



Number 440 (Online Version)

Forty-Three

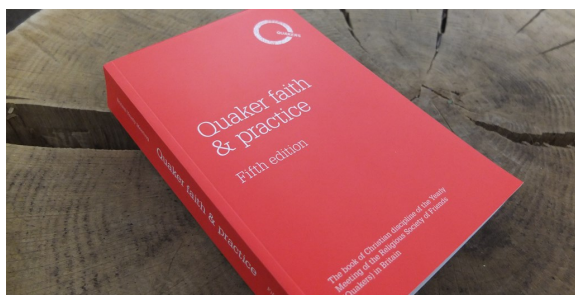
Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles · Oxford · OX1 3LW

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2015

40 pence

Reading *Quaker Faith & Practice*



Our Book of Discipline is under review. All Friends are asked by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group to join in reading the current *Quaker Faith and Practice*.

As we are a large and diverse meeting, this can take place in many different ways:

- Individually
- Self-chosen reading groups
- Occasional events organised by Elders: Friday with Friends and Saturday workshops (these will start in March 2016)
- Online reading and commentary group (to be arranged)
- Reading groups brought together through signing a list in the entrance to number 43 (starts in December: Friends on Duty will put people in touch with each other)
- Occasional pre-meeting and post-Meeting groups on Sundays and other regular Meeting days (anyone can organise one: ask Anne Watson (Elder) if you need help)

- Readings from relevant F&P chapters in MfW on the first Sunday of each month
- Other events such as the 'Exploring Quakerism' series of meetings and Worship Sharing on 22 November.

The Revision Preparation Group has published a calendar to support the Reading. Oxford is already behind in their calendar so Elders have suggested an alternative catch-up calendar (see below) and will include reminders in the Notices and Newsletter from time to time.

Further information and support can be found at <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>

Suggested calendar for Reading *Quaker faith and practice* (Oxford version)

- December 2015 – Chapter 2: Approaches to God – worship and prayer and Chapter 21: Personal journey

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From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of itself occasionally.

QF&P 21.25 - Gerald Priestland, 1977

Deadline for contributions to the January 2015 issue: noon, Wednesday 16 December

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 4 can be emailed to office@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor.

For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

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- January 2016 – Chapter 23: Social responsibility
- February – Chapter 3: General counsel on church affairs
- March – Chapter 5: Other Quaker groupings and Chapter 6: Yearly Meeting and Chapter 10: Belonging to a Quaker meeting
- April – Chapter 11: Membership and Chapter 12: Caring for one another and Chapter 17: Quaker funerals and memorial meetings
- May – Chapter 16: Quaker marriage procedure and Chapter 22: Close relationships
- June – Chapter 13: Varieties of religious service and Chapter 20: Living faithfully today
- July – Chapter 26: Reflections
- August – Chapter 7: Meeting for Sufferings and Chapter 15: Trusteeship
- September – Chapter 8: The central managed work and Chapter 28: Sharing the Quaker experience
- October – Chapter 1: Advices and Queries and Chapter 4: Area meetings and local meetings
- November – Chapter 24: Our peace testimony
- December – Chapter 27: Unity and diversity
- January 2017 – Chapter 14: Stewardship of our material resources and Chapter 25: Unity of creation
- February – Chapter 9: Beyond Britain Yearly Meeting and Chapter 18: Faithful lives
- March – Chapter 19: Openings and Chapter 29: Leadings
- April – Introduction and Note on the history of the text and Concluding questions

Quakers and Climate Action

Tuesday 15 December, 7:00 for 7:30 pm

US Quaker climate activist Eileen Flanagan will talk about how and why her Quakerism led her to take on the power of one of the largest banks in the US, successfully pushing them to stop financing mountaintop removal coal mining – and how she ended up handcuffing herself to the White House fence.

Eileen Flanagan is the author of three books. Her latest book, *Renewable: One Woman's Search for Simplicity, Faithfulness, and Hope*, tells the story of her midlife realisation that she was not living

up to her youthful ideals, and how she reoriented her life to work for environmental justice. Her previous book, *The Wisdom to Know the Difference*, was endorsed by the Dalai Lama.



For over twenty-two years she has found spiritual community among Quakers. Eileen lives with her husband and two children in Philadelphia, where she serves as clerk

of the board of Earth Quaker Action Team, a small grassroots group that challenged the bank and won. This meeting is arranged by Oxford Quaker SEE Justice Group. Don't miss this inspiring event!

Alan Allport

Drones, Robots and the Ethics of Armed Conflict in the 21st Century

An event was recently held, by the University of Oxford, to discuss the ethical consequences of the automation of warfare. There were two speakers, one a professional philosopher and the other a military consultant, formerly a member of the armed forces. The contrast between the two perspectives was as illuminating as the content of each presentation.

However on most points the speakers were in agreement. Both pointed out the long history of remote weapons (a spear is a remote dagger) and the preference for combatants to locate themselves away from harm. There are already military robots, e.g. for bomb disposal. The ethical issues arise from the introduction of autonomy and the removal of human agency. Here again there are precedents: animals have been used in war, which have also reduced human agency. Drugs have been administered to troops, affecting judgement, and finally military training is intended to provide instinctive reactions on the battlefield. What is new is the possibility of autonomous machines that may develop 'emergent behaviour' and can develop in unpredictable ways.

2 Regarding the contrast in perspectives, the military consultant regarded the issue as primarily a data

analysis issue, with modern technologies generating large volumes of data that no human could process and where action may be required almost immediately. Given the human is relying on machine-generated analysis in decision making, the question posed was the value of having a human 'in the loop', affecting decisions as opposed to 'out of the loop' (a compromise is the 'on the loop, where the machine is autonomous however there is a potential for human override). He also pointed out that the performance of human troops leaves a lot to be desired, for example United Nations 'blue helmet' have abused the populations they are meant to protect. A comment from the audience noted the parallels with the ethical debate on autonomous vehicles, which may be safer than a human driver but create concerns over 'responsibility gaps' if harm is caused.

This brings us to the philosopher's view, where the emphasis was on morality and justice; the relevant body of knowledge is Just War Theory but he noted the minor interest paid to the topic of weapons, other than weapons of mass destruction. He also noted the distinction between operational and moral autonomy (i.e. the decision by a person whether to act) and that it was the issues of moral autonomy that were important here. However, he took the view there was not a problem with a 'responsibility gap' as responsibility (and criminal liability) could be traced to those who initially deployed the systems. Rather, the issue was one of risk management – are unacceptable risks being introduced to warfare? However this is a 'conditional argument', namely asking if the use of robots is morally right or wrong, depending on the merits of the case. There is an alternative 'intrinsic argument' namely that the removal of human agency in the taking of life is an intrinsic wrong, regardless of the benefits that may accrue from better targeting and reduced collateral damage, or even reducing actions by errant human soldiers.

Quakers are likely to be drawn to the latter view, given their general opposition to the taking of human life, but nonetheless they need to consider that the new technologies may also lead to fewer indiscriminate deaths.

Rupert Booth 3

Friday with Friends

Launch of the booklet and exhibition – 'Quaker Belief in Action: Conscientious Objectors in the First and Second World Wars' On 4 December, 7:00 for 7:30 until 9:00 pm.

There will be an exhibition which accompanies the booklet, telling the stories by theme – what happened to conscientious objectors in their family lives, their employment, their health and friendships.

Quaker belief in action
conscientious objectors
in the First and Second World Wars



Editors
Sue Smith and Marieke Faber Clarke

2016 is the anniversary of the introduction of compulsory military conscription. 1916 saw the struggle to establish the right of individuals to refuse military service required by the state. Many Quakers were among the objectors,

but there were many others who objected for other political and social reasons.

There will be a short contribution from the editor and contributors, about the context of social reform which inspired so many at the time, the struggle for just and humane treatment of those who refused to fight, and the experience of COs and their families.

We will celebrate with non-alcoholic bubbly, juice, and some nibbles! Copies of the booklet will be available, donations are invited. All are welcome.

Sue Smith

Bread and Roses

The next Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting will take place at Oxford Meeting House on Saturday 9 January, when we on the committee will serve a warm lunch and tea to about 40-45 Members. We always aim to offer a good variety of food, and would therefore be grateful if you could please contact me about the choice of savoury dish, dessert or cake you wish to bring on the day.

Ursula Kneisel, u_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 2015

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 6	9:30 am	Fairtrade Fair (see below)	Tuesday 15	7:30 pm	Quakers and Climate Action (see page 2)
	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 16	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Saturday 12	8:30 am	Garden Retreat Day Including Winter Poems (see below)	Friday 25	10:45 am	Christmas Day Meeting
Monday 14	4:00 pm	Poems in the Library (see below)	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends

Poems in and out of the Library

Saturday 12 December: during the Garden Retreat Day, there will be a session open to everyone, to bring-and-share our favourite 'winter poems'.

Monday 14 December: from 4:00 until 6:00 pm the December Poems in the Library will focus on poems anyone brings by Louis Macneice and Cecil Day Lewis, and/or any other poems anyone wants to share, plus Christmas pudding.

Advance notice. On **Saturday 20 February** in the Meeting House in the evening, Philip Gross will read from his latest work, alongside some Back Room Poets who he will have had a Masterclass with earlier in the day. More details to follow.

Stephen Yeo
stephen.yeo@phoncoop.coop

Twenty Thousand Welcomes: an Advent vigil for refugees at St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey

Tuesday 8 December, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

All are welcome for all or part of the time. There will be speakers, silence, meditation, discussion and engagement. The event will be structured around three main themed sessions:

- Re-member, re-member: exodus and exile (10:00 to 12:00)
- Blown by the winds: conflict, climate change and current pressure (12:00 to 2:00)
- Consider yourselves at home (2:00 to 4:00)
- Epilogue (4:00 to 4:30)

All are invited afterwards to attend evensong at 5:00 pm in the Abbey.



Christmas Fairtrade Market Stall

At the Meeting House on Friday, 6 December from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm there will a Fairtrade stall with clothes, candles, small toys, cards and food from all over the world. There will also be an opportunity for people to get together and place an order for food and goods from Suma Fairtrade Wholesalers. Please come and take a look!

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

Mondays at 7:00 pm Young Adult Friends
(followed by baked potato supper)

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

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