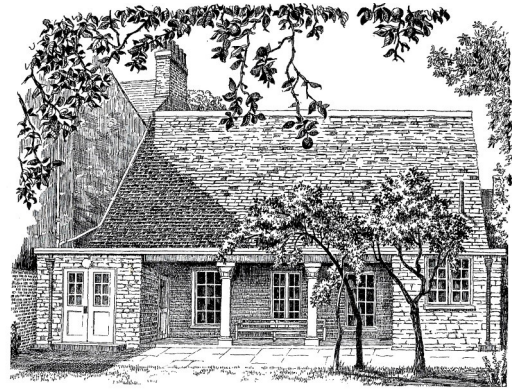


Forty-Three newsletter

Number 514
February 2022



Oxford Friends Meeting

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Steeplehouses, Social Media and SEND:

Worship and Worth-Ship as a Burned-Out Parent.

Nicole Gilroy

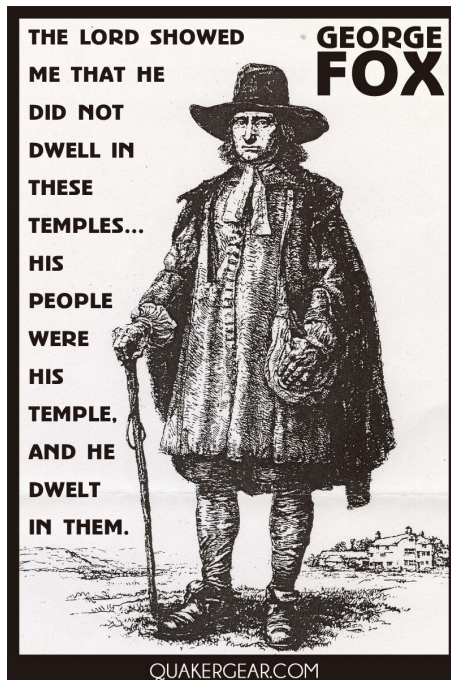
Those of you who know me (and for reasons that may become clearer as you read, that is quite a limited number), will be aware that I am a heavy user of social media. Social media comes in for a lot of criticism, with its risks to mental health, its ability to suck away precious time and its addictive qualities. And also, I mean, megabusinesses mining the details of our lives, feeding us with ads for barefaced consumerism; it's not very, well *whisper it* Quakerly, is it?

As a single mother of two, with no local support, and with a child for whom finding an appropriately skilled carer is such hard work that it defeats the object of having a break, social media represents the overwhelming majority of my social interactions with adults. Sure, I go to work, but my

short days due to limited wraparound care mean long lunches, drinks, and socialising with colleagues don't really feature in my day.

Sadly, the restrictions extend to meeting for worship. The weekday meetings are impossible as they are either too early or take too much of a

chunk out of my working day. Weekend meetings are almost impossible as one child is ultra-keen and the other is so dead set against coming that the experience and aftermath is unbearable. The zoom meetings gave me a chance to attend for a while, but there's no companionship and the constant interruptions to deal with the needs of the small people make settling to worship impossible. And then on 16 January, the anniversary of George Fox's death, his picture popped up on my newsfeed.



This weekend just past, I made the superhuman effort to drag the children along to a meetup of two wild swimming groups I follow. (I say follow, as

Continued next page ...

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 or community noticeboard can be emailed to office@oxfordquakers.org. For information: tel. +44 (0)1865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

regular swims are another thing I can't fit in, but occasionally the planets align, and I can fit in a dip.) So maybe 50 or more folks, on a freezing day, stripped off and immersed themselves in a lake. Some swam, some bobbed about chatting, most swore loudly on entry. All emerged beaming, with the glow of 'ice tan' on their skin. Afterwards we huddled together around a fire and drank our flasks



Toasting marshmallows after a swim. Photo by Nicole Gilroy

of tea, sharing around handfuls of cake and toasting marshmallows. For new attenders, badges were handed out, but membership isn't a formal affair. If you want to belong, you belong. There are no rules but looking out for each other and making sure no one is left behind, or spotting signs of ill effects in someone who has been in too long are unspoken obligations.

Our wonderful Friend Taz posted this meme on Facebook recently:

Can I consecrate this for communion?

A guide to getting kicked out of seminary

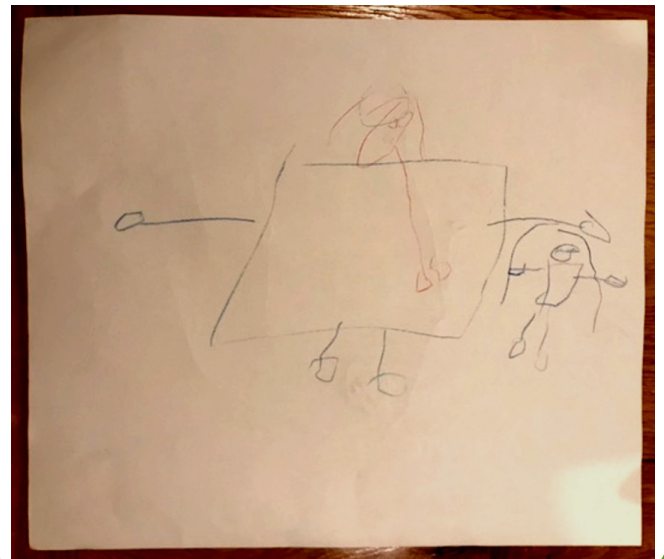


	Ingredient purist (body must be made of wheat flour, water, salt; blood must be made from grapes)	Ingredient neutral (body may substitute any grain, blood may be from any fruit)	Ingredient radical (body and blood may be made from any ingredients)
Structure purist (body must be an unleavened wafer, blood must be alcoholic)	Red wine and communion wafers can be consecrated for communion	Hard cider and corn chips can be consecrated for communion	Vodka and Lunchables can be consecrated for communion
Structure neutral (body may be any bread, blood may be any juice)	Grape juice and tortillas can be consecrated for communion	Tomato juice and cornbread can be consecrated for communion	A kale smoothie and a turkey sandwich can be consecrated for communion
Structure radical (body may be any carbohydrate, blood may be carbonated)	Champagne and plain pasta can be consecrated for communion	LaCroix and corn fritters can be consecrated for communion	Mountain Dew and deep dish pizza can be consecrated for communion

It spoke to my condition. Clearly, I sit at the radical corner on both axes. I feel like hot chocolate and marshmallows absolutely can be consecrated for communion. I've experienced it. Maybe it extends to baptism.

Is stripping naked on a lakeside with a bunch of strangers symbolic of throwing off what's unnecessary and experiencing the wonders of creation? Maybe. Do we need to have a badge, or show up religiously at a certain place and squeeze our messy and overflowing lives into a setting that doesn't meet our needs in order to belong? I hope not.

Eleanor frequently attends zoom Meeting for Worship when her mother, Nicole Gilroy, does. She often has moving ministry to share. Here is more of her ministry in one of her drawings: 'Eleanor hugging her dad who is seriously ill'.



Drawing by Eleanor Gilroy



Photo by Juliet Henderson

Editor's note: Many of you will know the poems of fellow Quaker Dana Littlepage Smith from The Friend or elsewhere. This is a poem from her book What Love Requires, published by Overstep Books, and seems to me to capture the tragedy of the culture of lies that dominates current politics, and their devastating consequences. Dana was very happy to share it with us all.

Juliet Henderson

Lies

Dana Littlepage Smith

*Falsehood flies,
and Truth comes limping after it ...*
— Jonathan Swift, 1710

The lies came easily
at the end, as easily
as fire counterfeiting light
until it swallowed
darkness. As easily
as darkness sexing
a starless sky into night.
Other were noble lies
which fell like Plato's rain
engendering the social
harmony: dissimulators
until the end of time.
But no one knew
where the roots,
the steadfast ones,
had burrowed
in our post-truth world.
Light seemed to slip away.
some said it illumined ...
All the while, the lies
came fast as funerals
for glaciers. Meltwater
brimmed our eyes.
Truth and beauty
might have blinked as falsehood
danced its thin red line
over the horizon,
The suicides
became fake news.
False witness
worked overtime.
Our blinded eyes
reminded us of something.

Living in the Spirit

Jenifer Wates

At a recent Area Meeting, John Mason spoke about an initiative he called 'Living in the Spirit', and explained his idea. Using the facility of Zoom, to which so many of us have been introduced over the last two years, we were invited to meet as a group to pay attention to a passage of spiritual writing, and then share our responses.

These meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month, hosted by John, and on each occasion one of the group offers a piece of writing that they have found useful. I had volunteered to do this for the January meeting, and had brought a piece from a book by David Steindl-Rast called *A Listening Heart: the Art of Contemplative Listening*. Very helpfully, John circulated this in advance of the meeting so that people could ponder on it beforehand and be ready to share their thoughts.

In the event, some parts of the piece were found difficult, especially the idea of 'listening with the heart' if the heart was identified as the seat of emotions. Although the writer had specified that he was using the heart in the sense common in earlier spiritual writers as the deep core of our being, several people preferred to look beyond emotions – e.g. "sink down to the seed". So this in fact led to further exploration as others spoke, and seemed to have served as a useful focus for contributions.

There is no general discussion in these meetings, and no specific responses to each other, but it seemed fruitful in enabling each of us to deepen our understanding and thus our practice, beyond the meeting itself. I hope others too found this to be so.



Photo by SL Granum

A Plant, a Time, a Place

Ellen Bassani



I stand embracing a small, red-leafed plant. The time is a week before Christmas. The place is the Oxford Quaker Meeting House and the bodies before me are my adopted family.

I am offering the poinsettia plant as a visual reminder of Christmases past in

steamy Queensland. The children of my Quaker community are riveted. They can't believe that the tiny plant I hold, grows to ten feet and was the backdrop to a child's Christmas day where a swim in the Pacific Ocean was the morning's ritual, rather than a tramp in the snow or rain.

Mum wanted us children out from under her feet on Christmas morning. The mad scramble to gather together the new beach towels, flip-flops, and sun hats – all presents from Santa – took on a noisy clamour as Dad yelled for us to hurry up. There was a rush on. Mum was getting fractious. She needed to prepare the hot Christmas lunch. Dad was tasked to keep us away for at least two hours. No real sacrifice I suspect. The day was blue and gold. The temperature rapidly rising along with the spirit-crushing humidity. The ocean gifted a breeze every visit.

To leave the driveway was never a simple matter. We'd be settled in the car. Dad would be ready to release the hand brake. Then one of us would remember the Styrofoam surfboard that must, absolutely must, be grabbed from under the house. My beloved father was a patient man. A child would open the door, jump from the seat (no seatbelts in those days), and slam the door just as dad demanded that the door be closed softly. The little figure would disappear into the darkness. Our house, like most older Queensland houses, was up on stilts. Eventually after a lifetime of impatient waiting by the rest of us, she would emerge triumphant.

About fifteen minutes later Dad would be driving up and down the road fronting the beach looking for a

parking space. The whole of Southport was following the same instinct or maternal decree. We always found a space. Doors were opened before the car stopped.

We're talking 35-degree heat here. The tarmac, should you be foolish enough to place a bare foot down, would bubble and burn. Flip-flops, or in Australianese 'thongs', new and smelling of rubber, graced our feet as we slammed the doors on our run towards the sand and sea. Exhilarated, the smell of ozone and coconut oil pistoned our feet even faster.

Poor Dad would be left shaking his head. He'd have to wind each window up and lock each individual door. None of the automatic locking in those days. What care did we girls have about the extra work for our dear father? The ocean with its pounding waves called siren-like to our joyous anticipation.

If foolish enough to cast off the thongs once the fine sand began to squeak under foot, you'd feel the burn. The glorious talcum powder coral sand was as hot as the tarmac. Many a squawking visitor would be seen goose-stepping down the beach. Towels, hats, bags, and thongs would be dropped in a pile, with just enough space to allow the next family's privacy as it enjoyed cool drinks from the esky (insulated container for food or drink).



Southport, Queensland

Photo from Wikimedia Commons

Every Queenslanders was trained from tadpoldom to swim only between the red and yellow flags. These were placed carefully by the lifeguards to minimize the chances that swimmers might be hauled out to sea on a riptide.

We three would rush as a gaggle to the water's edge. Our toes would meet the incoming wave at the same time. Each of us would shriek at the cold. We're talking 78 degrees Fahrenheit water temperature I think – not exactly chilly. Here each child's character would present itself. One sister and I would rush into the freezing depths and get the shock over in a flash. My other sister would edge into the water ankle upwards.



Being immersed in the glorious translucent water was bliss. Waves would pick little bodies up like rag dolls and throw them at the shore. I'd go out beyond the breakers and just flow up and over the unbroken tower of sparkling green. Sometimes the undertow would warn of a real dumper wave coming. It could be dangerous to be caught up in its curling power. I'd wait my moment until the wave was beginning to curl over my head, then dive underneath. The full power of the tons of water would jerk over my body lying at the bottom. Up I'd pop, gasping but triumphant. If I was not immediately alert to the feel of the ocean, another huge wave could knock me off my feet – and round and round I'd tumble to the shore. Now that was truly scary.

My family were a little careless with me. Neither my sisters nor my father seemed to monitor where I was. The pull of the tide might take me far along the beach outside of the flags. Conscious of no other bodies or squeals, I'd realise and make my way to shore. Then I'd stand, believing that one of them would come for me. My towel could be anywhere, and I was cold. I'd walk towards the cries of

swimmers and eventually bump into the flag. I'd wait ever hopeful. If not collected, I'd try to find my belongings by working out distances from the flagpole. Delighted would I be to find the towel, hat, and maybe my sister.

The tramp up the beach seemed endless. Then there was the tedious business of removing the sand from legs and feet before getting into the car. A towel was spread over the seat to absorb the saltwater from our swimmers.

Home we'd go to the smell of roasting meat and vegetables. The hose in the back garden would remove the rest of the sand and the saltwater. We'd then dress in our new Christmas shorts and tops, wash our swimmers, comb our hair, and proceed to the table. Mum – flushed from the crippling heat of the kitchen – would start serving our enormous Christmas dinner. Always wonderful, always too filling, we'd laugh and talk. After the dishes were washed, we'd all go and lie down for an afternoon sleep. A Queensland Christmas is an exhausting business, you know.

Top Marks for Our Community Kitchen Office

The kitchen at 43 has been awarded 5 stars for food hygiene by Oxford City Council Environmental Health Department. Well done to the team – especially Karen who does our regular cleaning and apprentices Lorren and Jarell who have been looking after the kitchen recently. If you use the kitchen and would like to do the short online course in Food Safety please contact the office and we can sign you up!



New Kickstart Starter

Joe Collett



My name is Joe Collett and I am 19 years old. I specialise in maintenance and gardening and I previously worked at New College. I have joined as part of the Kickstart programme till the summer. I have already spent 3 days here and I have got familiar with the building and Charney Manor. I was in charge of checking all the rooms and running the café. I am looking forward to meeting all of the people at the Quakers and Charney Manor.

Message from Janet Toyne

Judith Atkinson

Janet is grateful to Oxford Friends for holding her in the Light while John was ill and since his death. John's memorial in Jesus Lane Meeting, Cambridge, has been postponed until some time in March, to give Janet time to recover from the operation she is due to have. She will make sure that details of the memorial will be shared with Oxford Friends.

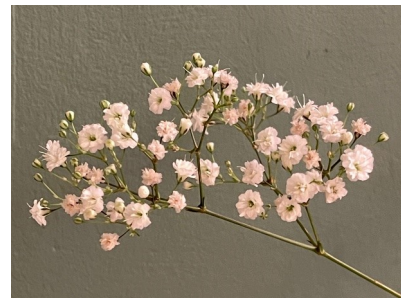


Photo by SL Granum

Crash-Testing Isaac

Trio Watson



I'd like to thank Keith Wilson for his exploration of one of my favourite passages from Quaker Faith & Practice — Isaac Pennington's advice to "give over thine own willing". I'm a bit embarrassed to admit that my copy is rather clean looking for a book that should have had much more use, but Keith has encouraged me to try a little harder to appreciate the rich cultural inheritance we have from our Quaker forefathers.

I share with Keith the pleasure and the frustration of Pennington's phrasing, and decided I would set myself a humorous exercise: to translate Pennington-speak into the language I enjoy in the deeply thoughtful work of the Crash Test Dummies, a Canadian rock band who wrote one especially good album in the 1990s called *God Shuffled His Feet*. Translation is optimism in the face of the impossible: an effort to catch a wind blowing through the neural forests of one mind, and blow it through an entirely different one. Sometimes we

gain sometimes we lose in the process. Not something to take too seriously, perhaps.

Quakers sometimes say that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life". So here (after Isaac Pennington's original) is my offering!

Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion.

Isaac Pennington, 1661

Our many understandings, and doubts about the future that lies before us, form an ocean. In the soil of our being, a place we can't see, we can believe ourselves stuck right out in nature, and in that place be more than just one thing. Breathing parts connect inside us, unseen. Such night drives make it nicer when we do arrive.

Trio, 2022 / Crash Test Dummies, 1993

Tabora League for Children Says 'Thank You'

Marg Paton

A big thank you from the children of Tabora League for Children (TLC) in Tabora, Tanzania, for their yummy Christmas lunch, their gifts, and for their families' food parcels of rice and beans.



Photo by Beatrice Makua

Thank you too for their nets and water-filters. Numbers with malaria are always high in Tabora. All those who needed new nets because their old ones got too holey to mend, have got them. Their family water-filters have a clay liner and the faulty or broken ones have now been replaced.

The children went back to school on 17 January 2022, so new school skirts and shorts were sewn locally, and the shirts and socks were bought in the market.

Shoes have been given out, heads shaved, and all the supplies needed for attendance at school have been provided, including bikes for those attending a new secondary school far from either home or their

TLC centre. Mattresses and brooms and gardening equipment were needed for secondary boarding schools.

For the first time solar lamps have been given to students aged ten and above so they can do homework after darkness falls suddenly at 18:45.

An amazing £6,221 was raised for this seasonal appeal from all our supporters, including the very generous help from Oxford Quakers. It was all spent on our 150 children and their families over November, December, and January. The children are all sorted out, ready for 2022. This includes Saada, mentioned in a 9:30 Afterword. She came daily to one of our Centres asking to join TLC and be helped to attend secondary school once she had been allocated a place. We agreed and she was kitted out. Her mother sells bananas on the street and simply could not afford what was needed. Father had deserted the family.

All the children are sponsored, and that helps to pay for the daily lunches served at each of the three TLC Centres. The Centres provide safe havens for these vulnerable children. Extra tuition from the two part-time teachers in each centre is enabling significant improvement in class positions. Class sizes range from 100 to 375.



Quaker Videos in This Month's Forty-Three—February 2022

Michael Hughey

In the first video, Alistair Fuller briefly discusses George Fox's recognition of God's light in everyone. The second video describes twenty positive steps taken by Quakers to promote racial justice. The third is from Don McCormick, describing his exploration of spiritual autobiography.



Alistair Fuller

[Equality and 'that of God' in everyone](#)

In 1647 George Fox recognised that God's light is within everyone. Alistair explains why this matters today.

Quakers in Britain

1 Minute

https://youtu.be/h0_NaPlkHzy



Friends House London
Photo by Simon Burchell

[20 things Quakers are doing to build a racial justice movement](#)

To celebrate 20 years of Refugee Week, we put together 20 of the things we have been doing to protect human rights and be in solidarity with newcomers to the UK.

Quakers in Britain

2 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/RbWRVROHEFs>



Don McCormick
Grass Valley Friends Meeting
Grass Valley, California

[Writing a Spiritual Autobiography](#)

...if you think about it some of the most influential books in the history of Quakerism (George Fox's journal and John Woolman's journal) were spiritual autobiographies. So there's a unique kind of connection between spiritual autobiography and Quakerism.

Quaker Speak

4 Minutes

https://youtu.be/WPx7_8ljI3w

Monthly Appeal The Hope Institute, Kampala, Uganda

Virginia Allport and Glen Williams

The Hope Institute was founded in 1992 by a charismatic Ugandan priest, Gideon Byamugisha. The Institute trains young women and men from low-income families in skills that will enable them to become economically self-sufficient.

Female students of the Institute outnumber males by about two to one. Graduates now support themselves as chefs, clothing designers, electricians, motor mechanics, and hair stylists. The Institute also educates its students in safe, responsible sexual behaviour. One female student of electrical installation topped her year in national exams, despite having recently been orphaned.



*Winie Nagadya,
top student in electrical installations*

No students have yet tested positive for COVID-19. However, the staff and the students have all been severely affected by the pandemic. From March 2020, the Institute – along with all other training institutions in Uganda – had to stop teaching activities for a total of 13 months. This severely affected the number of students able to sit for their final exams. It also impacted negatively on re-enrolments after extended lockdowns, since many parents were unable to pay the Institute's fees. Nevertheless, teaching resumed on 1 November last year.

Many students have re-enrolled, but growing numbers are at risk of dropping out because their parents are unable to pay for tuition fees and living expenses. Funds are urgently needed to cover running costs, especially staff salaries, training materials, and meals for students.

To support the work of the Hope Institute, please make a BACS payment to:

**G and A Williams Partners,
a/c 50323628,
Sort Code 607003,
Natwest Bank.**

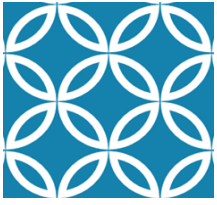
Alternatively, please send a cheque to:

**G and A Williams Partners,
93 Divinity Road,
Oxford OX4 1LN.**



*Winie Nagadya (left) with fellow students and instructor
Photo by Ruth Ninsiima*

Your donation will be acknowledged, and no charges will be made to cover administrative costs. You will also receive a report on the work of the Hope Institute.



Events February 2022



Calling all garden FODs — It's Spring (almost). Let's start again! Thursdays from 10.30am. Lunch usually provided.



Forty-Three Newsletter

Smart scan! Pick up a copy of Forty-Three in 43 St Giles. We print a limited number of copies, but if you have a smart phone you can scan the QR code on the stand in the lobby. Try this out: How to scan Open the camera app on your phone. Point the camera towards the image. Then you'll be taken to the Forty-Three newsletter web page.

Fridays Without Friends are Rubbish! If anyone has an idea for a Friday With Friends Please contact Elisabeth Salisbury as we are missing getting together!



Our lovely assortment of regular groups are gradually returning to use our rooms, but we still have availability. If you, or a group you know, are looking for affordable space in a supportive environment in central Oxford then please contact the office. You can find our room rates and Terms and Conditions of hire on www.oxfordquakers.org (room hire dropdown menu) — or we can email them out to you.

Dear Friends... Information for weekly notices – please send to the office by Wednesday lunchtime for inclusion. 100 words or fewer please!!

Welcome! What is a meeting without a welcome? Please contact anyone from the pastoral care group if you could take a few minutes ahead of any meeting to welcome people arriving – especially newcomers. Let's make it a good worship experience for all.

FEBRUARY 2022

During the COVID-19 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

Quaker Faith and Practice

Careful listening is fundamental to helping each other; it goes beyond finding out about needs and becomes part of meeting them. Some would say that it is the single most useful thing that we can do. Those churches that have formal confession understand its value, but confession does not have to be formal to bring benefits. Speaking the unspeakable, admitting the shameful, to someone who can be trusted and who will accept you in love as you are, is enormously helpful.

QF&P 12.01



Photo by Jacqui Mansfield

OXFORD MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Meetings for worship are via Zoom and/or in person.

For more information, contact the Office at

office@oxfordquakers.org +44 (0)1865 557373

First Sunday of each month:

Meeting for Worship 10:30-11:30 (in person & Zoom)
MfW for Business 12:15 (in person & Zoom)

All other Sundays:

Meetings for Worship 09:30-10:15 (in person and Zoom)
11:00-12:00 (in person and Zoom)

Monday:

Young Adult Friends 19:00-21:00 (in person and Zoom)

Tuesday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (in person only)

Wednesday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (Zoom only)
Meeting for Worship 11:30-12:15 (in person & Zoom)

Friday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (Zoom only)

Forty-Three is available online,
<https://brooksidepress.org/quaker/>
and on the Oxford Quakers website,
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.

HEADINGTON MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Headington Meeting meets each Sunday at 10:00
at Old Headington Village Hall,
Dunstan Road, Headington, OX3 9BY

For full details see

<https://headington.quakermeeting.org/>

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

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