



# Forty-Three newsletter

Number 460  
August 2017



Oxford Friends Meeting  
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

## Towards a Common Humanity

The film *'Beyond Forgiving'* was shown to a diverse audience of 50-60 people in the Meeting House recently as part of an event called *'Beyond Group Allegiances: Towards a common humanity'*. It depicts the true story of two South Africans - Letlape Mphahlele, a black atheist man and Ginn Fourie, a white Christian woman - both with every reason to view themselves as victims but who share a story of tragedy and hope and who subsequently reach out together as peace-makers. Through listening and talking with each other they both reach a greater understanding and acceptance of each other, of 'the other', of a common humanity. Howard Grace, producer of the film, facilitated a deep discussion after the showing of the film. Letlapa was invited to speak, but was unfortunately prevented from attending, He sent this message instead.

Dear friends, colleagues and guests,  
This day, this time, and at this venue, I was looking forward to being with you. Needless to say, I couldn't make it due to some visa complications. I profoundly apologise for not showing up. Although I failed to arrive in person, my mind and heart are with you as you explore the possibilities to outgrow group allegiances and to strive towards a common humanity. This is a hugely important exploration, more so as we daily witness our world degenerating into bloodbaths. Armed men and

women unleash violence on people who are punished for being 'the other' instead of one of 'us'.



As an explorer among explorers, I'm aware that some of you have been exploring long before I was born. For me it took a handshake and a frank talk with Ginn Fourie, to embark on a never-ending struggle for fostering a common humanity. In this march no step is too small, and no initiative is too little or too late. In these endeavours, personal responsibility is more important than hiding behind the veil of group allegiance. After all, groups consist of individuals and are influenced by individuals.

Building a common humanity needs the bricks and mortar of integration. If we are committed to 'walk the talk' towards a common humanity, we should personally take the initiative to reach out to the people who are different from us: people who, loosely speaking, come from other groups. We should listen with empathy why people hold sacred things we view as ordinary, and treat as ordinary things we glorify. I thank you and wish you all the best in your collective exploration.

**Contributed by Gwithian Doswell**

**Deadline for contributions to the September 2017 issue: noon, Wednesday 23 August**

*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)*

## Citizens Advice Bureau

Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OxFAP) held a recent committee meeting in the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to get a feel for the place and to hear about its work. The CAB's job is to give advice to people about a variety of difficulties, or to point them towards specialist help that is available elsewhere. We were particularly interested to learn about current trends of difficulty and hardship in financial matters, some of which have been around since 2008 and throughout austerity, and some of which are new due to changes in policy and practice in welfare benefits.

The main change that is already causing serious hardship for people is due to the way in which the new combined benefit called Universal Credit is administered; this problem will escalate when the benefit becomes universal in October. The main problem is that it is paid monthly, and therefore when people go onto Universal Credit for any benefit they have to wait a month to receive any money. The assumption is that people will live on whatever they got at the end of the previous month, but many people who need benefits do not have a previous monthly payment to live off because they have been budgeting weekly up until this point. Also, when people are laid off from low-paid jobs, their ex-employers sometimes (for a variety of reasons) withhold wages that are due.

It takes six weeks for someone to be given any allowance if they have been judged to have made themselves jobless. 80 per cent of applications for ESA (Employment and Support Allowance, the replacement for Disability Allowance) are turned down, but 80 per cent of those that are appealed are successful. However, many people do not appeal because they cannot afford to. There is now no legal aid for people to go to employment tribunals. It can cost £250 to make a wage claim to a tribunal; the loss in pay may have been less than that, but may still be a significant amount for the claimant.

One way and another, people waiting for benefits have to get through several weeks without money. Food banks fill the food gap, but not the

rent gap or the fuel gap. Landlords react in different ways to people who cannot pay for whatever reason. In social housing there is some leeway, but private landlords react in a range of different ways depending on how kind they are, from attempting eviction to making agreements to pay the missing rent in instalments.

OxFAP's remit is to make one-off grants to people who are trying to turn their lives around. However, we have recently made some payments to families with children who have got caught in these benefit gaps. We are aware that we will have to come to the Meeting to ask to adapt our remit to allow us to be more responsive to people caught in these gaps that are about maintaining their lives rather than 'turning them around'. There are other charities doing this with more money than we have, but we respond more quickly to cases of urgent need (such as heating costs over a weekend last winter).

Meanwhile, we have agreed to give the CAB a small grant so they have a fund from which to help people pay for bus fares to get to benefit meetings and so on - tiny sums to us, but major obstacles if you have no money.

If you want to help more, remember that CAB run on volunteering. Some Friends are already involved.

**Anne Watson on behalf of the OxFAP  
Committee**



## Journeys and Anoraks

In common with many f/Friends I started attending Meeting (Durham, 1979) as someone uncomfortable with mainstream denominations and looking for a spiritual home. I was keen to find somewhere that could help me with the many questions I had concerning the purpose of my life and how I might find meaning in it.

I had initially thought that I might find this home within Zen Buddhism - and had even spent a physically and spiritually arduous retreat at a Zen monastery high up in the Pennines above Durham. I was also starting out on my career as a social worker, and had enjoyed learning from a Social Work lecturer and author called David Brandon (*Zen in the Art of Helping*, RKP:1975). David's initial spiritual home had been with Friends but he had then moved towards Buddhism.

In his writings he had posed in me the question of how I might use my religious practice. Was it a cosy cloak to protect me from the world, or did it push me into the 'cold rain' of reality?

I reflected on this period in my life a few weeks ago. I was visiting Brigflatts Meeting House near Sedbergh. My companion asked me how I had come to the Society of Friends and I spoke of my initial interest in Zen. As our conversation developed I reflected on the twists and turns that the journey of my life had taken. Our discussion concluded with this observation: 'It has been the same road, the same rain, the same sunshine - just a different anorak.'

Chris White



## Update on the Faith Project

This time last year I introduced a project with which I am engaged that involves interviewing people about the way Quakerism has influenced their lives. These are sometimes called 'faith stories'. So far I have interviewed 25 people from the Oxford and Headington Meetings. I discovered 50 accounts from the Oxford Meeting. This encouraged me to write to other Meetings and I have been helped with interviews and written accounts. Milton Keynes provided 40 written accounts and other Meetings have provided individual ones (every one is valuable). I have found the project very moving and I hope that the people who have given of their time have also valued the opportunity to reflect. I now have over 200 accounts, including some testimonies to the life of individual Quakers.

I will be involved with the project until 2020, so should you wish to be interviewed or provide a written account I would be most grateful. Interviews have taken place in our home, in the home of the person being interviewed, and in public places such as the 'Vaults' café next to St Mary the Virgin Church in the High Street. When I come to write an account of the trends and themes, any comments will be anonymous in line with earlier research that I have conducted and which you are welcome to read.

Christine and I attend the Headington Meeting once a month and I try and attend the Wednesday lunch time meeting in Oxford when I am working in the library. If you would like further details or wish to be involved, let me know.

**Richard Bainbridge**  
rmbainbridge@gmail.com  
01865 872868

### Poems in the Library

The following Mondays 4 till 6 pm. All welcome and the themes are NOT compulsory. The poem's the thing not the theme !

AUGUST 21 : Smell

SEPTEMBER 11: Taste

OCTOBER 16: The Sixth Sense

**Stephen Yeo**

## Message from Elders

### Meeting for Worship Welcoming Hugo Boris Michael Spencer

God has given us the most amazing gift with the arrival of Hugo in our family on 4 March 2014. He is now 3 years old. Hugo is learning how to live between cultures: his father is English and his mother is Bulgarian. As he arrived, we planned to have him christened. We began to deliberate on which religion to christen him in. Should it be the mother's – Bulgarian Orthodox (like the Greek) - or the father's – Anglican? We started to ask ourselves deeper questions about God, and about our own beliefs and values. We realised that for many reasons, in order to preserve our personal integrity, we could not go either way.

This was one of Hugo's main gifts to us. Around the same time, a very difficult one, we began attending the Oxford Meeting. We acquainted ourselves with Quaker beliefs and values and we saw how these were exemplified in the lives of Oxford Friends whom we got to know. We realised that it was we that were looking for a spiritual home. Now, having found it, we hope to offer Hugo the opportunity to grow up in the Friends' community and to discover and cultivate the light within himself among people who can support him in this endeavour.

We are particularly drawn to the idea that children are regarded as innocent from birth and that each child has a direct relationship with God. We observe this in Hugo. We hope that the Society of Friends would allow Hugo to find his own way and be curious and questioning. Please join us in welcoming him to the Society of Friends at Friends' Meeting House in Oxford. A special meeting for worship for this purpose will take place on Saturday 7 October at 9:30am for a 10:00am start. After the meeting there will be light refreshments and fun and creative games for kids and adults.

**Robert and Didi Spencer**

Elders are thinking of running another series of Enquirers' Group meetings in the autumn. They would probably start in mid October. You might like to attend such a group if you are an attender who is thinking of applying for membership. You might also like to attend if you want a refresher course in Quakerism. If you would like to attend such a group, could you please contact me or Anne Watson (Education). Then we shall have some idea as to how many people might like to come. Please could you tell us which day or days of the week and what times would suit you? We should also like to know of any topics that you would like to look at.

**Marieke Clarke**

01865 557807 [marieke.clarke@gmail.com](mailto:marieke.clarke@gmail.com)

**Anne Watson**

01865 426748 [anne.watson@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:anne.watson@education.ox.ac.uk)

---

### Visitors from Friends School Tokyo

My name is Maud Grainger and I work at Woodbrooke Quaker College in Birmingham. Every year I run the George Fox Tour for students from Friends School Tokyo. Approximately 25 students from the Quaker school in Japan come to the UK for 10 days to learn more about Quakers, George Fox – and a little about Britain at the same time. Usually the tour ends with time in London, but instead this year the students have opted to visit Oxford.

The students' last day is Sunday 13 August, and they are hoping to attend the 9:30 Oxford Meeting for Worship that morning. They'll depart soon after as they want to visit Windsor Castle before heading to the airport. The students are around 15 years old, and over the 10 days they will have attended worship at Woodbrooke in Birmingham Meetings, and visited Swarthmore Hall and Briggflatts in Cumbria. The students are accompanied by Jasmine Piercy, as well as three of their own teachers and a translator, so we are fairly big group.

**Maud Grainger, Faith in Action Tutor**

0121 415 6775

## Open Doors 2017

Oxford Meeting is again taking part in Oxford Open Doors, which takes place on Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 September. We need Friends to help welcome people and show them around the building between 10:00am – 4:00pm on Saturday and 1:30pm – 4.30pm on Sunday. If you can offer a minimum of two hours on one or both of these days, please sign up to help! There is a list on the notice board in number 43, or please contact the office or Elisabeth Salisbury.

**The Office of the Oxford Quaker Meeting**  
[office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org), 557373

---

## Launch of a Residential Christian Community

Are you looking for a church with which to be involved and a place to live with other Christians in Oxford? In September, Wesley Memorial Methodist Church is launching a residential Christian community for three people based in a flat on its premises in central Oxford. It is now seeking expressions of interest from potential community members. For more information please visit <http://www.wesleymem.org.uk/churchflatproject.htm>

Peggy Heeks

---

## Friday with Friends 8 September

Starting at 7:00pm for 7:15pm, in the Garden Room

‘Opening the door to talking about mental health’: a two-hour workshop run by representatives from the Quaker Life Mental Health Cluster Group

The objective is to provide an opportunity for Oxford Meeting to discuss mental health in a safe and supportive environment. This is a pilot workshop that is being trialled in several Meetings. Please contact Becky Riddell for more information.

Would you like to join the Mental Health Cluster Group or find out more? Please contact Oliver Waterhouse if you are interested:

[oliverw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:oliverw@quaker.org.uk) or 020 7663 1007.

Becky Riddell 5

## Social-action Film Shows

Beginning in August, the Oxford Friends Meeting will host a social-action film series on the first and third Sundays of each month. The showings will be held in the Garden Room of 43 St Giles at 7.30pm. Popcorn will be provided.

Sunday, 6 August: *The Day After Trinity*

In memory of the 72nd anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and the continuing danger posed by nuclear weapons, the film on 6 August will be *The Day After Trinity*, a powerful documentary about the making of the atomic bomb and the moral dilemmas confronting the scientists who worked on the project. The film focuses on the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos project, from his early career as a brilliant physicist, through the first atomic test at the ‘Trinity’ site in the New Mexico desert, to the McCarthy-era hearings that revoked his security clearance in 1954. *The Day After Trinity* was nominated for an Academy Award as the Best Documentary of 1981.

Sunday, 20 August: *Pride*

Set in Britain during the Thatcher years, *Pride* recounts the real-life story of a group of gay activists in London who travel to Wales to support a miners’ strike. While the converging of these two groups produces cultural clashes along the way, both sides experience the many ways that love and solidarity can bring people together. With a brilliant ensemble cast, *Pride* earned a Best Picture nomination at the Golden Globes for 2014. Film critic Mark Kermode ends his review in the *Guardian* with the following line: ‘I laughed, I cried, and frankly I would have raised a clenched fist were both hands not already occupied wiping away the bittersweet tears of joy’.

The schedule for September will be announced in the next newsletter.

Eric Roberts



## Rebuilding the Garden Room

Earlier this year, we held a Friday with Friends where we shared some initial concepts from architects for replacing the Garden Room. There was lots of enthusiasm, and also some questions. Premises and Finance Committee (P&F) agreed to go to the next stage, developing more detailed designs and costings. We had asked the same architects to do this and they had begun work when Area Meeting Trustees pointed out that we should have invited competitive tenders.

P&F asked a small group (Val Ferguson and Tony Joyce working with the office staff and with Nigel Braithwaite from Area Meeting Trustees) to develop a brief for architects to tender for the various stages of the project. We're expecting the architects who developed the initial concept to submit a proposal and we aim to have at least two others.

We want to make sure that Friends are in unity with the principles before we go ahead with an invitation to tender. **All members and attenders are welcome to a meeting on Wednesday 6 September at 7:00pm** where we'll consider the essentials of the brief. This might include the things we definitely want in the new Garden Room, things we don't want, and things we would like if they were possible.

The current draft brief says that any new design must reflect the Quaker testimonies, attaching the highest priority to sustainability. The existing Garden Room is light, has a good view of the garden, and in many ways is a flexible and convenient space. But there are several problems. It is cold in winter and hot in summer. It lacks connectivity with the garden. It is not big enough. It cannot be separated from pedestrian traffic through to the kitchen, Meeting House, and garden. And there are pinch points in terms of people movement round the edges of the space.

The proposals we are inviting from architects would be to:

- create a new garden room which is larger and which can be both a social space and used for private meetings

- consider re-modelling the present kitchen so it can be used as a meeting room
- improve access, circulation, and connection to the garden at the rear of the building for all ages
- review the heating and hot water arrangements in 43 as a whole, aiming to install an up-to-date, energy efficient system

After the meeting on 6 September, P&F will incorporate changes to the brief, aiming to forward it to Local Business Meeting for consideration on 1 October. If approved then, we'll go ahead with the invitation to tender. The Meeting will of course be kept involved in decision-making as we go along, and there will be lots more opportunities to comment on the designs and the details of the project.

**Laurie Michaelis, Clerk,  
Premises & Finance Committee**



## Quakers and Music

I was brought up as a Quaker and have always embraced the simplicity of our worship – the absence of ritual and ceremony, the direct communication with others through spoken Ministry, organising every aspect of our Society through our own efforts alone, and collaborating as equals. Not having to be part of a formal religious service has been something I have always embraced.

There is one thing though, that I find hard. We don't include music as part of our worship. There are many Quakers who, like me, love music, play it, sing it, and are enthusiastic members of groups and choirs. It may be that for them, as for me, it is an important part of spiritual life. Before this century, some of the best and most glorious music was written for churches and as part of religious life and celebration. Just as one example, think of the power of Bach's chorales to unite and inspire congregations. Music was and is part of spiritual devotion, because religion, churchgoing, and the social respectability that went with it, was central to most people's lives until the early twentieth century. No longer.

I belong to a small choir called Sine Nomine (meaning 'no name'!) We are not connected with any particular church. We sing a repertoire from the huge and gorgeous variety of religious music heard in churches down the ages. We sing on request in churches around Oxfordshire, many of them very old and very beautiful, in lovely settings. We are trying to keep the tradition of choral evensong alive, but also perform other concerts on request. I enjoy the music so much, and have learnt a lot about church liturgy and why it is the way it is – which has helped me to overcome my prejudices about formal services!

We usually do three performances a year, and practise for a few weeks in advance. We practise in Headington, on Friday night. We are looking for members, in any part. A working knowledge of reading music would be helpful, but we do note-bashing at practice anyway. Come along to one of our practices and try us out. I promise you, it would be worth your while and your time! You may, like me, find the richness of church music a revelation. Get in touch with me if you are interested 07799

133241, [sueandali@gmail.com](mailto:sueandali@gmail.com)



## Abolish all Nuclear Weapons: A Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons Now!

Can you be a visitor? As part of an International Fast from 6-9 August there will again be a demonstration in Victoria Embankment Gardens, Whitehall extension, just by the Ministry of Defence. Look out for banners. Quakers and members of Trident Ploughshares will take part in the Fast, and they invite anyone to visit them on any day. Some participants will always be present and they really value visitors. The nuclear ban treaty agreed at the UN in early July was endorsed by 123 countries and we hope our government will endorse it too. Nuclear Weapons are Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) just like chemical and biological weapons, and should never be used.

For more info contact [marcwmorgan@btinternet.com](mailto:marcwmorgan@btinternet.com) or call 07563 725 829. Marc will be at the demonstration.

Sarah Lasenby 7

Sue Smith

# CALENDAR FOR AUGUST 2017

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Thursday 3	10-12	Pastoral Care Group	Sunday 27	12.30	Shared Lunch
Sunday 6	7pm	Quaker Film Night: The Day after Trinity	Wednesday 6 September	7pm	Meeting about the Garden Room
Sunday 13	9.30	Students from Friends School Tokyo at Meeting	Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 September	10-4pm	Meeting House is open for Oxford Open Doors
Sunday 20	7pm	Quaker Film night: Pride			
Monday 21	4-6pm	Poems in the Library			

## Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP) FEST!

**Coming soon – help needed!**

“A concert raising money for local  
people in need.”

**Saturday October 14th 7pm**

**Tickets £8**

**(to include food from 6pm)**

**Can you sing, dance, tell jokes?**

**We need YOU to volunteer!**

**Please contact the office**

**01865 557373**

## From Quaker Faith and Practice

Whenever we intercede in prayer we must  
be prepared for an answer which places a  
practical obligation upon us. A prayer is  
always a commitment

Thomas F. Green

**Q F & P, 2.29**

*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.

## 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

## Editorial Team

**Editing and Production:** Sue Smith,  
Sherry Granum, Catherine Redford

**Calendar and Distribution:** Deb Arrowsmith,  
Jacqui Mansfield, Max Howells