

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 492
April 2020

Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW



It's Life Friends But Not As We Know It.

You will be reading this on your 'device', not having been able to come to your place of worship and pick up a copy of 43 in the real world. But what we knew as the real world until 24 March 2020 has been forced to take on a very different shape. You may already have shared in an online meeting for worship or social gathering of Friends. If not, and if that seems a bit frightening, its ok – we have plenty of time to help and encourage each other up this steep learning curve of life. Remember that advert



“In turbulent times be a Quaker”? Well, we may not have anticipated this sort of turbulence but the results are re-shaping our city, our road traffic, the

pollution, our leisure time, our neighbours, and our shopping habits and needs. I'm not sure this is 'living adventurously'. I know it's by turns amazing and frightening. And I know that everything's better with Friends.

This month I should have been writing to invite you to our Oxford Meeting House Coordinating Group. This informal information-sharing gathering is where someone from each of the different groups across our Meeting comes along to share concerns, actions, activities, suggestions – and has the occasional rant or moan. (Yes, this is the real world!) The idea is to make sure all parts of our large meeting are connected and practicing 'tender listening'. It's been a very positive and enlightening exchange about all the stuff that goes on to keep this Quaker vessel afloat. Well, we are still afloat even if heading off into uncharted waters just now.

The coordinating meeting will still go ahead on 6 April, 17:30-19:00 – this time via Zoom, our online conferencing platform. Now, especially now, we all need to keep in touch.

I went into 43 St Giles recently, on my own, to close up, shut everything down, switch off, unplug, lock up, put away, tidy up everything to leave it all in good order. I left the Garden Room and Meeting House set out as if for meeting as usual, not knowing when we are to return. I'd like you to

Deadline for contributions to the May 2020 issue: Friday 17 April

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to 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.



visualise those rooms over the next few weeks. They are there waiting for you. As your places of worship, they hold a greater sense than ever of waiting; that is imprinted in all our worship wherever we are.

In our worship spaces there is calm, strength, peace, and determination for us all to absorb and to take away with us. I felt that presence come with me as I locked the doors and shut the garden gate – with our friendly thrush singing out perhaps welcoming in a new Spring. He will welcome us back in time.

So don't think we have all walked off the job; we take this spirit with us wherever we go. Jacqui and I continue to work from home. We will send out weekly notices; just keep emailing the office and we'll respond. We are keeping in touch with our part time office, gardening and cleaning colleagues to support them where we can. We keep in touch with our groups who send you all their support and good wishes. They want to come home to us too. We set up online meetings and will also try some social gatherings. How about meeting up for a

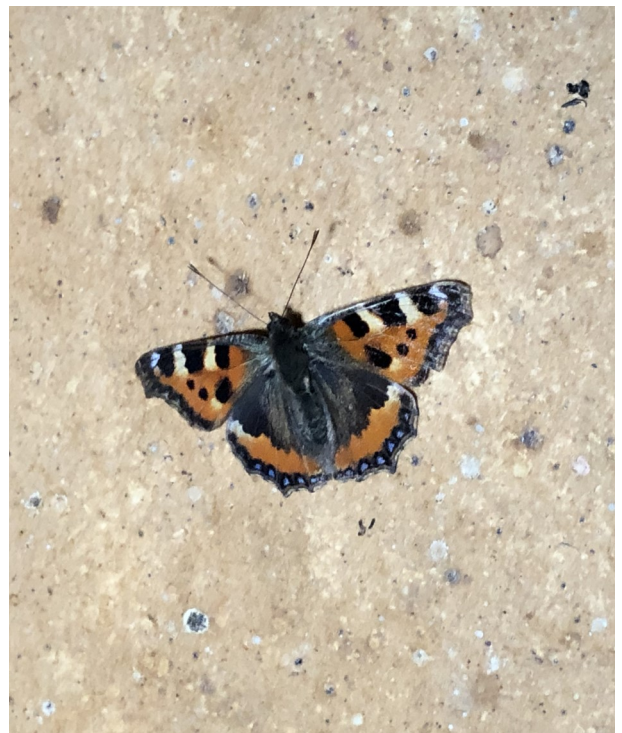
virtual coffee one morning or a lunch on Tuesday? We are working with PCG (Pastoral Care Group) to make sure everyone who may feel too isolated is contacted. We'll post on the website anything we can to help – hopefully take you on a video walk down our spring garden too! We'll try to answer any reasonable request.

If this isn't "Living Adventurously" I don't know what is!

So if you have an idea or suggestion to share, email it in. Anything uplifting and certainly some humour please. Light that candle in the evening – for your spirit, your loved ones, for our nurses, doctors and paramedics, delivery drivers, postmen and women, checkout assistants, and for our undertakers. Do whatever it takes to remember that we are, and always must be, connected to life and service and effort and spirit.

In Norfolk there's a saying "We Do different". Seriously, this is the time we will need to 'do different'. We *must* do different more and more, while knowing that our faith and our actions will be powered by an unchanging spirit that nourishes and supports us all.

Deb Arrowsmith
24 March 2020





Faith

Hold fast to faith though all seems lost,
tie it down at any cost!

It is the weight within the soul,
to counteract life's ocean roll;
It is the glimmer of a light,
that shines when stumbling through the night;
It is the warmth of early sun,
which tells you that the winter's done;
It is the flower that blooms from dust,
amidst decay and filth and rust;
It is the pulse that throbs within,
when sound is drowned by constant din;
It is the drum's unbroken beat,
as troops are rallied from defeat;
It is the hope of things to come,
though every sense is rendered numb;
It is the cure that nature finds,
when all the world puts up its blinds;
It is the rain that damps the fire,
while man is heaping up his pyre;
It is the breath of life on lips,
from which the hold on living slips;
It is the firing of our state,
on which is formed both chance and fate;
It is belief in lessons learned,
before this wheel of life was turned;
It is the thing that grasps the hand,
through which have slipped the years as sand;
It is the rope that's cast once more,
to haul a sinking ship to shore:

Hold fast that rope when all seems lost,
and tie it down, at any cost!

Roger Ede



A Poem from Jill

Jill Green sent the following poem to the newsletter explaining "*I offer up my poem which expresses how my heart is just now when our dear next door neighbour has just been admitted to the JR aged 89 and has tested positive for the virus. He has a heart condition and is diabetic, but today he is rallying again Last year he removed the overhanging branch of a diseased apple tree in our garden with his son in-law helping, so that he could plant a green fig tree in its place. He had grown it especially for us (knowing our email name) from his own tree. I inspected it this morning and found two healthy buds....*"

Several days later Jill was able to report that her neighbour was much improved, and had been discharged from hospital.

All Change for a Virus

We knew it was needed, but not how fast!
Now the future unfolds in the present
And we cannot look back to the past
The foundations we laid were slow and unpleasant.
Now we can see how useful they were
And we thank God for our prophets who
Showed us soon, ways to move without fear
To a love time on earth not just for the few.

So we learn simple joys with each other
Don't fall into traps set by our Mothers
Grow up, fully-fledged as the birds above heads
Flying in formations, leaving our beds
For the air and the woods and the bees all around
Thrill to see the lessons humans have found.

Jill Green
21.03.2020



Quaker Values in Coronavirus Times

We're all experiencing radical, sudden changes to our habitual everyday lives at present, whether responding to expert guidelines on protective measures that will keep the incidence curve flatter and help the NHS cope, our workplaces closing for business, or inner promptings inspired by the fresh quiet in our souls and streets. For me, although my work as a lecturer continues in the virtual world - with students using loving, caring language in google hangouts and emails of the like I have never seen before - this pause in the usual rush of transactional doings seems to be bringing out 'the best in everyone' and requiring us to work out different ways to honour our Quaker and personal values.

Like many, I'm sure, one of my first actions was to sign up to be a street champion, to support those in need. But daughters' protests about various health conditions soon made me realise that given the nature of the Beast that would help no-one. So instead, in the grace of this new quietness, throughout the day I stop to open my heart to receive the love of God, to express my gratitude for those who survive CV attacks, and to hold in my heart all those at the front line of the crisis: the key workers and the patients. Community is now very deeply spiritual – spanning the social distancing and isolation.

This same spirit was present in a [5 Rhythms](#) dance session yesterday, when we congregated – 2 metres apart – on the banks of the Isis. As a conscious intention, we all held in our hearts those who could not dance for all the reasons we are now familiar with. I cannot find words to describe how magical it felt to dance outside in the gloriousness of a sunny first day of spring, nor how the energy of that intention seemed to transform us all and give embodied hope that we will pull through this crisis. Not everyone's cup of tea, I'm sure, but one of my ways of speaking truth to the power of the virus.

On the home front, greater simplicity is very much the new norm. Dare I say I couldn't be happier? Shopping for the bare essentials, reading, drawing, music, bonfires, gardening, and meditation. Keeping body and spirit limber to affront the hours of working online. One of the ways I do this is by making quick very small sketches of the 'masters'

from art books. The aim is not to make perfect copies, but to learn from different artists' approaches to light, line, composition etc.: to feel a living connection to an artist from centuries ago through their work. Here's a quick sketch of El Greco's *Adoration of the Shepherds* I did yesterday evening.:



Oh, and in terms of the renowned Quaker sense of humour, I've been loving some of the memes circulated. Particularly this variant of gallows humour:



"In the year 2020 humanity was threatened with extinction. Panic spread across the planet like never before."

"What were you doing, Grandpa?"

"Just sending memes to friends and stuff."

I wonder what other Friends experiences are of living Quaker values in Coronavirus times?

Juliet Henderson

The following was written by the Czech poet and immunologist Miroslav Holub (1923-1998). Alex Smith offers it to the newsletter.

A dog in the quarry

The day was so bright
that even birdcages flew open.
The breasts of lawns
heaved with joy
and the cars on the highway
sang the great song of asphalt.
At Lobzy a dog fell in the quarry
and howled.
Mothers pushed their prams out of the park
opposite
because babies cannot sleep
when a dog howls,
and a fat old pensioner was cursing the
Municipality:
they let the dog fall in the quarry and then leave
him there,
and this, if you please, has been going on since
morning.

Towards evening the trees
stopped blossoming
and the water at the bottom of the quarry
grew green with death.
But still the dog howled.

Then along came some boys
and made a raft out of two logs
and two planks.
And a man left on the bank
a briefcase, in which bread is planted
in the morning
so that by noon
crumbs may sprout in it
(the kind of briefcase in which documents
and deeds
would die of cramp),
he laid aside his briefcase
and sailed with them.

Their way led across a green puddle
to the island where the dog waited.
It was a voyage like
the discovery of America,
a voyage like
the quest of Theseus.

The dog fell silent,
the boys stood like statues
and one of them punted with a stick,
the waves shimmered nervously,
tadpoles swiftly
flickered out of the wake,
the heavens stood still,
and the man stretched out his hand.

It was a hand
reaching out across the ages,
it was a hand
linking
one world with another,
Life and death,
it was a hand
joining everything together,
it caught the dog by the scruff of its neck

and then they sailed back
to the music of
an immense fanfare
of the dog's yapping.

It was not a question of that one dog.

It was not a question of that park.

Somehow it was a question
of our whole childhood,
all of whose mischiefs
will eventually out,
of all our loves,
of all the places we loved in
and parted never to meet again,
of every prospect
happy as grass,
unhappy as bone,
of every path up or down,
of every raft and all the other machines
we search for at our lathes
and drawing-boards,
of everything we are reaching out for
round the corner of the landscape.

It was not an answer.

There are days when no answer is needed.

Miroslav Holub
contributed by Alex Smith



Walking!

In this extraordinary 'lockdown' we oldies (C. and I are 81 and 82!) are at least allowed to go *walking* ("1 walk a day ... with family members" — i.e. each other).

We have had some good walks – for instance up Tilbury Lane and round to Botley 'Parade', up to the Hurst or along Hurst Lane towards Youlbury. We start about 11:00 and get back for lunch ... and are feeling fitter! Today is obviously windier and colder, so we're advised to wrap up warm. We recommend walking!

All best wishes,

Christopher and Anne Watson



Stephen Yeo said about the following poem "*I have been developing it recently because right now I miss the physicality of Meeting. This includes direct eye contact, person-to-person warmth, indecision about how to use one's own gaze, wondering about how deep 'inside' to go without getting lost in one-self, and the wonderful 'noises off' to be heard in any meeting as the verbal silence deepens.*"

IN THE SHALLOWS?

... right ear cocked,
same-side eye not quite looking
as a tentative bird approaches another,

he pecks, for the quick
of silence.

Clean gravel, limpid puddles
to Weekly Meeting, where

Friends sit, four square
– a tight, unbroken ocean –
making love, from nothing.

They look, he sees
not at each other's eyes, but *with*.

Around this well
everyone seems the same,
no whites, all pupils.

Old buckets on worn-out velvet ropes
go far too deep.

Lids close.
Within such waters, ear lobes
might as well be fins.

Him, him, It, us, us
she...
but when is *we*?

Leonard? No, Helen.
A guide-dog
slurps his water.

Two clicks.
The thermostat at last, or
was it the electric clock?

Ecstatic rummaging,
deep inside a leather bag
a member touches keys, then coins.

India-paper pages
leafed through
crackle like straw, catching fire.

Oxford Quaker Meetings for Worship via Zoom-Rooms

Dear Friends

At the usual times for Meetings for Worship, Elders will be worshipping from their own homes. In parallel, a **Zoom-Room** will be open so that those who join with a camera-enabled machine can see and be seen, and those who join by phone can hear and be heard.

Joining Rooms open 15 minutes before the scheduled time.

It is recommended that on your first time to be sure to join early in case there are any hiccups.

Time	Full Zoom	By Phone 0131 460 1196 or 0203 051 2874 Key in the ID below
Sunday 9:30 – 10:15	The Zoom codes for these Meetings have been sent to Friends who are on our mailing list. If you aren't on the mailing list and would like to attend any of these Meetings, please send an email to office@oxfordquakers.org	
Afterwords 10:30 – 11:00		
Sunday 11:00 – 12:00		
Mondays 19:00 – 21:00 (Young Adult Friends)		
Tuesday Breakfast 7:00 – 8:00		
Wednesday 12:00 – 12:45		
Thursday Breakfast 7:00 – 8:00		

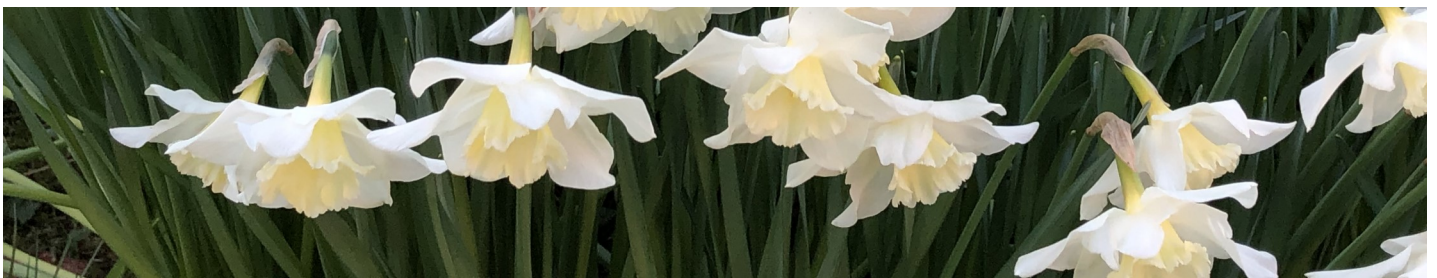
There is an unconnected (no zoom, simply simultaneous) **Meeting for Worship daily from 18:00 to 18:30** initiated by Ursula Howard and Stephen Yeo.

There is an unconnected (no zoom, simply simultaneous) **Meeting for Worship on Sundays from 11:00 to 12:00** initiated by Ellen Bassani.

Oxford Quaker Meeting Social Gatherings via Zoom-Rooms

Time	Full Zoom	By Phone 0131 460 1196 or 0203 051 2874 Key in the ID below
Open Office Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 – 10:30	The Zoom codes for these gatherings have been sent to Friends who are on our mailing list. If you aren't on the mailing list and would like to take part in any of the gatherings, please send an email to office@oxfordquakers.org	
Tuesday Lunches 12:30 – 13:30		
Friday "Elevenses" share coffee at home 11:00 – 11:30		

PLEASE SEE FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS NEXT PAGE



JOINING FROM A MACHINE WITH A CAMERA

When you join a Meeting for Worship, the meeting may have already begun, so go through the following:

- Bottom Left corner of Zoom window, click the microphone icon so as to mute your own microphone (this avoids everyone hearing your background noises);
- Bottom Left corner beside the microphone is a video camera icon. Click this so as to activate the camera on your machine;
- Upper right corner of Zoom window, click the 3 by 3 array of 9 dots to see everyone who is attending.

Warning

At NO TIME click the 'share' icon at the bottom of the zoom window as this forces everyone to see what is on your screen.

JOINING BY PHONE

Mute yourself by pressing *6 on the keypad. It also unmutes.

Put your phone on *speaker* so that the phone doesn't have to be held to your ear

Joining a Meeting for Worship

When you join, the meeting will probably have begun (as it normally would when the first person sits). If you are having trouble with joining, please feel free to unmute and ask for help (before the scheduled Meeting Time).

At the scheduled start time, an elder or convenor will welcome everyone.

If you find yourself moved to minister, click the UnMute button (bottom left of the Zoom window at the microphone icon); wait for a moment or two, then begin with a distinct "Friends" so as to alert people to ministry. At the end of ministering, click the microphone icon to return to the mute state. People on phones use *6.

The elder or convenor will close the meeting with a "Thank You Friends".

Afterwords

There may be opportunities for Afterwords following Meeting for Worship depending on timing.

Leaving a Meeting for Worship

PLEASE click the "leave Meeting" in red at the bottom right of the zoom window.

Collections

Friends may wish to set aside an amount each week, for eventual deposit shared amongst the charities when our collections resume.

Joining a Social Gathering

Follow the instructions above. As Friends drop in the screen will divide to show all participants. As a person speaks the edges of their screen light up green. Stay as long as you wish!



CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2020

As per Zoom-Room details on pages 7 & 8



From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Heed not distressing thoughts when they rise ever so strongly in thee; fear them not, but be still awhile, not believing in the power which thou feelest they have over thee, and it will fall on a sudden.

Isaac Penington
Quaker Faith & Practice, 2.48

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Please note that for the time being, all meetings for worship are via Zoom-Rooms.

1st Sunday of each month

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

2nd 3rd & 4th Sunday of each month

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

Monday

19:00 Young Adult Friends at 43 St Giles
(followed by baked potato supper)

Tuesday & Thursday

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

Wednesday

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

Headington LM worship on Sunday

10:00 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, 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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