

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 495
July 2020



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Prayer for Pentecost

Come, Holy Spirit,
come, Spirit of God,
come with your peace, your power, your light.
Come with forgiveness, courage and hope.

Come, Spirit of God,
unite us with the risen Jesus,
turn us again to the Father of Jesus.
Together they pour You daily into our hearts.

Come now to our suffering world,
sick with a killing virus
and everywhere threatened with silent death,
but most cruelly among your poorest children.

Come to our first responders, our doctors
and nurses and hospital staff,
the men and women who preserve the civic order
and protect us from fire and bring us our food.

Come now to the hearts and minds
of scientists seeking a vaccine for the pandemic,
to all who support their work, bringing to it
in equal measure patience and commitment.

Comforter, we call you, Counselor, Consoler,
Advocate and Paraclete. Come now also to the
borders of our world—between Greece and
Turkey, central Africa and Kenya, Myanmar and
Bangladesh,

where millions on millions of men and women,

and children, helpless before the virus—
have fled violence, are homeless now, without
sure shelter—
your sons and daughters, in such pain, our
refugees.

Come to the hearts and minds of all
who seek to walk with them, and care
and advocate and pledge a future that,
if found, will equally enrich ours as well.

With your gift, the community of believers
who came to be called church was born.
Strengthen us to be working signs for all
humanity to be one, a community of mutual care,
and a sacrament of salvation through your loving
power, united eternally with the Holy Mystery
who gives us Jesus, the Risen One among us, to
bring our suffering yet beautiful world home
forever.

Amen.

Leo J O'Donovan, S.J.*
29 May 2020

Published in America, The Jesuit Review
<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/05/29/prayer-pentecost-pandemic>

*Leo O'Donovan is president emeritus of Georgetown University and director of mission at Jesuit Refugee Service/USA.

S.J. is The Society of Jesus (The Jesuits).

Shared by **Tas Cooper**

Deadline for contributions to the August 2020 issue: Wednesday 15 July

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.

Belly Pots

I've played around with ceramics for many years at an amateur level, but lately I feel I have made something of a breakthrough and I'm so pleased I wanted to share it with friends. The photo below shows two of my most exploratory pots. My aim is to let the pot be held in my hands in the manner of a pot belly. This feels like a valuable contribution to a discussion of positive body image, aesthetics, and how the female body is the space in which many passions are held or directed.

When Juliet Henderson gave me a nudge to write more about these pots, I did rather wonder how I could keep it short! These pots have arisen out of many years of processing what I want my own arts practice to be, how I have experienced my emotional space, and how I have lived in my woman's body. Many conversations with different people have fed the pot-making process.

I use the community ceramics studio in East Oxford, OXPOTS, to make my pots and meet other potters. I've used it on and off for years, and although my ceramics are almost always functional, they have grown in size and scope from the ashtrays I first made as a psychiatric inpatient thirty years ago.

My preference is for large pinch pots. I take a ball of clay (which has been handled to remove excess air), stick my thumb in, work out a hole by pinching with finger and thumb, and eventually fit my whole hand in. I use both hands to ease the clay to a rough bowl shape, dry the clay slightly, and use a serrated or rubber 'kidney' to develop the texture or smoothness of the surface internally or externally. Slightly later in the drying stage when the clay is described as 'leather hard', it is possible to bring nuance into a curve, and a pot wall can have almost skin-like flexibility if handled gently and not too much.

Focussing specifically on vessels has helped me develop my ideas around how we judge what we

can see on the outside, and what is held within. I especially like ceramics for the fact that they are highly unpredictable (particularly for an amateur), and are created in a furnace – these phenomena speak to me.

The OXPOTS studio has a group of regular users on a Thursday night, all of whom support and critique each other's work. We are usually all women, so perhaps it is not surprising that the idea of creating pots that capture a woman's curves from the inside was a welcome one. My first belly pot was made in

2008. The second was

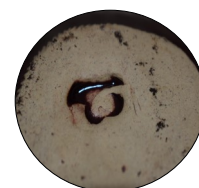
finished in 2019. In between were many fairly insignificant bowls exploring asymmetry, and just getting comfortable with my 'vessel' logic and various glazes. My recent lockdown breakthrough has been photographing my work and trying to

keep the documenting going – and seeing where I am heading. The studio is currently closed due to coronavirus.

Women are often compared to vistas of beauty that are very symmetrical, youthful, and highly manipulated. Holding a curvaceous pot in my hands is an opportunity to enact how I think things 'should' be. 'Woman as vessel' is also a politically charged concept. So making a pot with a pot belly feels audacious! Really to just be in that space making whatever shapes I like is a chance to be playful, irreverent, sensuous, even downright feminist.

I have a maker's mark, which I developed in my early days in the studio. Increasingly I use it on my pots or tiles as a way of identifying my body of ceramic work. I also paint and write – I'm currently working on a collaborative written project about psychiatry and bureaucratisation.

Trio Watson



Message from Intermountain Yearly Meeting, USA

We are heartbroken by the recent murders, terror and injuries visited on men and women of color. We grieve when we see or hear of miscarriages of justice. What affects any of us, affects each of us. We cannot remain silent, or believe that words alone will create change; that is the path to complacency and complicity.

Together with those who have lost friends, loved ones, and acquaintances, we lift up these names and people: George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, Robert Fuller, Breona Taylor, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, missing and murdered indigenous women, immigrants, and too many others who have been victims of systemic racism.

We pray that our hearts will be broken open, helping us to take actions that will help change the face of the legal system, policing, and the way each of us treats every other.

Friend, deal plainly with yourselves, and let the eternal light search you, and try you, for the good of your souls; for this will deal plainly with you; it will rip you up, lay you open, and make all manifest that lodgeth in you; the secret subtlety of the enemy of your souls, this searcher and tryer will make manifest.

~~ Margaret Fell, 1614-1702

As Friends, we often focus on silence ... not as a means of abdicating responsibility, taking no action, but as a way to listen carefully to that still small voice. Often, we find that voice urges us to take action, and to create change where it is needed. There is no one right way to take action. We must each do what we can from where we are. Change making may take many shapes.

We ask, in preparation for our virtual annual sessions, that Friends take some time for serious reflection. Now is a time when we must come together to determine what actions each of us can take, individually, within our monthly meetings, as a yearly meeting, and as the larger Society of Friends. We also ask Friends to consider what actions we can take that are in keeping with the needs of communities of color, rather than simply speaking



words or taking action to make us feel good. We are all weary and grief stricken these days. While our responses to the pandemic must be acknowledged and taken into account, it is our hope that is not used as an excuse to neglect the needs of those communities.

Quakers have historically spoken truth to power, and this is a time when that is absolutely necessary. However, it is not enough...mere words cannot take the place of cooperative action that is focused and ongoing, even after "all this dies down".

We must remain grounded in our Quaker faith and worship, seeking to hear the still, small voice within, while acting in the world. We query ourselves: How do we embrace our change-making power, while remaining grounded in our faith? What action can we take, staying aware that our focus for action must be the stated needs and desires of those with whom we seek to build alliances?

We look forward to discussion of some of these questions in the coming week, and beyond, and finding new ways to take action to create the world that we seek.

Holding each of us in the Light,

Gale Toko-Ross
she/her/hers
IMYM co-clerk

Valerie Ireland
she/her/hers
IMYM co-clerk

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Shared by **Marieke Faber Clarke**



When it Comes to Budgeting and Finance ... Governments *are* Different from Households

In these troubling times when many of us are being forced to worry about our finances, Government finances seem to be in as much trouble as ours. But are they, and should the government be judged on how **we** manage **our** finances? I suggest not.

The headline figures certainly look grim. This year, the Government's budget deficit (expenditure less taxes raised) is forecast to be £300 billion; it could be higher. Though this is high, budget deficits are the norm: in the past 50 years only six have recorded budget surpluses. There are sound reasons for governments running deficits: to keep services going when the economy contracts and taxes fall, and to finance new investments aimed at improving productivity and enhancing future growth prospects. So in principle borrowing makes sense.

The Government borrows largely by issuing bonds (gilts) which it later repays. The money borrowed is called the National Debt, and it has risen steadily over time. In 1974 it stood at £52 billion; today it is about £1,950 billion, some thirty-seven times higher. Of more immediate importance than the size of the debt is the ability to repay it. Last year the Government repaid £36 billion of debt which fell due. Though large, this accounted for only 4% of total Government expenditure. This year debt repayments are forecast to rise to 6% of total Government expenditure, still far lower than in the mid-1980s, when the ratio reached almost 10%. Thus current and even expected debt repayment levels are far from unmanageable.

Now let's look at the revenue side of budgeting. Very few of us are fortunate enough to arbitrarily increase our income, but the Government can – simply by raising taxes. What's more there seems to be some scope to do this as the UK's ratio of tax to economic activity (GDP) is 33.5%, the lowest in

western Europe and among our main trading partners. In Germany, the ratio is 38%, and in France, 46%.

We now come to the biggest difference between your finances and the Government's: through the Bank of England (which it owns), the Government is able to create money, and it has recently done this through a scheme called Quantitative Easing (QE). In brief, to try to stimulate the economy by lowering the cost of commercial loans, the Government has been buying back from the private sector some of the bonds (gilts) it earlier issued. It has been able to do this because the Bank of England credited it with the funds required. The sums involved are large: QE funds raised since 2008 total £745 billion, of which £300 billion have so far been raised this year. QE has not only been achieving the boosting of the economy (though at the cost of increasing inequalities), but importantly, the money created has not led to a rise in inflation.

But there is more. By buying back its own bonds with its own (newly created) money, the Government now becomes the owner of its own debt – in effect that debt no longer exists. As the £745 billion of QE funds amount to well over a quarter of total National Debt, this is hugely significant in terms of lowering future debt repayments. For the future, there is now discussion about the government (judiciously) extending its money-creating role to help fund and kick-start other large emerging national priorities such as The Green New Deal, and addressing the growth of inequalities.

This article has scarcely scratched the surface, but I hope it has done enough to show the differences between the way the government runs its finances and the way you and I run ours.

Brief Reflections on My Whiteness

Informed by the first session of the Quaker-led 5-week workshop 'Black Lives Matter: Whiteness and Racial Justice Learning' facilitated by Turning the Tide GB and Woodbrooke, I share a few reflections to feed into conversations we are all having.

To give a context to who I am in relation to my whiteness: I come from an all-white family, was brought up in a small Buckinghamshire village with no black or BAME people living there or attending the primary school, and I went to a very white girls' grammar school. So my only encounters with people of colour were with the Pakistanis who lived in the streets in Aylesbury leading from my secondary school to the bus station. I want to own this since it informs what I think. I'm not sharing it to make it too personal and individual. It's just some of the history of my own racialising as a white individual who belonged to an 'us' different to a 'them'.

Going to university and living for 17 years in very multicultural parts of Paris were the movements that allowed me to establish friendships and working relationships with people of colour. In these contexts, whilst I was aware of structural racism – for example in the more frequent stopping of people of colour for ID checks – I was not aware of racist behaviour in my own social groups. Personally, this meant I felt genuinely neutral about colour and racial difference. However, with the recent horrific killing of George Floyd, all the outrage and protests that followed, and the ethnic disparities of COVID-19, I have come to understand that this assumption of neutrality is/was a big part of the problem.

Now my emotional and intellectual priorities are to: unravel my own relationship to privilege and oppression; explore what my white body has given me through my life; look at the ways racism and supremacy exist in my life; own that I am (we all are) racist since that has been educated into me; lean into the discomfort of my white privilege; commit to working for racial justice.

When doing this work I recognise that racism is systemic, ongoing, part of the 'deep entanglement

of accumulation, dispossession and violence' that defines 'racial capitalism' (Joshua Virasami, *The Guardian*, 8 June 2020) and that 'racism is a system of privilege conferred on whites' (Robin DiAngelo, paper on White Fragility, *Int J Critical Pedagogy*, 2011).



One notion from this week's readings that particularly struck home was DiAngelo's argument about discourses of universalism and individualism, whereby whites are taught to see their own perspectives as objective and representative of reality and hence the norm for humanity (e.g. 'we are all equal'). This means whites do not see themselves as having an identity. White people are just people. This links to discourses of individualism (very much linked to capitalist regimes of discourse) that encourage whites to see themselves as unique and original, and so somehow untouched by the actions of their racial group. So it's other 'bad' white people who are racist, not 'them'. I own that I have at times thought like this.

I also found three questions asked in *Race and Privilege in Europe* (produced by the Quaker Council for European Affairs) very constructive: 'What do we want to unlearn? Who do we want to disempower? We can't not be white, so how do we want white to be?' I don't have clear-cut answers to these yet. Perhaps you do? For the moment I'm staying with

the personal, unstitching the deep seams of my whiteness and blindness – a task that will never finish. One that is spirit-led as well as politically driven.

To conclude, I do not write this to exonerate myself from my own entanglement with the history and practices of white supremacy. I know full well, as my poet friend Alan Buckley put it, that I have a statue of Rhodes inside me that I can only take down by chipping away at it with economic and political action and ongoing relearning. I am white, privileged, and a subject of racial capitalism.

Juliet Henderson

Flowers for Meeting for Worship



If there are people who could offer to bring flowers for MfW please to let me know. Just to do it for one or two weeks would be most kind. Otherwise elders will be fetching flowers from our garden. It will be some time before the regular providers of flowers will be back in circulation. Thank you so much for your help.

Daphne Hampson (Convenor of Flowers)
daphne.hampson@theology.ox.ac.uk



Silver Linings Part Two – A Modest Proposal

How can we avoid going back to the old ways when COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed? Will we see our homeless friends back on the streets and sleeping in doorways? I have a modest proposal. During the pandemic the council has housed two hundred people in hostels, hotels, and student accommodation. There are about forty colleges in the university. Here's the plan.

Each college should house five previously homeless people. This would have three silver linings:

- Students would benefit by living alongside people who currently don't have their advantages and who could shine a light on our way of living.
- Homeless people would be housed, fed, and integrated into society.
- The University would earn acclaim and plaudits nationwide for removing a former blight on our beautiful world class city.

Win – win – win.

Now can someone make it happen?

Elisabeth Salisbury



Tears are not enough

Many years ago I spent six weeks during the Civil Rights Movement in the South of the USA. I was young, impressionable, idealistic and full of love for humanity. What I witnessed there changed my life.

The beatings, the humiliations, the shooting of small black children attending a white church left me feeling horrified, helpless, anguished. I left the South in deep anxiety and depression.

Yet I did nothing. I cried a lot. That made no difference.

As the years passed, I joined in solidarity with ongoing civil rights movements in the North, in protest at the ongoing injustices and inequalities perpetrated on black citizens.

My daughters were born in the USA (New Mexico), and my heart aches at the horrors they still perceive now, all these years later, as witnessed by the recent murder of a black man by a policeman in Minneapolis. The history of slavery and white supremacy is at the root of this unconscionable travesty and must be addressed at all levels, politically, socially and morally. It is the obligation of white people to stand united against these injustices, and to bear witness.

I joined SURJ (Show Up for Racial Justice), based in the USA, a call to the white community to join the struggle. It is a struggle not confined to the USA. Fear of, and violence against, people of colour is

found worldwide, including in my own country, the United Kingdom.

There is a wider and integral dilemma: the whole issue of non-violence and peace. Upon return to the United Kingdom I camped at Greenham Common, endured slurs and garbage thrown by passing cars, watched women embrace the nuclear base, championed the rights of immigrants to dignity and respect, participated in non-violent demonstrations, joined Women's Rights movements. I became an activist. And the memory of the South, and my non-participation, haunted me still.

Now in the hindsight of old age and a certain wisdom born of experience, pain, and much soul-searching, I have learned the answer to my inaction of so long ago. It is my responsibility as a human being and a Friend to show up, to stand up, to witness and protest the violence in the justice system. How can Quakers do this?

We witness. We consult. We listen. We make art. We hold people in the light, not only the murdered, but the ones who wield the sword.

All have that of God in them.

My mission for what remains of my life is to help them to find it.

Carol Macfie Lange
31 May 2020



Note from Sarah Lasenby:

The following is an article written by one of my Oxford acquaintances, a man of African Jamaican heritage, who is anxious for people to think about what is needed to improve race relations in Britain. I think the issue of racism (NB not inequality) is so timely that we should be looking at it among Oxford Quakers. This piece could be a starting point for discussion. The issues around racism in this country are coming to the fore. I hope this article helps make these issues more understandable.

It's Not 'Inequality': It's Outright Racism

"Britain needs leadership on race inequality – not just another review" thunders Parliament's foremost African-skinned MP, Mr David Lammy (Labour Member for Tottenham). Mr Lammy identifies 'inequality' as the chief injustice that prevents England's African-skinned people from fulfilling their potentials. But his use of the term 'inequality' (a popular left-wing word) should scare all of England's African-skinned subjects for two reasons.

First, Mr Lammy is certainly Parliament's 'big beast' on issues of discrimination and racism; mislabelling 'racism' as 'inequality' is especially harmful coming from someone who is powerfully influential. He spoke with far more conviction when identifying and chastising Parliament for its racism and its collusion with the Home Office when, in 2018, more than 80 English subjects of Caribbean heritage were forcibly and illegally exiled to the Caribbean.

Lammy's finest hour was his excoriating criticism of Parliament's racism, when he asked how Her Majesty's Government could allow, support, and fund the illegal exiling of its own subjects. This Windrush crisis led to much heart-searching – but not to significant changes.

Mr Lammy's Windrush Scandal address was remarkable, but one was forced to question why the other eighteen African-skinned Members of Parliament remained mute. Where oh where are the Bernie Grants – the true conviction parliamentarians – of today? Her Majesty's Parliament is composed of

ideologically unimaginative career-centred MPs. Are they so contented with the huge financial benefits Parliament gives them that they are happy to be spectators whilst, on the basis of skin colour, their own people are subjected to humiliation, detention, and illegal exclusion?

African-skinned Dawn Butler, Labour's front bench shadow minister for Women and Equalities, was too preoccupied trying to achieve 'equality' for liberal Caucasian middle-class women to notice or care that Parliament was busily exiling people of her own heritage.

As a front bench shadow minister, Dawn Butler made no memorable contribution to the defence of Caribbean-heritage subjects who were being illegally exiled to the Caribbean.

Second, according to Parliament's 2017 Race Disparity Audit (RDA), 'inequality' is an erroneous way of describing the skin-colour-based discrimination and racism meted out daily to African-skinned English subjects by all of England's public and corporate institutions.

Not one male or female has emerged from amongst England's African-skinned subjects to campaign for justice for England's African-skinned population, nor have England's many churches with African-skinned members given rise to England's equivalent of Dr Martin Luther King. England's African-skinned subjects have not even created a national or regional charity or lobby group to provide legal or cultural or historical assistance.

The complete failure of England's African-skinned subjects to provide a counterbalance to the colour discrimination and racism that infects all of England's institutions is catastrophic. This failure urgently requires Professor Jordan Peterson's psychological critique. What is the impact on African-skinned people of living in a society where their skin colour is reviled, lampooned, and regarded as inferior?

Because 'inequality' does not describe colour-based injustice, applying this Marxist socialist remedy, Mr Lammy, will not assist England's African-skinned

people to defeat public and corporate institutional racism. Moreover, Mr Lammy, for the past four hundred years, Caucasian Europe has too often regarded African people as inferior beasts of burden at worst or as loyal infantile house slaves.

Caucasian European people's racist beliefs were supported by their men of 'science' such as the Rev Dr Charles Darwin and his eugenics-pioneering cousin Sir Francis Galton, who likened African and native Australians unto simians.

The worst aspect of Caucasian Europe's brutalisation of African-skinned people for four hundred years is the complete lack of regret, apology, restitution, or financial assistance for the rehabilitation of the African-skinned people, who were psychologically damaged by being made to feel inferior even in the eyes of the Caucasian Christian Church and the Caucasian-looking Christian God and his Angels.

Today, Mr Lammy, African-skinned people are not historically 'equal' with Caucasian people. Therefore, Mr Lammy, the application of left-wing-inspired policies of 'equality' are of no assistance with fighting, resisting, or defeating colour-based discrimination and racism.

The Labour Party's concentration on policies to address 'inequality' is of no assistance to England's African-skinned subjects' struggle to defeat skin-colour racism. I, as an African-skinned English subject, will never in my lifetime be historically equal to a Caucasian-heritage human being no matter how lowly or deprived the Caucasian man or women might be.

African-skinned people live on a planet where we tacitly accept the superiority of all Caucasian people.

These statements are certainly shocking, but Parliament's last three Commissions into English colour discrimination and racism confirms this perspective.

The Labour Party's concentration on 'equality' as the solution to racism is of no assistance to England's African-skinned people who struggle against racism. The majority of the eighteen African-skinned Rt Hon

Members of Parliament proved themselves to be useless in preventing the Windrush scandal. In her report into the illegal exiling of Caribbean heritage subjects in 2018, independent adviser Wendy Williams blamed Parliament, the Home Office, and the Civil Servants. Their collective

ignorance regarding the contribution that African and Caribbean people have made to the Monarchy, the wealth of Parliament, and the English people contributed to the abusive 'hostile environment' policy that directly created the Windrush exiles.

If England's African-skinned subjects want to identify, address, and defeat English institutional racism, then we must create our own political party, political lobby, and academic associations.

If Boris Johnson is serious about Black Lives Matter he should ask Parliament to 'equally' assist England's African-skinned subjects with a £75m public gift (just as £75m of public money was granted to English Jewry in 2017 to build a museum in central London), not make an announcement about yet another Royal Commission into the effects of English corporate and institutional racism.

Chukka Artwell
Shared by **Sarah Lasenby**



CALENDAR FOR JULY 2020

During the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic,
most meetings and events are being held via Zoom-Rooms.

Please contact the office for more details.

Email: oxford@oxfordquakers.org

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From Quaker Faith and Practice

*Our Society is often blind to the gifts and richness of other traditions
and this cultural chauvinism impedes its development.*

Racism within the Society of Friends

is perhaps more damaging because it is unconscious

and springs from stereotyped assumptions:

'And no harm is meant by it. Harm may be done but is never meant'.

Epistle of black, white, Asian, and mixed-heritage Friends, 1991

QF&P from 10.13

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

For more information, contact the office at

office@oxfordquakers.org

+44 (0)1865 557373

Sunday: Meetings for Worship

9:30 & 11:00

**First Sunday of each month:
Meeting for Worship for Business**

12:15

Monday: Young Adult Friends

19:00

Tuesday & Thursday: Meeting for Worship

19:30

Wednesday: Meeting for Worship

12:15

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. The same applies to calendar items.

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

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