



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### Confidentiality Secrecy or respect for privacy?

#### **Background**

I spent many years of my adult life keeping the secret of my attraction for my own gender to myself. This was very damaging to me and therefore to my family. I am also aware that people returning from war situations have felt bound not to share their ghastly experiences with their loved ones on their return, often leading to irretrievable fractures within their relationships, and a need to suppress the truth by turning to alcohol and drugs.

The increasing necessity of 'coming out' for gay people in this country began in 1987, when the notorious Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill was proposed. This clause, which banned the 'promotion of homosexuality in schools, by suggesting that this is normal' became law in the following year (Section 28 LG Act 1988). Friends, it became necessary for all of us gays to 'speak our truth'.

#### **Confidentiality**

These experiences of the damaging nature of secrecy inside families and communities leaves me finding the regular and blanket use of the term 'confidentiality' in our groups quite baffling and upsetting. I hope that we can reflect carefully about our use of this word.

Much more helpful in seeking to support the development of an open, trusting community would be the practice of, when discovering some particularly sad or joyful news about an individual or individuals in our midst, *always* remembering to ask how they feel about information being shared with other Friends, and how widely they want this to happen. Adopting this practice whenever good or sad news is shared with any of us seems vital to diminishing gossip, however well intentioned, or Chinese whispers that invariably become inaccurate over many sharings. We would then be empowered to pass on accurate information to our correspondence clerk for communicating the agreed details throughout our worshipping community by email, or to our notices clerk for inclusion in notices read after Meeting for Worship.

*Continued on page 2, column 1*

#### **From Quaker Faith and Practice**

Regional meetings...provide for conference and inspiration, informing themselves regularly about the service of their members and fostering spiritual support, learning and friendship. They have opportunities to consider the work of the yearly meeting, outreach and ecumenical and interfaith links and activities.

**QF&P 5.06**

**Deadline for contributions to the April 2015 issue: noon, Wednesday 18 March**

*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 [oxfordquakers@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordquakers@gmail.com). 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)*

Continued from page 1, column 2

### Conclusion

The joy of being able to be open with each other cannot be underestimated in fostering a culture of openness and trust within our whole community, bringing us closer together. My recent experience of the love and prayerful support offered to me when we shared the details of my broken leg with all the Friends in our Meeting last year, returned me to faith in the power of prayer and confirmation of love. It turned what could have been a depressing and frustrating time into a period that I have since called "my lucky break".

It seems very important that we don't adopt a one-size-fits-all mentality about this. We are all different in our need for privacy or openness, and respect for each other surely means that this is an issue which needs care and full exploration as we begin a new triennium when new pastoral care team members are beginning their service, and training events are being laid on.

Surely it is not enough to simply agree to the blanket maintenance of confidentiality to ensure that respect for each other is maintained?

Jill Green



The Prison  
Phoenix  
Trust

At Friday with Friends on **10 April**, Sam Settle will talk about the Prison Phoenix Trust (PPT). I became interested in the PPT after I had done a class with one of the Trust's yoga teachers, Sandy Chubb, a former director of the PPT.

The PPT encourages prisoners in their spiritual lives through yoga and meditation, sensitively tailored to prisoners' needs. The Trust supports prisoners and prison staff through teaching, workshops and correspondence. Books about yoga and newsletters help. I am now a volunteer with the PPT, helping to get the newsletter ready for posting to prisons throughout the UK and Ireland. There are currently 136 weekly yoga and meditation classes running in 82 UK and Irish prisons. Last year the PPT sent nearly 2,000 book packs to prisoners who wrote asking for help setting up practice in their cells.

As a volunteer I met the Director, Sam Settle – who kindly offered to talk to us about the PPT at Friday with Friends, knowing our interest in silence. Sam became Director of the PPT in 2010, having worked as a yoga co-ordinator for the Trust since 2003. A former Buddhist monk and development worker in Thailand, he is a British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) teacher and practises Zen meditation.

Recently, Oxford University Psychology Department (Drs Farias and Bilderbeck) conducted a study of the effects of yoga and meditation in a prison population. Since 1988, significant anecdotal evidence had accumulated – through letters from and conversations with prisoners – of the positive impact yoga and meditation has on their lives. Asked about their mood, stress levels, psychological distress and social behaviour, the prisoners who did the yoga and meditation course were significantly more positive. The findings of this project give reason to believe that yoga and meditation are important tools for prisoners, as is frequently seen in their correspondence, with the potential to influence their attitude and behaviour in a prison setting, as well as helping them to lead law-abiding lives after leaving prison.

Since this study, the interest and demand for these classes in prison, from prison governors and from prisoners themselves, has risen greatly. This will be a very interesting evening – don't miss it!

Anne Watson

### An Invitation

Jon Brown and Steve Hope, Jill Green and Sandra Figgess would welcome your presence at their double wedding to be held on **28 March at 3pm** followed by a bring-and-share tea-party at FMH. They ask Friends to arrive by 2:45 pm.

Contributions to the tea party would be welcome. We would also appreciate some help with the preparation of the garden room, and tidying up at the end of the afternoon. Please contact Ursula Kneisel (01865 744 540 or [u\\_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:u_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk)) about offers of food and other help.



## Quaker Vigil in Central Oxford

On **Saturday, 14 March**, 2 to 4 pm, there will be a Quaker Vigil in Cornmarket (near St Michael in the North Gate) to protest about the ever-growing economic inequality in our society, and to call for active steps to reverse it. This is Oxford's part in Quaker Equality Week, 7-15 March, and similar events are taking place around the country.

Equality is of course one of our core Quaker Testimonies, and I hope everyone associated with Oxford Quaker Meeting will be there, if they possibly can. We hope that people from other faith groups will join us.

You do not need to stay for the full two hours, if that seems too long: feel free to join the vigil for just as long as you are able.

If you intend to be there, please email me at [alan.allport@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alan.allport@psy.ox.ac.uk). We need an idea of numbers in advance (before Tuesday, 10 March please), so that we can make an appropriate number of placards. These will be important to explain to the public what our vigil is about. (You can see some of the placards at [www.quakersforequality.org.uk](http://www.quakersforequality.org.uk) by following links to 'posters'.)

Alan Allport 3

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire Regional Meeting

10:30 for 11:00 am on Saturday 21 March, FMH

### What has Meeting for Sufferings ever done for us?

This meeting has been organised in collaboration with Meeting for Sufferings (MfS). MfS is the standing representative body of Quakers in Britain, has a 'visionary and prophetic role'. What does that mean in real life? Ethel Livermore (Clerk of MfS), Peter Christy (West Scotland Area Meeting and a member of MfS) and Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, will lead us in an exploration of this long-established and vital meeting.

We will use this time together to:

- Learn about MfS: why it matters and how it works
- Strengthen the links between MfS and local Quakers
- Shape the future of MfS

MfS clerks are keen to hear from us all and will come with some questions – for instance:

- How does the representative/alternate system work in your area?
- What sort of information helps representatives and Area Meeting clerks?

If possible, please bring your copy of *Quaker Faith and Practice*.

### Programme

10:30 Hot drinks available

11:00 Worship

11:30 – 3:30 approx – Programme on MfS

12:45 approx – Lunch: please bring a sandwich

15:30 (at the latest) Regional Meeting business (appointments, etc.)

16:00 (at the latest) Tea and departures

### Friends not in formal membership are very welcome to attend Regional Meeting

It's hoped to provide children's activities, but please let the clerk of Regional Meeting (RM) know by 11 March of any children intending to attend, including their age.

Enquiries about Regional Meeting should be addressed to Robert Card, 248 Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, RG40 3PA – 07584 905819

[robert.card@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:robert.card@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

## From the Correspondence File

Here's a selection from the correspondence file kept above the library hearth. These items are also available at [www.quaker.org.uk/february-2015-lm-clerks-mailing](http://www.quaker.org.uk/february-2015-lm-clerks-mailing)

**Why Prison?** Quaker Peace & Social Witness has produced a framework for discussion to explore the purposes, effectiveness and experience of imprisonment as a response to criminal actions. It can be downloaded from [www.quaker.org.uk/ccjg-briefings](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ccjg-briefings) (Contact: Paula Harvey, 02076 631036)

**Thinking Through Threshing (14 March,** Friends House, London): Friends are invited to come think about how threshing is used and understood by Quakers in Britain today. Contact: Rhiannon Grant, 07789 120 256

**Answering God's call to universal love:** Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world (mission statement). Through various means, FWCC is connecting Friends, crossing cultures, and changing lives across our many differences and within our spiritual unity. FWCC provides a Quaker voice at the world level through its global ecumenical participation and its worldwide representation on the Quaker United Nations Committees in New York and Geneva. FWCC works both vertically serving Friends at the world level and horizontally, supporting Friends through the four section offices. FWCC connects us as Friends in our work, in our worship, and in our lives. Contact Helen Griffiths (02076 631161) or visit [www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/BYM-FWCC-Reps-letter.pdf](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/BYM-FWCC-Reps-letter.pdf)

**Val Ferguson and Mark Ebdon**

### Friends in Print

**Peggy Heeks:** 'Truth, ambiguity & stories', *Friends Quarterly*, Volume 41, No. 4.

**Stephen Yeo:** 'Towards a testament: an old Friend clears his mind', *Friends Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No.1.

**Lesley Morris:** 'Winter sestina', *the Friend*, 13 February 2015.

**Jill Green:** 'Confidentiality', *the Friend*,

## A New Educational Charity

Peter Coville is the coordinator for a new charity called ACCESS, the Abingdon Centre for a Caring, Enlightened and Sustainable Society. The aim is getting people together to discuss critical issues facing society, such as the NHS, housing, inequality, democracy, climate change and the economy. Upcoming events include:

- A workshop on climate change at 1:30 pm on Saturday, **28 February** at 11 High Street, Drayton, Abingdon, OX14 4JL. You can book online at [tinyurl.com/access28feb](http://tinyurl.com/access28feb)
- An event with Richard Wilkinson (co-author of 'The Spirit Level') discussing inequality in the UK at 1:30 pm on Saturday, **14 March**.

For more information Peter can be reached at 07887 407947 or [accessindrayton@gmail.com](mailto:accessindrayton@gmail.com).

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## Human Dimensions of Climate Change

### Living Witness Workshop Saturday, 14 March, 10 am – 4 pm, FMH

This one-day workshop is the first gathering of the new Quaker network on the Human Dimensions of Climate Change. The workshop will include opportunities to explore:

- working constructively with denial, blame, shame and guilt
- embracing difference and reconciling the value systems, worldviews and priorities of different people and groups
- developing moral community and a collective will to change

We will also consider the development of our network. Our sessions will be grounded in Quaker worship. Refreshments will be provided but please bring your own lunch.

To receive full details of the workshop, please contact me. The fee for the day is £10, which you can pay by BACS or on the door.

Do sign up to the network's e-mail list and to the Human Dimensions blog at the Living Witness website: [www.livingwitness.org.uk](http://www.livingwitness.org.uk).

**Laurie Michaelis** — [laurie@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:laurie@livingwitness.org.uk)

## How is your spiritual growth?

We often talk glibly about 'spiritual growth' as if it were measurable. Woodbrooke even has a category for courses on 'spiritual and personal growth'. Yet if we ask one another 'How much have you grown spiritually in the last year?' we see that the question doesn't tie in with the complexity of life. It assumes that life is a linear progression, but in reality we move forward, we regress, we stand still. The standing still, the contemplation and reflection are part of a whole, although often under-rated. Just as fields need to lie fallow, so we need times of rest, of consolidation. It's significant that Jesus began his teaching mission only after his time in the wilderness.

Although we may see that trying to measure spiritual growth is foolish, we do recognise that every day brings opportunities for spiritual growth – if we are open to them. In quite unexpected ways we can gain fresh insights and become aware of more loving ways to live. We should give thanks for the many ways in which we can learn: from one another, for example, from reading and from the wonders of the natural world.

Peggy Heeks

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## Calling all Elders and Members of the Pastoral Care Group

The Area Meeting (AM) is funding a weekend of exploration and reflection for Friends who have been appointed in this triennium as Elders or members of the Pastoral Care Group. The team planning the event consists of Myra Ford (Burford), Hoonie Feltham (Oxford) and Peggy Heeks (Oxford). The weekend programme has now been completed.

The AM is covering all the accommodation costs, but it is hoped that individuals will cover their transport costs. Those to whom this presents a problem should discuss their needs with one of the Pastoral Care Group. There may be scope for car sharing. The weekend begins at 4 pm on **Friday 5 June** and ends with lunch on Sunday 7 June. All accommodation is in en-suite rooms. Application forms will be sent out within the next few weeks.

Please contact one of the planning group if you have any queries.

Peggy Heeks

## Meetings and Notices

### Fridays with Friends

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

**Friday 13 March:**  
'How to Kidnap a General'

Led by Chris White.

Chris will talk about the kidnap of the German General Kreipe in Crete in 1944. Chris has edited and written part of a new book on this adventure by Patrick Leigh Fermor. While this is a story of wartime derring-do, it fittingly ends with a warm reconciliation between the General and his abductors in 1972. Chris will bring slides of photographs taken at the time along with his photographs of the route through the Cretan mountains in the present day. He also has video footage of the 1972 reconciliation.

**Friday 10 April:**  
'The Phoenix Prison Trust'  
Led by Sam Settle. See page 2 – for more information

### For your April diary

**Sunday 5 April**, the day appointed for our normal monthly Business Meeting, is Easter Sunday. In accordance with our recent practice in years when Easter falls on the first Sunday in April, Business Meeting is postponed until **Sunday 12 April** at the usual time and place.

The Clerkship Team (**Iain McLean, Lis Burch, Val Ferguson, Mark Ebdon**)

### Database Updates

If your phone number or address has changed, please let me know so I can update the Meeting's database.

**Laurie Michaelis**  
laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

# CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2015

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 1	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business Meeting	Saturday 14	10:00 am	Living Witness (see p. 4)
Monday 2	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends		7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends
Monday 9	7:00 pm	Premises and Finance	Monday 16	7:00 pm	Hustings—Wesley Memorial Hall (see below)
	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends	Wednesday 18	2:00 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Wednesday 11	11:00 am	Poetry Group	Thursday 19	10:30 am	North Oxford Elders' and Pastoral Care
	7:00 pm	Pastoral Care Group	Friday 20	7:41 — 11:50 am	Partial solar eclipse (yes really!)
	7:00 pm	Nominations	Saturday 21	11:00 am	Berks and Oxon Regional Meeting (see p. 3)
Friday 13	7:00 pm	Elders' Meeting	Monday 23	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends
	7:00 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 5)	Sunday 28	2:45 pm	Double Wedding (see p. 2)
Saturday 14	2:00 pm	Quaker Vigil in Cornmarket see p. 3	Sunday 29	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch

## Hustings

Monday 16 March, 7:00 pm

Wesley Memorial Hall, New Inn Hall Street, OX1 2DH

All the candidates from Oxford East and Oxford West Constituencies have been invited. There will be an opportunity to hear from each party and ask questions. You can raise any issue with the candidates—from the NHS and education to immigration and the economy. The issues do not have to be faith based. **Elisabeth Salisbury**

## 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

## Do you have back issues of *Forty-Three*?

In response to Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting minute 61/2013, old copies of *Forty-Three* are needed to share with archivist Marney Binns. In particular, the following gaps need filling: November/December 2004, January/October 2005, May 2006, February/March/April/May 2007, and all issues from 1994 to 2001 inclusive.

If you have any of the above, please get in touch (mebden@robots.ox.ac.uk, 01865 283391) or leave the papers in my pigeonhole. I can return the newsletters to you afterwards if you wish, or (if you seek to declutter) I can just email you the scans.

**Mark Ebdon**

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