



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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Managing the Meeting House: a fresh approach

When I came to the interview for the job as Manager of Oxford Meeting I remember wanting to make a statement by coming only with a bowl of fruit – organic, natural and fresh. Wisely, I considered that I may be mistaken. Instead I presented a mix of words and images all about making a fresh start, opportunities for growth and offering a taste of Quakerism to all who enter the building for whatever purpose. Central to this was the welcome we give to all – I have certainly been cheered by the welcome that Oxford Meeting can give to newcomers.

In the course of the next few months I will be encouraging you to join me in taking a fresh look at what we have to offer to the wider community we serve. For me this happens on all levels, from cleaning the surfaces (spring cleaning the parts we haven't reached for a while!) to assessing what supermarkets would call "our offer". What are the qualities that make our House distinctive as a place of Worship, a venue for conferences, quiet space for study, contemplation or therapy? How can we be a centre for the community – distinctively Quaker-fresh-open-organic and local? Perhaps you can help me with that thinking? On our volunteering morning just after Christmas a group of Friends joined in and made great progress with

a clean-up and sort out *and* shared some fresh homemade pumpkin and ginger soup too!

For me, in the next few months, the days will be full, whether it's checking the loos, answering the phone, booking or invoicing groups, attempting to answer all those knotty questions from passers-by like "so what do Quakers believe?"; to me it's all practical ministry. I see no distinction between our personal and professional selves – it's all of a piece.

I firmly believe what we have to offer should be the best it can be. We are fortunate to have a wonderful Meeting House (our home) which we offer to share with others who also make it their home for worship, for spiritual nourishment and for practical support. The support is mutual and the letting of rooms an ethical business which enables us, over time, to use those funds for the benefit of Quaker work. To work in this environment should be both a privilege and a

Continued on page 2, column 1

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?

Advices and Queries, 41

Deadline for contributions to the March 2015 issue: noon, Wednesday 18 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 oxfordquakers@gmail.com. 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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pleasure if we are paid, and especially for the volunteers who are unpaid. I hope many of you will want to join our team of "Friends on Duty" to give a couple of hours a week or a month learning a little more about the way the building works and welcoming those who come to share it with us and giving them a glimpse of the Quaker way.

In the Quaker Faith and Practice advice on wardenship 13.32 it states: "We appear to offer our facilities but in fact we offer our love". It sounds like a pretty good offer to me.

Deb Arrowsmith

The Peace Scarf Wrapping up Trident

More than twenty people from Oxfordshire went to help "walk the scarf" round the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in Whitehall, past Big Ben and around Portcullis House. Then the walk proceeded along the Embankment and back to the main entrance to the MoD in Horse Guards Avenue. Subsequently, a rally was held in Palace Yard.



This was well reported online but there was little on the TV. The Government has said it doesn't think it will have a proper vote in 2016 just an internal (infernally) decision. This is despite their promise in 2007 for there to be another chance to vote. The main decision to go ahead and build the new system will be taken early in 2016. Please ask your MP about this.

Sarah Lasenby 2

Heart, Head and Hands

Richard Thompson, a trustee of Quaker Voluntary Action (QVA), will present a Friday with Friends evening on 20 February. This article provides an introduction. A longer version has been submitted for publication in The Friend.

Paul Parker reminds us (*The Friend*, 2 January) of the Swarthmore Lecture challenge to be a 'do-it-together faith.' I do so much agree. We live in interesting times, a world situation showing the worst and the best of the human experiment. Fortunately, within Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM), there is a lot happening, with initiatives from Quaker Life, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) and many others. All drive home the point that The Quaker Way is not just about ideas but also experience; it is essentially practical.

The Quaker Way is a stream of experience, present in all cultures, which values the individual human experience of the divine, a sense of the oneness of the whole world and that of God in everyone – "practical" – the essential expression of our mysticism in action for peace, social action and sustainability. QVA brings this vital blend of activities together, in our thinking, feeling and physical action. I see the huge potential of the QVA model for our Meetings.

The QVA model can be summed up by the words balance, wholeness and conviviality. It has proved a remarkable way of developing a sense of community. The future of the Society of Friends will be vibrant if Local and Area Meetings use it. The model has the following features:

- A group chooses an activity everyone is keen on
- Inclusion of spiritual reflection
- Emphasis is on Friends working together
- Engaging physical activity, such as gardening, t'ai chi, patchwork or sketching
- Inclusion of travel to some interesting place nearby
- Having meals together, something fundamental here!
- Conviviality

We are planning a number of day conferences in 2015 which will use the QVA model to promote working together in the Quaker community in activities that come from our leadings. QVA also wishes to share this experience by running workshops in Local and Area Meetings.

Out of this, QVA could produce a simple guide on developing community, using the experience of our courses. Not a top-down approach; we build from the roots up rather than from the top-down. We empower each other to take our own steps to strengthen our own communities. We develop resilience.

An idea we may explore is 'commissioning.' This involves creating or bringing forward project work for Quaker meetings or groups that has a wider relevance and significance than to the local community carrying out the work.

A West African Sufi, Cerno Bokar, wrote about plenitude and originality. We Quakers have the key to these in our meetings together. Plenitude or "wholeness" comes from combining the thinking, the spiritual and the physical to create together. Originality means, 'returning to our origin.' Our form of worship gives us the possibility of sharing this creativity, an essential part of being human.

Richard Thompson

Does living adventurously include examining the state of our carrier bags?



Quakers have a saying: "A simple life, freely chosen, is a source of strength." I would say that this simplicity enables us to be more flexible, more resourceful, more appreciative of what we have, even happier! The list goes on.

In March last year I attended my first conference run by apdo (Association of Professional Declutterers and Organisers) UK. It has motivated me to continue developing a new business providing professional organising services ('decluttering') to people in Oxford. Many Members and Attenders have encouraged me with their insights and experience, and I'm immensely grateful. Developing a service that is genuinely helpful and authentic is an amazing journey and 'it takes a village to raise a business.'

The clients I've worked with so far are all intelligent, creative and energetic people, who are organised to a certain degree. My work involves looking at their 'challenging disorganisation' (different from extreme hoarding) and finding ways to give away unwanted items, recycle items, reuse them, or come back to appreciating them. There's always plenty left! Some of this is about introducing new ways of sticking to routines, or breaking down big goals into smaller ones. I am always aware of the challenges of the abundant society we live in, and rather than criticise or make people feel guilty, I'm more interested in how they want to proceed. As St Ignatius said, the glory of God is a human being who is fully alive.

Some Professional Organisers (POs) draw a comparison between the rise in having too much to cope with and obesity. We're so tuned in to make-do-and-mend from the 50s that we've barely noticed the 24-hour shopping opportunities online, a two-month-long Christmas or the flood of increasingly sophisticated marketing that sustains and expands our shopping impulses. This consumption is not great for the planet either. For many POs, the drive to declutter is linked to a sense of our environmental responsibility.

A client is probably well aware of what specific areas they need help with, but is held back from addressing them by a lack of time, a sense of powerlessness, or not really knowing how to start. I help with my two hands, my interest, and in being present in the room to keep people on track (and not retreat). I'm a real believer that this work is worth it. I'm prepared to take time, and this clearing process does take time. I take advantage of apdo's training and peer network too and that provides lots of ideas.

Identifying connections to my Quaker practice is difficult because it is already so embedded in my Quaker childhood. I suppose you could say the altruism involved in decluttering, the awareness of others, the care about what and how we consume, and the question of why you are here, the responsibility to the natural world...all of these are Quaker themes. I'd like to thank the Meeting again for its support.

Trio Watson

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A Different Way To Fast for Lent

Church Action on Poverty is an ecumenical (and increasingly, interfaith) charity which has been campaigning since the Thatcher Government era on behalf of the poor in Britain: at local level, by encouraging self-help groups and charity action, and at national level, by informed campaigning in parliament. This year, it's asking supporters to fundraise through a sponsored Lenten fast. This is not by the traditional 'giving up something' but by undertaking to live for three days in Holy Week (29 March to 4 April) on a pre-purchased 'food parcel' based on a typical food bank parcel for one adult or two children.

Your food parcel	
A typical three-day parcel for one adult or two children would contain:	
One carton of UHT milk	One packet of pasta sauce or cook-in sauce
500g of sugar	One or two pot noodles or cup-soups
One carton of tea, coffee or hot chocolate	One jar of jam or marmalade, or two jars of meat spreads
Two tins of soup	One box of cereal or oats
Two tins of baked beans	One tin of fruit
One tin of spaghetti	One tin of pudding
One tin of tomatoes	One tin of custard or evaporated milk
Two tins of vegetables	One packet of biscuits or snacks
One packet of potato product or instant mash	Fresh bread
One tin of meat product	
One tin of fish product	
One bag of dried pasta or rice	

Or to put it another way, a food budget of approximately £2.50 a day. This is rather different from the list Asylum Welcome gives (based on clients' requests) which includes cooking oil and basic toiletries (including disposable nappies). Church Action's office suggested one could use extras from one's store cupboard; but how could a client who was sofa-surfing or moving from one temporary bedsit to another accumulate stores? How do people manage special diet needs such as low-salt, diabetic, gluten-free, lactose-free, veggie/vegan? How does one achieve a five-a-day on processed food only, never mind the sheer bland monotony (and lack of fibre) of processed tastes? Imagine trudging home from your nearest food bank carrying that 'typical' bagful. And do the products I contribute to the food bank box in Sainsbury's do anything to raise the spirits of the recipient/s? There is plenty to think about – including, please, sponsoring my small effort!

Patricia Wright

For more on food banks see www.trusselltrust.org – and to participate yourself in the Lenten Fast visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/fast/resource

University Lectures

This is a list of public lectures that may be of interest to you. Some are intended for specialists and some for a general audience. For details, do a text search on the lecture title in The Gazette: tinyurl.com/lect2015

- *Securing justice in a complex world* (5 pm, Friday 13 February; by Helena Kennedy)
- *A difficult distance: Israeli poetry about Gaza* (5 pm, Tuesday 17 February; booking recommended)
- *The Bible, the British and the First World War* (5 pm, Monday 23 February)
- *Moral Forces: the search for integrity in professional military development* (4 pm, Tuesday 24 February)
- *Beautiful facts: secularism, religion and the desire for text* (5 pm, Wednesday 25 February)
- *Four crises of democracy* (5 pm, Thursday 26 February)
- *The Earth as literary critic: climate change and the limits of imagination* (5 pm, Friday 20 March)
- *On liberty* by Oxford Brookes' chancellor (4:30 for 5 pm, Friday 10 April)

Here are two seminar series:

- *Creating a climate for change: what's at stake in global climate negotiations* (5 pm, each Thursday until 12 March; booking recommended)
- A seminar series by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (1 pm, each Monday until 9 March)

P.S. Karen Armstrong will be speaking on the topic of Fields of blood: Religion and the history of violence, at 5 pm on Friday 20 February, in Mansfield College, Mansfield Road, OX1 3TF. The details of this talk are not at the link above.

Mark Ebdon

Change of Email Address

The email address oxfordpm@yahoo.co.uk has been changed to oxfordquakers@gmail.com. This account is being used by our non-resident manager, Deb Arrowsmith, and our resident assistant, Anbara Khalidi.

Meetings and Notices

Environment and Economic Justice Group

Wednesday 18 February at 7:00pm for 7:30pm
in the Library

The main item will concern the preparation for the Vigil Against Economic Inequality to be held on the afternoon of **Saturday 14 March** in Oxford, part of a national Quaker action. We will also discuss fossil fuel divestment in the light of the divestment action in Oxford on the previous weekend the 13 - 14 February. All are welcome so please come along and help us.

Dennis Price

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

Fridays with Friends

In the Garden Room at FMH
The session will start at
7 for 7:30 pm

Friday 20 February:
'Heart, Head and Hand'

Led by Richard Thompson — for an
introduction see the article on page 2.

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.

Contributions Earnestly Sought!

Currently, our repository of material for future issues of *Forty-Three* is empty. We need your help to replenish it. Please consider writing an article for us. It can be about any topic of interest to Oxford Quakers. If you have an idea and would like to discuss it, please come talk to Becky or Keith.

Film Evening

Sunday 22 February, 6:00 pm in the Garden Room, for
11 - 18 year olds

We are still debating which film to show but it will be a fun evening with popcorn!

Contact **Gwen Da Sousa Correa** for more Information.

*Editorial Team: BECKY RIDDELL and KEITH WILSON
(Joint Editing & Production);
ANBARA KHALIDI and DEB ARROWSMITH
(Distributor and Subscriptions)*

CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2015

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 1	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 18	7:00pm	Environment and Economic Justice Group (see page 5)
Monday 2	6:30 pm	Elders and Pastoral Care Group	Friday 20	7:00 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 2)
Wednesday 4	7:00 pm	Enquirers' Evening (see Nov. issue, p.2)	Sunday 22	12:30 6:00 pm	Bring-and-share lunch Film Evening (see p. 5)
Wednesday 11	11:00 am - 12 noon	Poetry Group	Monday 23	4:00 pm– 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library
Wednesday 18	1:45 pm - 2:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends

Are you interested in the general election?

The general election will be held on 7 May 2015. Many Quakers are starting to think about how their meeting could use the opportunity to talk about the issues they care passionately about.

Our faith can compel us to speak out. We work on a wide range of issues, some of which are likely to become politically contentious ahead of the election. We feel that we have something to offer to the debate, and we encourage all Quakers to be involved in political discussions with parliamentary candidates.



Resources

Quakers in Britain is preparing resources for local and area meetings. These will be:

A Quaker election guide

This booklet introduces key concerns, suggests questions to ask candidates, and contains ideas for activism during the general election. It's available in late January 2015. A copy will be sent to every meeting, with extra copies available through the Quaker Bookshop. It will also be available to download from this website.

A list of briefings

Interested in finding out more about a specific issue? This website will include a list of more detailed briefings – from small booklets to larger information packs. They'll all be downloadable, and some of the larger information packs will also be available through the Quaker Bookshop.

Webinars

A series of videos and web-based seminars will be uploaded to this website for you to watch. Each one will focus on a particular concern, providing a personal perspective and more information.

Hustings

Could your meeting hold a hustings? Hustings are an opportunity for members of the public to put questions to candidates – a chance to decide which person you'd like to represent your constituency.

[Adapted from: www.quaker.org.uk/quaker-vote]