

# Heath Street

## BAPTIST CHURCH



# Working for Peace

## A talk by Clare Wood

### Head of peacebuilding projects, Quakers in Britain

**I work for the Quakers.** I don't know if you know the Quakers, so I'll just say that we are known as a peace church. Ewan asked me to come and tell you a bit about the peace work we do. We work with many other amazing churches and people of faith, including Baptists, so you may know about some of the things I'm talking about, but I hope you will hear something new and that it might prompt some ideas or questions for you in these really challenging and changing times we're facing.

**I first came to this church** because we needed somewhere for an away day for our small team that runs something called the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. It's a programme run by the World Council of Churches, and Quakers run it in the UK and Ireland. We bring ordinary people from all faiths and none to the West Bank for 3 months, to live alongside Palestinian communities living under occupation and to meet and support Israeli human rights and peace groups. The model we use is called "accompaniment" because it's about being alongside people, offering what we can for as long as it's wanted.

**The accompaniers walk children to school,** they walk farmers to their fields, they stand alongside people at checkpoints, they stand with families who have had their homes or animal shelters destroyed, they listen to families whose teenagers were arrested in the middle of the night. The idea is that by being a visible presence we will reduce violence in the first place.

And when violence or human rights violations occur, as they do every day, the accompaniers record and report them to Israeli peace organisations, who might be able to help, or to international agencies like the UN or Red Cross.

**By accompanying people we are saying, "you are not alone,"** and we are responsible too". And the accompaniers are changed by the experience—they see humanity at its most fearful and most violent, but also at its most resilient, most welcoming and most hopeful. They come back to share the stories and words of those they have met and to campaign and work for change, usually over many years and sometimes for the rest of their lives. In Palestine and Israel, we have been doing this work for 30 years so this is a large community now.

**So coming back to this church,** we came here as a very tired, very stretched, very on the edge team. And in this lovely place we took a breath, reconnected, resolved some sticky issues and came out revived.

**And that's something else we consider important in peace work. We give space.** Just as you do here. We give space in our meeting houses for people to meet and to learn together, we give space to organisations doing really difficult work on community division, or working for peace and justice. We host networks—community peacebuilding networks, peace education networks, peer mediation networks. We consider all of this peacebuilding—meeting people you don't usually meet, spending time

working on relationships, offering and accepting each other's hospitality, that is all part of making a community stronger and more prone to peace and less prone to violence.

**Like lots of people of faith, Quakers love words**—the words in the Bible, and the words of others who have worked for peace. And we really use those words to shape the work we do. We often use the concept of the two hands of nonviolence, coined by Barbara Deming, a US nonviolence advocate. She said: 'With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, "Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing..."' 'But then the other hand is raised outstretched—we say, "I won't let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now, and I'll be here when you are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another.'" That commitment, to nonviolence, or to 'seeing that of God in everyone', is a thread in all our work.

**So some of our holding up the hand work** is when we organise and take part in nonviolent protests and vigils, boycott certain companies or speak out against something we see as deeply wrong. And then the reaching out hand is when we try to sit down with policy-makers working on Palestine and Israel, offer space to people negotiating climate policy, write letters or support mediations.

**My colleague, who works on ecumenical and interfaith relationships,** told me that churches are connecting together and working together—and with other

faiths—more than ever and that we are speaking out in a more clear and united way. For example, churches are now grappling with the rise of the far right and what it means for our communities, and they are working together and speaking out together. That is all peace work.

**And finally we do peace education,** supporting teachers to discuss difficult peace issues in the classroom and peer mediation, helping children to handle conflict in creative and healthy ways and to become accredited peer mediators.

**Some of this work takes a lot of resources and a lot of time and many years.** But we have violence and the seeds of violence very much alive in our communities, and there is so much we can do. When they have a dilemma, Quakers like to ask 'what does love require of us?' and that question can lead us to do difficult and new things, but it can also remind us that to be loving, to care for others, to find small ways to extend our community, is all part of the hard work for peace. Quakers love to have huge meetings and then to write minutes that capture the sense of the meeting. Here's a bit of a recent minute, that I'll leave you with:

*Our desire for peace can come from love for everybody in the world. As Friends we are called to love one another, whether we like them or not. That persistent love is how we bring about peace and how we move forward. We have been encouraged not to simply take sides in a conflict but to see that on every side there are people in pain and fear, and people working for peace who need our support. We can work in our local communities to bridge gaps and build community before we get to violence, to bring in the people who are left behind, ignored and hungry.*

# A Taizé New Year

Since 1978, the brothers of the Taizé community have visited a different European city for a few days over the New Year. This year, I went to the gathering in Paris. I was one of around 30,000 people — the vast majority aged between 16 and 35 — drawn from a wide range of countries and Christian traditions. Most strikingly, both Russian and Ukrainian contingents were present. As in Taizé itself, there were three prayer times each day. Away from Taizé's own Church of Reconciliation, the house of prayer was a changing sequence of Paris' churches and cathedrals. The



brothers allocate each pilgrim a different three buildings each day, and in this way one gets to meet new people and see the city. Sitting in silence in the centre of Notre-Dame while being filmed on all sides by tourists is not something I'll forget in a hurry! Nor was evening prayer at Montmartre: the beauty of the basilica itself, followed by stepping outside to see the lights of Paris glittering before us. The moment I found most encouraging came when a group of young Aramaic-speaking Chaldean Christians from Iraq (part of a relatively recent refugee community living in Paris) formed an impromptu choir alongside some West African Pentecostals and a smattering of others from different traditions and languages.



The Chaldeans had shared their testimony and a little of their community's very venerable history. They impressed me as dignified, softly spoken and unassuming. Then they sang for us in Aramaic, Jesus' mother tongue. Their song felt as if it were yearning for the Holy distilled, purified by centuries of singing; it was beautiful. They were invited to stay on as an evangelical band led the next part of the service. These were young people from church traditions whose worship style is big and impossible to ignore, building as it does on modern popular musical forms,



and expressive, as it is, of such a heartfelt Yes to God. At first, the change of gear was a little crunchy. The congregation stumbled as we attempted to clamber from one tradition of worship through to another. But as people warmed into the groove (helped by an excellent drummer), bodies began to sway and voices to rise. I watched the diverse choir exchange words and laughter. The awkwardness dissipated. Encouraged by the spreading enjoyment, they found their feet and synced together. By the fourth song or so, the whole congregation was dancing. I released myself from attempting to keep up with the French lyrics and joined them. It was an image of Christian unity and youthful faith that feels very characteristic of Taizé — and, for me, a lived experience of God's universal Church.

—Wilf Merttens

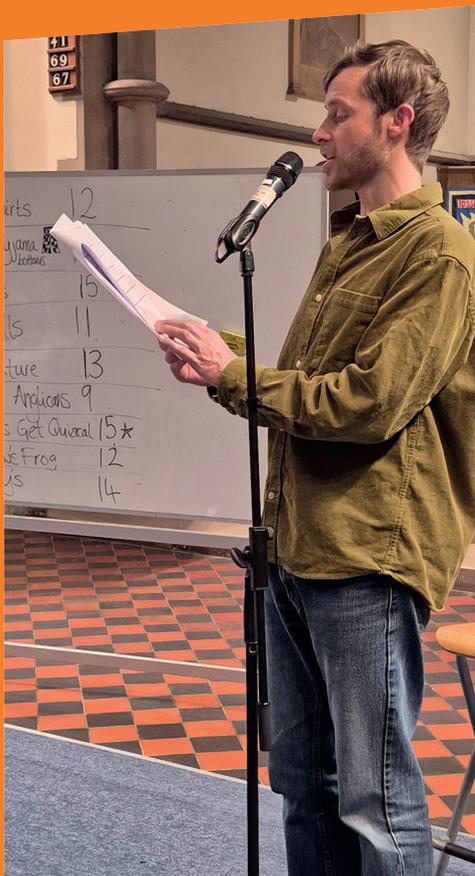
# Churches Together in Hampstead

## QUIZ NIGHT



I really liked the sports round because I know a lot about football. I was proud to know the answer to “who won the 2025 Champions League”, which was PSG (Paris St Germain), breaking the world record of biggest ever finals win (5-0). One of the trickiest questions was “Who won the cricket World Cup 2025.” We put India but the correct answer was South Africa. I also knew that Svalbard is part of Norway because I study the globe beside my bed. I really liked the food and the sausages were the best, although that was probably because I got the last two. I didn’t really like how my team, the Checked Pyjama Bottoms, came second to last. I was with Grace, Phoebe, Otilie and Mysie.

—William, age 9





## Nine Lessons & Carols Service

Heath Street Baptist Church's annual carol service has long been a favourite of ours and this year's did not disappoint. A traditional service of nine lessons and carols was reimagined as only Ewan King and Heath Street BC can—gathering a congregation of the faithful and the occasional to hear the news of Christ's birth celebrated with what I can only describe as sonic joy! In so many ways this service reflects the unique character and ministry of the church to local people and to the artistic community. Politicians, poets, musicians, old and young were all welcomed generously by church members and then all were invited to stay for a shared lunch. This was good news sung and tasted together, and the memory of a congregation singing 'O come let us adore him' is one I take and treasure.

—Rev. Shona Shaw

## Tour of the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

This Advent season myself and the children at Heath Street enjoyed a tour of the historic site of Jesus' birth! With the terrible troubles in the Holy Land, the plight of the people of Bethlehem is worsened by the fact that the usual stream of pilgrims and tourists so vital for their economy has all but dried up. Well, I have a friend of a friend who is a tour guide there, Abood, and my friend wondered if there was any way we could help him. So Abood and I did a few tests and figured out that he could actually provide a decent tour online. So the children sat, fascinated, as Abood led us from the sunshine of Bethlehem into the church. He gave us the tour, and a bearded Armenian priest in the basilica lit a candle for each one of us. The signal started to splutter as we descended into the grotto, and we lost Abood. I quizzed the children on what we had learned so far, and soon my phone was pinging: Abood had gone down and finished the tour by making us videos of the Holy grotto beneath the church.

—Wilf Merttens

## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Representatives of the clergy and congregations of St. Joseph's, Highgate and St. Gabriel's, Archway (Roman Catholic), Chalk Farm Salvation Army, St. Dominic's Priory and Heath Street Baptist Church meeting for prayer.

HEATH STREET BAPTIST

Join Emmanuel, Heath Street Baptist and students  
from Vienna Baptistengemeinde Churches for:

# EASTER HOLIDAY



## THEATRE WORKSHOP



**When:**  
March 30 - April 3 2026



**Where:**  
Emmanuel Church West Hampstead  
Lyncroft Gardens, NW6 1JU



**Time:**  
Breakfast: **8:30am** (included)  
Workshop: **9am - 5pm**



**Age:**  
8-80 years



**Price:**  
£5 per day

Book your place now:  
[info@emmanuelnw6.com](mailto:info@emmanuelnw6.com)

### Act - Design - Build - Create

For actors, writers, tech and  
anyone who loves theatre!



**Performances on Good  
Friday and Holy Saturday!**

[www.heathstreet.org](http://www.heathstreet.org) - [www.emmanuelnw6.com](http://www.emmanuelnw6.com)



# Readings

MARCH 8-14

EXODUS 17.1-7

8th Mysie Johnson  
9th Nesa Thorne  
10th Thaddeus King  
11th Phoebe Jiang  
12th Elisa Ghasempour  
13th Isabel Somers  
14th Wilf Merttens

MARCH 15-21

I SAMUEL 16.1-13

15th Theresa Thom  
16th Evelyn Baker  
17th Edward Humphreys  
18th Zahra Safaryazdi  
19th Beryl Dowsett  
20th Grace Jiang  
21st Tom Somers

MARCH 22-28

EZEKIEL 37.1-14

22nd Maral Agin  
23rd Ewan King  
24th Cole Ellenbogen  
25th Hyun Ju Lee  
26th Lydia Baker  
27th Annie Fang  
28th Joachim King

MARCH 29-APRIL 4

MATTHEW 21.1-11

29th Ali Ghasempour  
30th Babak Agin  
31st Emad Eisapour  
1st April Jen Finamore  
2nd Coco Ellenbogen  
3rd Robin Thorne  
4th John-Henry Baker

# & Prayers

APRIL 5-11

ACTS 10.34-43

5th Frida King  
6th Birgit Leuppert  
7th Gaynor Humphreys  
8th Leila Ranjbar  
9th Susan Le Quesne  
10th for our deacons  
11th Dusol Lee

APRIL 12-18

ACTS 2.22-32

12th for all who sing in our community choir  
13th HK  
14th Esme Baker  
15th Laura Somers  
16th Julie Benoit  
17th Sarah Harper  
18th Ilia Ghasempour

APRIL 19-25

ACTS 2.36-41

19th Anselm King  
20th for the parents, carers and children who attend Oldtime Nursery  
21st Juno Lee  
22nd Nathalia Bell  
23rd Genna Naccache  
24th Gabrielle Falardeau  
25th Rhona MacEachen

APRIL 26-MAY 2

ACTS 2.42-47

26th Selena Barrera  
27th for all who attend Contact Club  
28th Andrea MacEachen  
29th Otilie Johnson  
30th Josh Somers  
1st May Kylo Layton  
2nd Fiona Ranford

# WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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and  
these  
three  
remain

<b>Sundays</b>	11:00am	<b>DIVINE WORSHIP</b> Including our <b>Children's Sunday Club</b> stories, crafts, drama and play for all ages  <b>Live stream</b> also available on request by emailing <a href="mailto:johnhenry@heathstreet.org">johnhenry@heathstreet.org</a> at least 24 hours in advance
	7:00pm	<b>CONTACT CLUB</b>
<b>Tuesdays</b>	9:30am	<b>OLDTIME NURSERY</b> Introducing old melodies and traditional stories to a new generation of children
<b>Thursdays</b>	10:30am	<b>OLDTIME NURSERY</b>
	7:30pm	<b>HEATH STREET CHOIR REHEARSALS</b>
<b>Fridays</b>	3:30pm	<b>STORYMAKERS CLUB</b>
	6:00pm	<b>PRAYER MEETING</b> We meet in the downstairs kitchen to talk and pray. Do come and join!





Please see the church website for updates

**[www.heathstreet.org](http://www.heathstreet.org)**

For requests regarding church membership,  
Baptism or opportunities for Christian ministry in the church,  
please contact the minister

### **Copy for the next Newsletter**

should reach Eleanor Patterson ([eleanorlaise@gmail.com](mailto:eleanorlaise@gmail.com))  
not later than **Wednesday 15 April**

### **Church Officers**

Gaynor Humphreys (Treasurer)

Wilf Merttens (Church Secretary)

Annie Fang (Deacon)

### **Minister Ewan King**

Heath St Baptist Church

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