship for Business and then some (not compulsory) party games to help us get to know each other.

SM led an evening meditation by candlelight. On Saturday morning, AH gave a talk on the new laws concerning discrimination in the work place.

On Saturday afternoon, we had some free time (while the



committee was having its meeting). I went to Astley Hall (Museum and Art Gallery, surrounded by beautiful gardens and park land) only a few minutes' walk from the college.

We then divided into two groups, one to discuss Taking back the Bible, and the other to talk about Diversity and Inclusion. I chose the latter group, GC talked about her experiences of setting up a GLBT support group in her place of work, which involved coming out simultaneously to thousands of colleagues. I would have preferred smaller groups for that discussion, as even in a

group of 9 it is difficult for all to participate, with our very varied experiences.

On Saturday evening some read poetry and some danced. SM led another candle-lit meditation. On Sunday morning BH led another Meeting for Worship for Business, followed by Meeting for Worship, and we set off after lunch.

Thanks to SC for letting me know there were no trains back from Chorley that afternoon, and to JW for giving me a lift to Bolton. The college is in a beautiful place, rather further than I'd usually travel for a weekend outside London. The accommodation was very good, the choice and quality of food excellent.

Thanks to AY and to all involved in organising the event.

**LG**

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## ***International Day Against Homophobia***

The campaign for an International Day Against Homophobia appears to have been started by Louis-Georges Tin, editor of Dictionnaire L'Homophobie, and the main supporting organisation is the International Lesbian and Gay Association. It is also supported by human rights groups, most political parties in Europe, and the Coalition of African Lesbians.

The aim is to work towards an international recognition of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Trans People, to focus on May 17<sup>th</sup> as an annual event when over 35 countries will be organising various activities to highlight homophobia, including the handing in of a petition to

local, national governments and the UN. Because it is too dangerous in some countries for gay groups to organise such events, they have asked other countries to act on their behalf *e.g.* Uganda and Senegal.



May 17<sup>th</sup> has been chosen because on this date in 1990

homosexuality was taken off the list of mental disorders by the World Health Organisation.

This is to serve as a symbol and also a reminder that the UM has so far failed to pass a resolution acknowledging gay rights as human rights.

Can I ask you both to look at [www.petitiononline.com/idaho](http://www.petitiononline.com/idaho) and read and sign the petition? Please pass it on to anyone you know who might be interested?

Of course it's not necessary to be gay to sign the petition-many heterosexuals are against homophobia. Please also look at [www.idahomophobia.org](http://www.idahomophobia.org)

**Derek Lennard**  
**Chair**  
**GALHA**

## The invitation

*It doesn't interest me what you do for a living, I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.*

*It doesn't Interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for Love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.*

*It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain.*

*I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade or fix it.*

*I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own, if you can*

*dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.*

*It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul; if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.*

*I want to know if you can see beauty even when it is not pretty every day - and if you can source your own life from, its presence.*

*I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "yes!"*

*It doesn't interest me to know where you love or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after a night of grief and despair and do what needs to be done to feed the children.*

*It doesn't interest me whom you know, or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.*

*It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom, you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else fades away.*

*I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.*

*Oriah Mountain Dreamer,  
1995*

## Reply to Oriah: Another Invitation

Sometime towards the end of last year, I first came across "*The Invitation*" by Oriah, Mountain Dreamer, 1995. I think by then it had already been round the internet and back, so it's likely that most of you may have read it already - presumably it's still there. If you don't know it, I'll explain that the '*Invitation*' of the title is to you, the reader, to look inside yourself) and discover what could be the '*real you*' which lies beyond the self-definitions of money, job, class, etc. I found it exciting and immensely moving but because I was feeling vulnerable at the time, too demanding, the goals somehow impossible. So I sat

with it for a time and decided, by-and-by, that I wanted/needed my own more manageable version. What emerged was the following set of questions which now, six months on, seem to me more like an afterthought to "*Advices and Queries*" I offer them, tentatively, here:

*Like you, Oriah, I don't care much about your age, your income or your job; or about your postcode and your education, or even whom, and what you know.*

*What I'd like to know is this:*

*Can you acknowledge yourself as unique, precious, Loved?*

*Can you source your joy in a fleeting second of something experienced and understood?*

*Can you accept that 'good enough' in you and me is just fine?*

*Can you live with imperfection - mine and yours - for this is what we find?*

*Can you see beauty every day - even when it is not obvious - and therein find your groundedness?  
Can you settle for less when you cannot have your heart's desire?*

With thanks to Oriah for making me stop and think!

*Sally*

## News from Local Groups

### Westmorland Group

The Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship in the Westmorland General Meeting Area held an open meet-ing on Thurs 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005, at Morecambe Friends Meeting House, where we welcomed Andrew Dodd to speak to us.



It was a pity that, despite all PMs in the general meeting area being advised of the meeting, nobody, except the very supportive warden of Morecambe meeting, took advantage of joining us and learning a little more about the group. In fact we raised only six, two lesbians, three gays and one other.

Andrew Dodd is a crown prosecution service solicitor in Barrow-in-Furness, a Baptist Minister with his wife at Hawkshead Hill chapel, and part time ecumenical office to Churches Together in Cumbria. He recently took on the role of CPS liaison officer with the LGBT community and Andrew's brief is to raise awareness in the organisation and the community, of CPS policy and practice in dealing with motivated crime, particularly appertaining to homophobia.

In considering whether or not a case can be brought to a prosecution, criteria need to be satisfied. The two points are (1) Evidential sufficiency and (2) Public interest. Due account needs to be given also to the victim concerning the effect on a gay person bringing the

prosecution. Namely the effect that publicity might have on his life, such as being 'outed', and the effect that might have on his private and public life.

It came across very clearly that the CPS has an understanding of the gay or lesbian person's needs, and at least as far as Andrew is concerned, an appreciation of our legal rights to lead an open decorous lifestyle.

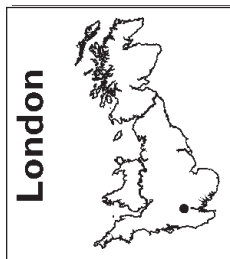
Andrew Dodds gave us a very interesting and instructive talk, and we were only sorry that there was so little support from the general meeting.

*Les McI*

*Les also comments in his covering letter 'generally speaking we enjoy a lot of support from the constituent PMs and are supported without prejudice.'*

### New London Group

A meeting to decide whether London needed a QLGF local group decided we would give it a spin. With both Jaffa Cakes and Chocolate Hobnobs served, how could we not be energetic and positive?



An acting core group of six arranged three meetings in June, July and Sept.

**Organisation:** We do not propose to have an organiser or a committee ... the group will have to take responsibility to plan 2-3 meetings ahead and everyone will share out the tasks to make things happen. Please

volunteer to do things that are needed.

### Why have a London group?

Reasons raised include:

- A group is useful for those new to London, new to Quakers, or new to coming out, or any combination
- A significant number of people are the only gay or lesbian or TG person in their meeting, as far as they know.
- Even meetings with many LGBT members do not necessary talk very much about the issues
- Some of us are trying to reconnect with Friends at the moment. Others wouldn't mind a space that is not our meetings!

**Membership:** all meetings are open to all, regardless of sexuality or gender. Information will be sent via the newsletter to all QLGF members and by email to all PMs. We are thinking about how to operate a third category of members [more 'people to contact'] not reached by the other two. We will not operate fees but take collections to cover expenses.

### Recent meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> June:

16 Friends from 8 London meetings met to discuss their spritual journeys in the first official meeting of the London QLGF Group, otherwise known as London Whatever, or the ReTreads. On the basis of our two meetings so far, Jaffa Cakes and socialising will play higher role than high theology or saving the world. (Although we intend to touch on these.) A mixture

of socials, discussions and outside speakers is planned and details will be posted on the website when we have them.

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Pride.** Open air meeting for worship in Hyde Park. 11:00 a.m. Meet near the Round Pond which is on the NE side of the park and a useful meeting spot. March/Parade for those able. Starts 1pm. Ends Victoria Embankment Community/stalls/rally area will be in Trafalgar Sq. We have booked Westminster FMH for optional chill out/ tea and buns 5-7pm.

**PRIDE PARADE:** Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005. Starts in Hyde Park at 1pm and finishes at Victoria Embankment, the ideal opportunity to promote your group

with a motorised float or on foot with banners and costumes. It is extensively covered by the world media and every national newspaper.

**PRIDE RALLY:** Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005. This year Trafalgar Square was packed to capacity, so much so that in 2005 we will need to close even more streets in central London to cope. We will have high profile speakers and more entertainment throughout the afternoon and early evening. We plan to provide stalls for LGBT groups at cost (and hopefully free).

**2 minutes walk from Westminster Friends Meeting House (ed)**

**PRIDE CABARET:** Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005. Leicester square

is the venue for the Pride Cabaret in association with Drag Idol from 4.00 to 7.00. The stage will feature the competition finalists and a whole lot more! Watch this space for more details.

**Ideas to take forward:** Wet weather alternative for the MFW ... Whether we want some bigger or longer presence in the Meeting House ...

**Saturday Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>.** 5-7pm, Westminster FMH. Outside speaker (to be confirmed).

**The Core Group This Time:**  
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## ***Captives to sexual aberration?***

GALHA has warmly welcomed the reaction of Scottish politicians to homophobic rantings of Cardinal Keith O'Brian, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland.

The Cardinal used his address at Holyrood's four-minute prayer slot Time for Reflection to attack gays claiming they were "***captives to sexual aberration***" and comparing them to prisoners in Edinburgh's Saughton jail who were waiting to be "***set free***".

Scottish politicians reacted by signing a motion put by Green MSP Patrick Harvie who is a member of the Humanist Society of Scotland. His motion condemned O'Brian's "***gratuitous insult***" and attracted cross-party support.



MSPs have acted to prevent a repeat of this by tightening the rules for speakers at Time for Reflection. They have clamped down on offensive religious contributions by revising the guidelines to read: "***[Contributions] will be consistent with the principle of equal opportunities for all and should not include remarks or comments which are discriminatory.***"

Commenting on the MSP's stance, GALHA's Scottish spokesperson Dave Gilmour

said: "***This is a welcome slap in the face for the Cardinal. It's great to find politicians prepared to stand up to religious homophobia of this sort and take practical steps to curb it. It's also good to know that the initiative came from a Humanist. It's a great pity that New Labour MPs can't emulate their Scottish counterparts instead of always kowtowing to religionists as they have done over anti-discrimination employment regulations and civil partnership legislation.***"

***"The Cardinal is obviously following in the footsteps of his predecessor, the late ultra-homophobic Thomas Winning, and demonstrating that under the authority of Pope Benedict XVI there will be no let-up on Catholic hostility to gay relationships and gay rights."***

