

Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 453
January 2017



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

The Garden Room

Drop everything (as long as it's safe to do so!) and come help us discuss the future of the Garden Room. We are holding a special Friday with Friends on the 13th January at 7pm in - you've guessed it - the Garden Room!

We have long intended to rebuild it because it is poorly designed and dilapidated. Premises and Finance Committee with the Management Team has begun the process of exploring what might be an appropriate re-development of the room and wants to involve as many Friends as possible in this exciting project.

This is the beginning of a journey for whole meeting. We will show you where we have got to in the process, show you some design ideas – none yet cast in stone – examine different elements of the process and how we will handle all of this and, most importantly, get your feedback.



The Garden Room is our most used room and we hold our Oxford Meeting weekday Meetings for Worship there. We all know how congested

it can become on Sundays for refreshments and bring-and-share lunches. So together, we may be able to take the opportunity to imagine a new space providing more of what we need for this generation and the next.

We need to be looking at and imagining the sort of building, welcome and layout that we want to be at the heart of the Quaker Centre for the next 20 – 40 years. This is why we need the support of all ages in the meeting to help fashion our future space. Please come and join in - our future depends on you!

Deb Arrowsmith

From Quaker Faith and Practice

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

John Woolman, 1772

QF&P 25.01

Deadline for contributions to the February 2016 issue: noon, Monday 23 February

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

Fair Trade Friends on Duty

We are the Fair Trade Friends on Duty (FODs). We work on a Tuesday morning during the year as part of the Meeting's outreach testimony.

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one. (George Fox)

We focus on three tasks:

Ordering fair trade goods for the Meeting House to be used by Friends and people who rent rooms there. We order from *Suma*, a wholesale, worker-run co-operative, about every 6 - 8 weeks. We unpack the goods on delivery and distribute them.

From 2017 for three months we will be trialling a Fair Trade table in the Garden Room every third Sunday when our goods will be on sale for everyone attending both Meetings. Selling at trade price enables Friends to buy goods at a reasonable price.

We run three Fair Trade stalls a year: at Christmas, Easter and in the summer to coincide with the Saturday Open/Quaker day. For these events we also obtain goods/gifts from the Fair Trade Shop in St, Michael's Church, Cornmarket, on a sale-or-return basis which allows us to return any unsold items.

Anthea Richard and Hoonie Feltham



A vacant seat

A vacant seat

I hope that few of you have noticed but, for the last six months, I haven't been attending Meeting regularly. I have been asked – challenged, even – to write about my absence. I accept the challenge but insist on a few words of preamble. I dislike writing about myself, but there seems no other logical way to approach this article. I am, however, writing it only in the hope that it might give friends pause for thought and thereby benefit others.

I can explain why I've been absent from Meeting with a single word: depression. I've had it for many years. Often it's no more than a threat lurking in the background but sometimes it's all too real. I've tried pills and I've tried professional counselling. The pills were no help at all; the counselling helped a little.

You might think that attending Meeting would lift me, as I would be among supportive Friends ready to show that they cared. I'm sure this works for some who have depression, but not for me.

In fact, my absence from Meeting was triggered by a Friend who knew I was depressed and, acting purely out of love and kindness, happened to remark how concerned "everyone at Meeting" had been about me recently. My reaction was one of horror. I really couldn't face walking into Meeting with the idea in my mind – correctly or incorrectly – that Friends were looking at me and thinking, "We really must do something about Keith!"

I'm sorry if this sounds ungrateful, but what I really want when I'm depressed is for Friends to ignore me, except for simply greeting me. I really don't want further conversation. At such times, there's very little that feels as if it's worth talking about. Furthermore, when depression has a hold on me, even the most caring efforts to make me feel better are doomed to failure. In truth, they are likely to make me feel worse, as I now have the added burden of knowing that I'm wilfully rejecting kindness.

With all of this in mind, I concluded that the best thing for me to do was to stay away from Meeting.

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That way, Friends wouldn't have their mood dragged down by mine and they wouldn't have to concern themselves with thoughts of what to do about me. And I wouldn't have to handle the extra pressure of rejecting well-meant, even loving, attention from Friends.

I hope this helps you understand why you haven't seen much of me in recent months but it does, of course, leave open the question of how you should respond to me and to others in the meeting who share the rather common problem of depression.

I can't answer for everyone and I'm sure that there is no single right answer. From my experience, however, I suggest that when you approach someone you suspect may be depressed, you should be gentle, even tentative. And if the person you're approaching doesn't seem to want to talk, don't press the issue, simply let them be.

Keith Wilson

Relaunch of Friendly 8s

Friendly 8s is an arrangement whereby eight people meet in eight homes on successive weeks and then disband. The purpose is to meet new people within the Meeting and discuss any topic the group wishes.

The groups, once formed are autonomous, choosing their own schedules, discussion topics and format (e.g. tea & coffee, or a pot luck meal). The groups are also closed for their duration, i.e. no members join part-way or share discussions outside the group.

If you would like to participate, please could you let Rupert Booth know on gfriendly8@gmail.com, indicating the days on which you would prefer to meet (or days on which you cannot meet). There will then be a match-making exercise to set up groups with as close to eight members as possible. The groups are expected to kick-off mid-January.

Rupert Booth

Continental drift

I hope the shade of Yeats won't mind my selective quotation from his 1919 *The Second Coming*.

*'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.'*

I am writing about the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA). Concerns arising from our testimonies have never needed expression more. *'Our Quaker voice in Europe'* is an



outlet which for some 37 years has had a ready hearing, not only in the EU but also in the Council of Europe, which we are not (yet) trying to leave.

With Brexit an exercise in self-harm, making QCEA's blogs and alerts more widely visible in Britain can only help us to speak truth rightly to power.

I am nominally Oxford Meeting's contact person for QCEA. As Assistant Clerk of QCEA British Committee, which raises funds for QCEA, my main contribution has been to invite the Meeting to send a subscription and to make the case for a collection each year. To my relief, both have been generously received. We get the *Around Europe* newsletter. We had a speaker at a Friday with Friends some time ago. However, I have been less active in surrounding myself with members of the Meeting who share my concern. I have in fact been running a (very occasional) network of QCEA correspondents in local meetings around Britain, but diffidently haven't linked in Oxford Friends, not knowing quite who to contact.

There was also the *Quakers for Europe* referendum campaign. I wish now that we had offered a concern through our local meeting for business that could have gone up the chain to make Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) do a proper discernment job on how far EU membership matches our take on the state of Britain.

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Seeking to mend the world may seem overly political, but the spirituality of Quakerism beyond our shores is not left to wither. Friends World Committee for Consultation has its lively European and Middle East Section – run as it happens from Cambridge rather than Oxford.

If you read this and would like to share in Europe thinking, please email me or talk to me – richard-seebohm@onetel.com. To read the QCEA blogs, go to www.qcea.org.

Richard Seebohm

Does your bank contribute to climate change?

Rainforest Action Network (RAN), Bank Track, Sierra Club and Oil Change International released an annual review of the banking sector in July 2016, exploring how the world's biggest banks are driving climate change by pumping hundreds of billions of dollars into extreme fossil fuels.

The report, *Shorting the Climate: Fossil Fuel Finance Report Card 2016*, evaluated the bank policies and the exposure of 25 United States, European and Canadian banks to 'extreme fossil fuels'. These include the most carbon-intensive, financially risky, and environmentally destructive sub-sectors such as coal mining, coal power, extreme oil (tar sands, Arctic oil, ultra-deep drilling) and North American liquefied natural gas exports.

The report, which also graded banks on their human rights policies, shows that banks perform poorly in all sectors. Levels of exposure to extreme fossil fuels are high across the board with researchers saying that hundreds of billions of dollars are invested by the largest 25 banks in companies involved in these sectors, with a vast majority of banks having no significant policies in place to stop funding extreme fossil fuels.

According to the report, between 2013 and 2015:

- HSBC invested \$1.46 billion
- Barclays invested \$1.11 billion,
- Royal Bank of Scotland invested \$0.86 billion
- Santander invested \$0.19 billion

In a statement on the Bank Track website, the campaign group added that: "The report card does reflect bank movement on coal mining, where ten of the biggest US and European banks committed to reduce funding for the coal mining sector in the last year."

"Based on their ability to quickly switch their stance on coal over the last year alone, banks are capable of making the critical choice to cut out extreme fossil fuel investments. Not only can they do it, it is a critical step to follow through on promises made in Paris to stabilise the climate."

To read the full report visit www.ran.org/shorting_the_climate

In July 2016, Ethical Consumer officially joined the 'fastest growing divestment movement ever', with the launch of its *Personal Carbon Divestment* campaign. The campaign encourages individuals to switch their current accounts, savings accounts, cash ISAs and investment funds away from companies funding fossil fuel projects, and towards companies that are proactively investing in climate solutions – such as renewable energy projects.

For savings, Triodos, Charity Bank and the Ecology Building Society currently lead the way in driving us towards a post carbon economy. For current accounts, Nationwide, The Co-operative Bank and Norwich & Peterborough are recommended. Article reprinted with permission from Ethical Consumer magazine. For more information about the campaign visit

<http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethicalcampaigns/carbondivestment.aspx>.

Tina Leonard

We hope it will not take water seeping into the lobbies of Wall Street for banks and financial institutions to understand when it comes to climate change,

Their fates are bound up with everyone else's.



SHORTING THE CLIMATE

A celebration of Light

In December the Oxford Council of Faiths met in our Meeting House to celebrate the meaning of Light in our different traditions. Members brought candles, decorations and food particularly associated with these celebrations. There was a wonderful display of the different candles used in our worship from the Hanukah candles of the Jewish tradition, the little clay pots of Diwali and the tall impressive Easter candle of the Orthodox faith.

Ten members spoke of the significance of Light in their faith, beginning with our Deb. Our first Advice takes us straight to the core of Quaker beliefs *'Take heed dear Friends to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life'*. Advice seven continues *'are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?'*

By the end of the contributions from all faiths one thing was abundantly clear: so much more unites us than divides us. I closed the meeting with my favourite *Quaker Faith and Practice* quotation 19.28 by William Penn.

'The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here make them strangers.'

Elisabeth Salisbury

2017

Let joy be
unconfined
and unalloyed

sunsets
birds in flight
trees in leaf
children at play

and trumpets
the sound of joy

ES

Exploring collective Quaker action for nonviolent social change

Quaker Peace & Social Witness social action training programme *Turning the Tide* has teamed up with Redland Quaker Meeting in Bristol to host a series of three, free one-day workshops on taking collective Quaker action for social change. The work-



shops will provide an opportunity for Friends to:
Explore how to make an effective Quaker contribution to social justice issues of our day
Connect with local Friends interested in taking collective action for social change
Develop your understanding of power, social change and collective action
Learn practical tools for taking meaningful action for change

Experience working collectively and effectively with like-minded Friends

The workshop topics and dates are:

Power, change and collective Quaker action:

Sat 14 January, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Campaign planning & effective group work:

Sat 25 February, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Sustaining our witness:

Sat 22 April 2017, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Is this something you and your local Meeting could be interested in?

If you want to sign up, or know of a Friend nearby or member of your Meeting who might be interested, please complete the online registration form online at <http://turningtide.org.uk/active-witness-bristol>, by Sunday 8th January.

All the workshops will take place at the highly accessible Redland Quaker Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, Bristol, BS6 6JE. As the workshops are part of a series, each one building on the one before, you are expected to commit to all three workshops from the outset.

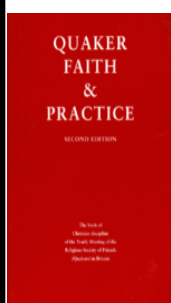
For more information on the course, please email turningtide@quaker.org.uk or call 0207 663 1064. For further information on *Turning The Tide*, visit www.turningtide.org.uk

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2017

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sun 1	12.30pm	No Business Meeting	Wed 18	1.45pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Thurs 5	10.00am	Pastoral Care Group	Tues 24	7pm	Premises & Finance
Sat 7	10.00am	Area Meeting at Oxford	Sat 28	9.30-4.00pm	Reading Quaker Faith & Practice Day
Mon 16	4.00-6.00pm	Poems in the Library. Theme: Racism	Sun 29	12.30	Bring & Share Lunch
			Sat 4 Feb	10.30-2.00pm	Friends on Duty (FOD) Fun & Spiritual Speed Dating

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 January : Chapter 14 Stewardship of our material resources and Chapter 25 Unity of Creation.

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

Anne Watson

Walking with a smile into the dark

A reflective day drawing on chapters 21 (Personal Journeys) and 29 (Leadings) of *Quaker Faith and Practice*. **Leaders:** John Mason, Becky Riddell and Anne Watson. Saturday 28 January 2017. 9.30 am for 10:00 am – 4:00 p.m. (Bring your own lunch.)

In the morning we shall reflect on our individual journeys and how we have acted, and might act in future, on promptings of love and truth. In the afternoon we shall affirm the leadings of Oxford Meeting as a whole, celebrating what we do well and learning how to remain hopeful and concerned in 2017.

The format of the day will include reading, worship sharing, mini-Meetings for Clearness, personal and group activities. All are welcome. This day is for everyone: members, attenders, and enquirers. It would help us to know if you are coming, but it is not essential to book a place.

Poems in the Library, Winter Season

Mondays 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm in the Library, 43 St Giles

16 January: Martin Luther King Day. Theme: racism; liberation struggles; black experience

Next dates: 20 Feb, 20 March

Contact: stephen.yeo@phonecoop.coop

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

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, don't hesitate to contribute it, just let us know its not for inclusion in the internet version – no reason will be asked for. Articles and notices are welcome in the print edition only, and the same applies to calendar items.

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