

# Forty-Three newsletter

Number 493  
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Oxford Friends Meeting  
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

## Breaking News:

### There IS Joy in Faith & Practice!

Friends may have heard Val Ferguson tell of her disappointment at discovering that there is no joy in Quaker Faith & Practice (QF&P). For those who don't know the story, what Val meant was that there was no entry for 'joy' in the index of QF&P. I've had similar experiences of looking for words that I felt sure would be indexed, only to find they weren't. This is no criticism of the index compilers – a truly comprehensive printed index would be longer than the book!

Many Friends will already know that there's a way round this, but until recently I didn't, so I thought it was worth writing a few words about it. First an apology for those Friends who are not friends of technology. This does involve using a 'device' – a computer, tablet, or smart phone. But it is pretty straightforward: a lot easier than getting to grips with Zoom!

Here's what to do. Use your favourite search engine to look for 'Quaker Faith and Practice'. Find the result that says 'Quaker faith & practice 5th Edition'. It will probably be the first result on the page. Click on it or tap it. You'll go straight to the QF&P website and, if you're using a computer,

you'll see a box at the top right of the screen that says 'Search faith & practice'. If you're using a tablet or a smart phone, you may have to click on a magnifying glass icon (which looks remarkably like the Quaker 'Q' logo) before the search box appears.

Now you can type anything you like into the search box and press the return key (on a computer) or tap 'search' (on a tablet or phone). In an instant, the wonderful technology will list out every occurrence in QF&P of the word or phrase you entered in the search box, together with the item reference number and around 100 words of the surrounding text. It's actually easier to use than to describe, so if you're at all curious give it a try.

The search function isn't quite perfect. If you search for 'joy' for example, it will also find words like 'enjoy' and 'joyous' because they contain 'joy'. There doesn't seem to be any easy way around this, but it's not a serious limitation.

And, just for Val, I'm pleased to confirm that there IS joy in QF&P; a quick count shows that the words 'joy' and 'joys' appear about 60 times in total, which is a relief – elsewhere joy is in rather short supply these days!

Keith Wilson

**Deadline for contributions to the June 2020 issue: Friday 15 May**

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).

## Religion and God

When I was a child, Christmas was a magical time. In addition to all its obvious attractions – special decorations, music, food, and then the presents – it had a religious narrative that I found compelling. Love had actually come down to earth; the all-powerful loving spirit which the Bible called God was actually present for a while on earth. As a child, I believed that story literally, as did many adults in that increasingly long-ago time. Everyone seemed nicer and more cheerful in the Christmas season. For a brief moment I felt that life was transformed. I liked it so much that one summer day I begged my mother to allow me to decorate the small evergreen tree in our front yard, in order to re-create the atmosphere. She gave me some bits and pieces and let me get on with it. Of course it wasn't the same, but I did enjoy doing it.



The word 'God' means different things to different people, but to some brought up in the Christian tradition it references the most precious aspects of life, encapsulated perhaps in an image of a being who is beyond our imagining but who calls out the best in us and in those around us. There is no replacement concept that has the same effect. That is why the word 'God' is precious and will not be given up. It designates the space for what I could call my 'Christmas' experience.

For other people 'God' has quite a different meaning. It is disconnected from experience and instead represents a being who may or may not exist. If cast aside, its loss is not existential, but intellectual. If it is found intellectually necessary to disbelieve in the existence of this being, then so be it. It can easily seem a superfluous concept anyway.

These of course are not the only two views, but I think they are enough to bring me to my next point, which is that the 'God' question cannot be approached successfully without a shift in our habitual ways of thinking about religion and about ourselves as persons.

The long religious journey of human beings is the expression of our desire to understand the world and to live well in it. It is a difficult task, so it is not surprising that evidence of religious mistakes lies all around us. Ancient ways of thinking have too often been preserved and handed down by authorities (just as Jesus pointed out in the New Testament). This has to change. Our religious journey will have to abandon certainty, but not evidence. The task of how to live has not gone away.

In the Bible our distant ancestors tell us through their stories that they experienced the world as containing personal forces somewhat like themselves. The personal reality that they experienced acquired a name, which we translate as 'God'. The Bible emphasised that this was not a physical entity but a spirit or force. Any attempt to make an *image* of God was mistaken because God was not that sort of thing. God represented a *personal* reality but not *a person*. And here is the central point I wish to make.

We have trouble conceiving of an infinite personal reality. We can imagine a super-human being, or we can imagine an infinite reality which we think of as *impersonal*. But we find it hard to think of an infinity of the personal, in the way that we can think of an infinity of space or of matter. Why is this? Perhaps it is because a few centuries ago we developed a method of understanding the physical world that required removing ourselves from affecting what was happening. This *impersonal* approach to knowledge became the norm. Anything that was

not amenable to it was ignored or considered less important. This included stories, and in fact ourselves as persons rather than as impersonal objects of study. 'Personal' came to have connotations of 'trivial' or 'unreliable', unlike the 'objective' impersonal facts about the world.

This 'information' attitude, as 20<sup>th</sup>-century British philosopher John Macmurray called it, has limitations. In Macmurray's words, "Information is always information about something, not knowledge of it. Science cannot teach you to know your dog; it can only tell you about dogs in general. You can only get to know your dog by nursing him through distemper, teaching him how to behave about the house, and playing ball with him. Of course you can *use* the information that science gives you about dogs in general to get to know your dog better, but that is another matter."

Our personal lives involve knowing and getting along with ourselves and each other, a practical task. This, not the supernatural, is the proper field of religion. From Macmurray I received the idea that 'God' functions in much religious thought as a symbol for personal reality (rather as 'matter' does for material reality and 'life' for living reality). I am not mystical, so I had to live with this idea for quite awhile before it became meaningful. For me it was a turning point, one I tentatively share with others every so often.

**Jeanne Warren**



## Corona Ditty

I miss 'my' place at 43,  
And the cat on the wall in front of me.

I miss the quiet woman reading  
Faith and Practice for most of meeting.

I miss queuing for my Assam tea,  
And being admonished for my latest duncery.

I miss the open door of Spring,  
It's out there, but we cannot share the light it brings.

I miss the library and the saggy-cushioned chair  
At the back, half-reading, hiding there.

I miss the Albanese, two-jobbed and tired, but  
without a frown  
Makes the best espresso in this jumped up little town.

I miss getting doughnuts as an almost end-of-week  
Thursday treat,  
Jam for Ernie and custard for me, sugar in my beard as I eat.

I miss bumping into someone and saying sorry,  
Now this stranger getting too close makes me worry.

I miss my friends and I miss the sea,  
But now I cry if I think too much of Italy.

I miss 9:30 meeting and all it brings,  
Still together in silence and my soul sings.

**Alex Smith**

## Thoughts in Troubled Times

I am frightened. And with the COVID-19 crisis deepening by the day and even by the hour, I'm sure I'm not alone. But as I sat in (virtual) Meeting this morning, I started to think about what exactly I was frightened of. I found many answers, but I soon realised that they all have something in common: they are unknowns. I am frightened of the unknown.

This fear has many guises. I am frightened of the ultimate unknown – death – but it is not my main fear. After all, my death is hardly news; I've known for quite a while that one day I would die. I'm rather more frightened of the unknown experience of living without friends and loved ones who may die in the pandemic, and of the strange unknown world that will exist when the pandemic subsides – the unknown new normal, if you like.

As Meeting continued, my thoughts moved on and I experienced something of a revelation. While there are some things, like death itself, that we can never share, there are other things we can. Fear is one of these, and I suspect that we all share fears of the unknown. But the burden of fear can also be shared! To my mind, struggling alone with fear is rather like worshipping alone; it can be done and it can be productive but it's hard work. Struggling jointly with fear, like taking part in shared Quaker worship, is easier and more powerful.

Then I realised that this parallel between sharing our struggles with fear and shared worship goes deeper. In fact, it seems to me that Quaker worship is intrinsically a way of sharing our struggles with fear. While we are participating in worship and upholding each other, we can do no other than share the burden of each other's fears. Do not the very words 'upholding' and 'burden' attest to this?

Does it work? Does Quaker worship make life less frightening? For me, the answer is an unequivocal yes. It refreshes my bonds with other Friends and reminds me that we're all enduring the same challenging experiences. It gives me hope for the future, whatever that may look like, and it provides a reassuring link to the 'old' normality I've valued so much since I started to attend Quaker meetings.

I am so grateful to those who have made our virtual meetings possible. Thank you, a thousand times thank you!

Will it work for you? Will taking part in a Quaker Meeting, in whatever way you find comfortable, make life less frightening? Only you can answer that, but I think it probably will. In the meantime, I found these words of Isaac Penington useful; I hope you do too.

*"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."* (Part of QF&P 2.48)

Stay safe, Friends.

**Keith Wilson**



### Corona Calypso

There was a corona type virus  
That one day decided to mire us  
In a dastardly plan  
Set to wipe out the land  
But it found that it just couldn't tire us

Because one thing it wasn't aware of  
That no matter how badly we all cough  
We've some NHS guys  
And some researchers wise  
(so they say) who will soon chase it all off

And again it just wasn't aware  
That no matter how much we all share  
In the pain and the woe  
It will very soon go  
With a wing and a hope and  
a ... sort of quakerly type thing

**Val Speechley**

## Chariots

At a Sunday Meeting before lockdown I suddenly saw that there was an unusual mix of ages and generations. It made me think of a text I had written (in 2009) for Essex University's Muslim Awareness Week on the subject of the environment. It went:

'I'll begin with a reading from the Psalms (Ps 103) – a Jewish text that the Prophet may have known [4,163]:

*As a father is tender towards his children:  
so is the Lord tender to those that fear  
him.*

*For he knows of what we are made: he  
remembers that we are but dust.*

*The days of man are but as grass:  
he flourishes like a flower of the field.*

*When the wind goes over it it is gone: and  
its place will know it no more.*

*But the merciful goodness of the Lord:  
endures for ever and ever toward those  
that fear him:*

*and his righteousness upon their  
children's children.*

It is in stewardship of God's creation for our children's children that we are all called.'

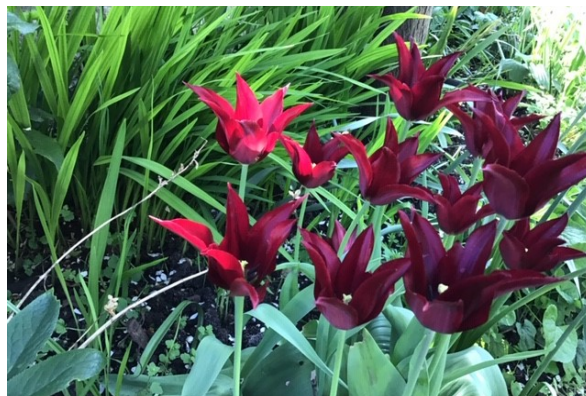
On another occasion I asked the local Rabbi for the Jewish take on the afterlife. He had no ready answer. My own recollected idea was that as a Jew one kept the law so that God would look favourably on your children and your children's children.

How does this relate to our own All-Age Meeting? It simply links me to yet another quotation whose source I still search for:

*We are the chariots in which our ancestors ride.*

I happen to come, with diffidence, from five generations of Quakers. So... what of all our children?

**Richard Seebohm**



## An Ordinary Miracle

Dear Friends,  
I found this poem by Joy Mead of Great Missenden in my Jerusalem Bible, which I took with me to my daughter's (she and fiancé drove to fetch me on the last Tuesday in March) and thought rather appropriate for the present situation. I rang Joy – it turned out we had friends in common – for permission to publish, which she gave. I'm giving the last three verses:

...in this once upon a time moment  
The story begins.

Outrageous hope, outspoken love,  
justice and joy are released

like nudging angels

amongst people

longing for comfort and community  
sensing the beginnings of friendships  
wanting touch and affirmation.

Child, disciple and the one who understands  
About just and equal sharing:

Know there will be enough

To go round;

Refuse to say 'It can't be done'.

So it happens – the great feast;  
Hearts and hands, baskets and pickets,  
open;  
neighbour gives bread  
and peace to neighbour  
each makes a place for another  
and in this most ordinary of miracles  
all are fed.

**Joy Mead**  
**Sent by Patricia Wright**



Jill Green

## **Hoping for the Best, but Preparing for the Worst**

*I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.*

— George Fox Journal 1647

Quoted in Quaker Faith & Practice 19.03

The Oxford Pastoral Care Group offers friends the following videos and article in the hope that they may allay some of the fear and anxiety we have come across when reaching out to Friends at these unusual times. They come to us via our Friend Sally Reynolds, a retired GP and Friend from Abingdon Meeting, who has found them to be simple, comforting, and very practical.

The videos were made by a Friend from Wallingford Meeting, Justin Amery, who is a current family doctor working in Oxford, and a palliative care

specialist. The news does seem very full of doomful predictions about coronavirus/COVID-19 which can, we believe, get things a little out of perspective in our thinking. You can watch all the videos in series, stopping wherever you wish, or one at a time if that feels more comfortable. We recommend that you might watch them with a partner, if you have one, or feel free to discuss them over the telephone with a member of our pastoral care group or with a special friend or relative. Like Sally, we found them a soothing and practical way of starting to make our preparations for 'if the worst should happen' from a medical perspective. Justin asks us to share the videos with family, friends and community groups and he says that he would appreciate feedback.

The article is from our Friend Katharine Nicholas, who has a background in law and is a member of Oxford Meeting. Katharine has written from a more legal perspective a very accessible, simple and practical message regarding 'Getting Our Affairs in Order', which we felt in the Pastoral Care Group

Meeting of 09.04.2020 could be shared alongside Justin Amery's videos.

We in Pastoral Care very much hope that you will find it easy and helpful to have this support via our newsletter. We ask that anyone who finds any of it a little indigestible or difficult gets in touch with one of us to talk about it over the telephone, and we enclose our numbers here.

Anthea Clarke	+44 (0)1865 721575
Jill Green	+44 (0)7970 902167
Ursula Kneisel	+44 (0)1865 744540
Johanna Longmore	+44 (0)7716 406564
Carol Saker	+44 (0)1865 739622
Glen Williams	+44 (0)1865 727612
Kath Wilson	+44 (0)1844 291615
Caroline Worth	+44 (0)1865 433219

**Jill Green**

Convenor of Oxford Meeting Pastoral Care Group

**Here are the links to Justin's talks –**

**Playlist that contains all the videos:**

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHOym43AmFwkffF1Kt\\_fAewzDxkYma5pZ](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHOym43AmFwkffF1Kt_fAewzDxkYma5pZ)

**Individual videos:**

Coronavirus part 1 - How to plan for the worst case scenario.

<https://youtu.be/Odd5QWhgv2M>

Coronavirus part 2 - What symptoms will I get with the Coronavirus?

<https://youtu.be/Ad1zDnTuJoU>

Coronavirus part 3 - Facts and figures about the coronavirus to help you decide what to do.

<https://youtu.be/jKjsaYFfXR8>

Coronavirus part 4 - Let's talk about dying from the coronavirus .

<https://youtu.be/U3cPYIe2IhI>

Coronavirus part 5 - How to plan ahead to get the care you want.

<https://youtu.be/bAN-FLXkqSI>

Coronavirus part 6 - How to have the conversation about the worst case.

[Coronavirus pt 6 - How to have the hard conversation.](#)

**And here is Katharine's article —**

### **Getting Our Affairs in Order**

Over the past 10 years or so I have had power of Attorney for, or been executor for, several elderly friends or relatives. The somewhat daunting task of being in charge of other people's money has in each case been made easier by the fact that all of them happened to be orderly people who had neat, up-to-date folders for everything important. (This was unlike my aunt the hoarder whose house had to be emptied by men in hazard suits; I was lucky that my siblings were the nominated ones in that case.)

Knowing that I am not quite as bad as Aunt Hoarder (not her actual name), but much less orderly than Friend Heather or Aunt Muriel, I have always thought that when I retire I should have a great sort out and become a model of administrative efficiency ready for my nearest and dearest to take over.

But I am not yet retired, and somewhere in the bit of my brain that does honesty and realism, I know that somehow I am unlikely ever to be whatever the bureaucratic equivalent of a domestic goddess is.

This realisation came home to me recently when my husband and I, my two siblings, and sister-in-law were all booked onto one flight on a small plane. Being a cheerful soul, I found myself envisioning us all disappearing into the sea, leaving my daughter to find all our documents, deal with funerals and an estate, and take on (or find someone to take on) the various financial responsibilities of managing the affairs of her disabled brother – and all without support or guidance.

So I have made a list, a long list, with explanatory notes – the sort of list we could all put together to keep in our houses or give to our nominated people. Most people's list would include:

#### What do we have?

- For most people that would be a bank account, or accounts. Which bank, and what are the bank details?
- Many of us will have one or maybe more savings . Again, which bank/building society etc. is it with? What are the account numbers? Perhaps we have a savings bond? A pension scheme?

- Do we get a pension, or state benefits of any kind? What are the details; who is the pension provider, what benefits do we get?
- If we own a property, which solicitor dealt with the purchase? Is there a mortgage, and if so what are the details, the name of the lender and the account number? Do we have details of the Land Registry documentation?
- If we rent, who is the landlord? How is the rent paid?
- What about utilities? Where is that information?
- Do we owe any money? If so how much and to whom?

#### Other documentation

People may need to know our National Insurance Number, also where to find our certificates for birth, marriage, divorce. Have we bought a burial plot? Have we made wills? Where can a copy be found? What is the name of our solicitor, and their firm?

#### Where is our documentation?

In my case, this is not in one handy drawer, but scattered all over the house. Whatever system we use, write down where our friends/relatives should look for documentation on all of the above. We may have paper copies in folders, or online accounts. Are the account numbers and passwords written down?

What about our computer and mobile phone; how could people access those?

#### Also:

We could think about writing a small statement of our wishes, any thoughts about our funeral, that picture that is not in the Will but we would like our cousin to have. Who would we want to be told about our death? A list with addresses or email addresses for the most important people would be helpful.

Do we have responsibility for anyone else? I am the appointee for my son, and manage benefit applications and queries, and assist with other administrative matters. Is all the relevant information available in case someone else needs to take over?

I have to say that my list DOESN'T actually cover all of this – I may need to revise it. You can probably think of plenty of other things that would helpfully

be included. Probably no one, no matter how orderly, will think of everything, and that's OK. But if we make a start, we will probably feel better ourselves, and we will be helping those whom we entrust with our affairs. Remember, what we can do to help them will be appreciated; what we can't they will probably manage.

**Katharine Nicholas**

08.04.2020

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## A Friend's Prayer

*God in  
all of us  
re-  
membered be your name.*

Our re-  
public come,  
our wills be one  
for all,  
and all for one

*Today*  
we will  
grow, reap, grind  
knead, bake then slice  
our daily bread.

Trespases?  
The measure for mercy is ours:  
we ask for no more than we give.

Temptation?  
Lead us not to strip  
the evil which goes with good  
in 'us'  
and stick it onto 'them'.

For ours is the human condition:  
the power in our stories  
of Now

again and again

Amen.

**Stephen Yeo**

stephen.yeo@phoncoop.coop



## A Friendly Four's Journey

The inspiring initiative of the 'Friendly Fours' (where each participant meets with three other friends from the Oxford Meeting in order to explore spiritual growth) has been very productive for our Friendly Four group (Elaine Parry, Steven Brooke, Anne Watson, and Didi Spencer).

Our first meeting focused on exploring our individual spiritual journeys — it was very special to share and receive everyone's journey into embracing Quakerism.

Our second meeting was devoted to exploring the Lord's Prayer. Each one of us had to rework the prayer into a meaningful one for ourselves. Here we offer our reworked versions of the Lord's Prayer.

The first one is by Steven Brooke. He has known the Lord's Prayer throughout his life but he feels that its language speaks of an authority long-dead now. He used a variety of sources to compile his own version of the Lord's Prayer. These included the revolutionary Padre Nuestro of La Misa Campesina, some Islamic ideas of Lord of all the Words, and 'Guide Us on Our Right Path', and the Quaker Testimonies. For Steven, although the current pandemic is giving the Earth a brief respite from exploitation, there is still an important urgency with regards to the pollution of the Earth and the extinguishing of all other life-forms — he addresses this in his version.

The second reworked version is by Anne Watson who analysed the structure of the Lord's prayer and then rewrote it in the Light so that she could use it as a guide for her daily actions. According to Anne, Heaven is not an external cloak that will one day enfold her, but a Life for which she can take some responsibility. She sees the prayer at random times of day and pauses to read it.

In the third prayer below, Didi Spencer has explored the structure and the various ideas in the Lord's Prayer. She attempted to stay close to its structure but she included only what felt true to her. Her version of the Lord's Prayer is instead a prayer to the Spirit and Light/Love as understood particularly by the early Quakers. It also calls for the daily

practice of love as a spiritual practice and invokes the lived experience of one's inner light as an insatiable connection to the Spirit.

*By Steven Brooke:*

Our Creator who is  
always with us  
We sing your name.  
Let us echo your Will of  
Peace, Love and Justice.  
All people enjoy the life  
you give.  
Correct our foolish ways;  
our selfishness, laziness,  
fear and anger.  
Teach us to be kind to  
one another

And to value all the Creation.

Our hearts and minds thank you  
For the light that shines and the air we  
breathe.

We accept the darkness of our small death,  
But have faith that Life on Earth will continue.

*By Anne Watson:*

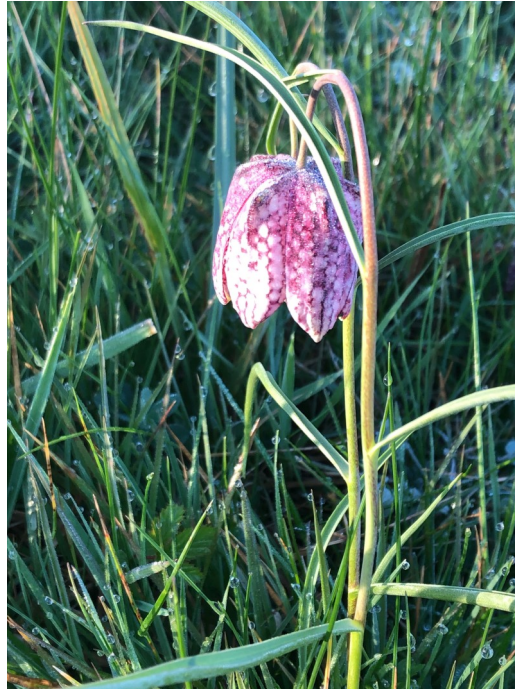
To my deepest sense of Truth and the flowing  
Spirit I share with others:

May I value you every day and live in what I  
know to be Good ways;

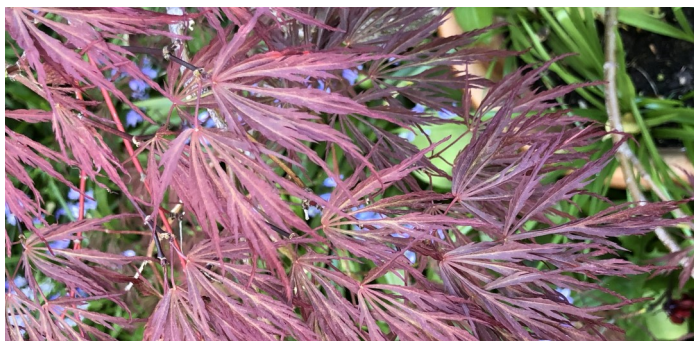
May I care for the earth and all things, and the  
deepest selves of other people and their  
goodwill;

May I avoid dwelling on past wrongs, hurts  
and misdeeds; be aware in the present; and  
anticipate the future with hope;

May I make good decisions today and use my  
time and capabilities in worthwhile ways.



*Continued next page ...*



*By Didi Spencer:*

Bright spirit

– embrace us all and

Let thy light forever

Bring us to the source of truth

And reveal to us what truly matters.

Dear Light, shine through us, and

Let us begin our work

from your source inside us –

So that we can rejoice in it wholeheartedly and

share our bread just like we share ourselves – with  
the light of being;

Shine on our temptations and on our trespasses so  
that we can navigate assuredly and  
find the road of love to ourselves, to you and to the  
world.

Shine even brighter on our shadows,

And let them show us what we have yet to love, to  
care for and

to nourish,

for thine is the kingdom of love –

the one we all have and we all need forever and  
ever.

The fourth version of the Lord's Prayer here below is  
by Elaine Parry. For some years now, Elaine has  
found it difficult to say the Lord's Prayer with an  
honest sense of meaning and acceptance. However,  
she has found her own way to say it in a public  
service or a prayer meeting. It usually consists of the  
beginning words of the line, and then she continues  
by silently thinking to herself ... so it generally goes  
like this (no initial lines):

Hello

Your kingdom

Heaven and earth

Give us

Forgive us

As I forgive

Save us and deliver us

Amen!

When Elaine uses it on a personal level, she is  
responding to whatever internal thoughts and  
concerns she is experiencing, or to external things  
such as her environment or current situations, or  
anything. On that particular morning, her initial  
focus was COVID-19 worldwide. She was sitting in  
silence. There was a lot of birdsong outside. Her  
garden was almost fully in bloom. So, Elaine created  
this version of the Lord's prayer, touching us all  
quite deeply –

*By Elaine Parry:*

Mother Earth,

Your bounty I share –

Hello! ...

We are part of it.

Help us to accommodate and be part of the  
Universal.

Thank you for my share.

Increase my awareness.

Forgive me and us.

Help me understand the 'other'.

Save us but help us to let go.

Amen!

**Dimitrina Spencer**



## Afterwords

I'm having a disastrous time  
my speaking must now be in mime  
coz my brain is aflame  
with words sounding the same  
and I'm only conversing in rhyme

**Val Speechley**



## Keeping Quiet

Now we will count to twelve  
and we will all keep still  
for once on the face of the earth,  
let's not speak in any language;  
let's stop for one second,  
and not move our arms so much.  
It would be an exotic moment  
without rush, without engines;  
we would all be together  
in a sudden strangeness.  
Fishermen in the cold sea  
would not harm whales  
and the man gathering salt  
would not look at his hurt hands.  
Those who prepare green wars,  
wars with gas, wars with fire,  
victories with no survivors,  
would put on clean clothes  
and walk about with their brothers  
in the shade, doing nothing.  
What I want should not be confused  
with total inactivity.  
Life is what it is about;  
I want no truck with death.  
If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with death.  
Perhaps the earth can teach us  
as when everything seems dead  
and later proves to be alive.  
Now I'll count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet and I will go.

**Pablo Neruda**  
Shared by Becky Riddell

## Zooming into Meetings

I live in Riyadh and only visit Oxford occasionally. This rather limits the number of meetings I can attend. However, the epidemic has changed all that and by using the Zoom app on my smart phone I am now able to take part in at least one meeting per week, often two.

This of course is a great advance. It is not the same as sitting in the Meeting House, but is far better than next to nothing, which was my previous situation. On the plus side, I can see more clearly who is in the meeting and their names, though there is inevitably a reduced sense of shared experience. My favorite experience has been joining the 9:30 meeting on Sunday and, with the two-hour time difference, hearing the noon call-to-prayer from my apartment, part way through the meeting: quite magical. There have been very few distractions, perhaps the main one being unmuted microphones, especially when someone has a cough and one wonders if it is a 'dry cough', and they now have one foot in the grave. My personal lesson is that I need to smile more; I am happy inside but it can be hard to see.

'When this bloody war is over' I hope we can make Zoom part of our physical meetings, so those who cannot travel can still participate. In the meantime, I am staying in Riyadh for a while, doing my part of not burdening the NHS! The lock-downs are stricter here, so the epidemic is not spreading as fast, and I remain uninfected. But variety is the spice of life: last night there was a missile attack. Fortunately, with the curfew there were few injuries and I slept through it all.

**Rupert Booth**



## Finding Friends West of the Tamar

From first attending meetings in Oxford, I felt that Quaker membership was beyond me: I could not guarantee to meet what I perceived as the required standard of behaviour, even though I knew that my heart, if not my temperament, remained in the right place.

A work opportunity first took me to Cornwall in August 2016. I found much-needed solace in watching the sea, noticing the daily diversity of wave patterns, looking up at the vast winter night skies uncorrupted by urban light, and discovering that walking the cliffs along the north coast restored me to peace. There is something very open about Cornish folk, and with the terrain and the spirituality of the peninsular, I quickly felt as if I had come home. Travelling the length and breadth of Cornwall to assess construction apprentices on site, distances seemed small to me and I itinerantly attended Truro, Come-to-Good, and Marazion meetings on a regular basis, noting their respective qualities. I wasn't looking to join a meeting but I was looking to attend meeting for worship, which had become important to me.

Truro was my nearest meeting and I was repeatedly made welcome there. From ministry one Sunday, I came to recognise that essentially there was little difference between the quiet I found whilst out walking windswept cliffs alone and the communal silence of meeting for worship, although in winter the latter was certainly gentler and safer.

Come-to-Good meeting was a similar distance from me cross-country. Being a carpenter, the thatched cob and timber constructed vernacular building, rurally situated off the Fal estuary had an immediate

appeal. During meetings I often glanced about me, reading the handiwork of the men who with skill and honesty had worked to tolerances appropriate to the materials then at hand. The meeting house being always kept unlocked, I sometimes found myself better able to sit in silence on occasions when I could be alone there, my tradesman's hands resting idle and my eye quietened.

Overlooking St Michael's Mount, Marazion meeting

stood out for me for the plain-spokenness of its members, which I instantly admired. Once after a meeting there, a Friend introduced me to Gerrard Winstanley, an early Quaker who founded the 'Diggers', a radical agricultural co-operative that advocated common ownership and cultivation of land, predating Marxist thinking by 300 years. There was something Winstanleyan in the essential character of the meeting; it was a delight to attend in Marazion and afterwards walk the shore, sometimes crossing the causeway at low tide to the mount.



Having met a bright Quaker at an ecological weekend on a farm near Redruth, I decided to visit Penzance meeting and discover whether there were others of similar mettle. Penzance Quakers rent the town's band room for its meetings; there is definitely something to be said for a meeting that does not have the encumbrance and distraction of property ownership. The band room, a stone-built hall naturally illuminated by large windows, is on a side road slightly set back from the shore at Mount's Bay. The 1950's red linoleum floor and walls adorned with dated photographs of former town's band members, contribute to an absence of any pretention, which somehow enhances the ministry and warmth that the heating fails to provide. I felt welcomed much more than I had

## The Contradictions of Lockdown!

This is a horrible time. I fear for my sisters, my children and grandchildren, my neighbours, my Friends, for governments, for humankind, and for the parts of the world so damaged by humankind. I talk to myself – and I fear for myself, wondering who will look after me if I inherit the Alzheimer's that haunts my family on both sides. The pain of losing my darling husband has come back strongly, after more than three years. I have just become a great aunt for the tenth time – what does the future hold for today's children?

I am aware of my own privileged position, with a warm house, a pretty garden, enough to live on, and – so far – good health. Neighbours shop for me, enquire after me, join me (keeping safe distance) for walks. With friendly help and enormous effort, I have learnt to use Zoom! This morning I saw two goldfinches.

And yet ..... and yet ..... probably many others are feeling what I feel and struggling, with me, to put feelings into words. I had hoped to write a poem, but no poem has arrived, so I fall back gratefully on the Truly Great:

*We were \*\* made for joy and woe  
And when this we rightly know  
Through the world we safely go.  
Joy and Woe are woven fine  
A clothing for the soul to bind*

— William Blake

\*\* original said 'Man was' – I hope Blake wouldn't mind!

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
Which perches in the soul  
And sings the song without the words  
And never stops at all.*

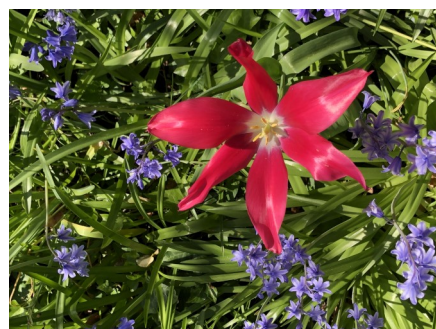
— Emily Dickenson



expected, and began to regularly attend. The monthly study groups into Quaker principles, held after meeting for worship there, were informative and very personal. I learned, for example, that Quakers never swear on oath or deferentially take their hats off to anyone and why so. I liked the diversity and character of the members, which I found both characteristic of the local community and a reflection of the core Quaker values so present throughout all the meetings I attended in Cornwall.

I don't always feel that I can fit into a group but I felt at ease within this Penzance meeting. Seeing, to my surprise, my own life values so present in these unassuming Friends, a commitment to a Quaker way of life suddenly seemed less remote and I applied for membership. It has been a long journey to rediscovering a spirituality I knew well in childhood; the rough rocky coasts have played a prominent part in this, although being amongst sou'westerly Friends helped me cross what I had thought was a finishing line. As I walk Cornish cliffs in solitude, the path that stretches ahead only beckons.

**Tim Toomey**



**Judith Atkinson**

## Hope Haiku

Sun slants through windows  
Touches the gold in her hair  
Illumines her hope

Carol Macfie Lange

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## Disarmament and Divestment: COVID-19

If any of you have been wondering how best to actively work to bring peace and divestment to the world, this piece from the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) provides clear and informed inspiration.

Sarah Lasenby

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## Notes from Prison

My work as Quaker chaplain at Grendon and Springhill prisons has been disrupted by the current COVID-19 crisis, but I wanted to share some encouraging news of ways in which I am still able to engage with the prisoners. My main involvement has always been at Grendon, where our weekly Quaker Meeting has had to be suspended indefinitely, and I am now restricted to visiting the wings and distributing literature.

The men are locked up 23½ hours a day and just have half an hour exercise outside, as well as being able to come downstairs three times a day to collect a meal to take back up to their cells. Nevertheless I am able to have fleeting conversations with them, and some good chats with the staff.

I have been taking in copies of 'The Friend' as well as books that I have bought myself and that Friends have started sending to me. There is also a weekly printout of 'Encouraging Quaker Thoughts' which our Quaker Faith Advisor sends us and which I distribute on each wing. All Quaker chaplains are

encouraged to contribute extracts from 'Faith and Practice' as well as poems and personal accounts.

This week the Roman Catholic chaplain had left me a message to say that two prisoners, including one on suicide watch, had asked him to pass on thanks for the continuing Quaker visits.

If any of you have any Quaker literature that you would like to contribute, now is a time for a good clearout and it would be much appreciated. Even older Quaker literature is fine as the men have sometimes told me that they like 'old-school' Quaker books! As they can't visit the library at the moment I am sure other fiction and non-fiction would be welcome too. It all helps to keep the atmosphere sane in a difficult time and the staff appreciate this.

When this crisis is finally over it will be good to be able to worship as a group again and I hope my team of volunteers will still be on board. The vetting process for volunteers is very arcane and time-consuming, but I have recently found out that visitors can attend Meeting for Worship for up to three times without clearance. This means that you can make a very short-term but still rewarding and much-appreciated contribution even if you don't wish to make a longer commitment or go through the rigmarole of vetting.

If any of this is of interest to you do contact me on [alldixons@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alldixons@yahoo.co.uk)

Yvonne Dixon





## Coping with Isolation

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

— *Philippians 4:6*

Difficult in these worrying times.

*Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.*

— *Mark 9:24*

I have been semi-housebound for three and a half years, and to some extent this has confined my husband also. Here are some things we have learned that may help in coping with isolation.

- Silence
- Meditation
- Choose a positive word such as *strength* and think of all its associations.
- Hold people in the Light.
- Listen to music.
- Make a mental or written list of things that make you smile.
- Smile.
- Keep in touch with friends and family.
- Tell them you are praying for them and, if they are religious, ask them to pray for you.
- Give each other space as far as possible, e.g. go out for a walk or cycle ride.
- Be patient with each other. (We try!)
- Get as much exercise as you can.
- Practise relaxation techniques.
- Learn from conversations, books, magazines, TV, radio, online.
- Start a new hobby. (We have just started learning Russian!)
- Detective stories and romances keep you guessing. PG Wodehouse is always funny.
- Avoid shops and shop online if you can.
- Take life one day at a time.

**Jean Moir**



## Share Those Window-Messages!

On our exercise walks we've all seen the uplifting



messages in people's windows – messages of solidarity, of thanks to NHS and key workers, and jokes to make us smile – most created by children. In our June issue of the 43 Newsletter, we would love to share your photographs of posters, pictures, and messages that have particularly touched you. Please do send these to the newsletter team, and we'll select as many as we can to share with you all. (Who knows, we may even by then be recalling the weeks of lockdown rather than living them!)

## Nominations Committee Message

Dear All,

Nominations on the Oxford Meeting Website.

All information can be found here: <https://oxfordquakers.org/roles-and-responsibilities-in-the-meeting/>

Scroll down and click on the button that says

**Committee Lists** - this document has three tabs

1. Oxford Meeting Committee Lists - who is serving on every committee
2. Vacancies
3. Roles Ending in 2020

**Individual Roles** - this document is sorted by name to see what individual roles they have.

**Role Descriptions** - this document gives role descriptions for all the roles in Oxford Meeting.

Scroll down further to see what **Current Vacancies** there are. If you click on the buttons they take you to the current role descriptions for those vacancies. For example, at the moment, Treasurer, Regional Meeting Support Committee Member and Children's Committee Member.

Scroll down further and you will see the **Questionnaire** button. Fill this out and email it back to Becky Riddell - [bexriddell@gmail.com](mailto:bexriddell@gmail.com) - to indicate your interests.

ACTION FOR ALL

1. **If you currently have a role or are a member of a committee**, please review the current role description (see above) and edit as necessary. Then email your changes to Becky Riddell - [bexriddell@gmail.com](mailto:bexriddell@gmail.com)

2. **EVERYONE** - please consider filling out the Questionnaire to give the Nominations Committee an idea of where your interests and availability lie.

Thank you very much,

**Becky Riddell**  
On behalf of the Nominations Committee





## CALENDAR FOR MAY 2020

During the coronavirus pandemic, most meetings and events are via Zoom-Rooms.  
Please contact the office at [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org) for details.



### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

*The basic response  
of the soul  
to the Light  
is internal adoration and joy,  
thanksgiving and worship,  
self-surrender and listening.*

Scientist and philosopher **Thomas R. Kelly**  
1893-1941  
QF&P 2.10

### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

**Please note that for the time being,  
Most meetings for worship are via Zoom-Rooms.  
For more information, please contact the office at  
[office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org)**

**1st Sunday of each month**  
10:30 at 43 St Giles

**2nd 3rd & 4th Sunday of each month**  
9:30 & 11:00 at 43 St Giles

**Monday**  
19:00 Young Adult Friends at 43 St Giles

**Tuesday & Thursday**  
7:30 at 43 St Giles

**Wednesday**  
12:15 at 43 St Giles

**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](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.*

*Editorial Team:*  
SHERRY GRANUM, JULIET HENDERSON,  
ALEX SMITH, and SUE SMITH  
(Joint Editing and Production);

DEB ARROWSMITH, JACQUI MANSFIELD, and MAX HOWELLS  
(Calendar and Distribution)