

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 456
April 2017



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

The Homeless in Winter

On 18 March a group of people from the city centre churches met at New Road Baptist Church to hear what was going on in the homelessness sector, and to plan for the future. Currently the official street count of people sleeping rough in Oxford is 28, but the real figure is somewhere nearer 50. Lucy Faithfull House, a hostel on Speedwell Street for the homeless, closed recently with the loss of 62 beds; Simon House on Paradise Street, with 52 beds, is due to be de-commissioned; and Julian Housing, providing 'second stage' housing in Oxford and Abingdon, is losing 83 places.

A series of events meant this winter was not as lethal to the homeless community as might have been feared. The weather was milder than expected. The former car showroom in Iffley Road, taken over by homeless people, accommodated twenty at a time for six weeks and St Aldate's church opened its basement with ten beds for 27 days.

To our great disappointment the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) that Churches Together in Central Oxford (CTCO) had been planning to provide in New Road Church was never able to open because of stringent planning requirements by the Fire Department. So the

meeting on Saturday was to discuss how we might plan for something different this year, taking into account the experience of St Aldate's and centres in High Wycombe and Bracknell.

Ideally we would like to have a centre open every night, whatever the weather, for up to three months. A venue open for less than 28 days is not subject to the same requirements as one open for longer, so it would be possible to share the provision between several city churches. There was general agreement that this is what people from the churches, and many with no religious affiliation, would like to see. It was also agreed that there would be no shortage of volunteers, who would be very much needed.

The project will be taken forward by Mary Gurr, chaplain to the homeless, together with others from CTCO who are experienced in this area: the Gatehouse, the long standing drop-in centre in St Giles, was started by CTCO 25 years ago. We all felt sure that the time was right to do something about the scandalous situation that people are sleeping, and dying, on the streets of one of the richest cities in Britain.

Thank you, friends, for the money you gave to the collection for SWEP. This is held in our accounts and will prove very useful when we open our first CTCO homeless night shelter this coming winter.

Elisabeth Salisbury

Deadline for contributions to the May 2017 issue: noon, Friday 21 April 2017

*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 office@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor.
For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org*

New Internationalist: Buy into a Better Story

With fake news and nationalism on the rise, there's never been a greater need for journalism you can trust. But the information age is making it harder than ever for honest, independent media to survive.

In response, the Oxford-based *New Internationalist* magazine is adopting a new ownership model, with readers and supporters at its heart. We have launched an ambitious community share offer, which opens up ownership of our media organisation to thousands of ordinary people.

This bold move goes against the tide of accelerating media concentration and centralised ownership worldwide – no more so than in Britain, where Rupert Murdoch bid for full control of Sky just last week.

So far, it's going well. Just over three weeks after going live on Crowdfunder on 1 March, our 'Buy into a Better Story' campaign has attracted £300,000 of investment and over 1000 new owners. That's 60 per cent of the way to our all-or-nothing target of £500,000. But time is of the essence – we have less than two weeks to raise the rest.

Why such a radical step? It felt like we had to do something big. With fear and mistrust growing, there's a need for alternative, socially-conscious journalism like ours that promotes peace and constructive dialogue.

For the past 44 years, *New Internationalist* has published stories that deliver the facts, make sense of the complex, beautiful world we live in and offer bright, bold ideas for ways to create a more equal world. This is journalism that has the power to bring people together. In the wake of Brexit and Trump's victory, we thought now was the time to step up, reach more people and set ourselves on a firm financial footing.

Community share offers are a unique way for businesses with a social purpose to raise equity without compromising their mission. Unlike conventional shares, this is 'withdrawable share capital' that cannot be sold on for a profit. If things

go to plan, investors may even get interest on their investment, but the focus is more about investing in the kind of world you'd like to live in.

In return for investing, our new co-owners become custodians of our Charter, meaning that the magazine can't deviate from its founding principles without the consent of its co-owners, each of whom gets one vote, no matter how much they invest.

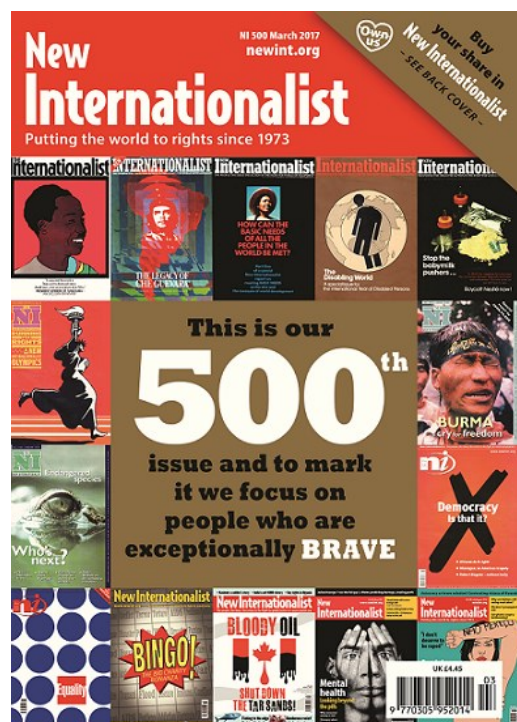
So for our new co-owners the return is a thriving *New Internationalist* publishing articles with a unique international perspective, eye-opening long-form investigations and stunning videos. This model of community ownership couldn't be more different than the 'ownership by the few' practised by most of the media.

In many ways this is a natural progression for *New Internationalist*. A workers' co-op since the 1980s, our journalism has always been a reflection of who we are and how we are run.

Join us, as we embark on our great experiment to democratise the media. You can find out more about the *New Internationalist* community share offer on the Crowdfunder page <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/new-internationalist/> www.factsandheart.org.

Join the conversation on social media with the hashtag #FactsAndHeart.

Hazel Healy, *New Internationalist* magazine



Times and Seasons

Perhaps George Fox made a mistake in abolishing 'times and seasons' (*Quaker Faith & Practice*, 27.42). The Easter and Christmas issues of *The Friend* have for years carried articles about these major events in Jesus' life, and in Oxford Meeting we celebrate 25 December with a joint Meeting and a shared meal. Lent is the season I need every year: a time of waiting and reflection, a rest from too much activity.

'Lent' comes from the Saxon word meaning March, the month when spring arrives and we feel the year turn. In Christian tradition it was a time of fasting, and in the fifth century it was lengthened to correspond to Jesus' time in the wilderness. There he was tempted to assume great power, but refused. In my childhood Lent was essentially a time of giving up: sweets for children; alcohol and entertainment for adults. We tried, in our small way, to make a sacrifice.

Now the perspective in Lent has changed. 'Forty acts of stewardship' offers something positive for each day of Lent: phoning someone whom you have neglected; visiting a lonely person; buying flowers. This is something we all can do, and I know from Lent 2016 how much these small acts of kindness meant.

Peggy Heeks

First Tuesday Group

The First Tuesday Group meets in Oxford Meeting House, 43 St Giles, on the first Tuesday (usually) of every month from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

Until now, we have been reading *Quaker Faith & Practice* following the schedule supplied by Friends House. On 9 May we will be discerning our response to the survey about our experience of this, and also we shall be planning future activities. Over the next few months we will read two books by Friends who have recently died: Helen Stevens' Swarthmore lecture, *No Extraordinary Power*, and John Punshon's book *Encounter with Silence*. Both of these can be bought from bookshop.quaker.org.uk. We invite other Friends to join us. If you would like to do so, please contact Elaine Parry by email (elaineparry@freeuk.com) or pigeonholes so we know the size of room we need.

Elaine Parry 3

QFP Readings: Where Next?

To all Reading Quaker Faith and Practice groups, and individuals who have been working towards the revision of F&P: As we come to the end of the schedule of readings, note that there is a now survey for us to respond to online. See: <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>

It asks for a reply to this very open question: *What have you learnt from the process of reading Quaker Faith and Practice?*

Responses can be individual or from a group. Since this exercise has been undertaken by several groups and individuals in Oxford Local Meeting there will be no attempt by elders to coordinate a joint response. However, articles in '43' would be very welcome.

Anne Watson

News from the Gardening Group

Geranium call out! We are re-purposing a large filing cabinet as a planter. It is in front of the Garden Room. We are planning to fill it with geraniums of all different colours and types. If you have any geraniums you can donate, please do. Please leave them in the area outside the kitchen window.

We have been given two 'Plantlock' bicycle stands as part of a council initiative to encourage people to cycle to community venues. We have put one of these in the area outside the kitchen window and one at the back of the Meeting House. We will be planting them up in due course. Cyclists please use and let us know if you feel the position is not right for you. Once planted up they will be very heavy to move again!

The garden group meets every Thursday morning to care for the garden, plants and wildlife and to drink tea and eat cake! Everyone is most welcome to join us.

Jacqui Mansfield



Our City: Patterns of Poverty and Networks of Concern

Around 40 Friends attended a Friday with Friends event on 10 March to learn more about poverty in our city, and Friends' involvement in the effects and alleviation of poverty. The event started with a presentation by Catherine Hines from the City Council giving us some of the facts about local poverty. A huge wall display was created by Zuhura Plummer to record our discussions. You can read some of the facts on: https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/497/poverty_and_deprivation

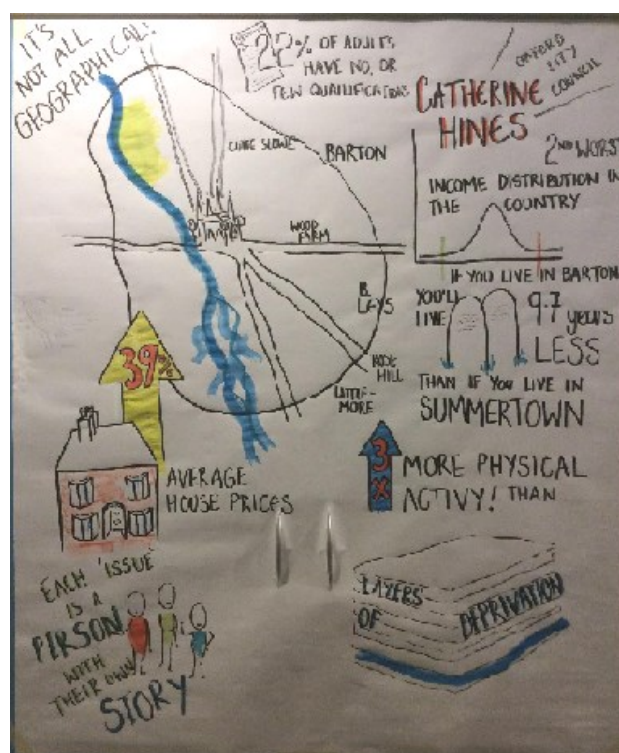
Here are some that stick in our minds:

- Although there are areas of Oxford where there are concentrations of people who live in poverty, *every* area of Oxford has people in it who are struggling to meet the costs of life in Oxford.
- Ten areas of Oxford (of eighty-three in total) are among the twenty per cent most deprived areas in England.
- There is a gap of 9.7 years between the life expectancy of men in poorer areas and those in wealthier areas.
- Twenty five per cent of children in the city live in poverty, and of course in some areas the percentage is much higher than this.
- Twenty two per cent of adults have no qualifications that would help them to get jobs.
- The average cost of housing in Oxford is seventeen times the average local wage.

The second part of the evening was about Friends' involvement. You can see from the illustrations that many of us are in some way involved in a range of local charities and agencies that work with various manifestations of poverty. Voluntary work of various kinds can be offered via the Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) website (ocva.org.uk).

A Friend told us how she supports a neighbour with the payment of bedroom tax, without which the neighbour might lose her home - acting financially to support people in the same

way as we might support family. We know of Friends who are regularly involved with the work of the Gatehouse. Also, through Churches Together, Friends are connected to various initiatives that provide for the street population. Several Friends do voluntary work for asylum seekers and refugees, some by hosting in their spare rooms. As well as these, we heard from a Friend who lives on a boat because of housing costs in the city and is worried about becoming too frail to manage, so within our meeting we can think of our Pastoral Care Group as a way to be aware of poverty issues affecting Friends' lives. It might be time to resurrect an old idea: having an internal credit union for Oxford Friends.



Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OxFAP) convened the meeting. OxFAP's remit is to provide one-off grants via agencies to help people turn their lives round. Recently we have been asked more and more often to help people whose outgoings have to exceed their income on a regular basis. We have agreed to fund, when asked, problems that arise through gaps in benefit that result from bureaucratic delays because these can be seen as 'one-off'. However, we cannot fund regular shortfalls between income and outgoings. Nevertheless these gaps create cycles of difficulty and despair for people. Perhaps our meeting – or individuals within their neighbourhoods and communities – could be creative about help in these cir-

cumstances. We heard of a neighbourhood-based attempt to help people who are fuel- poor, through alternative approaches to power usage. The attempt failed but the idea might have legs somewhere else.

At the end of the meeting we were reminded that 'doing things for others' is not always helpful and that 'doing things with others' is usually a better way to offer help. One Friend reported having special skills in organisation, managing finance, writing grant applications and writing reports, which she could offer to local initiatives. Many of us have writing skills and advocacy skills that could be helpful for others to use. Is there some way of making these available - a directory?

Friends also have teaching or therapeutic skills and these could be offered to schools and other agencies that reach people who are in difficulties because of housing costs, low wages and benefit restrictions, and who might benefit from reading, writing, budgeting and emotional support. The MEET charity, run by Friends in our meeting house, offers low cost trauma-focused therapy, and various Friends are involved in schools, food banks and so on. Offering such help to refugees and asylum seekers is well-organised through Refugee Resource and Asylum Welcome, organisations well-known to local Friends.

OxFAP cannot act as a campaigning or organising body as we have enough to do managing the flow of grant applications. We do, however, ask all Friends to think about how, as a meeting and as individuals, we might further become involved in resolving some issues of poverty in our city.

We hand these ideas over to you.

Anne Watson on behalf of OxFAP committee

OX4 Meeting

For members and attenders living in OX4 and beyond, at the home of Sarah Lasenby on Wednesday 12 April at 7:00pm
Theme: 'Hope for the Environment'
Please contact u_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk if you are hoping to attend.

Ursula Kneisel 5

A Moment of Clarity

A flash of sanity: the momentary realisation that there is no need to come to certain conclusions about persons, events, conflicts, trends, even trends towards evil and disaster, as if from day to day, and even from moment to moment, I had to know and *declare* (at least to myself) that this is so and so, this is good, this is bad. We are heading for a 'new era' or we are heading for destruction. What do such judgments mean? Little or nothing. Things are as they are in an immense whole of which I am a part and which I cannot pretend to grasp. To say I grasp it is immediately to put myself in a false position as if I were 'outside' it. Whereas to be 'in' it is to seek truth in my own life and action, moving where movement is possible and keeping still when movement is unnecessary, realizing that things will continue to define themselves and that the judgments and mercies of God will clarify themselves and will be more clear to me if I am silent and attentive, obedient to His will, rather than constantly formulating statements in this age which is smothered in language, in meaningless and inconclusive debate in which in the last analysis, nobody listens to anything except what agrees with his own prejudices.

Thomas Merton, 2 March 1966

contributed by Yvonne Dixon of Headington Meeting

The Quality of Ministry

"The quality of ministry is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the waiting worshipers;
It wells up from a deep unfathomed source
Unto the Meeting place: it is twice blest;
It blesses she that speaks and he that hears:
Received in silence, inwardly considered,
It speaks the mind of some, awakens else
To insight from that deeper place,
Abode of Spirit,
Source of wisdom,
Responded to by that of God in all."

Based on Portia's speech from the *Merchant of Venice* (IV.i) by William Shakespeare.

Modified by John Mason

CALENDAR FOR April 2017

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sun 2 April	12.30pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wed 19 April	1.45-3pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Thurs 6 April	10-12 noon	Pastoral Care Group	Thurs 20 April	7-9pm	Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting Trustees
Fri 7 April	7-9pm	Friday with Friends – Working with Refugees	Tues 25 April	7-9pm	Social, Economic and Environmental Justice
Wed 12 April	11-12 noon	Reading Quaker Faith and Practice	Sat 29 April	9-5pm	Christian Perspectives on Death and Dying
Wed 12 April	7pm	OX4 meeting (see note on page 5)			

Office News

Can you help us to promote our new Facebook page?

We have a new Facebook page to promote the Meeting House and 43 to organisations in sympathy with Quaker values who may wish to hire rooms. If you use Facebook please can you spread the word by liking and following our page and asking your contacts to do the same. Here is the link: <https://www.facebook.com/Oxford-Quaker-Meeting-House-1718502378461834/>

Developing the designs for the Garden Room

Jill Green was one of a small group who meet with architects to see how their plans for the new Garden Room were developing. They had designed a 3D virtual tour to give an idea of what the new space may look and feel like. When this has been developed it will be available for Friends to experience at a Friday with Friends later in the year.

New tables

At the back of the Meeting House you will see some small tables standing in what looks like a giant toast rack. These are small folding tables which are easier to lift than the big ones and are more suitable for some events. Please bear in mind if you are organising an event in the Meeting House or the garden.

*Editorial Team: SHERRY GRANUM, CATHERINE REDFORD, SUE SMITH, KEITH WILSON (Joint Editing and Production);
DEB ARROWSMITH, JACQUI MANSFIELD and MAX HOWELLS (Calendar and Distribution)*

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



Above: Sherry, Sue and Catherine

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.