

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 505
May 2021



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Celebrating Oxfordshire's Heroes

Elisabeth Salisbury
17 April 2021

As an (un)paid-up dinosaur, unlike many Friends I have attended very few Zoom meetings. Most have been thanks to the kindness of Deb when I have been able to attend Area Meeting or Nominations Committee meetings from the office at 43. In April I had the somewhat bizarre experience of being digitally present "On the occasion of the Declaration of Office by the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire".

This was an historic occasion in every way. Not only was the High Sheriff for 2021-22 officially appointed on Zoom, but for the first time s/he (and 2020/21's Sheriff was a woman) is a Muslim, and the Justice of the High Court who presided over the ceremony was a Muslim. It was a ground breaking occasion in so many ways.

Imam Monawar Hussain, the new High Sheriff, is well known in Oxford and throughout the county for his interfaith work particularly among young

people. He is Chaplain at Eton College, a member of the Chaplaincy team of the Oxford Hospitals, and founder of the Oxford Foundation which works to foster community cohesion.

Not surprisingly, instead of appointing just one chaplain for his shrieval year (a wonderful word I learned during the ceremony meaning of, belonging to, or relating to a sheriff). Monawar has chosen as chaplains members of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh communities. It was great to see friends from the Oxford Council of Faiths honoured in this way as they each accepted their appointment and offered a prayer or blessing appropriate to (and in the language of) their faith. Monawar will be supported by a loving cloud of witnesses.



In the garden at 43. Photo by S.L.Granum

Monawar is dedicating his shrieval year to celebrating and recognising acts of altruistic kindness and generosity by individuals, voluntary groups, and businesses from across Oxfordshire during, but not exclusively, the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out how to nominate someone, you can email mjp.undersheriff@gmail.com.

Please send newsletter contributions well in advance of the intended publication date.

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.

News from Our Children's Meetings

Matthew Gee

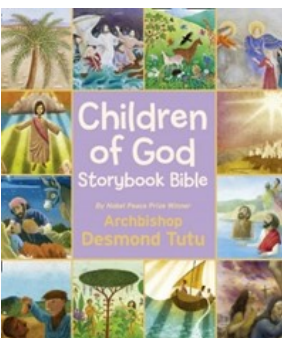
Both the Beansprouts and Sunflowers children's meetings continue via Zoom. We have sadly said goodbye to three children who have moved away from Oxford earlier in the year, and have also welcomed a new child to the meeting.

In March, our **Beansprouts** children's meeting (for toddlers) had a theme of animal homes, using this to think about what we all need to feel safe and secure, using resources from the child mental health charity Place2Be. Some of the stories we shared are: *The Home Builders* by Varsha Bajaj; *Over and Under the Snow* by Kate Messner; and *Little Home Bird* by Jo Empson.



Over successive weeks we each made an animal out of a toilet roll inner; then made a home for our animal, then drew/stuck what we thought our animal needed in its home.

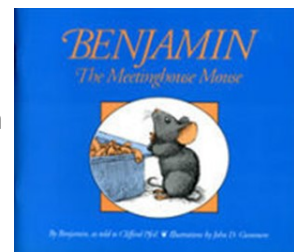
In April we explored the theme of identity and colour. Some of the stories we shared included: *Black all Around!* by Patricia Hubbell; *My Many Coloured*



Days by Dr Seuss; *The Song of Francis* by Tomie dePaola; and *Sky Color* by Peter H. Reynolds, as well as some stories from the *Children of God Storybook Bible* by Desmond Tutu.

Images on this page provided by Matthew Gee

In the **Sunflowers** children's meeting, for Friends age 4-12 years, we have been reading a chapter a week of *Benjamin the Meetinghouse Mouse* by Clifford Pfeil.



Benjamin has joined us each week via Zoom to tell us his story. Along the way we all made mouse finger puppets; thought about inclusion and accessibility in our meetings; and tried writing our own queries.



We also read *George's Journey* by Marcela Teran and Tim Gee: a rhyming story about George Fox. We then each drew around our feet, decorating our foot-shapes with words and pictures about a big step we have taken in our own lives.

Each Sunflowers children's meeting includes several periods of silent worship, with each of the children rotating the role of elder: a role which continues to be very popular. Our practice of the children holding the silence and bringing it to an end themselves is spreading to other children's meetings, and was featured in the *March Quake! newsletter* from Britain Yearly Meeting.

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE) 2021

Friends Southern Summer Events organise Southern Summer Gathering and Southern Senior Conference each year, which are annual week-long residential events for Quaker teenagers, and are an important part of the social and spiritual life of many of our meeting's young people age 11-17.

Covid restrictions have meant the events didn't go ahead in their usual form in 2020, and were online instead. For 2021, there will be events of some kind from 14 to 21 August 2021. Their format will be announced in May 2021. If you, or your child/grandchild, would like to take part this year, keep your eye on the website: <https://fsse.org.uk/>

Dandelion Dallying

Juliet Henderson

There was lively discussion on a number of topics at the late April Oxford Coordinating Group meeting, including the dandelion and its (un)welcome intrusion into gardens. One thing can sometimes lead to another, and it was this – followed by Ellen Bassani’s query about how to distinguish weeds from plants if you can’t see them, then topped by the genius of Deb’s thinking – that led to a Friday with Friends on gardening.

Below are two outcomes of my dallying with dandelions: the poetic and the painted.

Dandelion (*dents de lion*)

In meadows of fresh green cool
In wastelands, in pavement cracks
Comes dandelion
Ready to root

Cheery, cheeky presence
Golden tease, playing ‘catch me if you can’
With gardeners tending lawns
Locked in a lore of purity

Yellow stink clutched in little hands
Seed heads puffed to tell the time
Drifting parachutes freed to seed
What care you for the bad press?

Benign weed, you are edible from top to tail
Your leaves grace tables high and low
Full of nutrients sucked up
Through the hidden ribbons of roots

Your honest, humble heart giving all,
A survivor till the end



By Juliet Henderson

Advocacy Training

Several Oxford Friends have signed up to follow a course on Advocacy training, offered by Mothers 4 Justice Ubuntu. The criminal justice system creates a pipeline between school and prison. Volunteers will provide support to black children and families in Oxford who get caught up in this system. The website for signing up is: <https://mothers4justiceubuntu.com/advocacy/>

This project has been funded by a group of individual Friends from our Meeting.

For the powerful launch event please see: <https://mothers4justiceubuntu.com>

(‘UBUNTU’, from Zulu and Xhosa, translates broadly as ‘a quality that includes the essential human virtues of compassion and humanity’.)

Sense and Community

Jeanne Warren

3 April 2021

My eye was caught by the title of a comment piece by John Harris in *The Guardian* of 29 March: 'How do we faithless people make sense of the past year?' He talked about the lack, in secular societies, of any community in which to talk about 'the profundities of life and death'. He went on to consider how even social spaces such as libraries and parks have been disappearing or down-graded.

I wanted to join in this conversation so I wrote a short (unpublished) letter to the editor:

"John Harris says, 'For many of us, life without God has turned out to be life without fellowship and shared meaning' (29 March 2021). Our problem is that we have discarded not only the belief in a being called God, but also the belief that our connections with each other are as real as our individual selves. When we are isolated we feel lost. Religion was always about our communal life and trying to understand our place in the world. The Bible warns against making images of God, because the personal reality that is God is unbounded, extending beyond our understanding. Quakers as a religious community struggle with these questions in an open and honest way, seeking the spirit that will inspire the re-building of the kinds of community ties that John Harris talks about."

I leave it to other Friends to agree or disagree with my characterisation of us, bearing in mind that it was aimed at a largely secular audience.



Photo by S.L.Granum



In the garden at 43. Photo by S.L.Granum

May Charity Appeal: Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC), Rwanda

Glen Williams

Oxford Friends are long-term partners with the Quaker charity HROC, in Rwanda: first, by supporting training workshops and saving-and-credit schemes for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS; second, by selling Christmas and greeting cards made by the women's group, Urumuri, with support from HROC; and third, through support for training young women who are struggling with the immense challenges of being single mothers in a hostile social environment.

HROC's ability to do this work is now handicapped by the complete breakdown of its laptop computer. A reconditioned second-hand computer will cost approximately £350.

Donations to the HROC can be made in two ways, via a special account managed by Glen & Alison Williams:

- Online bank transfer:
G and A Williams Partners, a/c 50323628,
Sort Code 607003, Natwest Bank
- Cheque:
Payable to G&A Williams Partners, c/- Glen and
Alison Williams, 93 Divinity Road, Oxford OX4 1LN.

Support for Vulnerable People in Tigray

Abby Riddell

Five months since conflict started in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, the humanitarian situation is dire and millions of people remain in need of life-saving support. There has been widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and local services, and many people have fled their homes to escape the fighting, with no more than the clothes they were wearing.

People have sought safety in the major cities, but organisations do not have enough supplies to match the growing need. In Mekele, the capital of Tigray, at least 140,000 people have arrived – and numbers are increasing. There is also a grave shortage of food and clean water. In early March, at one centre for 3,000 people there were just 12 toilets. The local community has rallied around to provide shelter and cooked food. The Daughters of Charity were one of the first organisations to respond, re-targeting their school feeding programme to support displaced people. The charity is now providing approximately 18,000 people with rice or bread once a day. They want to maintain this and increase the nutritional content. They also want to provide more support for women and girls traumatised by the sexual violence that has taken place during the conflict.

The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic organization present in Ethiopia since 1927 – their mission to serve the poorest and most disadvantaged regardless of faith. The charity has a long track record in helping Tigrayan communities survive conflict and drought – making donations go as far as possible.

Several colleagues of Becky Riddell's mother Abby have worked with and been hosted by communities in Tigray for many years, as have many of their friends and family. This group, Team Kbret, are raising funds for Daughters of Charity St Vincent de Paul because of their work with vulnerable people in Tigray. They hope that the contributions made will enable some of the most vulnerable displaced people in Tigray to live in difficult circumstances with more dignity. This will include providing

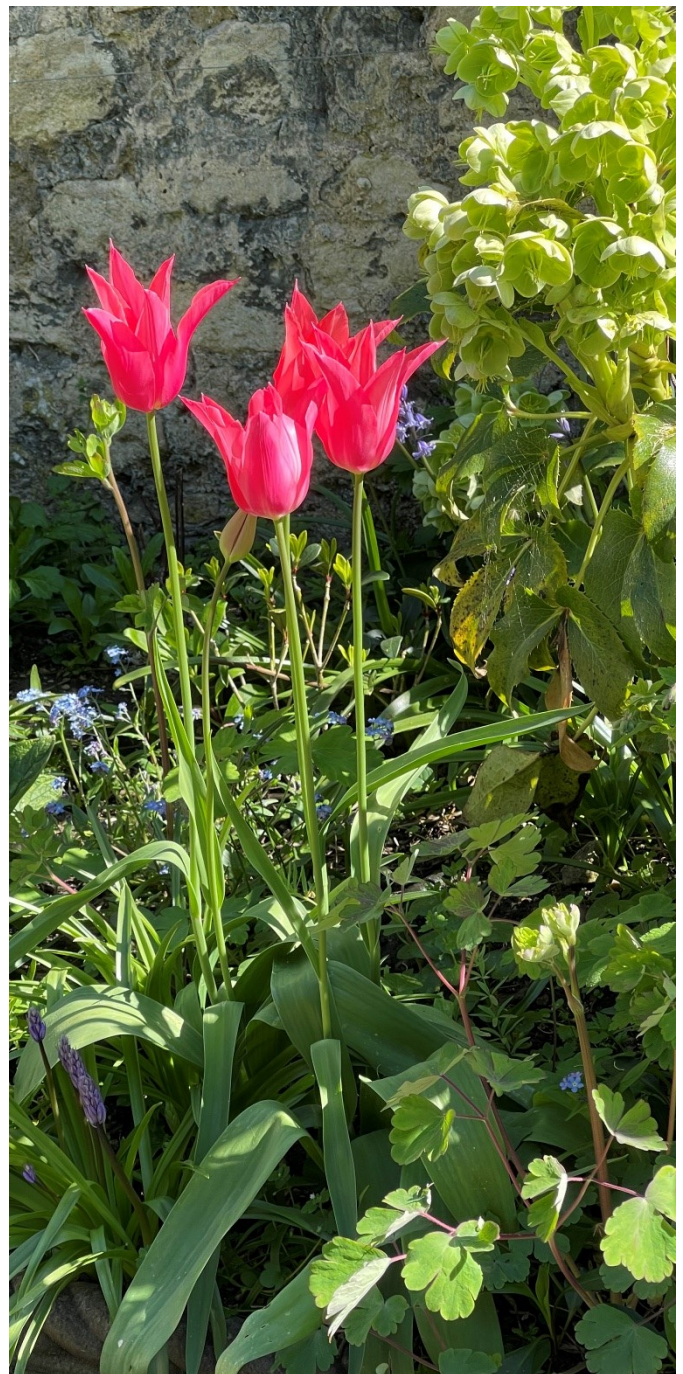
clothes, sanitary pads, baby milk and additional food to breastfeeding women, older women and men, the young, and people who are sick. The word Kbret means respect or dignity in Tigrinya.

For those who would like to know more about the situation in Tigray, see:

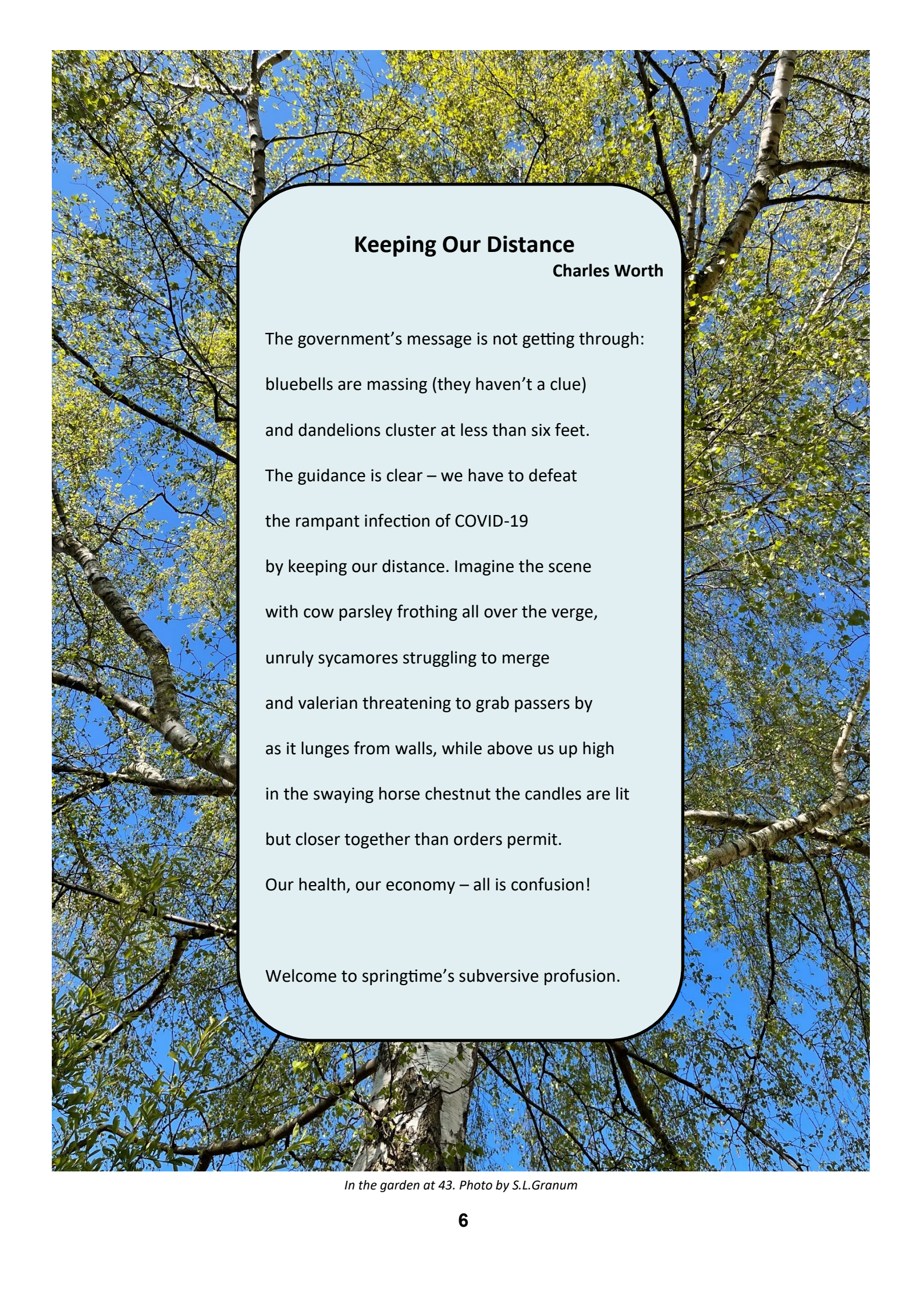
<https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/starving-tigray/>

To make a donation please go to: <https://www.justgiving.com/team/teamkbret>

Unfortunately, there is no alternative to online donations at the moment.



In the garden at 43. Photo by S.L.Granum



Keeping Our Distance

Charles Worth

The government's message is not getting through:

bluebells are massing (they haven't a clue)

and dandelions cluster at less than six feet.

The guidance is clear – we have to defeat

the rampant infection of COVID-19

by keeping our distance. Imagine the scene

with cow parsley frothing all over the verge,

unruly sycamores struggling to merge

and valerian threatening to grab passers by

as it lunges from walls, while above us up high

in the swaying horse chestnut the candles are lit

but closer together than orders permit.

Our health, our economy – all is confusion!

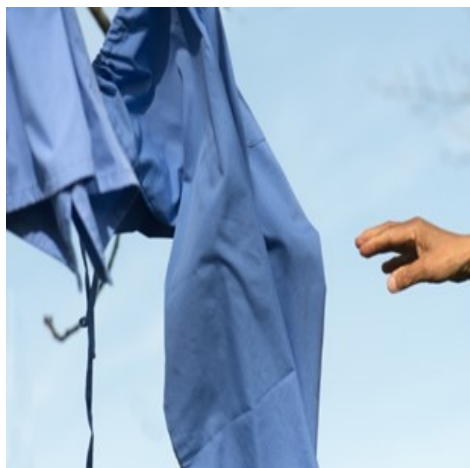
Welcome to springtime's subversive profusion.

In the garden at 43. Photo by S.L.Granum

On a Fifteen Minute Walk ...



Photos by S.L.Granum



Photographs of artists at work by Judie Waldmann/photographic artist

_hung_out_to_dry_ (Instagram) An Open Invitation to All Quakers

Jill Green

During Oxford City Artweeks from 8-16 May inclusive, artists Jill Green and Nimmi Naidoo (both retired NHS staff), working with Oxford City Council, will be showing an installation in Bonn Square that pays tribute to all our magnificent still-working key workers, and to our friends who have so sadly died or become disabled from contracting Covid 19 while faithfully serving the public during this pandemic. They have worked so hard for us, so endlessly turning up for work in spite of knowing that their own lives were/are at risk, that they lacked the right equipment, and that the preparation for such an event had been wholly inadequate.

We do hope that when you are down in town to do some shopping during these nine days, you will pause to bow heads and share a moment of silence and brief conversation with us as we think of our fallen colleagues. The artists hope to be at the site between 12:00 and 18:00 every day. Please bring a bunch of wild flowers.

SOLIDARITY!

All the numbers of deaths by occupation that we share on Instagram and at the site are compiled by the Office for National Statistics for England and Wales.



In the garden at 43. Photo by S.L.Granum

Seeking Accommodation

We are a couple, aged 26 and 24, who are both members of Oxford Meeting and are looking for (reasonably priced, by Oxford standards!) accommodation around the Oxford area from mid-June 2021. The house/flat should be self-contained and reasonably accessible for a wheelchair user (no steps to the main entrance, a shower rather than a shower over a bath), but steps in the house/flat are not a problem. We are willing to consider most parts of Oxford and the surrounding area.

If you know of anywhere suitable, please contact Jamie Green at jamiethomasgreen94@yahoo.co.uk and Ellen Allsop at eallsop@operamail.com



43 St Giles Community Noticeboard online!

Each month we feature upcoming events and activities for all to join.



Events in May



The First Tuesday Group meet by Zoom at 7pm on 4th May, to continue discussions on the writings of Thomas Kelly.

If you would like to join the Group, please contact

anne.watson@education.ox.ac.uk

Join our 'Living in the Spirit' Conversations.
4-5pm or 7-8pm
11th or 25th May
on Afterword link.

OSAM Area EVENING Meeting:

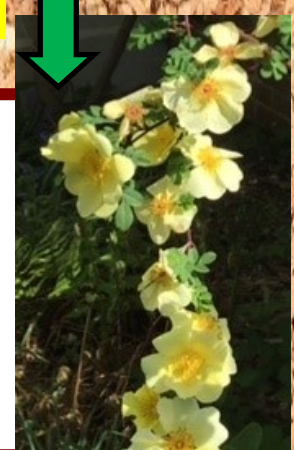
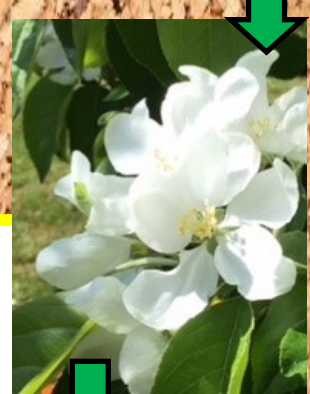
Thursday 13th May
7-9pm.

(zoom details to follow.)

Would you like to garden?
Help needed Thursdays at 43, or Charney Manor on Mondays, and occasional trips around the Area Meeting gardens. Contact the office team!

Poems in the Library: Monday May 17th 4-6pm
with the (as always voluntary) theme of ANNIVERSARY.

On Afterword Zoom



Notice! We are trying to make things simpler, so instead of weekly notices we are putting all events on our monthly noticeboard. We'll post this also in the Meeting House and the real 43 St Giles. We'll need to think ahead so people get their diaries up to date and urgent reminders can still be sent out.

Coming to use the Garden or building at 43? You're welcome! But please remember you must book in with the office team. This is so we record access to the building for our security and insurance liability, and applies to all staff, partner groups, and visitors. Thank you!

Item for the noticeboard? Send in to the office team: office@oxfordquakers.org

CALENDAR FOR MAY 2021

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

Please contact the office for more details.

Email: oxford@oxfordquakers.org

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 557373

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Beatrice Saxon Snell relates a story from her own experience, which reminds us that we are all potentially the instruments of God:

I had a salutary lesson in sober thinking when I was first asked to become an elder.

The invitation appalled me; I felt I was not old enough, had not been in the Society long enough; I suspected strongly that my monthly meeting had asked me on the inadequate grounds of vocal ministry; I read up the appropriate passages in Church government and felt still more appalled.

Nevertheless I had been in the Society just long enough to know that the group often has a wisdom which can seldom be justified on logical grounds but which is, nevertheless, superior to the wisdom of the individual. I therefore went to consult a much respected elder of my acquaintance.

She and her house were late Victorian; she sat on her ugly sofa with the poker up her spine, her feet set neatly together and her hands folded in her lap; and she let me talk myself out.

When I had quite finished she inclined herself slightly towards me and said: 'My dear, we have to take what we can get.'

I have since been convinced that this is a text which ought to be framed and hung up over the bed of every elder in the Society: it ought to be hung over the bed of every Friend who is tempted to refer to the elders as 'they'.

12:08

1982

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

1st Sunday of each month:
Meeting for Worship 10:30
Meeting for Worship for Business 12:30

2nd 3rd 4th Sunday of each month:
Meetings for Worship 09:30 & 11:00

Monday: Young Adult Friends 20:00

Tuesdays & Thursday: Meeting for Worship 07:30

Wednesday: Meeting for Worship 11:30

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.

Heartfelt thanks to ALEX SMITH for his many excellent contributions to the newsletter editorial team.

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

Editorial Team:
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and MICHAEL HUGHEY
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(Calendar and Distribution)