



# Forty-Three newsletter

Number 486  
October 2019



Oxford Friends Meeting  
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

## Open Doors 2019

Open Doors on 14-15 September was a tremendous success, thanks to all our amazing volunteers, many of whom went the extra mile (up and down the garden) by doing additional shifts to greet and welcome our large number of visitors. We were open from 10:00 to 16:00 on Saturday and saw 358 adults, 20 children, and two dogs. On Sunday we were open from 13:00 to 16:30 and were visited by 195 adults and 15 children (alas no dogs). Among our many guests were visitors from Australia, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, New Zealand, Poland, and the US. One of our members met a young man from China who had attended the same American college as she had many years previously (Earlham College, in Richmond, Indiana). Many of us found points of connection with individual visitors.

As ever, the reasons given for wanting to visit were varied, with "I've walked past your door for years and always wondered what lay behind" the most likely. But quite a few guests had a Quaker connection in their family past, and were genuinely interested in finding out more about us. Most memorable was the visitor whose 17C Quaker ancestor had been imprisoned for nine years for

holding a Meeting for Worship in his garden.

As well as the garden at 43 – top marks from everyone – there were exhibitions in the library on Quaker peace work, and in the garden room on our renovation project – including the emphasis on sustainability. Friends sitting in the Meeting House were questioned on Quaker beliefs and values, and the runners taking visitors through from the front door had to be prepared for anything. The children's garden equipment was a great success.

**OXFORD**  
**OPEN**  
**DOORS**

Many thanks to Maddy Aldis Evans, Alan Allport, Virginia Allport, Judith Atkinson, Steve Cappleman, Anthea Clarke, Marieke Clarke, Val Ferguson, Paul Fine, Sheila Forbes, Sandra Figgess, Jill Green, Elizabeth Johnston, Tony Joyce, Maja Korica, Sarah Lasenby, Johanna Longmore, John Mason, Amna Mujahid, Brigid Schroer, Val Speechley, Jeanne Warren, Anne Watson, Glen

Williams Kath Wilson, Keith Wilson, Patricia Wright, Caroline Worth, Charles Worth.

What an array of talent – but we could still do with more volunteers to welcome our visitors. Please look out for the second weekend in September next year, and come join us. I guarantee you'll be exhausted but exhilarated.

**Elisabeth Salisbury**

**Deadline for contributions to the November 2019 issue: noon, Monday 21 October**

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org), or a paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any editor. Items for the calendar (on the last page) can be emailed to [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org).



## Giving and Receiving – A New 43 Newsletter Section

Many of you will have read the article in last month's 43 Newsletter lighting ways to overcome reticence when asking for money to help maintain and open up the premises at 43.

Inspired by this, and more particularly by Deb's story of the pleasure and success of raising money for Garden Room work by offering the service of carpet cleaning in exchange for donations, we are beginning a new service column in the newsletter: *Giving and Receiving*. In this, anyone interested can specify the service they are looking for, or offering, and also the amount to be donated, if they so choose. A fair basis for donations might be the living wage of £10 per hour. For example:

| Service                                     | Name             | Contact details | Donation (optional) |
|---|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Help dividing and re-planting iris rhizomes | Juliet Henderson | 0781 315 8511   | £20                 |
| Offer group French conversation lessons     | X                | X               | X                   |

Apart from ensuring that we manage to make the Meeting House premises more sustainable, a bit of G & R service offers a fun way to share our talents and get to know other Quakers in a new context. Win Win. We await your requests for services or offers in number for the November issue of 43 Newsletter!

**Juliet Henderson**

## All-Age Meetings for Worship

The next all-age meeting for worship is on **Sunday 6 October**, at **10:30**, linking with this year's World Quaker Day theme of *Sustainability: Planting seeds of renewal for the world we love*. This meeting will include a short performance by the children of a story about sustainability, followed by an opportunity for everyone to contribute on the theme of planting seeds of renewal for the world. The December all-age meeting for worship is on **Sunday 1 December**, at **10:30**, and will be on a theme of *giving and receiving*.



Oxford Meeting has a longstanding pattern of holding three all-age meetings for worship each year, in which children, young people, and adults have a chance to worship together. The first half-hour of the main meeting consists of unprogrammed worship, while the children meet in their usual groups. The children then come into the main meeting half way through. In the second half of the meeting there is usually a programmed or semi-programmed aspect. In the past, this has sometimes involved short stories and performances — including several nativity plays, a puppet show about John Woolman, plays about George Fox and Baboushka, and autobiographical stories from homeless people in Oxford — and/or has provided an opportunity for adults and children to share thoughts, ministry, or prayers on a theme — including 'hope', 'growing up in the meeting', 'what gifts do we bring to meeting'. We often have a song, usually chosen from The Leavers' 'Sing in the Spirit: A Book of Quaker Songs'.

Our current pattern of all-age meetings of worship is that these will fall on the first Sundays of October,



December, and April each year, to tie in with the 10:30 single meetings. On the other first Sundays of the month there is a 10:30 single meeting for worship, with separate children's meetings, with children joining the main meeting ten minutes before the end.

**Matthew Gee**  
Clerk of Children & Young People's Committee



### **Eco-Listening Space** **Wednesdays 18:00-19:00 at 43 St Giles**

In August and September we've been trialling a weekly 'Eco-Listening Space' at 43 St Giles. This is a space for Oxford Quakers and others in our wider community to listen deeply to each other and to share thoughts, feelings, and actions as we engage with the climate and ecological crises.

We've had three to seven people each week and some have become regulars. Most weeks we've had two or three rounds of speaking with a talking stone, but sometimes people have wanted a more silence-based approach and we've used worship-sharing. We've had some deep and moving sessions and we may continue to experiment with different approaches.

From 2 October, we'll be meeting every Wednesday from 18:00 to 19:00. All are welcome. Doors open 17:45. Please arrive in good time to start at 18:00.

Any inquiries to Laurie  
Michaelis, [laurie@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:laurie@livingwitness.org.uk)

**Laurie Michaelis**



### **Towards a Fossil Free Oxfordshire**

Several campaigning groups use our premises at 43 St Giles as their base for planning their activities. Fossil Free Oxfordshire (see box), for example, meets twice a month in one of our rooms. Their aim is to persuade local government in Oxfordshire to stop investing in the fossil fuel (coal, oil, and gas) industry, which is driving climate chaos. Individual Quakers have been involved in the campaign since the beginning.

***Fossil Free Oxfordshire** is a group of citizens calling on local government pension funds (and other institutions) to move their investments out of companies that explore, extract and distribute fossil fuels – in other words, to stop investing in the causes of climate change and to move their funds to sustainable alternatives such as renewable energy.*

Founded in December 2013, [Fossil Free Oxfordshire](#) chalked up its first success early the following year, when Oxford City Council agreed to move its investments away from fossil fuels. Oxford City Council was the first local authority in the U.K. to commit to doing so. For the past four years Fossil Free Oxfordshire has been working on a much more difficult objective: to persuade Oxfordshire County Council's Pension Fund – valued at more than £2 billion - to move its investments out of fossil fuels.

To date, nine local authorities in the UK have committed to divesting from fossil fuel companies,

Continued next page ...

with another fifteen making partial pledges. Fossil Free Oxfordshire member, Julia Spragg, is convinced that similar progress can be made in Oxfordshire: “Many Green, Liberal Democrat and Labour Councillors in Oxfordshire now understand how influential divesting from fossil fuel companies can be in protecting us from climate change. Since the local elections in May this year, two District Councils in Oxfordshire - which are also significant employers in the County Pension Fund - have changed leadership.”

In the first half of 2019, three of the five district councils in Oxfordshire have declared a ‘climate emergency’ and have called on the County Council to divest. Oxfordshire County Council itself has also ‘acknowledged’ a climate emergency, with a unanimous vote. The County Council’s Pension Fund Committee is now planning a full-day workshop to consider its investment strategy in the light of climate change. Fossil Free Oxfordshire will be one of the invited contributors.

These are all hopeful signs. Oxford Quaker and climate activist, Alan Allport, says: “Soon, we hope, the many thousands of members of Oxfordshire’s local government pension scheme may discover a new sense of relief. Their pension contributions, intended to provide for their long-term future, may no longer be going involuntarily to fund the industry whose products threaten to destroy that very future – the future of civilization and indeed of the human species.”

### Campaign methods

Fossil Free Oxfordshire has used a variety of innovative and tried-and-tested campaign methods to get its messages across to decision-makers on the County Council. These include, for example:

- Presenting a petition to the Leader of the County Council
- Speaking at the County Council’s Pension Fund

Committee meetings to influence specific policy guidelines to take climate change into account

- Demonstrating in public places, for example outside County Hall and in Radcliffe Square on Global Divestment Day 2018
- Lobbying individual County Councillors and Cabinet members to ask them to support divestment
- Addressing County Council meetings to influence the Pension Fund’s investment strategies

Such steps on their own may not seem likely to persuade decision-makers on the County Council of the urgent need to shift pension fund investments away from fossil fuels. Cumulatively however, they might well have that effect.



### A world-wide movement

Divestment from fossil fuels is now a world-wide movement. Starting in 2012, it has rapidly become the largest anti-corporate campaign anywhere in the world. Well over 1,000 institutions have committed to cutting their ties with the fossil fuel industry. These include faith-based organisations such as the World Council of Churches, Britain Yearly Meeting, the Unitarians and the Lutherans. Universities such as Edinburgh and Oxford Brookes have also joined in - though, shamefully, not yet Oxford University.

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Even the Norwegian sovereign wealth fund - at a trillion dollars, the world's largest fund of investment capital - has undertaken to divest from fossil fuels, as well as European insurance giants AXA and Allianz. In 2018 New York City committed to divesting its \$189 billion, and London City Council has followed suit. By the end of 2018 a total of nearly \$8 trillion of investments had been withdrawn from the fossil fuel industry worldwide.

There is every reason to hope that these encouraging developments will continue to spread and will help to save life on planet earth from destruction. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, when speaking about the struggles of reformers who aim to change society for the better: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

Note: Anyone interested in playing a part in Fossil Free Oxfordshire's activities is welcome to attend their fortnightly meetings at 43 St Giles, Oxford. To check on the date and time of the next meeting, please use the email address: [fossilfreeoxon@gmail.com](mailto:fossilfreeoxon@gmail.com).

**Glen Williams**



## Poems in the Library

for October, November, and December

Monday 21 October, 16:00 till 18:00, when the

(voluntary) theme will be *Uncanny*

Monday 18 November, 16:00 till 18:00, when the

(voluntary) theme will be *The Body*

Monday 16 December, 16:00 till 18:00, when the

(voluntary) theme (and objects to share) will be

*Puddings and Pies*

Further to these delightful sessions of 'Poems I Like and Why I Like Them', which take place every month among ourselves, there is the equally delightful prospect of the fundraising readings in the Meeting House as listed below. It would be wonderful if we could each invite along a friend and some acquaintances who maybe don't know about 43 St Giles, but who might enjoy these sessions.

## YOU ARE INVITED TO POEMS IN THE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

43 St Giles, Oxford

free admission + a collection + refreshments

18:30 for 19:00 till 21:00

**Saturday 5 October**, when **Jenny Lewis** will cast new light on old texts, from her celebrated book *GILGAMESH RETOLD* (Carcanet, 2018). Jenny will share lively questions, evoke answers and – by means of her poems – discuss approaches to translation, and much more.

**Saturday 12 October**, when **Philip Gross** and **Lesley Saunders** will read from their book *A PART OF THE MAIN: A CONVERSATION* (Mulfran, 2019), a dialogue, even an improvisation, born of the difficult feelings and public discord arising from the events of 2016.

**Saturday 16 November**, when **Fiona Sampson** will read from her forthcoming collection *COME DOWN* (Little, Brown, Feb 2020), an exploration of belonging to place and to a family.

**Saturday 23 November**, when **Lucy Newlyn** will talk about creativity and read from her new collection, out this very November, *VITAL STREAM* (Carcanet, 2019).

**Saturday 14 December**, when 43 St Giles' own **Poems in the Library Group** will lead – and invite YOU to present – a *Poem I like, (not by yourself!) and why I like it'*. Bring a poem to an open-mike-and-mince-pies celebration of *poiesis*, or the 'making' of our own friendly passion.

**Stephen Yeo**

## Friday with Friends Religion as Gender Politics

Friday 11 October 19:00 for 19:30

Given that Christianity is a myth, there is the question as to why it takes the form it does. It may be that it performs the function of consolidating male normativity, while casting woman into the position of 'the other'. But it has also served to carry human awareness of that which is 'God'. Can we now move beyond it, expressing otherwise that awareness?

We are privileged to welcome Daphne Hampson, a systematic theologian, to lead this discussion. She held a Chair in 'Post-Christian Thought'.



## Friday with Friends Friendly Fours

Friday 8 November 19.00 - 21.00

Led by Juliet Henderson

In many ways, my mystical and earthly experiences in *The Religious Society of Friends* could be summed up in two words: spiritual friendship. For me, this expression weaves together the active spaces of silence and talk with which the Quaker community is built. Friendship may be felt or enacted silently, but it is also expressed in nurturing, inquiring, humorous, and practical exchanges. In both cases, the spirit of God and the testimonies feel more or less actively present. Such experiences have led me to wish to more fully understand the unique nature of this Quaker quality, historically and in our everyday lives and interpretations.

As one way to achieve this end with others, this *Friday with Friends* evening takes inspiration from the former *Friendly Eights* groups. In these, members of Oxford Meeting met on a monthly basis

to explore finding spiritual guidance and new light from each other, as well as have fun (!). The aim of the current initiative – Friendly Fours – is to seek a fresh iteration of this.

A particular emphasis during the evening will be placed on broadening and deepening our understanding of our status as Friends, conferred on Quaker members from the start. Questions at the outset of the evening, intended to inform discussion, will be considered by 'Four Friends' and will include:

- What did the term 'Friend' mean historically in relation to Quaker worship and action?
- How does the term guide us to see things in their wholeness in our everyday life and actions?
- In what ways can consciousness of the rich dimensions of the term 'Friend' help in imagining and implementing the Quaker testimonies?
- What are individual feelings and responses to the term? What are yours?

The anticipated outcome of the evening is an invigorated understanding of the term historically and personally, and a range of suggestions and ideas to inform the organization of a programme for future meetings of Friendly Fours. Do come along to listen to and participate in this discussion.

(Vegan)-Friendly flapjack will be provided.

**Juliet Henderson**

**An advance date for your diary!**

### **Retreat Day for All F/friends**

**Saturday 23 November**

**9:30 to 16:00 in and around the Meeting House**

This will be an all-day event for the whole of our meeting, deepening our F/friendships and worship together.

On this day we aim to deepen our F/friendships with each other and our understandings of worshipping together; this will include eating and talking together.

**Anne Watson  
for all Elders**

# CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER 2019

*All at 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

| Date       | Time                    | Event  |
|------------|-------------------------|--|
| Tue 1 Oct  | 19:00                   | First Tuesday Group  |
| Sat 5 Oct  | 18:30 for 19:00 - 21:00 | Fundraising Poetry Evening: Jenny Lewis                      |
| Sun 6 Oct  | 12:00 - 14:00           | Meeting for Worship for Business                             |
| Fri 11 Oct | 19:00 for 19:30         | Friday with Friends: Religion as Gender Politics             |
| Sat 12 Oct | 18:30 for 19:00 - 21:00 | Fundraising Poetry Evening: Philip Gross and Leslie Saunders |
| Wed 16 Oct | 14:00 - 15:00           | Friends Fellowship of Healing                                |
| Mon 21 Oct | 16:00 - 18:00           | Poems in the Library. Theme: Uncanny                         |
| Sun 27 Oct | 12:30 - 14:00           | Shared Lunch   |



## **From Quaker Faith and Practice**

How can we walk with a smile into the dark? We must learn to put our trust in God and the leadings of the Spirit. How many of us are truly led by the Spirit throughout our daily lives? I have turned to God when I have had a difficult decision to make or when I have sought strength to endure the pain in dark times. But I am only slowly learning to dwell in the place where leadings come from.

**Gordon Matthews, 1987**

**Quaker Faith & Practice, Advices & Queries No. 29.01**

### **MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP**

**1st Sunday of each month**

10:30am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

**2nd 3rd & 4th Sunday of each month**

9:30am & 11:00am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

**Monday**

7:00pm Young Adult Friends at 43 St Giles  
(followed by baked potato supper)

**Tuesday & Thursday**

7:30am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by breakfast at 8:00am)

**Wednesday**

12:15pm at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

**Headington LM worship on Sunday**

10:00am at The Priory,  
85 Old High Street, OX3 9HT

*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.

*The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.*

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