

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 491
March 2020



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Living in the Light in Rwanda

In November last year many Oxford Friends – and some Friends at Colthouse in the Lake District – bought Christmas and greeting cards made by a women's group in Karongi, in western Rwanda. Formed in 2016, the group has 20 members and calls itself 'Urumuri', which means 'Light' in the local language, Kinyarwanda.



The members of Urumuri are all affected by HIV or poverty or both. From the outset Urumuri has been mentored and supported by the Quaker organisation HROC (Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities). Twelve members of Urumuri are members of the local Friends Church.

The income from the sale of cards made by the members of Urumuri has been distributed evenly amongst the 20 members of the group.

The activities of Urumuri are by no means confined to making Christmas and greeting cards. The members of the group also carry out other activities, for example:

- Sharing and helping to solve family problems;
- Small-scale savings and credit schemes;
- Income-generating activities;
- Sharing information about healing;
- Mutual spiritual support through praying together.

Four members of Urumuri made statements that they would like to share with Oxford Friends, as follows:

Rachel (aged 38), who is a member of the Friends Church, is married and has two sons. She says:

"Ten years ago I suffered from a fistula, and at the same time one of my sons became sick. Almost all members of my husband's family hated me and wanted to chase me out of the family. By chance, I visited a Christian woman from the Friends Church. She prayed with me and helped me to get hospital treatment for a week. She also brought me food, and some other members of the Friends Church also helped me with medical expenses, so that I

Deadline for contributions to the April 2020 issue: noon, Wednesday 18 March

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.

recovered my health.

“Working with the group that made the cards helped me to share my problems. The money I got from the cards will help me pay the school fees for my sons, and also to pay for our medical insurance. We praise the Lord for bringing us this project.”

Providence (aged 42) has four children and was deserted by her husband after she tested HIV-positive. She says:

“We live in a house which I have to pay rent for every month. I don’t have a job. I can earn some money only by working on other people’s land. You can imagine how painful life is for our family. But with the money from the card project I can develop my business by selling maize and mangoes. The project also trained me in how to save money.”



Members of the Urumuri Centre

Jeannette (aged 36) has four children and is a member of the Friends Church. She says:

“I am a very small market trader and my husband works as a house builder. He was in jail for seven years because of the Tutsi genocide. After he was released, we spent two years without belonging to a Church. Then in 2016 we met some people from the Urumuri group who had been trained by HROC in healing from trauma, in small saving schemes and making cards for sale, and we decided to join them in the Friends Church. Now we plan to generate more income and buy a small plot of land for our house. We thank God for bringing HROC into our lives and for training us to work in a team to earn money.”

Esther (aged 36) is a widow living with her four children. She is HIV-positive. One of her sons is extremely ill-disciplined and has served several jail sentences. She says:

“I cooperate with the Urumuri members and they counsel me. The card-making project has opened my mind and is starting to benefit me. I can develop my business by selling more goats. I will also use the money to pay medical insurance and school fees for my children.

“The trainers who helped us join this group have made a big difference to our lives. We’ll never stop praying and sharing the Word of God with our church members.”

The 20 women from Urumuri also sent us the following joint statement: “We, the women of the Urumuri group, thank God and HROC, and Oxford Friends Meeting, for training us to make cards and finding clients abroad, and also to be healed from the trauma we have experienced in our lives. We want to help start at least two more women's groups, who will be trained in trauma healing and savings-and-credit schemes, and who will also collaborate with us. We also want to pray for and support financially poor women who are living with HIV/AIDS.”

Glen Williams

PS.	
Income received from sales of cards made by members of Urumuri was as follows:	
Card Sales at Oxford Friends Meeting	£452.45
Card Sales at Colthouse Friends Meeting	£105.00
Total	£557.45
In addition, sales of costume jewellery made and donated by Kath Wilson amounted to £179.00. The total amount sent to Urumuri via HROC was £736.45	

The Oxford Imposter

Imposter Syndrome: it's been my companion for many a year, yet it's only recently I've learned its name. For anyone who doesn't know already (maybe I was the only one!) it's a phenomenon most frequently encountered in the academic world. It's when someone feels that they've been accepted on a course by a fluke, and that in reality they lack the ability and knowledge needed to complete their studies. They live in constant fear of being 'found out'.

Where did I make my acquaintance with Imposter Syndrome? Not in the hallowed halls of academe, but at Oxford Meeting! When I started attending, around ten years ago, I knew next to nothing about the other members of our Meeting. Arrogantly I assumed that they were a lot like me but, as we were in Oxford, considerably more intelligent. Over time, however, a somewhat different picture started to appear.



Little by little I found out that I was surrounded by people who were not only exceptionally intelligent but had also done amazing things: founded charities, worked with underprivileged people around the world, served at Friends' House and in other Quaker institutions, taken asylum seekers into their own homes – and much more. Then there was the ministry in Meeting, which revealed that other Friends were discovering profound truths and insights while I sat in the silence wondering what I might be having for supper.

Clearly, measured against these examples, I am a miserable wretch indeed. So, dear Friends, I'm not waiting to be found out – I'm coming out! I am the Oxford Imposter!

But recently I've been thinking more about this. I know that generalising about Quakers is particularly perilous, but I believe most Quakers would agree that there is something of the divine in all of us, even if they choose to express this in different words.

I've also heard more than one Quaker say that there is no such thing as a bad person, only a person who does bad things. I wonder how many have considered the inevitable corollary: there's no such thing as a good person, only a person who does good things? With these two thoughts in mind – there's something of the divine within me and, irrespective of our deeds, we are all in essence equal – I am starting to be able to convince myself that maybe I'm not so much of an imposter after all.

I need to be careful though. Am I trivialising or even dismissing the dedication, efforts, and wonderful achievements of so many Friends at our meeting and beyond? Definitely not! I greatly respect and admire them and I'm sad to know that I'll never be able to match their example, but at least I can now see that this doesn't stop me being a Quaker – albeit a rather ordinary, run-of-the-mill Quaker.

Am I then about to part company at last with my long-time companion, Imposter Syndrome? As we say so often in business meeting, I hope so!

Keith Wilson

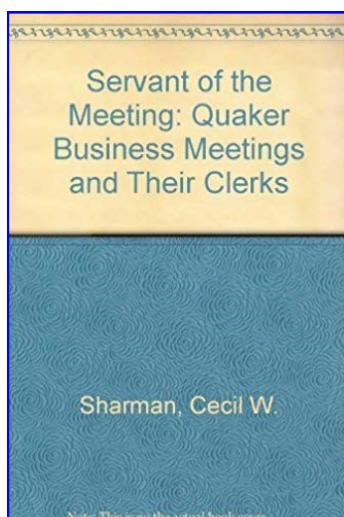


Becoming a Clerk

A year ago, I joined the Oxford Local Meeting Clerking team. Three of us serve as co-clerks: Christopher Watson, Judith Atkinson, and me. I'd had some experience of Clerking at national level, but being Clerk of a local Meeting is very different. I'm slowly learning what is expected of me, how it all works, and how to make sure everything is 'in right ordering'. (In case you are wondering, this means 'in keeping with Quaker tradition and practice', according to one Quaker jargon-buster http://www.ealingquakers.org.uk/jargon_buster)

It's easy to forget that as Quakers we have no Minister or Vicar in charge, so we have to run the Society of Friends collectively. Oxford Meeting belongs to all of us, and making decisions together can be a real joy. The decisions may appear small (e.g. how to alter the lighting the Meeting House), weighty (e.g. approving the Meeting's budget), or urgent (e.g. writing to our MPs about homelessness).

We make these decisions in Local Business Meeting, for which the Clerks are responsible. Oxford's Business Meetings are currently held on the first Sunday of the month, at midday, after the single Meeting for Worship at 10:30. This timing aims to maximise the number of people already present. All members and attenders are warmly welcomed. The more people come, the better the decision-making is.



The Clerk is the servant of the meeting. In practice that means Clerks arrange the agenda and conduct the meeting. Beforehand, the Clerks will have considered items of current concern to members and attenders, taken items that have been sent to them, and received reports from Committees such as

Children and Young People, Pastoral Care, and Elders. Our job is to enable reflective space for people to say what is on their minds and achieve

joint 'discernment'. Quakers use the word 'discernment' to describe the process of listening, searching for truth, and arriving at clarity about what is the right course of action.

The Clerk should present enough information (but not too much) so that people understand the issues around each agenda item. This might involve circulating papers beforehand, as well as providing further information in the meeting. During the meeting itself, the Clerk needs to listen very carefully to what is said, and – when the time is right – draft and offer a Minute to the people present, checking that it accurately reflects the 'sense of the Meeting'. A proposed minute might go through several cycles of drafting, checking, and re-drafting during the meeting, but eventually (and usually remarkably quickly) it is agreed by the Business Meeting at the time, and is then recorded. By convention the people in attendance can indicate their satisfaction with a proposed Minute by saying "I hope so". It is a rare thing for a Clerk to express a personal opinion when 'at the table'; that isn't why we are there.

Knowing when to move to a decision, and writing a Minute, is exciting and daunting. Judging when enough has been said and sufficient unity has emerged, without curtailing contributions and discussion, is a long learning process: I feel I am just at the beginning. Sometimes reaching a decision at the time is not possible, and the minute will show that the matter is deferred till a later meeting when unity can be achieved.

The Quaker way of making decisions is an enormous source of strength – it bears some resemblance to consensus and other forms of cooperative working, but it certainly isn't related in any way to voting. The aim is not to achieve majority rule, but to come to a common sense of what is the right thing to do. It is a wonderful thing to have the wisdom of other people to make and support the decisions that are made.

As Clerks we welcome your thoughts and feedback on what goes on in Business Meeting, and how the process can be improved. Come and experience it in action!

Sue Smith

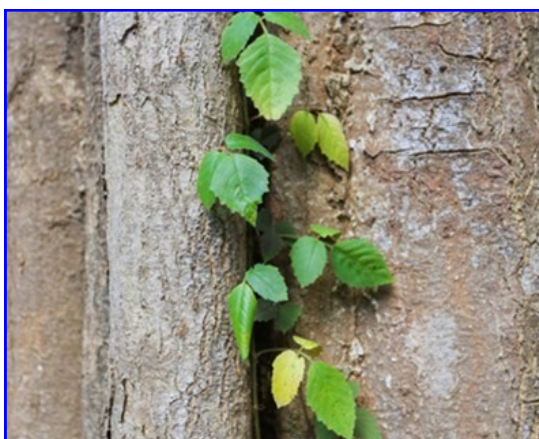
Offshoots of Oxford Meeting

Oxford Meeting has given rise to several groups that meet regularly but are not necessarily mentioned in the monthly diary. Individuals have coalesced according to postcode, shared interests, a desire to further their faith and practice, or simply because they like to. Some examples:

OX2 North has a regular coffee morning on the first Saturday of the month. It's great for a chat with Friends who simply drop in at one of our homes for a couple of hours. Sandra Figgess keeps the email list of people living in OX2 North and sends out reminders and gets host volunteers. Email her at sandra@greenfig.org.uk if you live in OX2 North to be put on the reminder list.

North Oxford Group (NOG), OX2, has an evening discussion and worship sharing group usually on third Sunday evenings at one of our homes from 19:15 for 19:30 start, finishing promptly by 21:00. We usually choose a word or phrase each month to be the focus for the next one. Recent word examples would be Prayer and Competition. The email list for this is kept by Becky Riddell who sends out reminders to all North Oxford Friends. Contact her on bexriddell@gmail.com

Coffee at Blackwells bookshop (Café Nero) happens most Sundays at 11:00, after 9:30 Meeting for Worship. We indulge in entirely informal conversations which can become profound and very



engaging, or simply lift our spirits. Just turn up and look for familiar faces, or find a seat and wait for others to arrive to join in. Anyone is welcome.

OX2 West has regular evening meetings of a good and cohesive group with a core of devoted friends that has been going for many years, though we love to welcome newcomers. We meet in each other's homes on the last Wednesday of the month from 19:15 for 19:30 and finish just after 21:00. We discuss all manner of topics in a quiet and thoughtful Quaker atmosphere, which doesn't mean we don't have fun but the discussion often goes quite deep. To be included on the list if you live in OX2 West, or surrounding villages, contact Daphne Hampson at daphne.hampson@theology.ox.ac.uk

OX3 and OX4 tend to do activities together for historic reasons. The organising team is Glen Williams, Ursula Kneisel, Anthea Clarke, and Kath Wilson. Activities include walks and coffee mornings from time to time, and a regular discussion group. The discussion group meets on the first Monday of the month 13:30 – 15:00, at 133 Hurst Street OX4 1HE. We are currently looking at *Quaker Renewal* by Craig Barnett.

Our next coffee morning is on 29 February, 10:00 – 12:00, at 133 Hurst Street OX4 1HE. To be put on the mailing list, or if you have queries or ideas, please email anthea.clarke@icloud.com, u_kneisel@yahoo.co.uk, or g.and.a.williams@ntlworld.com

OX1 Group currently has 8 or 9 members who meet monthly in each other's homes. At the moment we are reading chapters of a book we have chosen, each chapter leading us into a discussion which we all appreciate. If you are interested in finding out more, contact Anthea Richards, anthea-richards1@gmail.com or 01865 236230.

Oxford Friends Against AIDS (OXFAA) aims to support faith-based responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. The group was formed in 2007, when two HIV-positive African church leaders – Gideon Byamugisha from Uganda and Fidel Nsengiyumva from Rwanda – spoke at a public meeting in Oxford Meeting House. OXFAA is supported by a small group of Friends in Oxford, Cambridge, and Colthouse (in the Lake District), all of whom make contributions to support two projects: the Hope Institute in Uganda and Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) in Rwanda.

The group also sells Christmas and greeting cards made by the Urumuri women's group in Rwanda. For additional information please contact Glen Williams (g.and.a.williams@ntlworld.com).

With thanks to all those who helped compile this information

An Evening with Jocelyn Bell Burnell **43 St Giles, 10 January 2020**

In conversation with Iain MacLean of Oxford Meeting on 'life, the universe and some other things,' the astrophysicist Professor Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell shared with Friends the key events and influences in her remarkable career. This was a career characterised by determinism and struggle in the face of inequitable (to use a euphemism!) attitudes towards girls and women in science, from schooldays in Northern Ireland (where science for girls meant domestic science), and university in Glasgow and Cambridge, to the challenge of pursuing an academic career through frequent moves associated with her husband's work.

Given the antipathy towards women in Physics during the 1950s and 1960s it's not entirely surprising that Jocelyn attributed her ground-breaking discovery of pulsars to the extra effort she felt that, as a woman, she had to put into her work in order to prove herself. Sadly, Jocelyn feels this antipathy persists today – although progress is being made with the Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) charter, which she was instrumental in developing.

Asked about being 'passed over' for the Nobel prize for Physics (it was awarded to her supervisor), Jocelyn emphasised the award's importance in another context: this was the first time that the Physics prize was given for astronomy and it set a precedent for subsequent astronomy-related awards. Jocelyn's generosity of spirit is matched by a generosity of action, notably in her recent donation of a \$3 million special 'Breakthrough' prize to fund graduate studentships for all under-represented groups in Physics.



Quakerism has been a continuous thread throughout a life that has involved many geographical moves. Growing up in a longstanding Northern Irish Quaker family, Jocelyn appreciated the silence in Meeting for Worship from an early age – even though it was not unusual for one person to minister for 20 minutes, and then rise to their feet again later, this time to pray!

Currently based near Bath and nominally retired, Jocelyn is Visiting Professor in Astrophysics at Oxford and regularly attends midweek breakfast Meetings at 43 St Giles.

Liz Matthews

World Day of Prayer

Welcome to all at the World Day of Prayer (WDP) on Friday 6 March 2020, 12:30 – 14:00, at St Andrew's Church North Oxford, Linton Road, Oxford OX2 6UG. The service lasts about an hour followed by refreshments. St Andrew's are hosting the 2020 service for the WDP Oxford City Churches, (with whom Oxford Quakers are linked) and North Oxford Churches. Each church's representatives actively participate in the service and we learn about the history of the chosen country, and the women's strengths and challenges.

The service this year has been put together by the women of Zimbabwe with the theme Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk. In over 170 countries people participate in the same service through the different

time zones. Come and be part of this annual worldwide event.

“Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk,” said Jesus (John 5:2-9a). Our sisters from Zimbabwe are taking Jesus’ encounter to be a call to act in love for peace and reconciliation. They say “The action verbs suggest that we should not be afraid to act on the word of God. God is offering us the steps for personal and social transformation.” This is the time for change!
— from the WDP booklet

Posters will be up soon at 43 and individual invitations available to share with others. You are welcome to contact Elaine Parry elaineparry@freeuk.com or 07816 589123 for more information. Is anyone able to offer lifts for people who need help getting to St Andrews? If so, we can let that be known. Buses stop in Banbury Road near the end of Linton Road. It is about a 350 yard walk to St Andrew’s Church from there. Hope to see you on Friday 6 March!

Elaine Parry

Yearly Meeting Gathering: the When, What, Why, Who, How of Taking Part

When and What

Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) takes place 1-7 August 2020 at the University of Bath. Booking is taking place now. See: www.quaker.org.uk/ym and [Yearly Meeting Gathering 2020 brochure \(PDF\)](#) for details and important dates.

YMG is the coming together of Friends of all ages from all over Britain for a week of worship, fun, conversation, hope, games, arts & crafts, learning, building community, and challenge. This year's theme is **Listening, prophecy and reconciliation: allyship in a climate emergency**. (Allyship: a deep, trusting and lasting relationship with another person or group.)

Yearly Meeting (YM) usually takes place in April/May at Friends House in London, but in the years when there is a Yearly Meeting Gathering in summer, the YM takes place at the YMG. So this year YMG includes the business of Yearly Meeting. Even if you cannot attend the Gathering there are ways to contribute to its work (see below).

Why

Yearly Meeting is our opportunity to learn and understand more about the Society of Friends and how our own Meeting and our activities relate to the embracing concerns and organisation of the Society. YMG extends and develops the YM foci (currently the climate crisis and inclusion) across a week of mixed activities.

Make new Friendships; find others with similar concerns; try out activities and ideas that might be unusual for you; experience gathered worship with hundreds of others. Be a participant in enriching both our own Meeting and the Society through Friendship, worship, ministry and service.

Who

Anyone who attends Quaker Meetings can connect to YMG. Junior and Adult Friends meet alongside YMG and have already contributed to the planning and the theme. There are Children’s Meetings during YMG. Booking for these needs to be done by 30 April.

If you are not in membership you can attend Yearly Meeting by being sponsored – ask an Elder.

If you wish to attend but cannot afford to do so, please approach an Elder or member of the Pastoral Care Team for help. **Do this as soon as possible so that you can book with confidence.**

Even if you are not planning to go you can participate in a Local Gathering here in Oxford before the main event.

How

There is a range of ways to participate. During May, June, and July there will be some Local Gatherings in Oxford leading to YMG. All will be welcome. At least one gathering will be held at a time when Junior Friends and children will be able to attend. These will be announced in Notices, General Circulation, and the Newsletter ‘43’.

Partial attendance is possible. See the website for further details.

There are a variety of types of accommodation available during YMG including camping.

Anne Watson, on behalf of Elders

CALENDAR FOR March 2020

All at 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Note: Additional Meeting for Worship on Thursday evenings 18:00 – 18:30

Date	Time	Event
Sun 1 March	10:30 - 11:30, 12:00	Single Combined Meeting for Worship followed by Meeting for Worship for Business at 12 noon
Mon 2 March	17:30 - 19:00	Co-ordination Group
Tues 3 March	19:00 - 21:00	First Tuesday Group
Wed 4 March	19:00 - 21:00	Enquirers' Evening
Wed 11 March	10:30 - 20:30	Elders' Committee
Thurs 12 March	17:30 - 19:00	Pastoral Care Group
Thurs 12 March	19:30 - 21:00	Nominations
Fri 13 March	19:00 - 21:00	Friday with Friends: Maths and Spirituality
Mon 16 March	16:00 - 18:00	Poems in the Library: Theme 'Wild and wayward'
Wed 18 March	19:00 - 21:00	Enquirers' Evening
Sun 29 March	12:15	Bring your own lunch - (replaces shared lunch)
Every Tuesday	12:30 - 13:30	Tuesday soup lunch

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light from whatever source it may come?

Quaker Faith & Practice, Advices & Queries No. 1.02.7

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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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