

**‘Where two or three are gathered’:  
Young Adult Quaker Gathering at Jordans**

The Spirit is moving among young adult Friends, in Oxford and across the country. In new and exciting ways, we are being gathered, guided, and knit together by the Divine hand. In response to the Spirit’s movement, a group of Oxford young adult Friends are organising a Young Adult Quaker Gathering this summer at Jordans Friends meeting house and centre. This will take place 21 – 25 August, bringing together an international group of Friends to explore how we are transformed and drawn into community by the Spirit.

This gathering will centre on ‘the presence in the midst’: the promise around which early Friends gathered, that ‘where two or three gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt. 18:20). More than a century ago, James Doyle Penrose painted a now well-known image of the presence in the midst at Jordans meeting house. In his painting, seventeenth-century Friends meet for worship, waiting on the presence of Christ, who is positioned just above the Friends, leading the worship. This reflects the experience of early Friends, whose lives were changed by Jesus’s presence in the gathered community as its head, teacher, guide, and shepherd.

Here is Penrose’s testimony, given late in life, about his experience painting this image:

One beautiful summer day I went over to Jordans, and, quite alone, sat down in the seat from which the picture was painted... I seemed as I contemplated all those who had worshipped there in the past, to be surrounded by them in imagination as if they were gathered there. I pondered on what it was that gave them all their power; for they had power in those bygone times, and then I realized that it was the presence of Christ amongst them – ‘The Presence in the Midst’. And I felt there was a subject that I ought to paint; and I did feel that it was a very great undertaking. The sunlight streaming through the window threw the shadow of the casement mullion and transom on the wall, and, although I was not conscious of it at the time, it must have been an unconscious inspiration, for years afterwards, it was pointed out to me that this shadow was a cross – an empty cross. The work on the cross was a finished work of redemption, and now He, who once hung there, was the risen, living Christ whose presence may be relied upon where two or three are gathered together in His name.

We are moved by Penrose’s reflection on ‘what it was that gave [early Friends] all their power’, and by his realization that this could be nothing other than Christ’s living presence among them. We are sure that our gathering won’t look like his painting! However, we want to explore what that Source of Light and Hope captured in the painting might mean for us today. Is this just an old-fashioned image or does it have a connection to our lives? What would this experience of the living Christ among us be like today? What empowered earlier Friends to witness and suffer with such audacity, and how might we encounter that same source of strength?

Over five days together in August, we will have time for renewal, worship, fun, and exploration, as we come together with young adult Friends from across the Quaker world. We need your

help to make this happen: we are hoping to make use of the Youth Hostel near Jordans, but need support to cover the fees as well as food for the gathering. We are also keen to support Friends travelling long distances to join us if we can. If you are led to help us, please consider supporting us [at this link](#). And please consider spreading the word: registration information for the gathering can be found [at this link](#). We are so grateful for your help – whether in donating, spreading the word, or upholding us in prayer – as we gather to see how the Spirit is moving among us today.

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