



Forty-Three newsletter

Number 455
March 2017



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Our City: patterns of poverty and networks of concern

For all Friends and attenders who know, or want to know, anything about poverty in our city

Friday with Friends 10 March

6.45pm for simple soup supper. Meeting from 7.30pm to 9pm.

This Friday with Friends is an opportunity to understand more about poverty in our city, and also to understand more about how individual Friends and groups of Friends relate to the many manifestations of poverty in our city.

Catherine Hine from the City Council will inform us about the demography of poverty in Oxford and after some sharing of experiences among ourselves we will start building a 'map' of connections between Quakers and issues of poverty in our city. This will then be made available for others to add to in the future so we can build up a full and complex picture.

Our aim is to involve the whole meeting in discovering and making visible the many connections between Quakers and poverty in our city. We are a large and diffuse meeting in a large and diffuse city. As individuals we have

many different concerns, experiences and actions that relate to poverty. As Quakers we are concerned about poverty in our city through our charity, Oxford Friends Action on Poverty, (OxFAP) and our Social, Economic and Environmental (SEE) justice group, and in our everyday lives. We may not know the extent of how Quakers relate to the myriad needs in our city.

We hope that as many as possible will come to this meeting to join in the beginnings of the map.

Anne Watson



Deadline for contributions to the April 2016 issue: noon, Friday 24 March

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

Walking with a smile into the dark

On 28 January, 24 Friends and attenders gathered together to consider the ideas in Chapters 21 (Personal journeys) and 29 (Leadings) of *Quaker Faith and Practice*. Chapter 21 led to some deep personal sharing. Chapter 29 led to both personal and corporate idea.

Here are some of the anonymous comments written by individuals that day, relating to certain passages from Chapter 29:

Passage	Comment
29.07 We are all one. I would not be as I am without you; you would not be as you are without me.	An insight of immense importance. For me, leadings have come from my schooling, my friends, my wife, my children; from nature, from the universe of which I am a child. Is that what others mean when they say 'God'?
29.02 We must look to the Truth ...	Reminded me of passage 20.75... "How can I speak the truth in love when I feel no love?" "Unless you speak the truth there never will be love".
29.13 ... we are all hurt and need healing ... throw away the illusion that the rich alone have much to offer...	This is too kind to the rich as they DO have the most to offer.
29.16 ...there is poverty in our wealthy country ...	Very good passage!



Walk Cheerfully...

Other comments about 'being led' -

- Get in touch and trust God
- We all have much to gain from one another
- When we know what we have to do, how to do it will come
- How are leadings for me personally
- influenced by the discernment of leadings for the meeting?
- I have no sense or personal understanding of the words or concept of 'God' or of the phrases 'leadings of the spirit' or 'truly led by the spirit'. What could anyone say, suggest, or recommend?
- Acts of courage are best done unknowingly
- What is it like to be led by the spirit? How do I distinguish between spirit and ego?

We then moved from a personal sense of 'leadings' to leadings for Oxford Meeting, asking the question: 'Looking back in 50 years' time, what might people say about Oxford Meeting now?' We have turned the ideas from this activity into questions for future generations to ask:

Were they activists/mystics?
 Did they nurture those who came to them?
 How did they undertake spiritual accompaniment?
 What written testimonies emerged from the meeting? (interviews with Tanya Garland; writings in '43', *The Friend*, etc.)
 What were the concerns of the meeting? (OxFAP, MEET (therapy), Living Witness...)
 How did they cope with tempestuous social and political change?
 What did they do about poverty and diversity?
 Were they open to difference?
 Did they carry their skills into the local community?
 Did they make themselves available to everyone?
 Did they let people of all ages and backgrounds know that they might be a 'home' for them? How did the Meeting do this? (e.g. through a place ...)

John Mason, Becky Riddell, Anne Watson and all those who attended on the day

A National Quaker Day of Healing

Saturday 18 March

Organised by the Friends Fellowship of Healing

Some readers of Forty Three know of our local Oxford Friends Fellowship of Healing (FFH) as an article about it was included in the July 2016 issue. This mentioned the wider FFH, the magazine *Towards Wholeness*, and other activities and groups.

The national FFH have suggested that 18 March could be a special day. Some Meetings may arrange a day retreat.

Our Local suggestion for this day is that Friends may wish to set aside a short time of silence/meditation during which to hold in loving thoughts any Friend, family member, community, city, the environment etc., for whom we have concern. And to think of them with hope and gladness.

The point of such a time is to create a spiritual connectedness with Friends around the country as we wish for the highest good for each individual or situation.

For those who would like some words to open a time of meditation, Quaker Faith and Practice 21.73 by Jack Dobbs is helpful: 'As we open ourselves to become the channel of God's healing grace we shall find that healing is given to those who pray as well as those for whom we are praying'.



Office News: March

We are doing our best to simplify all the rotas/lists and information we provide for and about the Meeting. Look in the large A3 file in the lobby to see how we are doing. Perhaps you'd like to see photographs of those who serve the Meeting appointments to help identify them? Let us know. We'd also welcome your feedback on our website www.oxfordquakers.org. Please take a look at it and let us know how you think it could be improved or what you would like to see on it.

Meanwhile in our gardens the rockery has been rebuilt, crocuses are springing up and you may also notice lots of curly black hose! This is a leaky hose watering system we are installing to use water more efficiently for helping plants during dry periods. The pipe will gradually be buried to reduce evaporation.

We recently held a good fun training day with 'Dutiful Friends' (FODs). We are proud that Oxford Meeting House has so many committed and informed welcomers and helpers to look after all who use our buildings.

Forced Migration: a new programme for Quaker Peace and Social Witness

“That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right” 1822 QFP 23.26

According to a 2016 survey by Meeting for Sufferings (Quakers’ national representative body), more local Meetings are working on ways to welcome people forced to flee their homes than on any other issue. Responses include setting up and supporting City of Sanctuary groups, befriending newcomers, protesting at detention centres, sourcing and providing accommodation for refugees, sending donations to Calais and in some cases, helping out in person in refugee camps. We in Oxford have been part of local initiatives like this. Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) is just starting a programme on forced migration, and Tim Gee is its worker.



One of Tim’s first pieces of work was to join a well-attended conference at Woodbrooke on 3-5 February entitled ‘Forced Migration: how can Quakers respond?’, hosted by the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network, Quaker Council on European Affairs, Quaker United Nations Office, Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Woodbrooke. The conference will be putting together a short publication to inform the basis of a spirit-led position of Quakers in Britain, to be sent for consideration by our Yearly Meeting. It also produced a Conference Minute that will help guide Tim in his work of scoping and developing this new programme. Extracts of the Conference Minute follow:



“The people who have brought us together have come from far away places where there is war, oppression of people on the basis of race, religion, nationality, gender, sexuality, belonging to a particular social group, or their political opinion, and others have fled war, famine, and poverty that has been created by climate change and politics. They too have travelled by many often-dangerous means to reach sanctuary, over water, and by road and rail. They come from cities, towns and villages looking for a safe place to live and for their children.

Some of them are children, they travel alone, vulnerable, cold, hungry, frightened, brave and full of dreams.

We come from communities where some welcome those seeking safety and others do not. Others who have brought us together are decision-makers, MPs who create laws, Judges who interpret the laws, Home Office staff who put the law into action, private agencies that carry out work on behalf of the Government for example in providing accommodation, detention facilities, transport around the system and sometimes out of the country, and then there is the media.

All these people, and every person displaced whether in our own country or moving to another is in our thoughts.

Forced migration in its various forms is clearly a concern for Quakers to take forward in our individual lives, through our communities and Meetings, our Quaker bodies and Yearly Meetings, and when we work alongside others. We cannot change the world alone, however we may bring seeds of change and nourish the soil.

Quakers have through time been involved in every aspect of the humanitarian responses to forced migration including advocacy, legal help, trauma care, medical care, language and housing through the common thread of friendship.

If coming in a unsteady boat across the Mediterranean is anyone's safest route, we as humanity can do better. We need a different language for migration because the current situation and discourse is 'othering' people.

We feel a deep leading to act together on a political level in Britain and at the European level. In doing so we are acting upon our heritage, our way of being, and the leading of the spirit.

We work towards the breaking down of all barriers that divide us and define us, whether between countries, in the NHS, between those who have faith and those who do not, or in our own minds.

We pray that the 'scales will fall from our own eyes' and those of our politicians - as they did from Saul when he sought to create a hostile environment in his time, and that we may be the leaves on the tree of life which are for the healing of nations."

For more information see the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network website <http://www.qarn.org.uk/>

compiled by Sue Smith



**Coming up: Friday with Friends
April 7th, 7pm for 7.30pm**

Tim Gee will be consulting local Friends on their experience and thoughts to help him guide the Forced Migration programme.

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.

QF&P 18 (Introduction)



Seeking a gathered stillness?

Has anyone noticed that our poster on the front of 43 has changed recently? We have taken a picture hanging in our library of a Meeting for worship held in the Solar at Charney Manor. Then we added one of our favourite Quaker phrases as an encouragement for passers by to come and join us for worship. People really do notice and even stop to take a picture! We'll aim to change these more regularly so if you have a favourite phrase you'd like to see 'up in lights' let us know!

Deb Arrowsmith

CALENDAR FOR March 2017

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Friday 3	11.00am	Women's World Day of Prayer– hosted by Oxford Quaker Meeting	Friday 24	7pm	Elders Group
Thursday 2	10.30am	Pastoral Care group	Sunday 26	12.30pm	Bring and Share Lunch
Sunday 5	12.30pm	Business Meeting			
Wednesday 8	11am	Literature and Silence workshop– Library			
Friday 10	6.45pm	Friday with Friends– Oxford's poverty map.			
Wednesday 15	1.45pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing			
Monday 20	4pm	Poems in the Library			

Enquirers Weekends at Charney Manor

The next of these events are April 21-23 and November 10-12 2017. Please book on 01235 868206 or email admin@charneymanor.com. There is money available to help with the costs from Pastoral Care Funds. For more information please contact Jill Green or Anthea Richards.

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.

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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