

Fears

By Aidan Childs, Okehampton Quaker Meeting

It is easy to be scared or suspicious of other people. People who seem different; strangers, people who used to be friends.

There is a thought that I find it hard to live up to, although in these situations I treasure it. It goes like this. Almost everyone I have ever met is just like me: just another person as good or as bad as I am. So surely almost everyone I will ever meet will be the same: not perfect but essentially good. Whenever, I can hang on to that conviction, life becomes a little less daunting.

'There is that of God,' goes one of the most widely used Quaker sayings, 'in everyone'. The phrase means different things to different people, and some will find it more useful than others. For me though, it expresses one of the most challenging and amazing facts about the world. In my experience all people have a goodness within them, and there is a holiness in all life. People, I think, are not just bodies full of anger, illness or worry, but have a vast core of meaning and value. I believe that everyone has a different insight on the infinite peace all around that I sometimes do call 'God'. Everybody is capable of terrible things, but that is not a reason for fear, suspicion, or hatred. To scurry through the world afraid of others because I have never met them, or because they are different, is no way to be alive.

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