



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### Caring Matters Most

Oxford Quaker Meeting is underpinned by a series of structures which are designed to build a sense of community as well as responding to individual needs. Accordingly, we appoint Elders, focused on the spiritual life of the Meeting, and Overseers, who concentrate on the pastoral needs.

Things are on the move, though. The 2014 Swarthmore lecture was a breakthrough, with its radical proposals for simplifying structures. There are similar moves throughout the Area Meeting, with a general pattern emerging of combining spiritual and pastoral care. In Oxford, we have not yet reached that stage, but are working collaboratively with Elders on many issues. Recently the Overseers have decided to change their rather patronising name and have become the Pastoral Care Group.

At our July meeting we tried to establish our priorities, going through the 31 responsibilities listed in *Quaker Faith & Practice*. I do recommend that you do this too, just to see what this group is tasked to do. You may well conclude that it is difficult for one small group of Friends to carry out all these responsibilities. One advantage of being a large Meeting is that we have separate committees to work with particular people – for example, children. Some responsibilities are marked 'joint with Elders', and so are shared.

In July we agreed that a strong priority is to foster community events that lead to the development of friendship, and to work on developing our knowledge of the people living in our geographic area.

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### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Isolation of spirit ... comes to most – perhaps all of us – at one time or another. There are times in our lives when the tides of faith seem far out, times of dryness, times when we do not feel the comfort and guidance of God's hand. At such times we may stay away from meeting feeling that it does not give us the spiritual help that we need; or it may be that we continue to go and are to outward appearance actively engaged on the meeting's life and business, while, within, we feel the agonies of isolation and the longing for light to lighten our darkness. I can think with thankfulness of Friends who have brought light to my darkness – perhaps a single sentence, a friendly letter, a walk on the downs: their help was perhaps given unconsciously, but it was because they were sensitive to God's leadings that they were able to do it. Do we seek to be the channels of God's love and caring? 'Caring matters most.'

Edward H Milligan, 1951

**QF&P 21.20**

**Deadline for contributions to the September 2015 issue: noon, Wednesday 19 August**

*Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org), and items for the calendar on page 4 can be emailed to [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org). Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any editor.*

*For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

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At present there is a vacancy in our team but, before increasing our numbers, we are exploring more effective ways of working. This requires everyone in the Meeting participating, watching out for one another, letting us know about illness or a change in circumstances, and reaching out to support others.

To make our work more manageable, we divide the areas of Oxford and beyond between us, as follows:

- OX1: Peggy Heeks and Carol Saker;
- OX2 North: Jill Green and Elizabeth Johnston;
- OX2 West: Anne H. Watson;
- OX3 Beth Tomkinson;
- OX4 Kath Wilson

These Friends are your immediate point of contact. There's a lot of anxiety about responding to pastoral needs. Perhaps we should care more and worry less.

**Jill Green and Peggy Heeks**  
Co-convenors, Pastoral Care Group

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## **Visit from a Travelling American Friend**

On Friday 26 June Friends met in the Garden Room with Debbie Humphries, an American Friend travelling in the ministry, who was accompanied by Eleanor Godway from her support group in her Meeting in Connecticut. Debbie's leading to travel among Friends had developed over a period of some 15 years. In the past eight years she has visited many of the Local Meetings in New England Yearly Meeting. This is her first journey to British Friends.

We met in worship and then worship sharing, during which Debbie told us how she saw her role. Quakerism, she said, had much to offer to the world but it needed strengthening. She had grown up a Mormon. What she found in Quakerism was a willingness to accept uncertainty. Love replaced belief as the prime requirement. Quakers had some of the structures needed to support this way of living, such as our method of local decision-making. Debbie said that she did not come to a Meeting with a specific message but as a listening presence, a catalyst, drawing out from the Meeting its own concerns and questions.

In response to contributions from various people, Debbie told us more of her own spiritual journey. I was struck by what she said about her yearlong pondering of the story of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah was told by God not to be afraid, because he would always be safe. Yet his life was not an easy one. What did God's safety mean? It meant two things, Debbie concluded: first, there will always be a path of integrity, and second, you won't be alone.

When asked about the problem of falling numbers, she noted that the churches in the USA that are growing fastest are the ones that demand the most from their members. It is asking more, not less that leads people to see a reason for joining.

**Jeanne Warren**

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## **Complimentary Well-being Sessions**

The benefits of receiving well-being coaching include greater self-confidence, increased energy and enthusiasm, improved work-life balance, enhanced physical and emotional well-being, and the achievement of life ambitions. For those interested in receiving well-being coaching, I am currently offering complimentary taster sessions until **31 August**.



Places are limited so, if you'd like to attend one of these sessions, please e-mail me, Henrietta, at [oxfordlifedesign@outlook.com](mailto:oxfordlifedesign@outlook.com) as soon as possible to book.

**Henrietta Nagy**  
[www.oxfordlifedesign.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlifedesign.co.uk)

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## **London Literary Walk: Borough to Clerkenwell**

Christians Aware (CA) is an organisation with which I have had a long and happy association. CA members are meeting at 11:00 am at Borough Station (Northern Line) on Saturday 17 October for a literary walk exploring places associated with Charles Dickens, John Keats, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Samuel Pepys, John Donne, Ben Jonson, Agatha Christie and Karl Marx. Lunch will be at a 'suitable hostelry.'

For more information on the walk, contact [amanda@christiansaware.co.uk](mailto:amanda@christiansaware.co.uk) or 0116 254 0770.

**Yvonne Dixon**

## Demonstrating for a Better Way at AWE

Last month for the first time we used this lovely banner made by Anthea Richards and held up by her and Mavis Howard. We are very pleased to have this banner to show to the AWE workers that some people believe there is a better way to live without nuclear weapons. Around 6,000 people work in AWE so there is a constant stream of cars driving past us. We find it uplifting to put up peace flags and hold up placards for the workers to see. At first they avoided looking but now many of them do look so we feel this is something worth doing. Any Friends who would like to join us are welcome. Please contact me.

Sarah Lasenby  
01865 725991



### Exploring Quaker Faith and Practice

In June I went to Woodbrooke for a course on exploring *Quaker Faith & Practice*. The 2015 Yearly Meeting didn't actually agree that the book should be revised, but already a committee has been appointed, with Helen Rowlands as secretary. Over the weekend we were quite clear that the present book is too long, too heavy, and that the church government sections should be separate – as they were previously. New material, reflecting more recent insights and issues is needed.

It was with great interest that we examined books from other Yearly Meetings, and from earlier times. What spoke particularly to our condition in the present edition? There is already an index of well-loved passages, but over the weekend we made a list of other favourites. It was a surprise to find 20.06, by Philip Rack, coming top. Here is an extract.

“Some among us have a clear sense of what is right and wrong – for themselves personally if not for everyone else. They have a reassuring certitude and steadiness which can serve as a reference point...Please be patient, those of you who have found a rock to stand on, with those of us who haven't...We live on the wave's edge where sea, sand and sky are all mixed up together: we are tossed head over heels in the surf, catching only occasional glimpses of any fixed horizon. Some of us stay there from choice because it is exciting and it feels like the right place to be.”

I'm writing this in case you would like to try a similar exercise, or in case it might form part of the programme for our next Quiet Day on 12 December.

Peggy Heeks

### Friends in Print

The Observer, 26.07.15, Comment, lead letter by Jeanne Warren

# CALENDAR FOR AUGUST 2015

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Sunday 2	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 19	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Wednesday 12	11:00 am	Poetry Group	Sunday 30	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Monday 17	4:00 pm	Poems in the Library	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends

## Let's Welcome Cecilia!

We're sure that Friends will want to extend a warm welcome to Cecilia Stinton, who is joining Oxford Meeting as our new part-time administrative assistant. Cecilia



graduated in History of Art from St Hilda's College and has extensive practical experience in administration.

Cecilia has already started work in the office with Deb and Anbara, and the office team will be working together throughout the traditionally quiet month of August in preparation for what is expected to be a very busy autumn.

as with photographs of Quaker happenings. If you find that information on the website is out of date in relation to groups or events that you are responsible for, please email us with more up to date information.

Remember also that we have a set of email addresses that allow you to email Friends with particular responsibilities in the Meeting, even if you don't know who currently holds the post. I keep the list stuck on my book of members and attenders. These addresses are:

- [clerk@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:clerk@oxfordquakers.org)
- [correspondence@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:correspondence@oxfordquakers.org)
- [elders@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:elders@oxfordquakers.org)
- [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org)
- [notices@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:notices@oxfordquakers.org)
- [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org)
- [oxfap@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:oxfap@oxfordquakers.org)
- [pcg@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:pcg@oxfordquakers.org) (Pastoral Care Group)
- [treasury@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:treasury@oxfordquakers.org)
- [webmaster@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:webmaster@oxfordquakers.org)

**Sandra Figgess**

## Help Make Our Meeting's Website Lively!

Have you had a look at our Meeting's website recently? It now boasts a banner with the blue and white pattern that has become our Meeting's logo. There are plenty of photographs and access to a wide range of information about Quakers locally and nationally that is useful to Friends as well as to newcomers.

You can find present and past copies of the newsletter and information about forthcoming events such as Fridays with Friends, as well as about groups that meet regularly. If you email [webmaster@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:webmaster@oxfordquakers.org) and ask for the password you can also access minutes and reports from previous business meetings.

You can also contribute to keeping our website lively and up to date by emailing [webmaster@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:webmaster@oxfordquakers.org) with early notice of events that could figure on the website as well

### 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

*Editorial Team: BECKY RIDDELL and KEITH WILSON  
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(Distributor and Subscriptions)*