



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

Number 396

MARCH 2012

40 pence

### Meeting for Meeting

Do you wish you knew people in your Meeting better? Here is a great opportunity to do so while enjoying a variety of activities together and sharing some of the things we feel passionate about! All Members and Attenders of Oxford and Headington Meetings are warmly invited to 'Meeting for Meeting' on Saturday, 19 May from 10 am to 5 pm at St Margaret's Community Institute, Polstead Road, OX2 6TW.

The day is designed to build our community, to give spiritual inspiration and deepen our Friendships; and simply to enjoy being together on a Spring day. There will be several opportunities for discussion, and for getting acquainted in small groups, and, at mid-morning, three short talks from different speakers about things they are passionate about.

We will have a celebratory bring-and-share lunch together. In the afternoon there will be a choice of shared activities, including artwork, singing, creative writing and a deep conversation group.

This will be followed by a period of worship-sharing on the themes of the day; and we will end with circle dancing. We hope *everyone* will come, and look forward to welcoming you! Please bring a

festive dish to share over lunch. If you would like to offer any kind of help with the day – e.g. serving morning coffee or helping with one of the afternoon activities, and for further information – please contact: **Naomi Morris**: 07533 278598, nai\_84@hotmail.com, **Tina Leonard**: 01865 557464, tina.leonard3@gmail.com, **Becky Riddell**: 07779 646653, bexriddell@gmail.com.

### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Perhaps more wonderful still is the way in which beauty breaks through. It breaks through not only at a few highly organised points, it breaks through almost everywhere. Even the minutest things reveal it as well as do the sublimest things, like the stars. Whatever one sees through the microscope, a bit of mould for example, is charged with beauty. Everything from a dewdrop to Mount Shasta is the bearer of beauty. And yet beauty has no function, no utility. Its value is intrinsic, not extrinsic. It is its own excuse for being. It greases no wheels, it bakes no puddings. It is a gift of sheer grace, a gratuitous largesse. It must imply behind things a Spirit that enjoys beauty for its own sake and that floods the world everywhere with it. Wherever it can break through, it does break through, and our joy in it shows that we are in some sense kindred to the giver and revealer of it.

**QF&P 26.32 Rufus Jones, 1920**

*Thanks to Isobel Sutherland for choosing and reading this from the copy of QF&P presented to her last October at our All-Age Worship.*

**Deadline for contributions to the April 2012 issue: noon, Friday 23 March**

*Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org), and items for the calendar on the back page can be emailed to [lukesamuelmartin@gmail.com](mailto:lukesamuelmartin@gmail.com). Paper copy can be left in one of the editors' pigeonholes at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

## British Quakers and Refugees from Fascism



Sculpture by Frank Meisler

Between 1933 and 1941, British Quakers established a powerful network of support for refugees fleeing fascism. The support was largely based around the Quaker International Centres in Barcelona,

Vienna, Paris and Berlin, and mobilised networks of Quaker relief workers across Europe.

In March 1933, a Germany Emergency Committee was established under the auspices of London Yearly Meeting in response to the increasing persecution of Jews and left-wing activists in Germany. Friends objected to the denominational nature of relief work, and wanted to support those for whom there was no existing relief structure. This resulted in help being primarily offered to *mischling* (part-Jews) and left-wing activists. A 'rest-home' was set up in Bad Pyrmont, campaigns to release those imprisoned unfairly were established, and repeated entreaties to senior German politicians were made.

Relief efforts escalated during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), when British Friends raised tens of thousands of pounds to establish milk canteens in Barcelona. Working closely with the National Joint Committee and the International Save the Children Union, Quakers were also integral to the 1937 evacuation of 4,000 Basque children to Britain, where many were welcomed into Quaker families and schools.

The Spanish Civil War represented a turning point in Quaker relief work. Friends recognised that fascism posed such an immediate threat to the safety of those it persecuted that they began to encourage people to emigrate where possible. Quaker families in Britain were encouraged to welcome a refugee into their homes, either as a guest, or to work as a maid, cook or chauffeur. The Quaker International Centres across Europe acted as refugee advice bureaux, provided funds, and facilitated the completion of complex visa forms.

This work with refugees culminated in the *kindertransport* which was organised by Jewish

and Quaker networks from 1938-39 and remains the largest immigration of child refugees in British history. A joint delegation of Quaker and Jewish leaders persuaded the Home Secretary to allow the immigration of 10,000 unaccompanied children from Germany and Austria, provided they would not be a drain on the public purse. The administrative and financial complexities of this project were staggering, and it is a testament to the effectiveness of Quaker networks.

One former kindertransport refugee, now in her eighties and a practising Quaker, recalls, "No-one wanted us. Even the British government was not interested." There were fewer than 30,000 Friends in Britain in the 1930s, but of the approximately 70,000 refugees who found refuge in Britain, at least 20,000 were directly supported by Quakers. This serves as a testimonial to the power of faith in action, and underlines the significance of research into Quaker work.

I am a postgraduate researcher at the University of Sussex. I would like to hear from anyone with memories, stories or documentation about Quaker work with refugees in the 1930s. Please email [R.Holmes@Sussex.ac.uk](mailto:R.Holmes@Sussex.ac.uk) or write to Rose Holmes, Arts B120, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RH.

Rose Holmes

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## Asylum Monologues

The theatre company Ice and Fire will be presenting an account of the UK's asylum system through the words of those who have experienced it.



Ice and Fire explores human-rights stories through performance to make real and relevant the impact of human rights on our everyday lives: a dedicated space to explore and understand stories that are often passed over or ignored.

Ice and Fire was shortlisted in 2011 for the Liberty Human Rights Arts Award. The performance takes place at the Grove Auditorium, Magdalen College, at 7 pm on Thursday 1 March.

Tickets £5/£3.50 concessions – on the door and at Turl Street kitchen.

Janet Toye

## Introducing Young Adults at Oxford Meeting



**Luke Martin,**  
talking to Tanya Garland

I was born in Bangor, Northern Ireland. My parents worked, one as a midwife and the other as a primary school teacher. When I was six my dad decided to become a

Presbyterian minister so we moved to Vancouver, Canada, where Dad studied Theology at a school called Regent College, part of the University of British Columbia.

Vancouver was incredible. At that point there were five children: I was the eldest, and the youngest were six-month-old twins (later there were two more children). I was struck by the cultural variety in my new school – Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims.

We had very little money and towards the end of our time we moved to an island just off the Vancouver coastline. The advantage of Bowen Island was free accommodation (from a lovely couple); my father commuted to Vancouver by ferry. I hated school on the Island so my parents took James and me away for home schooling. This only lasted for a few days, after which we amused ourselves watching TV, fishing at the docks, or pestering the locals. When I was eight we returned to Northern Ireland, and to our previous primary school. James was quickly put up a year as he was very far ahead of his classmates, but my progress had slowed down. Arriving back to Primary 4, even the lowest reading group was too high a standard and the teacher formed a new reading group comprised of me alone. My teacher scared me. Only when I changed school again did my progress improve and when I took the 11+ exam (abolished in 2009) I was battling over the top marks with one of my friends.

Dad got his first church in Ballymoney, a small rural northern town. To begin with my brothers and sisters found it very difficult to understand the people's dialect (Ulster Scots), hence we made fun of it. In time we grew to appreciate the accent and

often spoke it amongst ourselves because of its comedic brilliance.

At thirteen I began to think more deeply about my life and it was at this time that I discovered C.S. Lewis. His writing excited me, and I can remember reading *Mere Christianity* while walking down the corridors in school between classes. I suppose I was aware that I needed help to be good, and it was for that reason I turned to Christianity. My interest in Theology continued to develop (my dad's study provided material for me to work through) and of course I read my bible. I had spiritual experiences too, which I am now rather sceptical about. Dramatically, at seventeen, I had a crisis of faith. For reasons too complex to go into, I first became very disillusioned with the church I was a part of, and then proceeded to doubt my own faith, which led to a rapid dive into existential crisis and despair.

Since then, I have worked as a hospital cleaner, and volunteered for a charity in Southern India (four and a half months) and completed two Theology degrees – one at Bristol and a Masters in Ethics at Keble, Oxford. I am now 23 and studying Philosophy by distance learning through the University of London, which will hopefully lead to a doctorate back in Oxford.

Since I was seventeen I've been through different phases, but have eventually returned to Christian theism. I believe there is a God... or rather, when I reflect on my life, on the world, on the importance I put on things and people, on the moral convictions that we hold etc. I think there must be more to this world than chairs and trees and skin and bones. I think there must be something else – something that puts value on people and gives an explanation to why we, in our better moments, value others – something that explains the intense strength of relationships that can be born between people and the devastation that accompanies the breaking of such relationships through divorce or death. We must value others because something else, bigger and higher than us, values them and us and holds relationality with such high significance. These things make me believe in something other than ourselves. I have thrown my lot in with Christianity, rather than some other form of religion, for further reasons.

*Continued from page 3, column 2*

My current struggle is two-fold. Firstly, when I decided to move from a vague agnosticism, (a hesitant theism), to belief in the truths of Christianity, I bought into much more. I became part of a tradition which has many embarrassing faces and I'm left struggling with many complex questions. The cynic can sit on the fence, criticise and tear down. But when one belongs to a tradition one must engage, think through and struggle with the baggage and the intellectual and emotional complexity that accompanies the tradition.

Secondly, whilst I think that Christianity has a good shot at being true, at an intellectual level at least, I struggle to understand what it can mean to me personally. How on earth could a God relate to me? There are several different answers to this but I have decided to do a doctorate on the subject to try and gain some understanding.

*Luke is Assistant Warden of Oxford Meeting.*



## **The Gift That's Hardest to Accept**

Have you ever turned away the gift of unconditional love from someone close to you? Rebuffed an attempt to give you love, comfort and affection offered, literally, with open arms? I have and I'm not proud of it. In the silence of a recent Meeting for Worship, however, I found myself moved to consider why I had acted as I did. It certainly wasn't because I didn't want the love I was being offered. At the end of a day made uncomfortable by a trivial but well-stewed squabble, I was yearning for love.

But there was something that stopped me from accepting; in fact, there was something that made it impossible for me to accept. It wasn't easy to work out what that something was but, in the silence, I came to know the answer. To accept unconditional love means giving submission in return. When you accept love, the time for playing games is over. It's time to swallow your pride and, yes, consider it possible that you may have been mistaken. That's not necessarily easy, at least not for me. When I've spent hours of effort building myself up into a state of not-so-righteous

indignation and developing a premium-quality sulk, I find it difficult to let go and really, truly to consider it possible that I may have been mistaken all along. That was why I couldn't accept the love that was offered; that was why my instinct was to continue playing the silly games that I'd almost unconsciously constructed to showcase an inconsequential grievance.

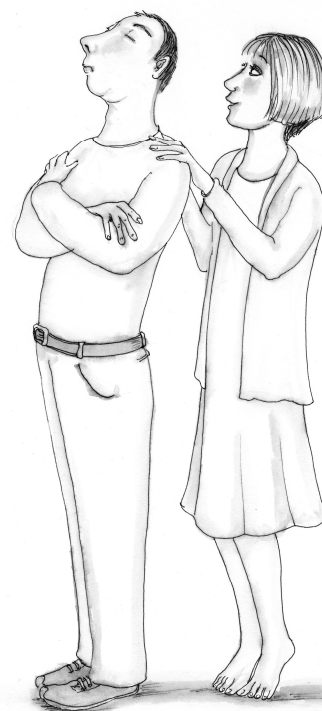
I hope that I've learned from this experience, that the lesson learned in the silence will stay with me, and that I will have the resolve to let it shape my future actions.

However, my thoughts didn't stop there. If I found it so easy to turn away the sincerely offered love of someone close to me, could it mean that I am doing the same thing with the love offered by God? Am I finding it impossible to submit to Him? Am I instead playing silly games as a way of avoiding God's love and, therefore, God's purpose for me?

Friends, I can't answer these questions but I sincerely hope and believe that as I become more involved with the Quaker faith, the answers – and their implications – will become clearer to me. In the meantime, I have at least come to understand that the gift that's hardest to accept is unconditional love, even though it's the gift that offers the greatest rewards.

**Keith Wilson**

*Illustration by Sue Mynall*



## A Legacy from Leonard

Over recent months, some changes have gradually been taking place in the Meeting House (MH) and in the seventeenth century house, 43 St Giles. You may have noticed new tiling in the toilets, for instance, but you may not have seen the improvements in the MH kitchen. Much is invisible but is very important for our comfort, such as the generous layer of insulation on the walls and ceiling, and under the warm cork tiles on the floor. No more chill, no more condensation! Other developments you will not have seen unless you happened to walk through the MH kitchen. It has been transformed with a splendid set of white cupboards and shelves for mugs and plates, and large drawers for cutlery. Also a pair of shining stainless steel sinks and taps has replaced the ancient shabby sinks and wooden draining boards. Particularly pleasing are the wall tiles, in cream, pale blue and warm terracotta red, randomised so that they are not arranged in any obvious pattern. The tiles mysteriously manage to have a special character of simplicity, honesty and charm, which accords well with our beautiful Meeting House and its flavour of the 'arts and crafts style'.

Members of Oxford Meeting owe this transformation to the kindness of Leonard and Peggy Heeks. Leonard died recently, and he left a generous legacy to the Meeting which has made these improvements possible. Leonard loved kitchens, and we believe he would rejoice to see us there, busily preparing and serving tea, coffee and food for the many gatherings, large and small, which are held here.

We warmly remember Leonard and his gentle and affectionate presence, and also his love of classical music. One particular memory is of musical evenings held in the Heeks's sitting room. These were arranged jointly with Peter Stark, another Friend no longer with us but warmly remembered. They would select records from their own large collections, and put them together into integrated concerts for Friends to listen to. Leonard would write short, interesting commentaries on the music and the composers, out of the formidable knowledge he had acquired in the course of running a Music Shop in Reading, before he and Peggy came to live in Oxford.

## Woodbrooke News

There are plenty of new things to celebrate at our Quaker Study Centre.

*New brochure for 2012:* now on display in the lobby.

*New initiatives:* Young Adult leadership Programme, of special interest to Young Friends groups. Online retreats.



*New venues:* some courses are being held at regional centres; others are being held at Swarthmore Hall, Cumbria, a building with long-standing Quaker associations, as the home of Margaret Fell and George Fox.

*New building:* funds are needed to build a (much-needed) garden lounge. This will be an informal social area, facing the lawns. I hope that Oxford Meeting will wish to support this project, but cheques from individuals are also welcome, payable to Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

*New tutors:* in 2012 Woodbrooke will be offering 170 courses. It will draw on a pool of over 180 Associate Tutors, including the following local Oxford Friends:

- **Roger Cullen:** 27-29 February, 'Understanding Conflict'.
- **Val Ferguson:** 16-18 March, a weekend exploring with Geoffrey Durham his anthology *The Spirit of the Quakers*.
- **Roger Cullen and Peggy Heeks:** 4-6 December, 'Finding the Life Narrative'.

For more information contact **Peggy Heeks**, Woodbrooke Correspondent to Oxford Meeting.



# Fridays with Friends

In the Garden Room at FMH  
7 for 7:30 pm

## 'Spirit, Culture and the Brain'

Friday 16 March

The dominant way of thinking in our culture is a technocratic one, aimed at identifying and solving problems. It overshadows more tentative and wide-ranging approaches to life which, while less focussed, may be more open to 'new light from wherever it may come'. Religious experience cannot always be analysed and explained. Does that make it less true or less real?

A book which came out two or three years ago provides a new standpoint from which to consider these two ways of thinking. *The Master and his Emissary* by Iain McGilchrist examines research into the brain, especially that relating to the differences between the right and left hemispheres and the relationship between them, and relates this to the development of Western culture. I think it throws light on our present situation. The title of the book comes from a story about a ruler (the master) who trusts his representatives (emissaries) to help him rule his domain. One of the emissaries eventually becomes powerful enough to usurp the master's role, with disastrous results for the domain as a whole. I'll be presenting the ideas in the book at 'Friday with Friends' on 16 March. Do come along and join in what I hope will be a lively discussion.

**Jeanne Warren**

## 'Cultivate Oxford'

Friday 30 March

A couple of people from the Cultivate Oxford Team ([www.cultivateoxford.org](http://www.cultivateoxford.org)) will talk about their plans for getting more local food into Oxford, and about how we can get involved in the co-operative – either through their community share offer or by becoming customers or volunteers.

**Sandra Figgess**



# QUAKERS AT

## THE SUNDAY TIMES OXFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

### Life, Death & Other Grown-Up Subjects

6:30-7:45 pm, Saturday 24 March.

Christ Church, Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, £5.

Oxford Friend **Sally Nicholls** will join three other award-winning authors of young-adult fiction to discuss how writers tackle some of the life and death issues when writing for the young. Sally is author of the life-affirming, tear-jerking *Ways to Live Forever* and of a new historical novel set at the time of the Black Death, *All Fall Down*.



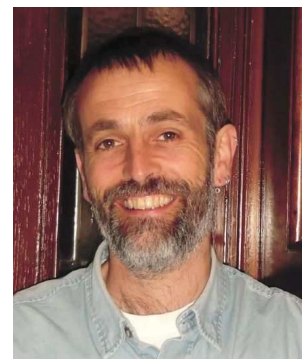
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### Quakers: A Very Short Introduction

5:15-5:30 pm, Tuesday 27 March.

Christ Church Meadows, Blackwell's Marquee Bookshop. Free entry.

**Ben Pink Dandelion**, director of the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies at the University of Birmingham, places Quakerism in the wider religious picture and outlines what the future may hold for the group. He looks at the origins and history of the Quakers: how they emerged from the social unrest of the English Civil War, and how they have since gone on to have an influence way beyond their numbers.





### Thoughts on Life

Life is precious	Guard it
Life is a challenge	Meet it
Life is tense	Ease it
Life is sweet	Taste it
Life is love	Kiss it
Life is promise	Keep it
Life is god	Worship it
Life is pleasure	Enjoy it
Life is rough	Smooth it
Life is duty	Do it
Life is <i>life</i>	Live it

Selected by the Friends Fellowship of Healing

## Northern Cross

Join an ecumenical pilgrimage to Holy Island from 31 March to 8 April. A small group of Christians from diverse traditions will gather for a week of walking, fellowship and prayer. Whatever your age, experience or walking ability there is a leg for you. For more information:

[www.NorthernCross.co.uk](http://www.NorthernCross.co.uk)



## Meetings and Notices

### New Noticeboards at FMH

You will have noticed the new organised layout of the Noticeboards at FMH. If new notices need to go on display, please place them in the wire basket labelled 'Notices for the Boards', which is kept on top of the pigeon holes. They will be put up by our wonderful Noticeboards team: **Ron Hillier, Matt Godwin, Dave Dight, and Luke Martin.**



### World Cleanup

This will take place from 24 March to 25 September. For information, see [www.letsdoitworld.org](http://www.letsdoitworld.org)

### London Friends Programmed Meeting

This occurs on the third Sunday of each month, at 2 pm in Friends House. I attended in February and enjoyed meeting a number of Kenyans. (Kenya is hosting the next Friends World Committee for Consultation, in April.) Do get in touch if you'd like to know more.



**Mark Ebden**, [mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk)

### Gathering for those in OX1

All Friends who live in OX1 are invited to meet in FMH on Saturday 5 May from 2 - 3:30 pm. We'll have read beforehand a pamphlet for discussion, called *Matthew 18: Wisdom For Living In Community*. Please ask for a copy of the pamphlet and other details.

**Peggy Heeks and Mark Ebden**,  
[mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk); 01865 283391

## CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2012

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Thursday 1	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Sunday 18	11 am	Friendly Bible Study
Friday 2	1 - 2 pm	Women's World Day of Prayer (see below)	Wednesday 21	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sunday 4	11 am	Friendly Bible Study	Thursday 22	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults
Sunday 4	12:30 pm	MfW for Business	Friday 23	7:30 - 9:30 pm	Economic Justice Group (see below)
Thursday 8	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults	Sunday 25	11 am	Friendly Bible Study
Saturday 10	10:30 am	Area Meeting ( <i>Swindon</i> )	Sunday 25	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Sunday 11	11 am	Friendly Bible Study	Monday 26	4 - 5:30 pm	Poems in the Library
Thursday 15	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults	Friday 30	7 for 7:30 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 6)
Friday 16	7:30 - 9:30 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 6)	Saturday 31		Regional Meeting (see below)

### Bread and Roses

**Women's World Day of Prayer** will be hosted by Oxford Friends on Friday 2 March, 1-2 pm, and Berks & Oxon **Regional Meeting** on Saturday 31 March. We will be providing refreshments/teas on both these occasions, and would welcome contributions from Friends. Thank you.



**Ursula Kneisel**

### Economic Justice Group

There will be a meeting on Friday **23 March** from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in the Garden Room. We will continue to study and promote action to reduce tax evasion and the bonus culture. We also hope to discuss various methods to relieve the current economic crisis including the 'Tobin tax', green strategies for growth, ethical investment and business methods.

**Dennis Price**

### 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.

*Forty-Three* is available online, at [www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter](http://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.

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