



FORTY-THREE

OXFORD FRIENDS' MEETING
43 ST.GILES OXFORD OX1 3LW

NEWSLETTER

www.oxfordquakers.org

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'Becoming Friends Companion'

Recently, there seems to have been a common thread running through various conversations I have had in my Quaker 'walks of life'. Whether it is more articles in *The Friend* or more discussions at Local Meeting (LM), there is this same craving for spiritual journeying, exploration, questioning and friendship.

For me, this need was paired with a desire to learn more about Quakerism and its immersion in my life. So, I was very pleased to learn of Woodbrooke's new 'Becoming Friends' (BF) pack. Our LM set up an informal discussion group to meet every second Sunday of the month between early and late Meetings. Sadly, I often work at the weekends and so this wasn't very convenient. I also felt the need for more personal and in-depth discussion and support. A possible solution came to me at Jenny Buffery's 'Friday with Friends – Our Spiritual Journeys': a 'Becoming Friends Companion' (BFC).

The idea is for any enquirers, Attenders, or literally anyone who is interested, to find a companion from Oxford LM to help support them on their spiritual journey. The BF pack can be used as a form of structure and method of exploration, but really the companionship should be as fluid and

flexible as the two people want. Hopefully, both people, whether relative newcomer or 'older and more experienced' Friend will find a positive partnership which will help them on their spiritual journeys.

So, be open to new experiences, pluck up the courage, and the next time you have the opportunity (perhaps during tea and coffee after Meeting) ask whether a Friend would like to be your BFC. Trust me, most people would feel honoured to be asked.

Becky Riddell

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Our name, the Religious Society of Friends, suggests that we think of ourselves not only as Friends in the Truth, which the early Quakers saw themselves to be, but also as a society of friends, prizing friendship highly and recognising its value for the religious life.

In our intimate relationships, as in the wider community of our meeting, openness to one another can open us to the Holy Spirit and enable us to acknowledge that of God in our own hearts and in those of our friends.

QF&P 22.03 1994

Deadline for contributions to the June 2011 issue: noon, Friday 20 May

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the Forty-Three pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373.



Why it Matters

The National Health Service is not 'marketised'. The motivation for those working in it is to care for people, while earning a living. Costs are met by general taxation. We trust that, if we pay our share, our money will not be wasted but used effectively. And though not perfect, it has worked. Our health service is as good overall as that in other developed countries, as well as being cheaper than most.

In a world where the services of electricity, gas, water and so on have been progressively 'privatised' (a new word in the 1980s), this is a model worth preserving. What I call 'marketisation' assumes that we are best motivated by money, and resources are best allocated by markets. The NHS works on a different basis. But there are powerful groups, working through institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and national governments, who would profit if the NHS became a market in which they could participate. They are pushing worldwide for public services to be opened up to the market.

The current Health and Social Care Bill introduces a market in clinical services, with 'any willing provider' able to bid under EU Competition Law. The use of GPs as commissioning agents is a small part of this change. The bill is 367 pages long and contains many provisions, including the abolition of most of the NHS administrative structure. It is the opposite of the campaign promise of 'no top-down reorganisation of the NHS'. It is an attack on the public service model, and in my view undermines Quaker values of equality and integrity, because it hands more power to those with money, while pretending to do something else. Real NHS reform needs a different bill.

Jeanne Warren

For direct action, visit
www.38degrees.org.uk
or tel. 020 7970 6023.



Caught in the system

Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP) receives regular requests from people in need – some of whom are caught in the benefits system by rules they don't understand, run by social security officers who don't know the implications of their decisions.

Kevin is on Jobseekers allowance, and has work selling the *Big Issue*. He has a baby son, and was given custody for a couple of months to ensure his health and safety. Of course, he needed baby food and nappies which left no money for him to live on. He applied to social services for a crisis loan, but was turned down on the basis that he should have used child benefit and child tax credit to pay for his son's needs.

Child benefit and tax credits are in most cases paid to the mother, and unless the couple live together or are on good terms, fathers don't necessarily have access to this money. Social security officers aren't always aware of who usually receives benefits – men or women – which can have big implications for added vulnerability, as in this case.

Luckily OXFAP were contacted by the Oxford Street Services Team, and were able to help. But how many others are out there like Kevin, caught by rules, at a time when benefit claimants are under more and more pressure because of public spending cuts?

Sue Smith

Tel. 761219, email wishingchair@btinternet.com

Thank You

I would like to say a very big thank you to all my friends who helped me over my recent illness. Thank you for all the cards, phone calls, lifts to doctors, help with shopping and gifts of flowers and food. I could not have recovered quite so well without all your help and support. You have all reaffirmed my feeling that my friends are my greatest asset. You are all so, so special. It's great to be back on my feet.

A very grateful,

Matt Godwin



Tabora: Friendship in action

I was an Attender at Oxford Meeting for about five years; during that time I worked with the International Interfaith Centre and then with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Since retiring I have been returning to Tabora in Tanzania, where I first went as a VSO teacher in 1968. My husband joins me on these trips. Jim is a retired GP and works in a local Anglican clinic, and I work with a Day Centre for orphans and vulnerable children. We have leased a house there for five years and enjoy welcoming other volunteers as housemates.

Jim's clinic introduced us to Ahamadi, who came to stay with us a year ago with advanced kwashiorkor disease [an acute form of childhood protein-energy malnutrition]. We doubted that he

would survive, but on two-hourly feeds of half-strength milk and sugar over 48 hours we saw improvements and knew he would be OK. Last Christmas he was diagnosed with TB, and finished treatment for that when we were there in June; but the following week he broke his arm severely in the school playground. However, the plaster is off now and he is fine again and living with his grandma's sister and her family of eight children.

There are now 55 children registered at the HAPO (Health Action Promotions Organisation) day centre: some are sponsored to go to private day or boarding school; eighteen attend local government school. The children go to school in the mornings and attend the centre for their midday lunch, and then play games or sport or have some extra lessons in the afternoons.

We have started to improve the water and sanitation facilities at the children's homes and have almost finished a toilet for one of our grannies. She has been helping to source the materials and workers and she is delighted with her new loo. Locally made water purification devices are now distributed to all our families.

HAPO is trying to generate some income itself, and has recently started to make bricks, and is launching a machine-knitting project. We need volunteers who could help take these projects forward, as well as those who want to come and play with the kids.

Visit our website <http://tlctanzania.org> for more details.

Margaret Paton





St Paul – the musical



When I heard that our choir was going to perform Mendelssohn's oratorio *St Paul*, I was disappointed and puzzled. Disappointed because I had suggested that we should sing Beethoven's *Mass in C*, and puzzled because no-one in our choir seemed to have heard of Mendelssohn's *St Paul*.

To be honest, I felt ambivalent about St Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, or the Apostle Paul, or simply Paul – whatever you like to call him. I knew, of course, that he was a towering figure in the early church. His personal story was most incredible – from a Pharisee dedicated to the persecution of Christians, he became the greatest Christian missionary of all, travelling for many years through Asia Minor, Greece and beyond to start and support new churches.

However, Paul was also controversial. Through his letters, he comes across as a passionate, argumentative, even irascible figure. The early churches were beset with disputes, and Paul weighed in with fierce attacks on his opponents who, in his view, were distorting the Christian gospel. And wasn't it Paul who wrote that women shouldn't speak in church and should keep their heads covered?

But as soon as we started rehearsals, 'the scales fell from my eyes'. The opening chorus, *Herr, Herr (Lord, Lord – we sing it in German)*, grabbed my attention and refused to let go. It moved on to the brutal execution of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, followed by Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. As the sopranos and altos sang "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?", the music seemed to shimmer and shine. For me, these ethereal sounds were not just beautiful music – they were a spiritual experience.

I became totally hooked on Mendelssohn's magnificent oratorio. We performed Part 1 in Grenoble and Oxford last year, and this year we're singing both parts. Part 2 describes some of Paul's missionary journeys, moving effortlessly from dramatic action to lovely lyrical passages, interspersed with chorales and fugues.

More recently, I began re-reading Paul's letters in the New Testament, and I also dipped into biblical

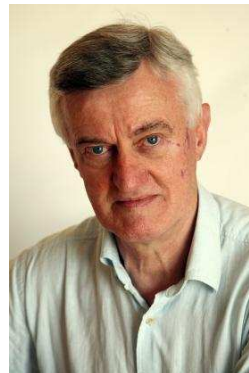
commentaries and other books about his life and ministry. I rediscovered 1 Corinthians 13 – surely the greatest statement of all time about the nature of love – and other inspirational passages. I still have much to learn from the writings of this most remarkable Christian missionary. I have come to this realisation through music: through Mendelssohn's great oratorio, *St Paul*. Why it is so rarely performed is a mystery to me.

Glen Williams

The East Oxford Community Choir and the Ensemble Interlude (Grenoble) will perform Mendelssohn's *St Paul* at the Sheldonian Theatre on Friday 3 June, 7:30 pm. Tickets from Tickets Oxford (01865 305305), or from Glen Williams (01865 727612).

Glen will be leading a Bible Study on one of Paul's letters, using the Friendly Bible Study method, on Wednesday 4 May in the Meeting House library, starting at 7:30 pm.

Poetry at the Meeting House



On Wednesday 4 May, Bernard O'Donoghue will read and talk about his poems in Oxford Meeting House. All welcome, admission free, collection for Oxford Friends Action on Poverty, refreshments from 7 pm, reading starts at 7:30. Please bring yourself and friends to hear this Oxford-and-Ireland winner of the 1995 Whitbread prize for poetry, 'beguiling and powerful writer'. See *Selected Poems* Faber 2008 for 'how beautifully he sings'. For example, page 62 'Going Without Saying':

*It is a great pity we don't know
When the dead are going to die
So that, over a last companionable
Drink, we could tell them
How much we liked them.
Happy the man who, dying, can
Place his hand on his heart and say:
'At least I didn't neglect to tell
The thrush how beautifully she sings'.*

Bernard O'Donoghue

Stephen Yeo

Meetings and Notices

Changes to Arrangements for Notices at Oxford Quaker Meeting

In future, the notices will be compiled by the Clerks' Team instead of the warden. Two versions of the notices will be prepared. A spoken version with brief details of events will go in the Notice Book and will be read out at the end of Meeting for Worship. A written version will give much fuller details of events advertised and will be posted up in the lobby of the Meeting House, and in the hall of 43 as well as circulated by email.

All notices must be emailed to notices@oxfordquakers.org by midday on the Friday before they need to be first read out.

If you wish your name to be added to the email circulation list for notices, please email clerk@oxfordquakers.org and ask to be added to the list.

Sandra Figges

Photos for Bolivia

In July I am going on the Quaker Bolivia study tour, visiting Quaker-funded projects.

The trip organiser suggests that 'a photo or drawing of your Meeting House with perhaps a picture of Friends in your Meeting and a greeting from them will be welcomed by the Meetings we visit'.



Tina Leonard

Do you have views on the layout and maintenance of the Meeting House's noticeboards?

Please contact us (tel: 01865 283391, email mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk) in order to join a group that will examine this issue.

Mark Ebdon and Val Ferguson

Poverty in Oxford: the Muslim experience

*What does the Koran say about poverty?
What are the needs and initiatives of Muslims in Oxford?*

Speaker: Councillor Altaf-Khan
Friday 13 May 2011, FMH, 7 for 7:30 pm

All welcome. Refreshments provided.

A Friday with Friends event arranged by OXFAP (Oxford Friends Action on Poverty).

Drama at Adderbury

Music, poetry and a little drama will be the focus for the annual Adderbury Gathering in an unmodernised seventeenth-century Meeting House in north Oxfordshire on Sunday 12 June, from 3 pm to 5 pm. Everyone welcome.



Adderbury Friends Meeting House is on Horn Hill Road in West Adderbury, OX17 3EW. The building has seen little change since 1675, with no running water, piped gas or electricity, and is a peaceful place to worship away from modern life. Friends worship there on the third Sunday of every month at 2:30 pm.

Matthew Gee



On Friday 13 May, 7:30 pm, at 24 Merrivale Square, OX2 6QX (chez Alan & Virginia Allport), John Toye will talk about, and then lead a discussion on, the 2008 financial crisis and what lay behind it. To prepare for this, participants are invited to read some or all of *Fools Gold* by Gillian Tett (ISBN: 9780349121895).

Alan Allport

CALENDAR FOR MAY 2011

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

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|--------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Wednesday 4 May | 7:30 - 9 pm | Bible Study Group | Wednesday 18 May | 1:45 pm | Friends Fellowship of Healing |
| Wednesday 4 May | 7-10 pm | Bernard O'Donoghue Poetry Event | Thursday 19 May | 7:30 for 8 pm | Young Friends |
| Friday 6 May | 7 for 7:30 pm | Friday with Friends | Thursday 26 May | 7 for 7:30 pm | Jocelyn Bell Burnell: public talk |
| Thursday 12 May | 7:30 for 8 pm | Young Friends | Saturday 28 May | 10:30 - 3:30 | Quilting |
| Friday 13 May | 7:30 pm | John Toye talk <i>24 Merrivale Square, OX2 6QX</i> | Sunday 29 May | 12:30 pm | Bring-and-share lunch |
| Friday 13 May | 7 for 7:30 pm | Friday with Friends: Councillor Altaf Khan | Thursday 2 June | 7:30 for 8 pm | Young Friends |

Public talk: Thursday 26 May, 7 for 7:30 pm

Jocelyn Bell Burnell will speak at the Meeting House on the topic of *'Hope in the Universe? Astronomy and Faith'*



Forty-Three is available online, at www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter

If you are considering writing an article or notice but would prefer it not to go online, please don't hesitate to contribute it. Just indicate that the piece is not for inclusion in the internet version — no reason will be asked for. Articles and notices are very welcome to appear in the print edition only, and the same applies to calendar items.

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Sundays at 9:30 and 11 a.m. at 43 St Giles
(followed by coffee and tea)

Wednesdays at 12:15 p.m. at 43 St Giles
(followed by coffee and tea)

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 a.m. at 43 St Giles
(followed by breakfast at 8 a.m.)

Sundays at 10 a.m. at The Priory,
85 Old High St, Headington

OPENING TIMES (43 ST GILES):

Wednesday - Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

QUAKER QUEST: A spiritual path for our time

A choice of informal open sessions exploring the Quaker way. Three Quakers talk about their spiritual lives, with opportunities for questions & discussion and an experience of Quaker worship.

*Saturday 7 May at Banbury Meeting,
Horsefair, Banbury OX16 0AH
10 am – 12:30 pm or 2 pm – 4:30 pm*

or

*Saturday 21 May at Sibford Meeting,
Sibford Gower OX15 5RX
10 am – 12:30 pm or 2 pm – 4:30 pm*

Everyone welcome; children provided for.

For further details, contact Judy Mason (01295 720900) or Gill Yeomans (01608 737890), or visit www.quakerquest.org

Oxford Meeting will run a series on Monday evenings in the Meeting House, from *10 October to 28 November*. Would you like to help out? We need speakers, advertisers, and welcomers (on the night). It's also not too late to join the planning committee, which is one of the first things to do! To volunteer, please contact Val on valfergus@gmail.com.

Editorial Team: MARK EBDEN, PENNY ORMEROD, and BECKY RIDDELL (Joint Editing & Production); TINA LEONARD, DEBORAH FILGATE (Proofreaders); HELEN McCABE (Distributor and Subscriptions)