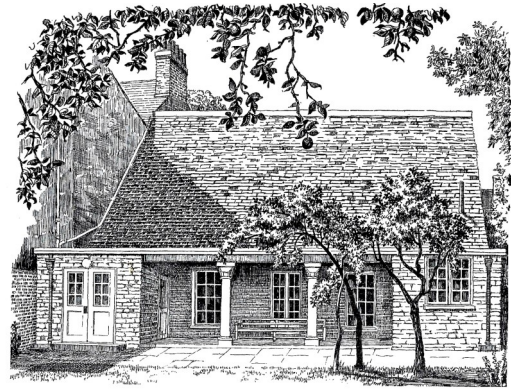


Forty-Three newsletter

Number 521
September 2022



Oxford Friends Meeting

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Just Ask

Ellen Bassani

In this piece I hope to share my experience of feeling included within my spiritual community, where I've been a member for over forty years.

Let me offer a limited biography, so my observations may be put into context.

My background is Australian, which makes me prone to outspoken directness. Over the years I've tried to temper this, with limited success.

Raised Roman Catholic, I found that Quaker spirituality, at its simplest and most profound, moved me away from any attachment to the faith of my childhood. Yet perhaps a certain rigidity of belief still lingers.

I was married in the meeting house: a marriage organized and supported by beloved Friends. My



Photo by Charles Worth

two children were raised in the meeting. Our dear Virginia can testify to the challenges that this provided. Shamefully, because of their behaviour, my two were once led from the meeting house by an elder.

My work history is as a Social Worker and a Disability Equality trainer. The latter career took me to China, Poland, and Perm in Russia. I believed this experience might be helpful to my meeting.

The other strand of this biography is my blind history. I have very little useful vision. Life in those early years of membership as a mother of one non-disabled and one learning-disabled child was beyond stressful, with my own family twelve thousand miles away. How would I have survived without the loving care of individuals from Oxford Meeting?

My husband also had a neurodiverse condition which, combined with my blindness, almost crushed me. Every Sunday my children and I were driven to meeting and returned home, a little more refreshed.

Every month a team of Friends would don marigolds and come and try to set my home aright. During this time, I was lovingly read to and mentored by the redoubtable Margaret Ainger – unforgettable!

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

There aren't enough words to express my deep gratitude to all. No idle words to claim that they made living possible.

However, in this loving garden of Eden I MIGHT have spied a serpent. Its form was hazy, yet my antenna flickered. In those early days, I didn't feel respected as an equal. Into my needy, willing arms came help, advice, and hard work — but the talented professional me didn't feel seen. It was my blindness that moulded my identity within my community. Certainly a feisty brave outspoken me was identified, however all through the lens of disability. I longed to give back yet wasn't asked.

In a business meeting, when I brought my concerns about obstacles in the lobby, an elderly member suggested that it was my responsibility to adapt. Those were different times, when the Disability movement hadn't made its mark. It still felt like a punch.

For the first fifteen years I was NEVER approached to join a committee even though I'd expressed an interest, believing that my professional background might be useful. Maybe my directness was seen as out of touch with my limits. It took a wonderful woman with a disabled son to strive for my inclusion. She was strenuously opposed. The opposition was not out of cruelty, but the belief that a blind person has too much to cope with and couldn't manage the extra demands that a committee role might require. Even today losing one's sight triggers a belief that one's life is over. Those folk back then had the same responses. Onto my shoulders, was projected their Terror. How did this negating make me feel? That I had nothing to give of worth. That I was invisible. To be blind robs me of other people's body language, smiles, or nods of approval. Verbal validation was needed, especially back then, when my sense of self was all need and helplessness. The inner voice confirmed otherwise, but my environment continued to perpetuate these feelings.

These days I feel loved, valued and even sought after. Inclusion is much higher on the social agenda, and I am less overwhelmed in my personal life. So here's one little piece of advice from a woman who loves her meeting and those within it. If there's a question of asking persons with disabilities to undertake tasks within the life of the meeting, be

aware of the assumptions you might be laying at their door. Remember that each of us is the expert of our own condition. This is particularly pertinent when an impairment is involved. Don't try to protect me or other folk that have particular needs. Simply make the request and wait with an open heart for the answer. You never know, they may bring a perspective that hasn't previously been considered. Never underestimate the grace bestowed by just asking.



Photo by SL Granum

The Communicating Group – What's This? And What's Going On?! Deb Arrowsmith

At Oxford Meeting we have many and various committees who are responsible for different aspects of the life of our meeting. Each group reports to the business meeting usually once a year about their work and activity.

In a large meeting clear communication can be difficult. Sometimes it's hard to know what's going on, especially if you don't attend business meeting. It's also important for the office team to know what the meeting is dealing with, and to share as widely as possible what's happening around the buildings and garden.

Trying to help with communication in a fragmented time, a couple of years ago we organised a monthly Zoom meeting for a representative of each group in Oxford Meeting to attend and share what their concerns, joys, and issues might be. We formed a Communicating Group. This is not a formally appointed group, each group or committee is encouraged to send a different person each time, who is then asked to report back and share anything

that was raised within their own group/committee. We meet on the Monday preceding a Sunday business meeting (which normally means the last Monday of a month) between 17:30 and 19:00, (though we try to finish in an hour). This gives our Clerks of the Meeting, who prepare the agenda for the following Sunday's business meeting, a chance to hear from all corners of the meeting.

No decisions are made in the Communicating Group. That is the role and place of business meeting in the way we work. No minutes are taken, quite deliberately. This is an open conversation — a chance to listen, ask questions, share, and explore ideas together. There's often humour and mutual support for those serving the meeting and I hope it's an enjoyable gathering for all. We do produce short notes about what was raised; these are meant to serve as aides-mémoire for those reporting back to their group or committee. Why not ask in your group/committee who goes to the coordinating meeting, and ask if you can come along?

Our next meeting will be on 26 September at 17:30 on the Afterword Zoom, and we'd like to extend an invitation to all who'd like to come along and hear for yourselves about – What's going on!



Rewilding Meetings

Yvonne Dixon

'Forest' appears as a modifier to describe a number of newly popular activities: Forest School, Forest Church, Forest Bathing, to name a few. My eldest daughter trained as a Forest School teacher just before the pandemic started and I attended my first Forest Church in Bicester at around the same time. I have a striking memory of that first gathering at

7:30 on a frosty morning in January 2020 at which I looked forward to making more local friends through the activity. However, it was 18 months before I could reconnect in person when it recommenced in July last year. Since then I have made many new friends within the local church that supports the Forest Church. We recently enjoyed an afternoon walking through small villages, fields, and woods north of Bicester, visiting a micro-dairy and tasting fresh home-made goats' cheese. On a recent ramble scoping out a walk I plan to lead with the Oxford Fieldpaths Society next year, I saw a notice next to a village pond announcing 'Wild Church' with services held outdoors, and of course early Quakers were quite familiar with worship under an open sky.

I have many friends and connections within Chiltern Area Meeting from my time as a Quaker Prison Chaplain, and I was very enthused by one of their latest initiatives, a series of guided walks starting from each of the Meeting Houses in the Area. In June this year I went on the first one of these, an extremely enjoyable and informative tour of Eton, setting off from Slough Meeting House and led by a Blue Badge guide. This month (August) I have just been on a walk starting from Amersham Meeting House with guides in Tudor dress from the town's museum introducing us to the history of the Lollards, their calls for the Bible to be made available for everyone to read in English, and a 'flatter' more egalitarian church structure. We climbed a hill above the town to the place where the Amersham Martyrs were burnt at the stake for these beliefs; similar in many ways to those of the Quakers in a later century.

I do enjoy the 'incidental fellowship' of walking alongside people on hikes, pilgrimages, and walks such as these, and I wonder if OSAM could envisage something similar: a series of short walks starting from a Meeting House door and visiting a few sites of interest. Post-pandemic, a number of habits have been overturned and some connections lost in the process. My own patterns of worship and modes of belonging have changed in ways I could not have foreseen, and maybe an idea like this would offer an opportunity of helping us 'seek to know one another in the things which are eternal' (Advices and Queries 18).

Return to the Home Country – Or ‘Look to Lesser Linen’

Karima Brooke

You're still under age, a juvenile,
'returned' to Extremadura, a home
you never knew, far from Chilterns' motorways
or wildest, wet and windy Wales.

Negative for avian influenza,
your DNA's entered in a database,
a tag – not electronic – put on your leg,
voice recorded for research purposes.

The plan:

 come February, you get a mate,
dancing and whirling in courtship ritual,
the international language of desire.
Then, find a nest, maybe in evergreen oak.

You don't build from scratch, that's not your forte –
anyone's abandoned structure will do.

Pad it out with bark, leaves, wool, twigs.
You are the original shantytown bird.

Decorating the nursery, that's where
you excel: flamenco dancer's hair clip;
thong cast aside in hasty human pairing –
your taste for underwear is notorious.

And, pièce-de-résistance, a cuddly toy
dropped by tourist child from speeding car,
with paper from an Olá ice lolly.
Now you feel at home, deported Red Kite!



*Red Kite over Bernwood Meadows, Buckinghamshire
From Wikimedia Commons, Photo by Charles J Sharp*



Reminder

Brigid Schroer

An Extended Meeting for Worship / Silent Retreat

will take place at 43 St Giles
on Saturday 3 September, 10:00 for 10:30, finishing about 13:30.
We will have use of the garden and a meeting room.
The meeting will be in-person only. All are welcome.
Please bring your own lunch.

Musings Upon a 4-Year-Old's First Encounter with a Meeting for Worship

Juliet Henderson

Last Sunday I took my two grandsons, who were staying with Nana for three days, to the Combined Meeting for Worship: Felix a beansprout (2), and Theo a sunflower (4). Though Theo had attended one meeting previously in his mother's arms, this was his first more conscious experience of entering meeting at the end for the last moments of worship.

They both very much enjoyed the activities so thoughtfully contrived by Matt and Virginia that occupied most of the hour outside in the garden. Reading books, drawing, playing with the other children, and learning the beansprout and sunflower Quaker song. What I'd like to share in more detail are Theo's comments during the short time we were in the Meeting House — Felix on my lap, Theo at my side.

Firstly, after a quick glance at the Meeting, Theo said to me urgently, "Nana, you need to put your

mask on". He had rapidly grasped the norms in place, and was concerned I respect them. Then, as we sat there in silence, looking rather anxious, he whispered, "Nana this is scary." Finally, after Matt had explained to the Meeting what the children had done and we filed out before notices, he exclaimed somewhat indignantly "but they didn't let us have our turn".



Those few comments in those short minutes prompted me to see and feel afresh what the experience of joining Meeting for Worship at its tail end might be for some younger children. Having previously only experienced it as a smiling adult enjoying the energy and disruption ushered in by the children's entry, I was slightly shaken to see it from the side of a child — albeit a newbie.

His comments left me with a number of questions about younger Friends I simply wish to share with you. Do they feel scared? Do they not feel included? Do we properly 'recognise the gifts they bring' to the end of the Meeting for Worship?

News of Fiona Mullins and Intentional Communities

Eric Roberts

Earlier this summer, Oxford Meeting had a visit from Fiona Mullins, who was for many years an active participant in Oxford Meeting and is well remembered by many here. Fiona is now living in a cooperative community called Old Hall housed in an old friary in Suffolk (see photo). The community has approximately 45 adults and 15 children, and Fiona reports that they are seeking new members.

See <https://www.oldhall.org.uk/> for more details.



Photo supplied by Fiona Mullins

Monthly Appeal - September 2022

Oxford Friends Action Against Poverty (OxFAP)

Jill Green

This group represents Oxford and Headington Meetings' response to poverty and inequality in our city. The committee of 8 members, convened by Karima Brooke, distributes funds raised from regular giving by individuals in our meetings. We only give grants in response to requests from organisations (such as the Probation Service, Family Centres, CABx) and their caseworkers, for individuals whose needs they have carefully assessed.



Illustration by Jill Green

Friends annual giving and related Gift Aid raises about £1,000 per calendar month. This year one-off donations from local Friends, funds allocated by Oxford Meeting as a whole, a donation from Headington Meeting, and £20,000 from an anonymous local family trust allowed us to increase our maximum grant for individuals from £300 to £400 in February.

This was important due to the increasing cost of white goods and our wish to encourage the organisations who apply for grants on behalf of their clients to go for ethical and sustainable options when submitting applications. However, requests for grants, in the current context of a cost-of-living crisis, are increasing all the time.

From 1 January to the present we have allocated a total of £47,674. This presents us with a dilemma that is illustrated well by the sort of requests we receive for help from caseworkers in the city.

Notably almost all the applications are for people

who are in work, unless prevented by disability. There are families for whom the breakdown of a washing machine or fridge is a disaster. We have funded laptops to enable children to do their homework, clothes for people whose clothes no longer fit, and ID documents to enable people to open a bank account or apply for a job. Still people are being catapulted into debt due to rising food and fuel costs, and it is heartbreaking when one of our boundaries (aside from the slightly easier geographical ones) is that we do not give grants to repay debt. However, we do help organisations that have clients who are applying for Debt Relief Orders.

Now we are hovering on the brink of reducing back our maximum grants for individuals to £300.00 while inflation gathers pace daily.

We realise that everyone is feeling the pinch just now, but we still hope you may be able to find some spare money to give to OxFAP – particularly during our collections in September this year. While one-off donations are always welcome, regular giving is the most helpful.

For details of how to donate please visit oxfordquakers.org, go to the SOCIAL ACTION heading and find various methods of donating to OxFAP there. Alternatively send a cheque to 43 St Giles OX1 3LW made payable to Oxford Quaker Meeting and please be sure to write 'OxFAP' on the back.



Photos by Charles & Caroline Worth

The Meeting Garden Party

Juliet Henderson

Thanks to the efforts and organization of Anthea Clarke, Ursula Kneisel, Elaine Parry, Anne Watson, Kath Wilson, and Caroline Worth a wondrous gathering of 75 members of Oxford Meeting was held on Saturday 13 August. A refreshing event for all despite temperatures of 35 degrees, with delicious cakes galore and all revelling in re-establishing connections or making new ones in the slow pace of garden party.

Many thanks to the organisers, and all who helped with setting up pagodas, welcoming at the door, washing, and clearing up.

Quaker Videos in this Month's *Forty-Three*

In the first video, Alastair Cameron reflects on Quaker social challenges and consequences. In the second, Quakers in Britain discuss putting faith into action. In the third video, QuakerSpeak outlines one way for attenders or non-attenders to join in membership with a Quaker Meeting.



Alastair Cameron

[Time for Reflection](#)

Alastair Cameron, clerk of South East Scotland Area Meeting, led the Scottish Parliament in "Time for Reflection"

Quakers in Scotland

4 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/nLI0IN3Svlg>



Quakers in Britain

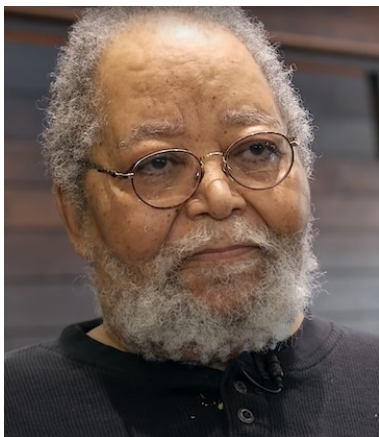
[Quaker Faith in Action](#)

Quakers discuss how and why they put their faith into action.

Quakers in Britain

3 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/-MNKBTIKkNw>



Carter Nash

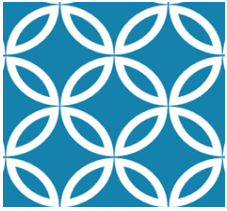
[How to Become a Member of a Quaker Meeting](#)

Interested in becoming a Quaker? Here's how to join a Quaker Meeting and become a member.

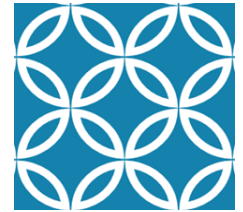
QuakerSpeak

5 Minutes

<https://youtu.be/xvv21eu6qvs>



43 St Giles Community Noticeboard online!



Events September 2022

Poems in the Library.

Monday
19 September
'Invincibility'
and or 'Defeat'
on Afterword Zoom
16:00-18:00



10th/11th – come and help!



We need Friends
to welcome, guide, and explain
who we are and what we stand
for – oh, and make tea too!

in and around 43

Who's in this month – just so you know....



Homeless Oxfordshire



Centre for
Sustainable
Healthcare



Interested?

The Book of Members and Attenders group is meeting to begin the process of creating an up-to-date digital list and new book.

The OSAM Website group is meeting to create a clear information point website for all OSAM activities and local meeting worship times and events.

Oxford is holding Enquirers meetings open to all across OSAM
First session **13 October:**
What happens in a meeting for worship



SEPTEMBER 2022

Many meetings and events are held in person and via Zoom.

Link for all Oxford online Meetings for Worship:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=Vkkya2ZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09>

Please contact the Office for more details:

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



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)

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/>

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Knowing and accepting ourselves

When we descend from our towers, and come out from our sanctuaries, and take our place in ordinary homes, and workshops, and are surrounded and jostled by our fellow-creatures, we find that our sensitive souls shrink from some of these contacts: that this man humbles our pride, and that one offends our aesthetic sense: that this woman takes our words amiss, and that one misconstrues and resents our actions. It is so much easier to feel enthusiasm for humanity, than to love our immediate neighbours.

*Phyllis Richards, 1948
QF&P 21.13*

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

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