

The Religious Society of Friends Abergavenny Meeting Newsletter July-August 2006

Dates for your Diary:

Sunday 16th July, Meeting for Worship, at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am.

Wednesday 19th July. Midweek Meeting for Worship- see below.

Sunday 23rd July, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am, for those who wish, Young people's meeting and anyone else who wishes will be joining in meeting for Worship at Quaker camp.

Sunday 30th July, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am.

Sunday 6th August, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am.

Sunday 13th August, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am.

Wednesday 16th August, Midweek Meeting for Worship- see below.

Sunday 20th August, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am.

Sunday 27th August, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am.

Sunday 3rd September, Meeting for Worship at Llanfoist Village Hall, 10am. Children and Young People's Meeting, Preparative Meeting.

Midweek Meeting for Worship

At Edna Spencer's home, 10 Greystone Close, Mardy O1873 85 8757 on the 3rd

Wednesday of the month. The next Meeting is on **19th July** at 10.30am

All are welcome.

Please call a member of the pastoral care group (Gill, Klaus, Megan, Penny, Ronald and Hetta) to arrange a lift.

The Move:

We have all enjoyed the excellent facilities at Llanfoist Village Hall. –Thanks to Klaus and Gill who have made the move go so smoothly and are making sure all the 'openers up' know what to do.

Hetta writes;

Dear Friends

It was a joy to have Edna with us when we met for the first time at our new venue, Llanfoist village, hall we hope she will be able to come regularly.

Good to have Pat back with us after her ankle injury and we send best wishes to Teresa hoping the knee operation has been a success.

To all who have been unable to be with us lately we miss you and hope you will be back with us soon.

Hetta.

Young Peoples Programme;

16th July-No young people's meeting

23rd July Visit to Quaker Camp

No young people's meeting in August, beginning again on 3rd September.

Recently, Duncan led a session for the young people's meeting on 'Gender'. Here are some of the thoughts that arose.

We started by thinking about some things that young men and women often do differently and came up with some examples:

Design technology: ♀ – textiles; ♂ – woodwork
Sport: ♀ – hockey/netball; ♂ – soccer/rugby
When worried: ♀ – talk; ♂ – don't talk
Careers: ♀ – not engineering; ♂ – not childcare
Arguments: ♀ - "spiteful"; ♂ – "open"
Appearance: ♀ – make-up; ♂ – "stay ugly"
Family: ♀ – homemaker; ♂ – breadwinner.

We considered what it is like when girls do things mostly done by boys (e.g. engineering, football). We came up with two adjectives: "lad", and "OK". We considered what it is like when boys do things mostly done by girls (e.g. make-up, childcare). Such boys are described as "fruitcakes", "poofs" and other words not mentionable at Quaker meeting! We considered what kind of hierarchy is at play where it is OK for girls to be like boys (a move "upwards"?) but it is not OK for boys to be like girls (a move "downwards"?)

We discussed the pressures that are placed on boys and girls. We heard that King Henry school in Abergavenny does not allow girls to play cricket because the school is not insured for girls to be injured! Duncan told how, according to research by the Equal Opportunities Commission, careers advisors in schools rarely promote engineering and plumbing to girls and childcare to boys; 25 per cent of boys are interested in thinking about childcare, but only 2 per cent of them are offered any opportunity to try it.

We then looked at the wider world and the front page of the *Independent* newspaper on 8 March (International Women's Day). We looked at differences in power between men and women:

- 1% of the titled land in the world is owned by women
- 21% of the world's managers are women
- 9% of judges are women
- 10% of company directors are women
- 3% of chief executives in major European countries are women
- 10% of top police officers in the UK are women
- Men directed 90% of films made in 2004
- In US, 35% of lawyers are women but just 5% are partners in law firms
- 12 out of 191 of the world's leaders are women

We also looked at the "pay gap":

- Women will earn an average of £500,000 less over their lifetimes than men.
- In the UK finance sector, women earn on average £970,000 less than men over a lifetime
- Women's full-time wages are 17% less than men's on average in the UK.

We discussed how women do so much less well than men even when they do better in education. The Equal Opportunities Commission has studied this and has come up with three main reasons:

- Women tend to go into lower paid professions - e.g. caring for people.
- Straightforward prejudice.
- Most of all: children.

We discussed how having children affects a woman's prospects so much more than men's. It starts straight away - employers see every young woman as potentially becoming pregnant and looking after children, but they assume that young men will not make any changes to their work if they have children. When a woman becomes pregnant, employers can make life difficult - the EOC found that over 25% of pregnant women face discrimination (but almost no expectant fathers do). And then, when a baby is born, the woman cannot work and income goes down, so fathers often work even longer hours (British fathers already work the longest hours in Europe). The more this happens, the bigger the difference in earning potential between women and men, so that when the second baby arrives and family finances get even tighter, most families have no choice but for the woman to focus on caring and the man to focus on earning. Some families may want this, but those who want to choose differently often cannot.

But research shows that women and men are just as good at looking after babies and children - there are no gender differences at all. The reason why most women are more capable and confident than men is because they get vastly more practice and there are social networks of support for mothers much more than there are for fathers.

But the good news is that change is happening. One of the young people (male) had done babysitting the evening before! Women's position outside the home is slowly getting better; mothers and fathers are sharing caring roles much more - fathers do eight times more caring of their children than they did 30 years ago. More and more boys and young men are seeing caring for children as an opportunity in life. There are more and more positive images of fatherhood in the media (we looked at some pictures of footballers parading their babies!) The top concern of the public nowadays, more than health, crime and pensions, is time - being able to have a private life as well as work. This is largely driven by the fact that men and women equally do not want to lose time with their children.

The discussion was led by Duncan. He is a member of the board of the Equal Opportunities Commission and he set up a charity, Fathers Direct, to help Government, public services and employers to provide more opportunities for men to spend time looking after children.

Report of Spiritual Life

Ronald and Theresa write

Early next year we are on the Monthly Meeting programme to present a report on our meeting. This comes around every 2 or 3 years and last time a file was placed on the table at meeting for a few weeks for Friends to contribute short paragraphs on what might be included. We have both been impressed by a section of a recent Southern Africa Quaker news entitled 'what I believe'. 5 Friends give very personal accounts which give a good idea of how their meetings nurture their spiritual lives. A few quotes will hopefully stimulate us to produce something similar.

"I remain committed to the Jesus of history and the God of my experience"

"I believe God is to be found in giving and I must trust that I will be cared for"

"My strength and inspiration for the week ahead has come from Meeting for Worship"

Editor's Note:

Contributions for the next newsletter, thoughts or comments about this newsletter are welcome either by post or email to:

Sara at sara@burchandcope.fsnet.co.uk or Gill at gillbranch@aol.com