



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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A Ministry of Welcoming

When I first went to Meeting for Worship at HMP Grendon, I was very struck by the way that the prisoners, on entering the chapel where the Meeting is held, shook hands with everyone already in the room. This image has stayed with me and influenced my own ways of greeting others. I would go so far to say that if I had not had that experience at Grendon I would not have agreed to join the welcoming rota.

For most of my life I had seen 'being welcomed' as a potential intrusion into individual choice. When attending places of worship, for example, I would prefer to slink in and get started on the worship. I saw 'being welcomed' as a public assumption of my agreement with doctrine, or a public assumption about my spiritual need. I once attended a *marae* (a Maori community meeting hall) in New Zealand where visitors had to enter by slinking along the wall in an invisible fashion until it was time to make the ritual verbal challenge. That way of entering suited me very well – it assures the safety both of the visitor and the visited and also offers the structure of ritual participation. 'Belonging' is ritually achieved through very clear steps and processes rather than a random conversation with someone whose job it is to shake your hand. The handshaking at Grendon changed my mind. There is nothing random about a moment of individual attention between two people.

When I took over teaching a class at a local school last term, I thought hard about how to make sure they felt welcome in my classroom. The class contained many children whose previous experience of school might have been rather negative. I decided to greet each child individually, giving them my name, asking for their names, using their names while shaking their hands, and holding on to their hands until they looked me in the eyes. I am convinced that this start to the relationship was a major contribution to the positive, purposeful atmosphere that lasted all term, avoiding big upsets and negative behaviour. However, I am also aware that for some of them this was an uncomfortable and unusual experience, intruding into their normal ways of being with teachers.

Continued on page 2, column 1

From Quaker Faith and Practice

"The yearly meeting has changed from comprising mostly those born into the Society to being largely made up of newcomers. For all of us there is still a need to be 'convinced', to make the tradition our own, so that we may know the same divine life and power, and open our lives to the same transforming Truth."

From QF&P 19.60

Deadline for contributions to the March 2014 issue: noon, Friday 21 February

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 6 can be emailed to lukesamuelmartin@gmail.com. Paper copy can be left in the newsletter pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

Continued from page 1, column 2

My peak experience so far as a welcomer was standing outside on the pavement on a few bright Sunday mornings and not only welcoming those on their way to Meeting for Worship, but also smiling and greeting passers-by, particularly at the time of St Giles' Fair. I was reminded of Rabbi Lionel Blue's story, how "quite by accident, I fell into a Quaker Meeting House in St Giles, Oxford" because he had been welcomed as a passer-by, and in our Meeting House he claims he rediscovered God. During my time as welcomer, I have come to understand the role as ministry rather than a job. I don't think



I have encouraged any future rabbis in off the street, but I have a strong sense of individual expressions of the common spirit that brings us all to Meeting for Worship.

Anne Watson
(the education one)

Wardenship

As explained more fully in our letter to the Meeting on 24 January, Dave Dight has decided to resign from his position as warden as from 7 January 2014. Premises and Finance committee are putting short-term wardenship cover in place as needed. Plans for wardenship in the longer term will be discussed at Local Meeting for Worship for Business in March and April.

Judith Atkinson, Lis Burch, and Sandra Figgess

Simplicity Conference

In 2012, historian Robert Skidelsky co-authored a book called *How Much is Enough? The Love of Money and the Case for the Good Life*. On Friday **28 February** there will be a free conference on the book from 9 am in Christ Church College, organised by Oxford University's Faculty of Theology and Religion. Speakers will include Rowan Williams, John Lloyd and Martin Kettle. For details see talks.ox.ac.uk/talk/index/16201

Mark Ebdon 2

Christian Spirituality, Ecology and the Environment: Ancient Wisdom, Present Crisis

Saturday **8 March**, 10:30 am - 4 pm
St Theosevia Centre for Christian Spirituality
2 Canterbury Road, OX2 6LU

At this ecumenical study day, Esther de Waal will speak on 'St Benedict, patron saint of the environment', exploring the monastic ecological vision; Dimitri Comomos will speak on the relationship between the environment and the Eucharist; and Martin Hodson will speak on 'Responding to the global environmental crisis'.

At the Quaker Enquirers' Meeting on the testimonies of Simplicity and Sustainability on 22 January, we had a fruitful discussion on what in the planet we're currently harming the most. In closing the discussion, Alan Allport listed three examples – the climate, biodiversity, and our nitrogen cycle – which were also highlighted in a 2010 study from the Stockholm Resilience Centre. On 8 March, Martin Hodson will cover these three 'planetary boundaries' and participants will explore "what can be done about them at individual, community, national and international levels, and what the Christian response might be to this crisis".

The day is free for students and costs £5 for all others on the door. For more information, visit www.theosevia.org/studydays.html

Mark Ebdon

Errata

Copies of the new Book of Members & Attenders are still available in the warden's office. Contact details of some Oxford Friends have been found to be inaccurate but errata are now available, in the same office. All are welcome to pick up a free copy.

Reminder

Please submit your articles and notices to the address newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, so that Becky, Penny, and Mark receive your contribution, thank you. Also, Mark plans to be offline for most of his holidays in Ontario from 27 February to 31 July.

BPM

A Source of Hope

A Czech woman of about twenty years old, immediately before entering the gas chamber at Auschwitz, handed a sheaf of papers to one of the superintending *kapos* in which were three poems she had written. These are the only poems written in the 'family camp' of the Theresienstadt Jews which survived the flames of Auschwitz. 'I Would Sooner Perish' is one of them and is the most remarkable testimony against bloody revenge and the violence of war that I have ever read. Is it not somehow a source of hope for Quaker values? It was translated from the Czech by Gerald Turner and appears on pp. 54-55 of Otto Dov Kulka, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* (2013) which sets out the whole story of the poems and of Auschwitz II-Birkenau and of the Prague Jews who were sent there.

Stephen Yeo



I Would Sooner Perish

I know: there are grand words
for which one may die.
Those words enkindle
and calm is cowardice
when they call out to the throng
beneath regimental colours.

But whoever knows the old mothers
left on their own
and the children without fathers
believes nothing they say.

I know: there are great deeds
and they require sacrifices.
I know: there are heroic deeds
used to hallow
the gains of purposeless wars
in lengthy truces.

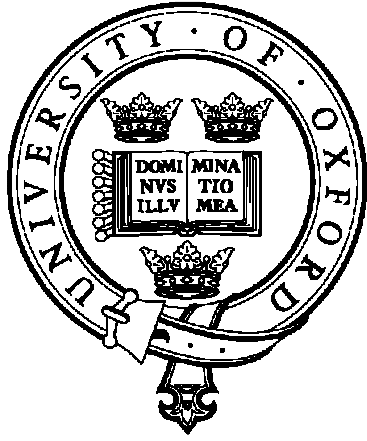
But whoever saw from afar
ruined cathedrals
and smashed cities aflame
will not believe them any more.

I know: there are great men
with claims to immortality.
They have inscribed themselves upon the ages
with their blood;
And there are more than enough of them
in the cemeteries of every land
in the shade of honourable linden trees.

But whoever has seen
beneath the bloodied sword
the wounded writhe in agony,
knows them even better.

I know: I am a small, wretched
and possibly despicable runt.
I know: these words of mine
are a dangerous poison
that can envenom
your high-flown song.

And yet I would sooner perish
with your spittle on my face,
I'd sooner die a coward
than have blood on my hands.



University Lectures

Here are a few of this term's lectures at the University of Oxford; some are intended for specialists, and some for a general audience. For details, do a text search on the lecture title in *The Gazette*:

<http://tinyurl.com/LecturesJan>

- *The presence of the Trinity within us: knowing and loving God* (**29 January**, 5 pm)
 - *When reporters cross the line...with governments over wars* (**31 January**, 5 pm)
 - *The prospects for conflict and peace in the Taiwan Strait* (**31 January**, 5 pm)
 - *Rethinking borders and conflict resolution in Israel/Palestine* (**3 February**, 5 pm)
 - *Geography, inequality and Oxford* (**3 February**, 5 pm; booking required)
 - *Is the global financial system safe?* (Andrew Haldane from the Bank of England; **4 February**, 3:30 pm; booking required)
 - *Organising the world* (Nils Brunsson, **5 February**, 6 pm)
 - *Eventful democratisation: how protests produce relations* (**18 February**, 1 pm)
 - *The Protestant Reformation and collective action* (**18 February**, 1 pm)
 - *Gandhian techniques of conflict resolution: satyagraha* (**18 February**, 2 pm)
 - *Against rescuing the victims of human trafficking* (**20 February**, 2 pm)
 - *Direct action: when and why?* (Kumi Naidoo from Greenpeace; **24 February**, 5:30 pm)
 - *Masculinity, marriage and the Bible in early-20th-century Rhodesia* (Diana Jeater, Senior Programme Leader at Woodbrooke; **27 February**, 2 pm)
 - *The better angels of our nature: a history of violence and humanity* (Steven Pinker; **27 February**, 6 pm)
 - *A look at the Global Peace Index and the Mexico Peace Index* (**6 March**, 12 pm)
 - *Post-humanitarianism: humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity* (**12 March**, 2 pm)
- Seminar/lecture series:
- *Culture, Religion and Contemporary Geopolitics* (2 pm, **28 January**, **5/18/26 February**, **4 March**). Includes 'The ethical landscapes of tomorrow's wars' and 'Kant's political theology and its implications for international relations'
 - *Oh, what a lovely war? Reconsidering 1914–18* (5 pm, **28 January**, **4/11/18/25 February**). Includes 'Was Britain right to fight?' and 'The war and English religion'
 - *Refugees Studies Public Seminars* (5 pm, **29 January**, **5/12/19/26 February**, **5/12 March**). Includes 'Asylum seekers and the criminal law' and 'Three asylum paradigms'
 - *Religion and War* (5:30 pm, 41 St Giles, **29 January**, **12/26 February**, **12 March**). Includes 'In defence of war?' and 'Gandhi on the virtues of war'
 - *The Aquinas Seminars* (4:30 pm, **30 January**, **6/13/20/27 February**, **6 March**). Includes 'Testimony in Aquinas'
 - *Social Policy series* (5 pm, **30 January**, **6/13/20/27 February**, **5/13 March**). Includes 'Constructing unemployment: historical perspectives', and 'The politics of social policy in Britain ahead of the 2015 election'
 - *Internationalism and Empire: British Dilemmas, 1919–39* (5 pm, **31 January**, **7/14/21/28 February**, **7 March**). Includes 'The chimera of colonial appeasement'
 - *Natural Capital seminars* (5 pm, **5/12/19/26 February**, **5/12 March**). Includes 'Sustainability and growth'
 - *Sociology seminars* (5 pm, **5/12/19/26 February**). Includes 'Welfare states and health inequalities' and 'Living precariously in the UK: housing, insecurity and ill-health'
 - *Seminars on Science and Religion* (8:30 pm, **13/27 February**, **13 March**). Includes 'Divine action and modern science' and 'Does the universe need God?'

Wage Peace

Wage peace with your breath.

Breathe in firemen and rubble,
breathe out whole buildings
and flocks of redwing blackbirds.

Breathe in terrorists and breathe out sleeping
children
and freshly mown fields.

Breathe in confusion and breathe out maple trees.

Breathe in the fallen
and breathe out lifelong friendships intact.

Wage peace with your listening:
hearing sirens, pray loud.

Remember your tools:
flower seeds, clothes pins, clean rivers.

Make soup.
Play music, learn the word for thank you in three
languages.
Learn to knit, and make a hat.

Think of chaos as dancing raspberries,
imagine grief as the outbreath of beauty
or the gesture of fish.

Swim for the other side.

Wage peace.

Never has the world seemed so fresh and
precious.

Have a cup of tea and rejoice.
Act as if armistice has already arrived.
Don't wait another minute.

Mary Oliver (chosen by Yvonne Dixon)



from Monday **24 February**
to Sunday **9 March**

www.fairtrade.org.uk

Meetings and Notices

Meeting House Party

Saturday 1 February
6 to 9 pm

Everyone is invited to a party to celebrate our newly refurbished Meeting House and our shared witness to sustainability: a bring-and-share feast followed by a programme of entertainments. There will be games for children; we hope families with young children will stay till 8 pm.

Please bring your vegetarian dish to share to the kitchen by 5:45 pm. Facilities for re-heating food will be limited.

We need volunteers to move the Meeting House benches from 5:15 pm on Saturday. Please contact us with offers of help.

Alan Allport, Jo Dobry and Val Ferguson



All-Age Worship

This will be held on Sunday **2 February** at 11 am, on the theme of Gifts. Friends are encouraged to think and respond to this theme in its widest sense and – if so moved – bring or share a gift or several to Meeting that day.

Virginia Allport



Calling Illustrators of all Abilities

This is your newsletter and we need you to be part of it. We love having Friendly-generated rather than computer-generated illustrations for your articles. Please email us at newsletter@oxfordquakers.org if you're interested in joining our bank of artists. You don't have to be Monet – simple sketches are welcome.

BPM



CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2014

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Saturday 1	6-9 pm	Meeting House Party – see page 5	Saturday 15	10:30 am	Quaker Quilting
Sunday 2	11 am	All-age worship – see page 5	Monday 17	7:30 pm	Young Adult Friends
Sunday 2	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 19	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Monday 3	7:30 pm	Young Adult Friends	Sunday 23	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Saturday 8	12 pm	ActionAWE event <i>(in Reading)</i> – see below	Monday 24	4-6 pm	Poems in the library
Monday 10	7:30 pm	Young Adult Friends	Monday 24	7:30 pm	Young Adult Friends
Thursday 13	6 pm	History lecture <i>(at the Museum)</i> – see below	Friday 28	9 am – 4 pm	Conference <i>(Christ Church College)</i> – see page 2
Bible study often occurs in the Short Room on Sundays at 11 am.			For more events, see 'University Lectures' on page 4.		

Friend in Print

Stephen Yeo's 'The Metropolis of
Death' appeared on page 12 of
The Friend on 24 January.

On Thursday **13 February** at 6 pm, Diarmaid MacCulloch will speak on 'Re-examining the history of sexuality in the Christian West', in Oxford's Museum of Natural History. Booking is recommended: tinyurl.com/LGBT2014

New Fiction Featuring Quakers

- *The Last Runaway*, Tracy Chevalier (ISBN: 9780007350353)
- *Of Love and Other Wars*, Sophie Hardach (9781849833004)
- *The Invention of Wings*, Sue Monk Kidd (9781472212757)
- *The Purchase*, Linda Spalding (9781908737519)

Becky Riddell

Since 2009, the UN has observed **20 February** as the **World Day of Social Justice**. Ban Ki-moon's message last year was, "As we seek to build the world we want, let us intensify our efforts to achieve a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable development path built on dialogue, transparency and social justice."

www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

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

Wednesdays at 12:15 pm at 43 St Giles
(followed by tea and coffee)

Headington LM worships on Sundays at 10 am
at The Priory, 85 Old High Street, OX3 9HT

OPENING TIMES (43 ST GILES)

Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm

Report an International War Crime at Reading Police Station

Police should investigate the crimes that Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) factories at Aldermaston and Burghfield are planning and preparing for. 'ActionAWE' will gather outside Reading Police Station, Castle Street, RG1 7TH, at noon on Saturday **8 February**. Details: tinyurl.com/AWE8feb

Sarah Lasenby

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