

The email newsletter of Shrewsbury Quaker Meeting

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Friends Online

Speaking of the Almighty ...

Area Meeting has accepted a Woodbrooke invitation to hold a one-day workshop on 14 April next year in Bewdley, with Alex Wildwood, to explore 'Speaking of God, or Not?'

For more than 350 years Quakers have spoken of 'discerning the will of God'. But today the Quaker community reflects the pluralism of society at large. Some of us still find traditional language about God deeply meaningful, others seek new ways of

describing and relating to the mystery at the heart of life. This is a chance both to listen respectfully and to share our own experience, and then briefly consider the significance and potential of our current spiritual diversity.

The cost is £40 per person and will be mainly covered by Area Meeting but each participant will be asked to contribute £10 in advance to book a place.

Two meeting groups to study 'New Economics'

The concept of 'New Economics' has been around for a few years, and it means different things to different people, countries and organisations. To get a sample, just type 'new economics' into Google. One thing that stands out loud and clear is that they all want national economies that treat people fairly and reward them honestly for doing jobs that need doing in a sustainable environment.

That all sounds fairly Quakerly, and now we have joined the fray, with a very welcome initiative by Britain Yearly Meeting that will give each of us the chance to think and talk about what New Economics means for us personally, as a Meeting and as a community.

The Economics, Sustainability and Peace Subcommittee of Yearly Meeting has produced six booklets which will form the backbone of much discussion – and involvement does not have to be limited to those who walk through the door on a Sunday morning. All are welcome. That's because economic decisions impact on everyone – our towns, wildlife,

housing, health, education and the air we breathe. Shrewsbury Meeting will run two parallel discussion groups on these, each group considering the booklets in order and keeping agreed notes on discussion and decisions.

One group will meet at lunchtime once a month for about two hours at David and Joy's home and the other will meet on one Sunday a month starting after meeting and also lasting about two hours. Angie will chair the first outing for this group.

The groups will meet up at the end of each booklet study and compare notes.

Hopefully, we will also share our work with other meetings inside and outside our own Area Meeting and keep up to date with what is happening at Meetings around the country.

Full details of meeting times and addresses plus copies of the six booklets are obtainable from Peter Staples at paperclips47@gmail.com. He can provide paper copies to those without email.

The six booklets are:

- 1 - **What's the economy for?**
- 2 - **Good work** - how we might organise work as if people and non-human life mattered.
- 3 - **Energy** - towards a green and fair energy system for all.
- 4 - **Money, banks, finance.**
- 5 - **Markets** - what are they and when do they work best for us?
- 6 - **Ownership in the New Economy** - ownership of natural resources in a sustainable and equitable way

Stepping out on God's behalf

[We] proceeded to Shrewsbury were we got about 8 o'clock in the evening, and took up our quarters at Esther and Margaret Phillips's. On 16th. and 1st. of week¹ we attended their meetings in Shrewsbury. The forenoon meeting began at 11 o'clock, 14 persons only attended all of whom were Females except our guide and 3 men friends who came from other meetings. It was a low time in the forepart but ended comfortably. James Harrison had a short testimony therein first from Isai: C: 66, v; 9. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord. Afterwards I had a pretty long time from Psalms 119. v: 17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word." At the close of this meeting, I proposed to friends that their afternoon meeting which usually begins at 3 should be put off until 5, and notice thereof be given to the inhabitants which was agreed unto, and the 3 Men friends stopt all night, and took great pains in giving information to the People.²

"The Town is very large, and friends Meetinghouse is very commodious, and when laid wholly open will contain abundance of People, but of late there hath not appeared much disposition in the inhabitants to attend on these

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries there was a Yorkshire Quaker named Joseph Wood, who as a young man was called to devote his life to the ministry.

This he did with tireless enthusiasm and vigour until his death in 1821 at the age of 71.

He walked thousands of miles across England and Wales, and when he could no longer walk he rode, holding public meetings to expound the Quaker message and way of life.

He visited Shrewsbury only once, towards the end of his life, and this is what he said in his Notebook afterwards, exactly as he wrote it, so be prepared for a little bit of head-scratching.

occasions, owing in part as it is supposed to the misconduct of some professors who resided there, and removed from thence a few years ago, leaving many sufferers by them³. The larger end of the Meetinghouse was not quite full, and yet we understood there was more attended than usual when equal pains have been taken in giving information. It proved a very open good meeting, and

held near 2 hours and a half. I had a very long testimony to bear therein first from 2 Cor: C: 5.v: 21. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." James Harrison had a short time next. Afterwards I expressed our satisfaction with the very commendable behaviour of the People, and after a pretty long exhortation, I saluted them in Gospel love and bade them all Farewell, and we separated under a very solemn covering, leaving I believe a door opened for other faithful labourers who may be drawn in a similar manner to visit them."

From Shrewsbury he went on to Newdale and Coalbrookdale, but that is another story. – PS

¹ '1st of week' was Sunday. Quakers refused to use words that were connected with paganism, so Sunday was first Day, Monday second day, etc...

² Perhaps hard to believe, but back in the day Shrewsbury, like many other towns, had two meetings on Sundays and one mid-week. Here Wood is asking the locals to turn the second Sunday meeting into a 'publick meeting' and advertise it widely among the population. This was a common practice.

³ 'Professors' was the usual word at the time for preachers and teachers – those who 'professed' something, although it was starting to acquire academic implications

In the latest issue of Friends Journal, a staff member at Friends House in South Carolina, writes on why they talk to teenagers about peace in the shadow of the vast military complex Fort Bragg. This is just a fraction of a long article, which is well worth reading. Part of the answer was: 'We are nurturing a conscientious commitment to peace, or a testimony of nonviolence, that the young people carry with them into adulthood ... We live in a war-illiterate nation. Nationalism is at a high point. We are at war in seven nations and rattle our sabres at others. We have nearly 800 military bases worldwide. The federal budget for

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the military [has] a 2017 projected budget of \$582 billion. Legislation has been introduced to require women to register for Selective Service ... Talk of reinstating a military draft gets louder.

'Then, sadly, our conscientious objector heroes from previous wars are passing away. These role models represented a living, historical testimony to deeply held convictions ... their voices and living memories are being forgotten as their generation passes away... More than ever, talking about conscientious objection with our youth is exactly what we should be doing.'