

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 465
January 2018



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Adopt a Room: Quaker Children's Choice Collection: December 2017

Progress report on the furnishing of rooms for the Iraqi refugee family.

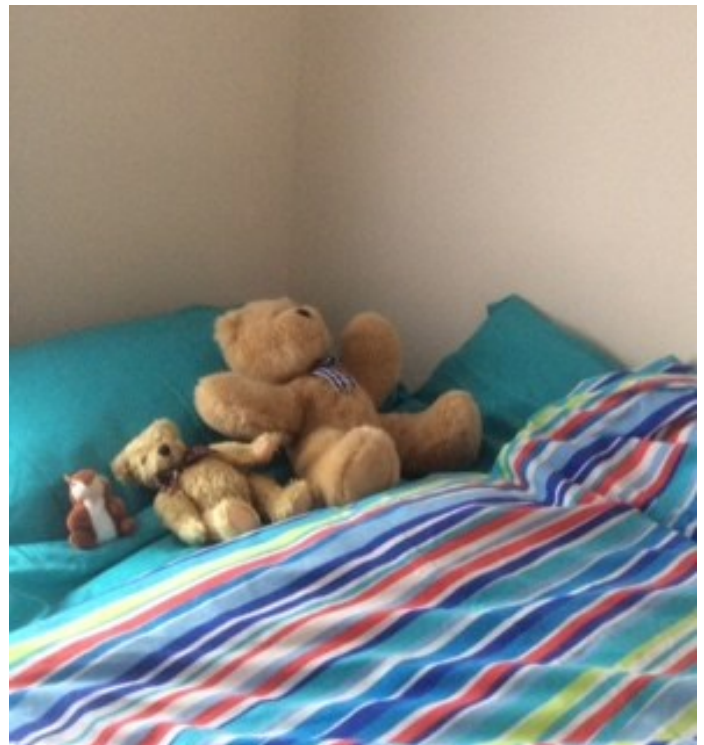
Jill and I had an exciting and exhausting time on Monday 11 December, in the crunchy snowy weather. We took all the bedding, rugs, pictures, TV, computer, lights, cushions, and toys to the house where the Iraqis were due on Tuesday. It is an Oxford City Council rented house, organised by Asylum Welcome. It belongs to a private landlady, very practical and friendly, so there were lights, curtains, carpets, beautiful cupboards, fridge/freezer, and some heating!

John Fenning, the family's resettlement officer, had got the electrician there at 9:00 am, to connect the wi-fi. John had also hauled the beds upstairs, and assembled them single-handedly. By the end, the house was looking beautiful, with all the beds made up, the pictures hung, and (thanks to the Quaker children's gifts) the toys, pens, and colouring books unpacked.

The family arrived at Heathrow on Tuesday, straight from Turkey, and thanks to John's Arabic, cleared immigration in reasonable time. Despite

the bitter frost, they had a good run into Oxford with just some minor hold ups around Heathrow, and had a VERY thorough house briefing from someone from the agency. John was eventually able to leave them in peace around 9:00 pm.

Virginia Allport



Deadline for contributions to the February 2018 issue: noon, Friday 19 January

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

The Rhythms of Life

Near the winter solstice, a rumination offered by Alan Allport at our Quaker Garden-Retreat Day, 9 December 2017, *'Entering sleep mode'*.

May I invite you to close your eyes, and listen to the rhythm of your breathing. And as you breathe, think about how the breath connects us with all other living things. The birds, the mammals, the fishes, the reptiles, the insects... we are *all* sustained by the same life-giving oxygen, the same breath.

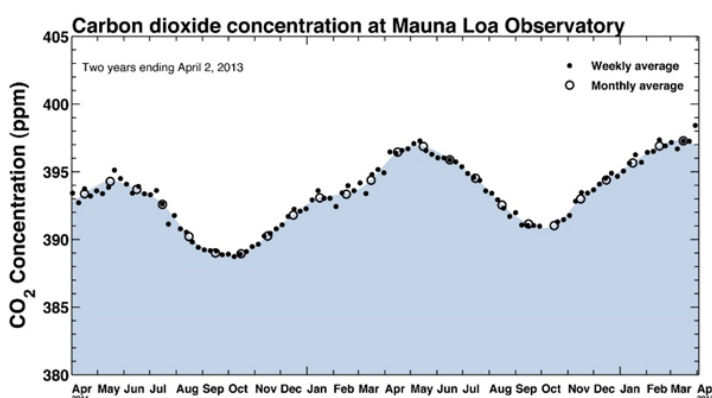
And now think about the extraordinary reciprocity between what you and I are doing, all the time (and what all the animals in the world are doing), and the breathing of the *plants*. We (along with all other animals) are breathing *in* oxygen, and breathing *out* carbon dioxide. While all the plants on earth (and all the phytoplankton in the seas) are doing the opposite: they are breathing *in* carbon dioxide, and breathing *out* oxygen. And they've been doing it, continuously, for billions of years: ever since the cyano-bacteria, the 'blue-greens', evolved, and 'invented' chlorophyll, back near the beginnings of life on earth. Chlorophyll, that's the miraculous molecule that makes plants green, and that converts sunlight, plus carbon dioxide and water, into the sugars that build all the amazing structures of plants. Without chlorophyll, no plants; without plants, no animals - and no humans.

I think of the words of William Blake, 'Everything that lives is holy.' Of course, there are many other rhythms of life, as well as breathing. Think of your heart-beat, the rhythms of walking, of running; the wing-beats of swans and humming-birds, of insects... We humans are somewhere in the middle: our hearts beat more slowly than a wren's, much faster than a blue whale's. Our pace of life, too - the speed at which we react and move - is slower than the insects; much, much faster than the movements of plants. An Italian colleague and friend of mine studies the 'behaviour' of plants, such as the way the tendrils of a pea-plant reach out to cling onto a support. And he is discovering remarkable intelligence in their movements, e.g. they turn towards a support as though they have sensed its presence long before they have made any physical contact with it.

Some of life's rhythms, however, are common to us all, because they are paced by the earth's rotation, and by its orbit around the sun. These are the rhythms of day-and-night, and of summer-and-winter: the rhythms of sleeping and waking; and the rhythms of the seasons - hibernation, migration, breeding, leaf growth and leaf fall, flowering and seed; for the plants, the rhythm of *breathing*, as well.

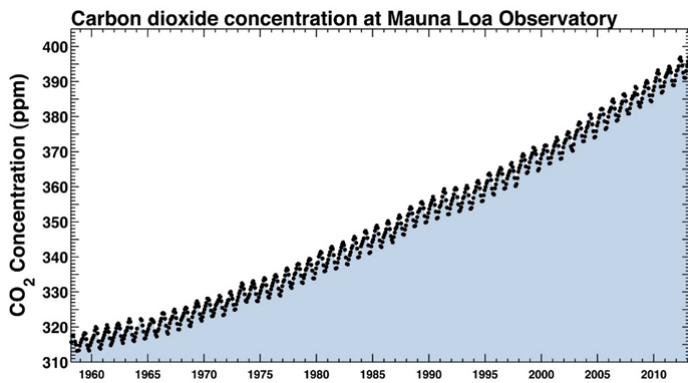
Plants, you could say, take one big breath every 24 hours. And the planet *as a whole* takes one colossal breath every year! You can see this 'planetary breathing' in one of the most remarkable scientific records ever compiled, the so-called 'Keeling curve'.

Here's a two-year sample of the Keeling curve, 2011-2013.



In 1958, Charles Keeling began recording the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. He did this from an observatory at the top of Mount Mauna Loa, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, about as far as it's possible to get from any big industrial centres. What he found, every year between May and September/October, was a continuous reduction of carbon dioxide levels, followed from November to April by a steady climb back up. You can think of this as one colossal in-breath by the world's plant-life through the spring and summer; then, during the northern winter, the planet's long slow exhalation, when the carbon dioxide breathed out by all the animals (and us) is not getting reabsorbed by all the plants. (The big majority of deciduous plants are in the northern hemisphere, where most of the world's vegetated landmass is, too.)

And here's the continuous Keeling curve, from 1958 up to the present. Take a good look.



Since the Industrial Revolution, humanity has undertaken a new kind of breath. Or rather, our burning of fossil fuels has caused the *planet* to begin one gigantic, continuous exhalation of carbon dioxide, bigger and longer than anything like it for millions of years. And, as everyone now knows, this is throwing our whole climate into chaos, melting the ice-caps, bringing storms, floods, droughts, mass extinctions – possibly, if we carry on like this, our own extinction.

What's to be done? Well, obviously, we have to quit burning fossil carbon – coal, oil, and gas – and we have to quit *now*. (Eating a lot less meat, or none at all, would help, too.)

We need to recognize the connections. Perhaps, most of all, we need to see *ourselves* as just a part of the whole family of life on our wonderful planet. And behave ourselves around the family table! When we can do this, when we quit giving ourselves airs as the Lords of Creation, then perhaps there's a chance.

Meanwhile, don't forget the breathing. It's all connected!

Alan Allport

Encounter with Silence

The First Tuesday Group has been reading *Encounter with Silence* by John Punshon, published in 1987. After a time of reading few Quaker books, I was glad to be offered this opportunity. Years ago I had met John Punshon at Woodbrooke, where he was in charge of studies. In the intervening years I had, when time allowed, been much engaged with the thinking of John

Macmurray. Then I followed the beginnings of the non-theist group among Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting. In other words, I had been sorting out my religious philosophy. Now it is time to get back to my religious practice, and I realise how bare my cupboard can sometimes seem.

Clearly John Punshon is someone to whom the practice of prayer comes naturally, although I don't suppose he would have put it like that. When he first found Quakers, as a student in Oxford, he had to learn how to use the silence, but he already had a tradition of prayer to draw on from his Baptist and Anglican experience. His belief in God was settled and sustaining. For example he says, 'Underlying this way of worship is a conviction about God. It is that our relationship with the divine is formed at many different levels and is experienced at many different intensities... So it is with worship. A one-dimensional relationship with God is a sure sign of spiritual immaturity'. (pp. 64-5).

I can now translate that for myself into a non-theological statement about real experience (as, to be fair, does John Punshon). I do not doubt the reality of his experience or that it is relevant to me and us today. But I can see that the language needs to be adapted and expanded somehow, and my way of doing it for myself does not work for others (I have tried).

He also says, 'Worship means opening the heart, and Quakers will say that silent meeting for worship is one of the very best places where this can happen...' (p. 71). Much of this language can be translated into the language of psychology. And here we encounter the ego. Our conscious self sticks up for itself, but it can also obscure the depths beneath it, making it hard for us to become aware of our deeper self, which may be where our connection with an important wider reality lies. In meeting for worship we can 'let our egos run down'. If we can let go of our fears of losing control, we can begin to see more widely, to discern our place as a person among persons more clearly. This kind of reflection is not popular or even understood in the surrounding culture ('the world', to use an old Quaker expression) and I think we need to understand it and encourage its practice.

Jeanne Warren

Welcome the return of the light!

A dance with the
Greensmith Ceilidh Band with caller

Feb 3rd 2-5.30pm
Quaker Meeting
House 43 St Giles
OX1 3LW

All ages and abilities
Welcome

Tickets in aid of
Friends Action on
Poverty

Pay £7 on the door
Kids free

To book please email
sueandali@gmail.com
or call 07799 133241



Rough Sleeping: The City Conversation

At the end of November I joined about one hundred citizens from voluntary and statutory organisations throughout the city who are concerned about and work with rough sleepers, to have a 'conversation' about how best to help. The ultimate aim of this gathering was 'to ensure that nobody has to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford'.

On arrival at the Town Hall we were allocated to a table of ten people. Each table had a mix of participants and was hosted by a City Council employee. I was working with people from Aspire, Asylum Welcome, Crisis, the Gatehouse, Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT), Oxford County Council, and Simon House. The participants brought diverse knowledge and experience to the table which enlivened our exchanges. Throughout the day we were given questions to discuss at our

table and then asked to feed back answers and queries to the organisers. Questions included 'Why are so many people sleeping rough in the city?' and 'What is the impact of rough sleeping in Oxford?'

We then heard from two people (one of whom had formerly been on the streets) who have been instrumental in setting up the Manchester Homeless Partnership (MHP). This partnership brings together statutory and voluntary bodies working in the sector, homeless people, and people from the arts, business, and action groups. It has transformed the situation in Manchester. The presentation was inspiring, and showed what can be done if people trust each other and work together.

For the rest of the day we discussed the feasibility of creating an MHP-style partnership in Oxford. What would it look like? Would it work? Would the organisations represented join in? What would be the aims, the principles? At the end of a long day some conclusions were reached and decisions made. We would all like to be part of an Oxford Homelessness Partnership (whatever it is to be called).

We agreed to six core principles:

- People are safer off the streets.
- People need shelter and support.
- Everyone can help.
- We are better together.
- Lived experience matters.
- Small change should deliver big change.

There are additional principles we need to talk more about:

- Rough sleeping is unacceptable.
- Every voice should be heard.
- Prevention is better than cure.
- People need help to help people achieve long-term sustainable solutions – such as by helping them into work.
- We should do no harm.
- We should build on small steps.

In time-honoured tradition, a small steering group was set up to take the issue forward (well, you couldn't have 100 people all trying to have their

for Business!). The steering group will be time-limited and will include at least one person with lived experience.

We shall see what happens, but all credit to the City Council for setting this in motion. Let us hope for a future for Oxford in which our most vulnerable neighbours no longer live and die on the streets.

Elisabeth Salisbury



Unspoken Ministry: Nov 2017

At the recent Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting our attention was drawn to, among other things, the prayer given in Numbers 6: 24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

This prayer is recorded in the Bible as having surfaced at a time when socio-political structure was of great significance: the Book of Numbers seems to be all about establishing a social hierarchy both between and within the tribes of Israel.

It struck me that it can be interpreted as an observation about human beings generally. There seems to be a desire, a need, to be recognised and acknowledged, especially by significant others such as those deemed to be in authority. Might this be what drives people to take 'selfies' with someone they consider to be a celebrity? Does the selfie constitute evidence of acknowledgement by someone important, which is then distributed to friends and acquaintances for a second round of acknowledgements from them?

What is it in me that seeks acknowledgement, seeks attention from others? Do I really get an experience of peace when acknowledged by others? What is or could be done with the attention received, apart from craving even more?

John Mason

Homeshare Oxford

Homeshare Oxford brings together older people with a spare room in their house with someone who needs low-cost accommodation in a friendly home and can provide not more than ten hours of help each week. The help could involve companionship and spending time together, but also some assistance with daily tasks such as cooking, light housework, and help with practical things such as IT.

Please visit our website www.homeshareoxford.org.uk for more information about Homeshare Oxford. Please email Homeshare@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk letting us know which accommodation you are interested in.

Here is an example of a current offer of accommodation:

Accommodation, north of Summertown, for male post-grad, or mature student (Ref 031)

Lovely bed-sitting room with adjacent wet-room, in bright and cheerful home, in quiet neighbourhood north of Summertown, Oxford. Off-street parking. Close to bus route. Amounts to £320 pcm. Sharing with an active, sociable 82-year-old man who would like some help with gardening, IT (ipad, printer, smartphone), and possibly a bit of de-cluttering support. The householder is a warm, friendly person who enjoys an active social life and is interested in helping out a younger person with affordable accommodation. This Homeshare might work well for a male post-graduate or mature student with an interest in music, history, and the arts.

Marian Pocock

Flower Rota

We are in need of another person, or some more people, to help with the flowers for the central table on Sundays. You will not be out of pocket, and no particular expertise is needed. It is a lovely thing to do.

Please contact daphne.hampson@theology.ox.ac.uk 01865.375787. Thank you so much.



Daphne Hampson

God, Words and Us

The First Tuesday Study Group is starting to read: *God, Words and Us: Quakers in Discussion about Religious Difference* a new book from QuakerBooks that has been sent to all Meetings. It contains discussions of the diversity of beliefs held by Quakers. The next meeting will be on 6 February at 7:00 pm in the Garden Room at 43 St Giles. Everyone is welcome, whether you have read the book or not. The Group will not meet during January.

Convened by Elaine Parry: elaineparry@freeuk.com.

Anne Watson

Poems in the Library

Mondays 4:00 pm till 6:00 pm

Monday 15 January Martin Luther King Day poems (themes jump out of his memory)

Monday 19 February (theme HOPE - it is Presidential day in the USA)

Monday 19 March (theme will emerge...)

Stephen Yeo

Can We Talk about the Spirit? Friday with Friends, 12 January 2018

7:00-9:00 pm

Well, we got on very well talking about God for those of you who remember our discussion last year - Can we talk about God?! Following on from that we decided to kick-start the new year with another Friday with Friends entitled 'Can we talk about the Spirit?'. As before we have invited several speakers - familiar faces in the Meeting - to share their varied experience of what 'the Spirit' means in their lives, and what they can point to as its influence. Are we getting in a pickle about language here? Can we talk about being 'led'? And where, in all this, does our ego take part? Is the Spirit a spark, an inspiration, a leader or a healer?

Last time, when God was our topic, we discovered there were many facets to (as Miranda's mother might say) 'what we call God.' Perhaps we will find the same applies to 'The Spirit'. Whatever happens, we know that sharing our stories is deeply enriching. There will be time for conversations and sharing in our usual manner. Come and join in another chance to get to know your fellow Quakers and the journeys that have brought us together at this time. It could surprise us all.

Deb Arrowsmith

Energy Workshops

“As a meeting ‘gathers’... there gradually develops a feeling of belonging to a group who are together seeking a sense of the Presence. The ‘I’ in us begins to feel like ‘we’ ... we suddenly feel a sense of unity, a sense of togetherness with one another and with that something outside ourselves that we call God”
QF&P 2.47

Energy psychology brings together modern Western ideas about the psychodynamics of the mind with ancient Eastern understanding of how energy moves in the body. Energy psychology uses simple techniques to stimulate the body’s subtle energy system. This stimulation can also open up a deep sense of working with a power beyond ourselves. I have found that there is a strong resonance between the connection that we experience with one another in a gathered Quaker Meeting and the experience I can sometimes have when working as an ‘energy’ psychotherapist. There can be the same sense of being guided, that the ministry comes ‘through one’ rather than ‘from one’ and that the source of healing is beyond and contains both therapist and client.

I am one of the teachers on the Converging Streams team. This is a small network of psychotherapists who teach energy psychology techniques to other therapists. We have been using 43 St Giles as a training venue for our Oxford courses. This spring, we are offering two short workshops at 43 which we hope may also be of interest to Quakers who are not therapists.

An Introduction to Energy Psychotherapy on Saturday 3 March (9:30 – 1:00 pm).

This workshop is open to anyone who is interested in learning about Energy Psychotherapy and discovering how to use EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), a simple self-help tool for managing emotional stress. There is no charge for the workshop, but donations for MEET in Oxford will be welcome. (Meet in Oxford = Making EMDR & Energy Therapies more accessible in Oxford. EMDR = These are two forms of trauma focused therapy which are offered at very low cost at 43 St Giles on Mondays.). Contact me on therapy@greenfig.org.uk if you would like to book a place on the workshop.



Energy rides on the breath on Saturday 28 April (10:30 am - 3:30 pm).

Energy psychology methods often include directions to breathe in particular ways. This workshop offers a deeper understanding about the principles behind such directions which are drawn from Sufi and yogic knowledge of the power and the mystery of breath. There will be both teaching and practices that focus on the heart and the breath. These practices are designed to facilitate a deeper connection to the Divine within. Contact Heather Redington on hc.redington@googlemail.com to book a place on the workshop. The workshop is offered free to members and attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting/ OSAM.

Sandra Figgess

Early Winter Retreat... And Thinking Forward to Summer

Cake-makers, soup and simple colourful lunch-makers, beautiful found-object collectors, artists, poem-finders and readers, brazier keepers and lighters, garden wanderers, meditators, retreat-room writers, image-makers and decorators, office organisers, welcomers, Friends who know about how our planet breathes in and out by day and night... and other users of our quiet spaces at 43 St Giles... THANK YOU to all thirty of us who gathered to meet our ENTERING THE SLEEP MODE, EARLY WINTER RETREAT on a sunny Saturday (just before the snow came) on 8 December 2017. Our hibernations proved genuinely restorative. £200 was sent to OXFAP to help local people in need, this time after all our food costs had been met.

Our next retreat at 43 will be on Saturday 2 June. We will limit numbers to 35, so book early for Summer! Help with ideas and material, as well as spiritual help, will be very welcome at any time between now and then. Please contact Jacqui or Deb in the office – office@oxfordquakers.org

Stephen Yeo

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2018

Tuesday 2	7:00 pm	Management Group Meeting	Wednesday 17	1: 45-3pm pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Monday 8	4-6pm	Pastoral Care Group	Wednesday 17	6-8pm	Enquirers Meeting – History of The Society
Tuesday 9	7:00 pm	Premises and Finance Group	Thursday 18	6-8pm	Elders Meeting
Wednesday 10	6:45 pm	SEE Justice Group	Wednesday 31	6-8pm	Enquirers Meeting - Structure, Business Meetings, Jargon
Friday 12	7:00 pm	Friday with Friends- Can we talk about the Spirit? <i>The Gees' Trip to Kenya</i>			PLEASE NOTE: NO MEETING FOR WORSHIP FOR BUSINESS OR FIRST TUESDAY GROUP THIS MONTH
Saturday 13	10:00-	Area Meeting in Oxford - OSAM			
Monday 15	4-6pm	Poems in the Library – Martin Luther King			

From Quaker Faith and Practice

In this century the practice of journal keeping is being explored as a way of becoming aware of the patterns of our inner life, of growing in self-knowledge and discovering our own gifts and possibilities... Keeping a journal is just one way ... of beginning to re-create your life. At its most basic it is a decision that your life has value and meaning and deserves the effort of recollection and reflection. It is also a decision that what you are living and learning is worth recording. That decision has its roots in a very deep layer of gospel truth.

Jo Farrow, 1986

Quaker Faith and Practice, 2.79

Top Floor Flat at 43 St Giles

The top floor flat at 43 St. Giles will become available for rent from mid-March 2018. The flat is 2-bedroomed with a sitting room, kitchen, and bathroom. The rent is £1050 pcm plus £90 utilities charge and council tax. The flat is managed on behalf of the Meeting by *Leaders* estate agents in Headington. Details will be available from *Leaders* in mid-January and they will also organise viewings. To register an interest please contact *Leaders*: headington@leaders.co.uk / T: 01865 764533. Reference: Oxford Quaker Meeting Flat.

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)