



Forty-Three newsletter

Number 470

June 2018

Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW



Ministry from Britain Yearly Meeting 2018 at Friends House, London, 4-6 May 2018

The experience of sitting in a Meeting for Worship containing more than a thousand people is always very special, but one piece of ministry this year really touched a chord with me and will not leave me alone.

Our Friend Shelagh Robinson, who wrote so movingly for *The Friend* about the onset and diagnosis of her Alzheimer's disease about six years ago now, and who has since been travelling about the country giving presentations about the illness on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society, rose to her feet below me in the east block of the Large Meeting House.

She told us the story of being asked by her daughter to stand in for her as a volunteer at their local food bank for a couple of weeks, and being saddened by her surprise at seeing a friend from her own Meeting collecting some food. She asked if she might take this friend out for a cup of coffee and a chat. The friend told her that her shame about her poverty was such that she would far rather go to the food bank than ask for help from her own Meeting, so busily involved in good works for others.

I believe that this may be also the case in our own Meeting, and it has – and should have – disturbed me. The Pastoral Care Group very rarely receives requests for financial help, though we know that there are people, young and old, alone or in a family, who struggle with money. In the last ten years we have seen drastic changes in benefit income, and the 'safety net' no longer feels safe. We have also seen earnings drop well below the rate of inflation, and many people overworking in poorly-paid jobs. Money poor *and* time poor, people in Oxfordshire are often struggling to pay huge mortgages/rents while bringing up young families.

I have often heard the phrase "Quakers are all middle class, white, liberal intellectuals". Well, maybe we are not any more, if we ever were.

I hope and pray that we can support our community as a place of welcome, diversity, and hope for the future. Can we start to look around ourselves and ask each other questions about money, talking gently and quietly with each other in some of our corners? Like Shelagh, we may be saddened and surprised by what we hear when we really listen to each other and find we need to reach out a helping hand.

Jill Green
Convenor of Pastoral Care in Oxford Meeting

Deadline for contributions to the July 2018 issue: noon, Friday 22 June

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on the back page 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

Our Vision for Replacing the Garden Room and 'Opening up the Meeting'

From the Garden Room steering group

Plans for our new Garden Room project, and 'Opening up the Meeting', are moving ahead very encouragingly. We hope to consult everyone in Oxford Meeting about the designs during the week 25 June – 1 July 2018 (see 'Dates for your diary', below). In the meantime, from Sunday 3 June onwards, the working designs will be on display in 43 for you to look at. Here's a little background, to remind you of the road we are on.

Background:

In 2011, Britain Yearly Meeting committed the Society of Friends to becoming a sustainable, low-carbon community. As one part of our Meeting's response, in 2013 we undertook the eco-refurbishment of our beloved Meeting Room, including its small kitchen and toilets, making it a comfortable and sustainable – as well as beautiful – spiritual space, with top-quality insulation and low-energy under-floor heating.

In July 2013, we held two well-attended and enthusiastic Open Meetings, '*Visioning the future of our premises*'. The shared vision that emerged was to 'Open up our Meeting from front to back', drawing many new people into 43, where they would find beautiful, light, welcoming spaces that reflect our Quaker spiritual values of peace, equality, simplicity, and sustainability, and attracting younger generations to Quakerism: in sum, to create a new kind of 'Quaker Centre' accessible to all. Our vision included also opening up the Garden to fuller enjoyment and use, both by Quakers and the wider community.

The Garden Room thus became the next major item on our to-do list. Not designed to last, it is now seriously in need of replacement. It is poorly insulated, with inefficient and costly heating. Movement in and out of the room, and along the side passageway to the garden, is awkward and restrictive. The connection with the kitchen means that the kitchen can *only* be used in conjunction with the Garden Room. And the Garden Room has become too small for many of the social and other important occasions that it was designed for.

In replacing the Garden Room, how might our premises, old *and* new, be re-imagined in such a way as to create a new, living 'Quaker Centre'?

Architects:

In July 2016 we began working with an architect, Tom Howard of Millar Howard Workshop (MHW), to develop a series of possible designs to replace the Garden Room, including refurbishment and re-arrangement within 43. Our Premises and Finance group (P&F) commissioned Stage 1 drawings and outline costings. A Friday with Friends held in January 2017 enabled the many Friends who attended to see five different design 'approaches' and to make constructive criticisms which informed further design choices and changes. In February 2017 Local Business Meeting agreed that P&F should continue working with MHW towards a fuller specification, and in March P&F sent a report to Trustees on the process and thinking to date.

The Brief:

At this stage, on the advice of Area Meeting Trustees, we temporarily halted the process while we went to competitive tender. A new and detailed Architect's Brief was drawn up in conjunction with Trustees, and approved by our Meeting for Worship for Business in September 2017. This Brief is our guide. The steering group plus advisers identified three outstanding architects, all with a strong focus on sustainability, and in tune with our Quaker values. In March 2018 Oxford Meeting for Worship for Business approved the choice of architects, Millar Howard Workshop, to develop designs in line with the Meeting's Brief, and submit them for pre-planning assessment.



Current plans:

Our new Garden Room will be larger than the one we have now, sited truly *in* the garden: a beautiful, multi-purpose space, from which the garden can be enjoyed and appreciated all-year and whatever the weather. The *existing* Garden Room acts as a kind of central 'hub', linking the adjacent spaces, as well as a space for all our social events, *and* for meetings. All these functions will still be needed. Our current plans replace this with a new, multi-purpose space – in effect, a new *Quaker Centre* – with, beside it, a small, sheltered, and sunny garden-courtyard.

We hope to provide for a more central location for the kitchen (the original kitchen of 43 St Giles!), thus freeing the present kitchen-space for more accessible and flexible use, both as a quiet meeting room through the week and for young children's use on Sunday mornings, while retaining some kitchen facilities within it. There will still be three toilets on the ground floor. Low-energy under-floor heating will be installed. The new garden extension will have a 'green roof' of living plants.

All of these plans are of course subject to approval by the Meeting. With the architects we have applied for a 'pre-application' meeting with City Council Planners. This will indicate their broad acceptance of designs or highlight any concerns that may lead to design alterations.

This time, we aim to build to last well over 100 years. It is an opportunity that will not recur. We must live adventurously! Our plans need to be highly imaginative, allowing for maximum flexibility of use. They must also embody our Quaker spiritual values and express them to all who use our premises.

Dates for your diary:

Monday 25 June, 'Meet the architect', 5:30-7:00 pm, refreshments and 'virtual reality' 3-D viewing of the plans; 7:00-9:00 pm, the architect will present the designs, plus ample time for questions, discussion and feedback.

Design plans on display in 43 all week, with provision also for 'virtual reality' 3-D viewing.

Friday 29 June, 'Friday with Friends', 6:30 for 7:00 pm. Fullest opportunity for Friends to query and



comment on the design plans. Lis Burch will act as Clerk.

Sunday 1 July, Meeting for Worship for Business. It is hoped that the Meeting will decide whether to go ahead with the designs, and/or with any revisions of them.

The Garden Room steering group: Alan Allport, Ursula Howard, Glen Williams, Richard Stamper, Deb Arrowsmith, plus one co-opted member, Tany Alexander. Robert Spencer acts as an adviser (sustainability specialist). The steering group was appointed by Local Meeting for Business, and reports to Premises and Finance Committee.

Alan Allport

Garden Rooms and Rooms in the Garden

Good gardens look as if they have always been there, having slowly developed and grown for ever. That is also the satisfaction (for me) of working in them: slowly slowly, corner by corner, plant by plant, adding and subtracting. In fact, of course, they change all the time, month by month, season by season, garden-worker by garden-worker. Imagine how the back garden of 43 St Giles must have looked when Henry Gillett gave the property to us lucky Oxford Friends: no Meeting House, no Car Park... a long, long stretch of green stretching back to Pusey Lane.

Now we have 'rooms' in the garden, front and back; the two long borders and round beds in the front; Connor's dahlia patch; scented plants round the garden seat; the rock garden reconstructed by



Anita Ghosh; cyclamen alley; the rose and peony bed; the shrubbery round the acacia tree turning into the children's allotment nurtured by Virginia Allport; the bug hotel; the wild meadow strip and the colourful 'mound' with hellebores, foxgloves, evening primroses, and wildnesses backed by the yew hedge, expertly trimmed by Connor... all delightfully subject to change as well as familiarity. The garden team feels lucky to be able to work there every Thursday morning, with Jacqui and Deb in active support.

And now we have the chance to make new rooms: a children's and older people's 'pavilion' or summer house type of room, to provide a space in which to be comfortable in the garden in all weathers, all year round; a garden room which will be even more part of the garden than the present one; a courtyard garden and play place outside the present kitchen window; and a planted 'green' roof on the garden room. The garden team looks forward to new plantings, even more festive Thursday morning cake-times, and new opportunities for creativity, retreat, meditation, beauty, and enjoyment among Friends and our ever-widening circle of friends and users of all our rooms, indoors and out. Gardeners like to look at next week, next winter, yes. And we also like to imagine what will be blooming twenty-five and fifty years ahead, around buildings worthy of our generation.

**Stephen Yeo,
for the Garden Team**

Everyone is welcome to join the garden team, occasionally or more often, including just to join us for tea and cake at 11:00 am on a Thursday morning.

Religious Diversity?

Yearly Meeting has magnificently finessed the theist / non-theist debate by saying that we are a community of religious diversity. This leads me to recall a limerick in *The Friend* (6 April 2018) by Michael Wright of Middlesbrough Meeting (slightly tweaked):

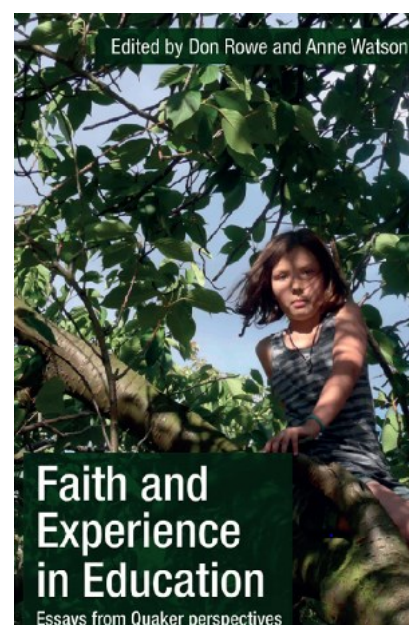
There was an old Quaker from Kent
Whose ankle was horribly bent.
He tripped on a clod
And said, Oh my God!
But that wasn't quite what he meant.

Richard Seebomh

New Publication

The book below has now been published and is available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop, Friends House, for £24.99. Any royalties will go to Quaker Peace & Social Witness. This has been a labour of love that has, from time to time, led me to hide away and avoid other responsibilities. Yet it has also led to profound respect for all the contributing authors, whose contribution to education in the state system has been substantial and loaded with their commitments to love, truth, peace, equality and 'that of God' in everyone.

Anne Watson (the education one, obviously)



John Woolman Puppet Play

For the four weeks in April, the Children's Meeting rehearsed the play about John Woolman, one of my favourite Quaker personalities, with children as puppeteers and adults with strong dramatic voices as the readers. The script is by Rosalie Regen, and Alan (Allport) managed to edit the narration down to fifteen minutes. With crucial production help from Elisabeth Salisbury and all the adult voices, we made a fantastic team.



Trio Watson took on the stage managing, and we all produced sound effects as Woolman's ship (a canoe) was whooshed across the Atlantic on a blue sheet. Bernard Clarke, the photographer, came on the day of the All Age Worship (29 April). The children developed strong sympathetic performances for their characters, Woolman took the threat from the Indian with a tomahawk very calmly, Richard played the jazzy Leaveners' song so well that the singing was enthusiastic, and the silent meeting at the end was long and moving.

I am taking the puppets and the posters to BYM, hoping to compile a list of Meetings which might like to borrow the puppets in exchange for a donation to OxFAP.

Virginia Allport

Notice from the Pastoral Care Group

Do you have a spare functioning vacuum cleaner you are willing to part with? If so, the Pastoral Care Group would like it. Please email pastoralcareoxford@gmail.com

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours.

How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

A&Q 19

Common Ground: New/Renewed Members Consultation Meeting 18 June, 12.00 to 2.00 pm

The Common Ground Café and shared workspace in Little Clarendon Street is a social enterprise selling coffee, and provides an area where people can study and work.

Jake Backus who runs the Common Ground shared space has kindly agreed to host a consultation meeting for potential new members. Lunch will be provided (Jake and Will Pouget from Vaults and Gardens have a project going to stop food waste). Common Ground aims to invite new businesses, colleges, and organisations, and those with whom they would like to renew contact, to find out how to get involved and make Oxford Fair Trade Centre work for them. It would be great if one or two people in Meeting could join us. Do let me know if you'd like to come and of anyone potential new members you think should be invited.

**Hoonie Feltham
Anthea Richards**

New Baby

This is Pascal Elicura, son of Felipe Saez and Daniela Diaz. Daniela has been attending 9:30 MfW and says, "For me the Quaker meetings were very important during my pregnancy".



Paulette Meier Chants

During the weekend of 8-9 June, we will be hosting Paulette Meier from the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. Paulette will be offering opportunities to explore the roots of Quaker Spirituality in Plainsong. Join us on Friday 8 June, 7:00– 9:00 pm at the Oxford Meeting House and on Saturday 9 June, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm at the Meeting House at Burford.

On Thursday 7 June, 6:00 –8:00 pm, Glen and Alison Williams will host a welcoming reception for Paulette at their home (93 Divinity Road, OX4 1LN) and on Sunday 10 June from 7:00pm Anne Watson and John Mason will host a soiree for Paulette at 27 Elms Road, OX2 9JZ. On both occasions singing may take place!

John Mason

Wonder and Trust as a Basis for Dialogue

This contribution was written by Henri Strobant, a member of the Quaker Meeting at Bennekom, in the Netherlands, 8 February 2018. It has been translated and edited by Marieke Clarke of our Meeting.

Who am I? With whom or what do I identify 'myself'? Rachid Oahalou, using his own experience, sketched how difficult it is to answer these questions for our co-citizens with a multi-cultural, in his case, Moroccan-Netherlands, background. The arrival of 'foreigners' leads to fear, and fear leads to 'us and them' thinking and to tensions.

For Rachid, liberation came from his spiritual development: "Don't accept what others tell you to believe. Read and listen for yourself; look and see what the scriptures do with you. Experience what life teaches you. Wonder at the Mystery. You will then experience that that of God can be found within yourself and therefore in every human being. That of God, a Spark of God, that which you really are, can be found within each of us: this is quite different from the conditioned 'ego' that can cause so many problems."

What Rachid said was illustrated with marvellous poems and Koran texts sung by Said Al Harazi, a teacher of Arabic language and a singer. The people present recognised the shared values in what they were experiencing: wonder, mysticism, love, hope, and trust. We realised that human beings are fundamentally good despite all their actions, Including the bad ones, about which we do need to talk to each other. People present realised that we can come without prejudice in contact with the other, the equal.

A most beautiful discussion followed. Fear is to be transformed into love when a human being recognises herself or himself in the other.

How marvellous it would be if discussions like these could be held everywhere! There is so much in the world that causes us anxiety, but there is also always hope. There is much that divides us, but eventually there is more that unites us. So discovery can lead to inner and world peace.

Rachid Oahalou works for the International Organisation for Migration.

Joke Hofman and Pieter Ketner, members of the Central and Southern Netherlands Monthly Meeting, attended this lecture. They are members of the Liberal Bennekom Church. This Protestant church in the village of Bennekom has a pastor and a vivid community, but is not orthodox, and has no dogmas and few rituals. Henri Strobant gave permission to publish his report in 'De Vriendenkring'. This is the monthly magazine of Dutch Quakers.

Marieke Faber Clarke

Midsummer Coffee and Cakes: Invitation to All

Pastoral Care Group invite all members and attenders at Oxford Quaker Meeting to come to a mid-morning coffee, tea, and cakes occasion in the garden on 13 June at 10:30 am. A Wednesday has been chosen so that people can stay on to attend mid-week Meeting for Worship, if they wish. We hope to see those who don't often manage to come in to 43 St Giles, but everyone is welcome.

Anyone who needs help with transport in order to attend this occasion is encouraged to contact Pastoral Care Group, or the Office if a taxi needs to be booked.

Carol Saker



What Remains to be Seen

Make a date in your diary for Wednesday with Friends on 11 July. Lauren Rusk, wife of Eric Roberts, who is well known to our Meeting, will read from her book of poems inspired by children's art from Theresienstadt concentration camp and join in discussion.

Elisabeth Salisbury

Quaker Mental Health Forum: Mental Health and Young People



The Quaker Mental Health Forum will meet
Saturday 3 November 2018; 10:00 – 4:00
in The Priory Rooms, Birmingham, B4 6AF

We will be exploring the topic of mental health and young people.

Grounded in our faith, we will be sharing experiences and ideas.

Everyone is welcome.

The day is suitable for those aged over 15; we suggest people under 18 come with a supportive adult.

We hope every Area Meeting will send a representative.

There is no charge: drinks provided; bring your own lunch.

To book: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/quaker-mental-health-forum-mental-health-and-young-people-tickets-45232690194>

More information from Alison Mitchell, Mental Health Development Officer
alisonmitchellmhdo@theretreatyork.org.uk
07483028490

Becky Riddell

CALENDAR FOR JUNE 2018

All at 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Saturday 2 June	12 noon—5:00 pm	Garden Retreat Day	Sunday 10 June	7:00 pm	Soiree for Paulette Meier (see p. 6)
Saturday 2—Saturday 16 June	Contact the office	Friends Summer Exhibition— Art in the Meeting House	Monday 18 June	2:00—3:30 pm	Management Team
Sunday 3 June	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Monday 18 June	4:00—6:00 pm	Poems in the Library
Tuesday 5 June	7:00—9:00 pm	First Tuesday Group	Wednesday 20 June	1:45—3:00 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Wednesday 6 June	2:00—3:00 pm	Prayers for the Homeless (in the library)	Sunday 24 June	12:30 pm	Shared Lunch
Thursday 7 June	6:00—8:00 pm	Welcome reception for Paulette Meier (see p. 6)	Monday 25 June	5:30—9:00 pm	Garden Room Plans Presentation
Friday 8 June	7:00—9:00 pm	Friday with Friends: Paulette Meier— Quaker Chants	Friday 29 June	6:30 pm for 7:00 pm	Friday with Friends: Garden Room Plans
Saturday 9 June	10:00 am—2:00 pm	Burford Quaker Chants Workshop			

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



Editorial Team: SHERRY GRANUM, CATHERINE REDFORD, and SUE SMITH (Joint Editing and Production);

DEB ARROWSMITH, JACQUI MANSFIELD and MAX HOWELLS (Calendar and Distribution)