



# Forty-Three newsletter

Number 454  
February 2017

Oxford Friends Meeting  
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW



## Quaker vigil at Aldermaston

Now that the New Year is opening up we want to invite other Friends to come with us to join a Quaker Vigil at Aldermaston. We are a group of around five Friends and we would love others to join us, if only occasionally.

We go down to the Home Office Gate on a Thursday (next date to be confirmed) arriving before 4pm as this is when the workers start going home. We put up peace flags and banners and stand to greet the workers and the police who are pleased to see us. The workers sometimes respond positively and we feel it is a good thing to show that Quakers care about peace. We stay till 5pm so as to get back around 6.30pm.

Those of us who go find this an inspiring thing to do and we would love to be joined by other Friends. If another carload of 3-4 people could come along we could have a presence at Tadley Gate too and thus be seen by all those leaving work from the West Gate.



You may wonder why we still continue when Parliament has voted to replace the Trident system at the astronomical cost of £205

billion over 25 years? Well in March the UN are convening a conference to negotiate a global nuclear ban treaty so we are strongly supporting this. Maybe we can help save the Government from their reckless spending. Please contact me on Oxford 725991.

Sarah Lasenby



## From Quaker Faith and Practice

Our discipline and structures do not exist by themselves. The life of our Society is made up of the lives of its members. The faithfulness of our Society consists in the faithfulness of each and all of us. And none of us can expect 'the Society' to be more faithful, more committed, more loving, than we ourselves are prepared to be.

Chapter 18, QFP

**Deadline for contributions to the March 2016 issue: noon, Friday 17 February**

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)

## Nurturing our stillness, deepening our silence

*“True silence... is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.”* William Penn, 1699 Quaker faith & Practice 2.13

As a Friend once said to me *‘We have been handed a pearl of great price’*. The insights mediated by past Friends contained in our testimonies to truth, equality and peace make up some of that pearl, as do the many actions they continue to inspire in Friends across the world.

Essentially, though, the spiritual practices within our various forms of worship and the stillness that underlies them are the bedrock in which they are anchored. It is from that stillness, and in various ways, we come to know of ‘that which is eternal’, the ‘numinous’ or ‘God’. In whatever way we describe that spiritual experience, we owe a great debt to our forebears who learned, developed and maintained those practices that allow us to experience it. They carefully nurtured them in their personal lives and meetings often at great cost, carefully and with love handing those gifts on to subsequent generations for them in turn to develop and grow. I have heard Friends talk of the joy and deep peace gained through our worship and have been privileged to have experienced some instances of those things myself.

I remember a very moving insight from a Friend in our meeting who told me about a particularly dark time in his life. He recounted how only the thought and experience of the shared stillness and peace in Meeting kept him going through what were clearly some very hostile working weeks.

That pearl is now entrusted to our generation to sustain and develop it and in turn hand on. So how do we foster and protect that communal stillness in our meetings, the wellspring which inspires spoken ministry and action? Elders & Overseers discussed this in one of our joint meetings last autumn and they asked me to write this article to represent their discussions.

There are of course many ways of deepening our understanding of worship, learning from other

Friends, books and courses. We can also practise skills in some of our more intimate informal small groups.

Friends should be reminded that funds exist to support attendance at the various Quaker learning venues from Woodbrooke to Charney. Our Friends Peggy Heeks and Chris White are keen to hear from those wishing to engage in learning and who need support. Please don’t miss a course if finance is an issue, see one of us.

There are also more immediate and practical ways for us to commit to that help sustain worship. Remembering that Meeting starts as soon as one person is sat in silent waiting is helpful. Honouring their act of worship by supporting their journey into stillness is an act of deeper friendship. I have found that preparing myself mentally and physically before reaching the meeting room is helpful for those already worshipping as well as for me. Reflecting on my time at Oxford Meeting I can see I have developed certain habits, picked up from Friends and stumbled upon by accident. I am conscious I try to use the toilets in the main building, a habit I got into when we used to have those horrendously loud old ones in the Meeting House a few years back. It is a habit that I think is still helpful now, even with the nice quiet new ones, as avoiding unnecessary trips helps minimise the noise.

As I take the first steps along our garden path I now ritually turn off my phone, take off my noisy raincoat and fold any plastic bags ready to stow under my chair as quietly as possible. I hope Friends coming from 9.30 meeting don’t find me rude as I walk past them towards the Meeting House, but ceasing conversations is my way of entering the silence and not disturbing the emerging stillness as I draw close. I often find it hard to be on time. Normally I drop off Evie at Children’s Meeting and linger a while to check she is settled and those running it don’t need help. I find our custom of sitting and waiting quietly in the corridor valuable both when I’m late and when I’m already in meeting. I want to show my respect for Friends who have already started the discipline of silent waiting. Sitting outside for a few moments helps me to still my mind, leaving behind the bad traffic, lost hairbrushes or coats that have made

me late. It also helps me to relax my body so I can enter in a calm way that doesn't jar with the emerging atmosphere.

We will never be able to create a totally silent place for worship and it wouldn't be helpful if we could. Learning to listen and let go of disturbances has helped me to begin maintaining that stillness when I re-enter the busy world outside. The noise made by the Eagle and Child's recycling of bottles every week at about half eleven is, in fact, a gift!

Meeting should not be a place where we are afraid to move, cough or breathe. Friends who need the toilet should feel free to stand, leave and use the lovely new facilities without fear of disturbing others. We are humans not robots and must learn to love each other in that humanity. It is, however, also true to say that we take on a responsibility as we begin to worship regularly with Friends, responsibilities to ourselves and those with whom we worship. Meeting is a communal act and helping create a space for shared silence, a loving space, enables that stillness to grow. Accepting that responsibility is an act of true friendship, helping to protect that pearl for generations to come.

**Steve Cappleman on behalf of Elders & Overseers**

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## Marigold and Geoffrey Best

Marigold and Geoffrey now live in their new home in the retirement village called Richmond Letcombe Regis, near Wantage. They moved five months ago. They would like to send their greetings to everyone, and are in good spirits.

**Carol Saker**



## Hoping for Change

The keyword for a new year is hope. On Christmas card after card Friends express their hopes: that we will meet in 2017; that it will prove a good year for us.

St. Paul compared hope with faith and charity, and chose charity above the others. Perhaps it's time to think more carefully about hope. Hope is what keeps us moving ahead when life gets tough; it fuels our resilience, the ability to bounce back in the face of difficulties. For what do we hope?

Maybe you, too, have false emails about winning thousands of dollars. Of course, they are fake, but my hopes are not on material things, and I'm too insignificant to change the world. My hope is centred on changing myself, and recently I began to believe that this was possible.

I went to see an old film: 'Scrooge' with Alastair Sim. We all know that Scrooge was a skinflint who begrudged every one else's happiness. Yet, through the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future, Scrooge did change. So my hope for 2017 is that like Scrooge, I'll become more generous, more loving and more open-hearted.

**Peggy Heeks**

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## Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment like salt in a  
weakened broth.

What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness ...

**by Naomi Shihab Nye in *Words From Under Words: Selected Poems***

**Selected by Yvonne Dixon of Headington Meeting**

## Work-related Coaching

Would someone you know benefit from Work-related Coaching? I am training to become a Workplace Coach and am able to offer 2-3 free coaching places to anyone not known to me personally, who would benefit from working with a coach on an opportunity or issue relating to their work or professional development.

Coaching provides a safe space to work confidentially on opportunities or issues of concern arising at work. It helps the coached person to express thoughts and feelings freely in a supportive and non-judgemental setting and deal with the complex and confusing world of work more creatively. It is a powerful mechanism for personal and professional development, and helps facilitate personal change leading to improved performance.

Coaching can be an effective tool in many situations, such as considering, preparing for or starting new roles, adapting to change, dealing with recurring or long-term problems or improving communication and team-working.

Coachees will work with me for several sessions, each of up to one hour long, during February-April. My coach training is part of a course being led and supervised by expert coach trainers from the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development at Oxford Brookes University. Prospective coachees do not have to have any connection to my workplace or Oxford Brookes and can be anyone in the Oxford area with a work-related concern they would like to work on.

Please get in touch with me at [ruth.mason@it.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.mason@it.ox.ac.uk) and pass the message on!

**Ruth Mason**

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## Pictures for Forty-Three

Friends, we love your pictures! They make Forty-Three so much more attractive and interesting so, if you're thinking of submitting an article, think also whether you could let us have a picture or two to go with it. The better quality the picture you send, the easier it is for us to work with them. Then they will look good in both the printed and

on-line versions of the newsletter, and we can include them at a reasonable size.

Pictures taken with almost any digital camera will be fine, as will pictures taken with a reasonable quality mobile phone that's no more than about five years old. Pictures taken with older mobile phones often give us problems. A good indicator is the size of the screen on your phone. If the screen is about the size of an ordinary matchbox or smaller, your phone probably won't take good quality pictures so, if at all possible, please reach for your camera! Also, if you're submitting an article, please, please send the pictures separately rather than embedding them in the document. Embedding a picture often reduces its quality and there's nothing we can do to get it back!

If you have any questions, Keith Wilson will be happy to try to help but, in the meantime, don't let any of this put you off. We'd like you to aim for quality, of course, but the most important thing is for you to keep on sending us your pictures!

**Sue, Keith, Sherry, Catherine**  
**The newsletter team**

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## Literature and Silence

I teach English Literature at Oxford University, and I am visiting 42 St Giles under a Knowledge Exchange Fellowship until early March. This is part of a project on Literature and Silence. I will be coming to Meetings at different times and hope to meet as many of you as possible, share silence with you and talk about what it means to you. On Wednesdays 15 February, 22 February, 1 March and 8 March, at 11am in the Library, I will be putting on workshops on Literature and Silence in which you will be invited to read, think about and discuss the uses of and approaches to silence in literary texts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present. All are welcome. For more information, please contact **Kate McLoughlin** at [kate.mcloughlin@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:kate.mcloughlin@ell.ox.ac.uk).



# Meetings and Notices

## Walking with a smile into the dark

On Saturday January 28th there will be a reflective day drawing on chapters 21 (Personal Journeys) and 29 (Leadings) of Quaker Faith and Practice. The leaders are Becky Riddell, Anne Watson and John Mason.

The day begins at 9.30 for 10 am and continues until 4 pm. Tea and coffee will be available. Please bring your own lunch. Do let one of the leaders know you are coming. More details are on the flyers in the hall of 43.

**Becky, Anne and John**

## Friends on Duty: Training Day

Are you a 'Friend on Duty' or interested in becoming one? We are holding a fun Friends on Duty training and information session on Saturday February 4<sup>th</sup> 10.30am – 2pm. Please do come along and join in. A delicious free lunch is included. Please let the office know if you are coming.

**Deb Arrowsmith**

## Building a better society: how do we change a broken political system?

In September Oxford LBM asked Jill Green and me 'to work on the possibility of hosting a public meeting to advance the concept of the Good Society and to report back in due course.' We have made some progress and now have a venue, date and some speakers! The plan is to bring together people from the political parties, and none, churches, other faith groups, and grass root organisations who are interested in increasing progressive representation in Parliament.

We hope this first meeting gathers together representatives from the Oxford based organisations and campaigning groups who are distressed by current political trends and want to consider how best to approach the next election. We will learn from the experience of our speakers, and hope to formulate the basis of an action plan. Then we can go on to have larger public meetings once we have some ideas about what we want to do, what groupings there are and how much interest there is in working together.

The date is **23 February, 7.30-9.30 pm**, at the John Wesley Room at Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford, OX1 2DH. The **speakers** so far are Helena Kennedy (Human Rights Lawyer and Labour Peer), Jonathan Bartlett: Green Party Co-leader, Neal Lawson: journalist and chair of **Compass** ), Cat Hobbs: founder of '**We Own It**' and LibDem to be confirmed.

**Tina Leonard**

## Office News A warm welcome to Marilyn and Karen

If you are in the building early on a Monday or Wednesday you may meet Marilyn (right in photo) and Karen. They have taken on the cleaning contract for 43 and the Meeting House. By coming in early they are able to clean all the rooms before people start to use them. Marilyn, who has run her own small cleaning company in Oxford for the last decade said 'Karen and I are delighted to be part of the team looking after this lovely and very special building'.

**Deb Arrowsmith**



# CALENDAR FOR February 2017

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Wednesday 1	2-2.30pm	Prayers for the homeless - Library	Wednesday 15	1.45pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Thursday 2	10.00am	Pastoral Care Group	Wednesday 22	10.30-12	Literature and Silence workshop — Library
Saturday 4	10.30-2pm	Friends on Duty Training Day	Monday 20	4pm	Poems in the library Theme: Colours
Sunday 5	12.30pm	Business Meeting	Friday 24	7.00pm	Elders
Wednesday 15	10.30-12	Literature and Silence workshop – Library	Sunday 26	12.30pm	Bring and share lunch



## Reading Quaker Faith & Practice

All Friends are asked by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group to join in reading the current Quaker Faith and Practice.

Suggested for February – Chapter 9: Beyond Britain Yearly Meeting and Chapter 18: Faithful lives

Further information and support can be found at <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>

**Anne Watson**

## 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

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