



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

Number 436 (Online Version)

JULY 2015

40 pence

### Clearness

Meeting for Worship is one of our most valuable inheritances from George Fox and our Quaker forbears. In a Meeting, we try to be gathered into a sense of unity which, for me at least, includes the sensation that there is something – someone – out there that is not just us. Whatever our theology, we will have heard the words of Jesus: when two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be also. This is what makes Meetings for Worship for Business, and the discernment which we try to achieve, different from any secular business practice.

If you look at sections 12.22 to 12.26, and even 12.21, of *Quaker Faith and Practice*, you will see that the Meeting process can be used for occasions when one or more individuals, or even a body of Friends, need to look for guidance or discernment over some particular issue. We can call these Meetings for Clearness. If the matter in hand is complex or the answer needed is not simply yes or no, they can become Threshing Meetings.

Both traditionally and now, the most obvious matters for such Meetings are key personal events such as deciding to apply for membership, for supporting a couple who intend to marry, and for testing the validity of a concern. A concern may be about a change of career, or action to meet a local need, or a political message to be voiced by

Quakers locally or generally – of course this doesn't mean party politics. You might have a Threshing Meeting to prepare for a Business Meeting on how best to repair or renovate your Meeting House.

The procedures aren't set in stone. Depending on need, a person may propose such a meeting, or elders/overseers (however described) may suggest it, or it may be set up by the Meeting as a whole. The Friends (or even non-Friends) to take part may be invited by the subject person; this is not normally a matter for a formal nominations process. The number attending the meeting may be only a handful – indeed, more than about 12

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### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

When work does not turn out as was expected or intended, do not let it depress you. If you are working from a right motive, and doing your best under the guidance of a loving Father in heaven, your work cannot be and is not failure...

Remember that the Lord never lays work upon His people that He does not give them strength or ability to perform, and if it please Him in the working out of His great purposes that life shall be sacrificed or cut short in the midst of the work, be assured that the work will not permanently suffer from such a cause.

Joseph John Armistead, 1913

**QF&P 20.04**

**Deadline for contributions to the August 2015 issue: noon, Friday 22 July**

*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 6 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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could be hard to manage. A clerk or convenor will steer the proceedings, and a minute or detailed note may or may not be needed. The essence is for the Worship pattern to be maintained, with silences not only at the beginning and end but between each spoken contribution. It may be decided in advance that those attending only speak once, which is a great help when there are combative presences or topics.

In Oxford we expect to offer Meetings for Clearness for membership applications and for weddings. I myself have twice entered such Meetings (elsewhere, on different topics) with my mind made up, only to find the opposite answer clearly and rightly discerned.

If you want to know more, ask an Elder – you can tell who they are by the way they mark the end of Meeting for Worship.

**Richard Seebohm**

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## **Being Alive Being Aware!**

Almost at the height of midsummer – some may think at the *most* growing and alive point of the year – we hosted a day retreat for 40 Friends and friends of Friends in and around the garden. How we were blessed with the weather – it rained all day and it didn't seem to matter a jot! Hardy folk from across the country came to stop, look and listen to the world around them, paint or draw, simply enjoy the peace of the place and sit silently in the library (or garden reading room as it became).

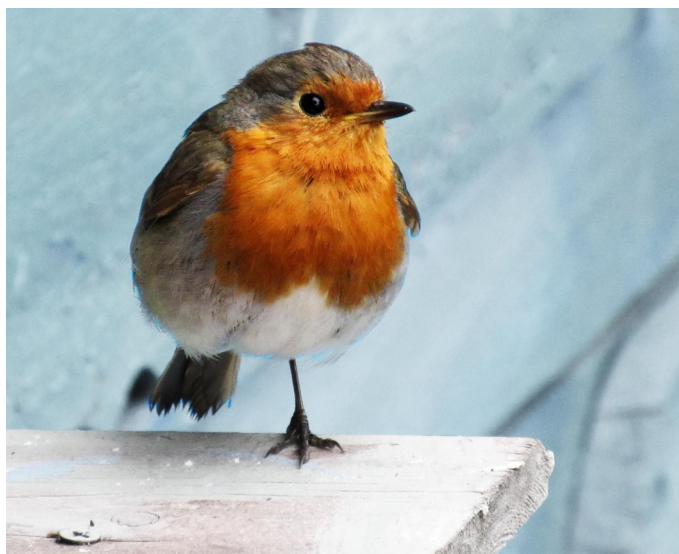
We learned more of birds and bees. Playing the recorded song of a goldcrest to its passing namesake caused a frenzy of interest delighting us all except perhaps the chap looking for its elusive mate. Friends of the Earth 'Creating a Buzz' project returned to encourage us to find homes for bees in places of worship and discovered we have a small colony in one of our walls; perhaps we might encourage them into a hive?

An hour of wonderful shared poetry on the theme of being alive passed too quickly – as these summer moments will. We must make the most of them, gathering rosebuds while we may.

Naturally we were well looked after with wonderful summer cooking; nourished in mind, body and spirit. We dipped our toes into the dark matter of spiritual compost and tripped the light (or dark) fantastic dancing around a heap of the stuff. Watching friends dance like worms or beetles to a Portuguese samba is something few of us will forget – such fun!

We raised around £400 for Oxford Friends Action on Poverty, our own garden fund and the Quaker Gardens Project (QGP). QGP aims to bring Quaker gardens and burial grounds back to the heart of each Meeting, using their beauty and natural habitats to speak of our condition – not just to each other but the communities we serve.

The team that put the day together feels our premises make the perfect place to stage day retreats and meet the growing need for space and time, peace and quiet to explore more deeply a variety of subjects and peaceful pursuits. Thus enlivened, invigorated and made aware (now is that a blackbird – or perhaps a song thrush, John?) we are already gently planning a very different retreat day for winter.



Put Saturday 12 December in your calendar or diary if you want pre-Christmas peace, a chance to delve deeper into compost, touch the deeper aspects of living and dying, possibly dance around a bonfire, and certainly leave with a smile into the dark, your heart and soul warmed in the company of Friends and friends of Friends. Many, many thanks for the gifts of the Friends who took part and allowed us all to enjoy this new experience in our garden.

**Deb Arrowsmith**

## Peace, Peacemaking and Islam



We attended this talk by Sheikh Ramzy in the beautiful 1675 Meeting House in Adderbury on the 21 June. It was completely full of people interested to hear what he would say and to have the chance to see this lovely old place.

Sheikh Ramzy started his talk by introducing us to the idea that peace is embedded in the Arabic greeting – Salaam – and therefore in Islam, as ‘peace be upon you’ is the very basis of all greetings and blessings.

He told us that he is one of the advisors to the government on helping ministers understand the context of the conflict in the Levant. It came across that he is devoted to building understanding and peace – his great love for his faith was very clear.

As it was Ramadan, Sheikh Ramzy struggled to keep his voice loud and everyone felt for him as he could not take water to help his dry throat – but he assured us that he was happy to be fasting and honouring the command of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him).

There was a short opportunity for questions before tea, though some Quakers stayed behind to continue their discussions with Sheikh Ramzy. We asked him what he would say to a member of ISIS were they here with us – but found his answer simplistic and wondered whether he was reluctant to engage in a debate.

We were very glad that such a peace-loving individual should be representing his faith in so

many influential places. He is certainly a diplomatic man with a talent for making friends and influencing people. We didn’t however come away with the impression that he would be prepared to argue with and try influence those advocating and carrying out violence in the name of Islam.

**Hoonie Feltham and Hugh Palmer**

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## Homelessness in Oxford

A talk by Lesley Dewhurst, Chief Executive of Oxford Homeless Pathways, on **Sunday 5 July** at 11:00 am at Blackfriars Priory, St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LY.



How many people are homeless? What are the causes of homelessness in Oxford? What is the impact of homelessness on individuals and families? Who are most likely to fall into destitution and homelessness and why? It is getting worse? How well is the local council dealing with the homelessness crisis? What changes in government policy are necessary to make it easier for local communities effectively to address homelessness?

**Blackfriars Poverty in Britain Group**

[www.blackfriarspovertyinbritain.wordpress.com](http://www.blackfriarspovertyinbritain.wordpress.com)

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## SEE Justice Group

**Tuesday 7 July**, 7:00 for 7:30 pm, FMH Library

The Social, Economic and Environmental Justice Group shall discuss the various ideas for future action that were proposed at their last meeting. Everyone is welcome.

**Janet Toye**

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## Overheard at Charney

In June, Friends within the Area Meeting met for a weekend of pastoral and spiritual exploration and reflection at Charney Manor. Someone who was there overheard the following remark: “I wish Peggy were God and Deborah her secretary.”

**Anonymous**

# CALENDAR FOR JULY 2015

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 5	11:00 am	Homelessness in Oxford Blackfriars (see page 3)	Monday 13	4:00 pm	Poems in the Library (see below)
	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 15	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Tuesday 7	7:30 pm	SEE Justice Group (see page 3)	Sunday 26	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Wednesday 8	11:00 am	Poetry Group	Wednesday 29	10:30 am	Summer Coffee Party (see below)
Saturday 11	10:30 am	Area Meeting at Swindon	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends

## Summer Coffee Party

Wednesday 29 July, 10:30 am, FMH



Come and enjoy morning coffee and cakes, admire the garden, explore the library, take time to talk (and listen). Everyone in Oxford Meeting is welcome. Transport costs can be reimbursed.

The party is hosted by Oxford's Pastoral Care Group, with help from the Bread & Roses team. At 12:15 there will be a 30 minute Meeting for Worship, and you may like to stay for this.

For queries and more information, please contact me.

**Peggy Heeks**  
01865 727391

## Poems in the Library

Summer Season!

On the following Mondays, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm: 13 July, 17 August, 14 September.

All are welcome!

**Stephen Yeo**

## 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

*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. Articles and notices are very welcome to appear in the print edition only, and the same applies to calendar items.

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