

Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 530

June 2023

Oxford Friends Meeting

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The Challenge of Poverty

Sarah Lasenby

Try the Audio Narration version of Forty-Three by [Clicking Here.](#)

Dear Friends,

I have been thinking about the things, people living on benefits are unable to do that we take for granted. We know that at present all poor people are finding it difficult to pay for heating and eating. The real value of benefits has dropped significantly in the last 20 years.

In the 1990s I worked with Children and Families in Oxford. At that point the County Council understood how important it was to have at least one week of holiday giving families a break from a, maybe, overcrowded home. The council bought a caravan and placed it in Hampshire



Photo by J Henderson

near a cheap holiday camp. The families who used it often had to double up with another family, but they really appreciated the chance to get away. They loved it. The caravan rotted and the council has never had the money to replace it. These people never imagined they could go away twice in a year, let alone more often.

Then I thought of some of the things these people could not do because they could not use a car. Learning to drive is very expensive even if someone will lend you a car. Very few people on benefits can possibly own

Please send newsletter contributions by the 15th of the month, the submission deadline.

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org or a paper copy can be left in the office pigeonhole of any editor.

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and run a vehicle. So, shopping in bulk is not available.

There are other constraints without a car. I acknowledge that people did not always have the luxury of a car but in those days public transport was more frequent, reliable, and cheap.

Now everything seems to be more difficult. Bus fares are much more expensive in Oxford than in London (more than double), and in other large towns. Our buses are of course run by private companies, and they must pay their shareholders!

Those of you that use the Oxford bus services will know that our buses do not always run on time and are very expensive.

Food Banks carry some stigma. Though these are no longer just for the identified

poor, now being regularly used by working people, like nurses.

In East Oxford people come to the Tesco Express by bus and go home by taxi adding to their food costs. I have just found out that Tesco is charging between 10% and 16% more in this small Tesco near us than they charge at the large out of town Tesco.

I am sure you can think of other things that we enjoy but those on benefits will not have the chance to. All the services people used to enjoy free in their home areas have disappeared with 'austerity'. This a huge gap in the quality of life for those living on benefits.

Artists, Correspondents, and Photographers

Karima Brooke

Crik, crak, crik, crak
now where's the flak jacket?
what we report
is re-enacted as sport
ricocheted retort
that grenade fell short
down by the port
meant for police convoy
of super-power envoy
hit schoolboy
and girls - a decoy?
inevitability, repeatability
what we narrate
is born of hate.



By Karima Brooke



Asylum Welcome Monthly Appeal May 2023

Tina Leonard

Asylum Welcome's mission is simple: we aim to make Oxfordshire a safe, welcoming, and inclusive community for asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants.

As a local not-for-profit we address a critical gap in the support available for our vulnerable clients by providing a wraparound support service that is uniquely client-led. We advocate for, empower, and advise every individual so that our support is tailored to every client's varied, complex, and unique needs.

Our work is growing in importance every day in this current climate of governmental hostility and the increasingly complex and opaque immigration legal system. In recent months alone we have welcomed more than six hundred new arrivals, and the number of people we are supporting annually has almost doubled to more than three thousand clients.

The demand for our help shows no sign of slowing, but with few additional resources, no notice of new arrivals and little to no funding from local councils or the Home Office for this work, our ability to fully support those who need it, is constantly being challenged.

At the core of our work is the belief that everyone deserves to live safely and freely,

regardless of who they are or where they come from. We are working to make this happen by providing essential services to help our clients navigate the many difficulties they face, this includes legal advice; language assistance; employment and education assistance; accessing crucial mental and physical health services; combatting homelessness by helping to find suitable accommodation; and providing funds to ensure clients are well fed, have essential hygiene items, suitable clothes and access to activities, phones and bikes that all increase their quality of living.

The asylum system may be broken, but that will not stop us from providing the essential care and support our clients need in these truly difficult times. Our goal continues to be building a community where asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable migrants feel safe and loved members of our compassionate community.

We will continue to work towards a future where our clients can exercise their rights and have their cases fairly considered; where they can live freely and safely; access crucial services easily; share their talents and achieve their goals, and where ultimately, they can feel at home.

If you share this sentiment and wish to help us to make Oxfordshire a safe space for everyone, please support us today and donate if you can.

The Co-Operative Bank
PO Box 250
Skelmersdale, Lancashire
WN8 6WT

Account: Asylum Welcome
Sort Code: 08-92-50
Account number: 65026773

Asylum Welcome donate website:
<https://www.asylum-welcome.org/donate/>

The Christian Story

Jeanne Warren

The Christian Story shows us a way to think about the world we live in and how to live in it.

It says that the world as created is OK and that we do not need to fear death, which is a part of creation. The way to live is to care for each other. A world in which each cares for the others will be a world in which we can find security and well-being. Bad things may happen, but they do not cut us off completely from a meaningful life as long as we remain connected with each other. Healing is always a possibility.



Photo by J Henderson

When I call this story Christian, I am not talking about what is Christian dogma or theology, but of what we can read in the first four books of the New Testament.

These four gospels tell the story in four different ways, which correspond roughly to the four functions attributed to human beings by the psychologist C G Jung: thinking (Matthew), feeling (Luke), sensation or sense perception (Mark) and intuition (John). Each of us has elements of these four functions in ourselves but most of us favour one of them, so it probably helps that we have four presentations of the story.

If I had been raised in a different culture, I would know a Muslim story or a Jewish story or a Hindu story or a Buddhist story or some other story. It would probably satisfy me in the way that the Christian story satisfies Christians.

Sometimes people change stories. We also change interpretations of our own story, and it is never wise to force people into pre-conceived understandings which they cannot really agree with.

What the story does not talk about:

- How to amass ever more knowledge
- How to amass great wealth
- How to acquire power over others
- How to create beautiful objects and sounds

It does not preclude all these things, but it does not emphasise them.

Quakers have tried to learn the meaning of this story for life in their own time and they continue to do so today. To do this they had to discard the traditional thought structures that had become Christian theology. Early Friends, in the 17th century, believed they could hear the voice of God in their hearts and that Jesus was 'the Christ', the living spirit who spoke for God when he was alive and continued to do so after his death.

Modern Friends are not always so sure that they can hear such a voice, but they remain open to something from deep within that can sometimes guide them through the immense complexities and dangers of modern life. In our Meetings for Worship, we listen for that voice.

All the above is just my own view, but I think it accords with mainstream Quaker thinking. Of course, there are many Quakers today who do not come from a Christian tradition and so do not think of their Quakerism in Christian terms. They have different issues to deal with. And we all need to think of ways to know and accept each other in the depth that has drawn us to Quakerism in the first place.

“Why Walk When You Can Dance?”

A Review of the Marmalade Festival Dance Workshop run by Julia Dover on 11 April

Nicole Gilroy

‘Marmalade’ is a collaboration of individuals and organisations coming together in Oxford to make it a better place for all by focussing on power, relationships, and place with the aim of shifting power and sharing it across the city.

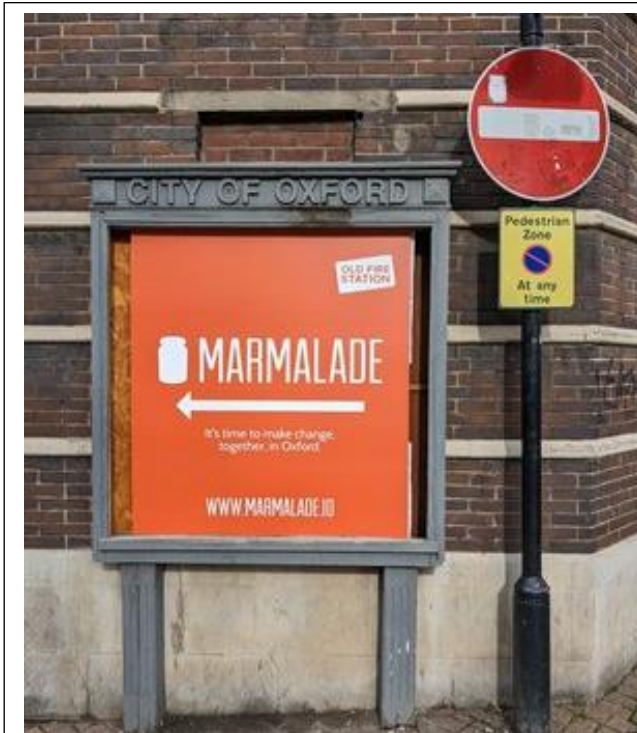


Image from the Marmalade Website

Dance is an art form that exists in every level of privilege and oppression, and is used in every culture to express joy, to celebrate and to rebel. It can be both elitist and subversive, even at the same time. So obviously I signed up for this workshop the day after Easter Monday, thinking it might be a breath of fresh air after an emotionally challenging Easter weekend and two relentless weeks of childcare, which can bring out subversive intent in the best of us.

Anyone who’s been to some kind of creative workshop will know how they tend to go, but notably absent from this one was the ‘ice breaker’ or ‘getting to know you’ bit. The participants were for the most part strangers and didn’t get to speak more than the odd word to one another until the end. We didn’t know each other’s names, roles, jobs, accents, or reasons for signing up. I’ve had a similar experience in a silent retreat and being a nosy human, I find myself endlessly speculating about these other humans in my company. Who are they? Why did they sign up? Will I get to find out?

“And those who were seen dancing were thought insane by those who could not hear the music...” (Friedrich Nietzsche).

The first exercise was to walk around the room. First, as if one were desperately trying to get somewhere as quickly as possible. Frankly, this one was far too familiar to me and I was glad to move on.

But soon we were asked to add a random movement into our walk. Just a gesture, anything. My thoughts were immediately drawn to the tics my daughter has developed recently, seemingly meaningless, repetitive movements, serving no practical purpose.

Odd. Kind of annoying even. Here we were, moving around a room and deliberately introducing tics to our gait. Next, we added another, and another, until we each had four, effectively meaningless but deliberate and intentional movements incorporated onto our travelling around the room.

At this point, and in these numbers, coming from maybe 20 people, the movements were

no longer erratic but rhythmic, and possibly even meaningful, though who could say what that meaning might be.

Next, we began to meet one another, still wordlessly, but we were to offer and/or receive a gift. The gestures and movements needed to express this gift and our gratitude and joy became part of the dance. We met one another as if we were meeting the first human we'd ever seen.

We mirrored one another's movements, and this too became a dance. Small elements of touch entered the interactions – fingertips, hands. These interactions: facial expressions, fingertip touches and eye contact took on a profound communicative function which connected the individuals of the group still without having spoken to one another.

Eventually, to the horror of some and the excitement of others, we took our performance to the Said Business School where the Skoll World Forum of Social Innovation, featuring Al Gore as keynote speaker, was taking place.

We poured ourselves onto the concrete forecourt, performing our sequences of movements and our moments of connection and communication, much to the entertainment of the staff and visitors behind the glass frontage. Afterwards we learned that one of our number was taking part in the forum, and he disappeared inside once we'd finished looking energised and full of a sense of fun.

We had a short session of discussion after the 'performance' where we realised that we had in fact communicated intimately with one another, we knew the movements of one another's bodies but not each other's names; we knew the typical gestures and type of mirroring a particular person favoured but not their job or nationality.

Just as not so very long ago, a person talking excitedly to themselves in the street would be judged insane, and now the Bluetooth earpiece means they're simply chatting to their boss, or partner, these meaningless movements can be perhaps interpreted more generously.

Moving – walking or perhaps dancing – down the street can be more than a means of locomotion but a deep connection with our fellow beings, whether we speak with them or know any of their standard data. What other communication are we missing by ignoring the medium and making assumptions about the value of information available from a person who doesn't speak?

Why walk when you can dance? Why talk when you can sing? Why rush on by when you can connect? Dare I add, why minister verbally when so much can be celebrated by silence?



Al Gore at the Skoll World Forum, 2023, from their Website.

Postscript: Grumpy old Nietzsche in fact found the sacred through the medium of dance and claimed his only act of piety was to dance daily, saying 'I would only believe in a god that knows how to dance.' Read more here:

<https://partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/07/28/dance-lessons-with-nietzsche/>

A Letter from Banbury and Chipping Norton Amnesty Group

Ian Myson
John Dunleavy

Dear Friends,

We need an effective, humane, and civilised system for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers.



Image from Amnesty International UK website.

The way our country treats refugees and asylum seekers should be regarded as primarily a humanitarian issue rather than a political one.

The right to seek asylum is a mark of a humane and civilised society. Britain was one of the key countries that developed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and we have committed under international law (the Refugee Convention 1951) to grant asylum to those with a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country.

Britain has a proud record in how it has treated people fleeing persecution in other countries. But current Government legislative proposals in the Illegal Migration Bill fall well below the standard set by international norms and risk trashing the country's reputation for humanity and decency in matters of asylum and refugees.

Safe and legal routes need to be provided for genuine refugees to enter the country so that small boat crossings become a thing of the past.

Automatic deportation of entrants deemed to be illegal, transportation to Rwanda, and the removal of legal protections from people who are often victims of trafficking – these are not measures that are part of a humane and civilised system. Particularly when dressed up in inflammatory language, they appeal to the worst in people rather than the best.

Britain can do better than this!

Friends can join the efforts of ordinary people in our area to press for a better refugee and asylum system by getting in touch with us at

britaincandobetter@gmail.com

Ian Myson
Banbury Amnesty International Group

John Denleavy
Chipping Norton Amnesty International
Group

Oxford Quaker & Answer Back Next Month

Luke Young

If you are interested in featuring in the *Forty-Three* Newsletter's Quaker and Answer section, please email

newsletter@oxfordquakers.org

and we will be in touch. It is an opportunity to tell the wider meeting who you are and what you're doing!

Happy News

Some lovely news Friends!

Elliott Merlin Riddell was born at 8:41am on Friday 12th May weighing 5lb3oz.

Congratulations to Becky and Mark!



Quaker Videos in this Month's Forty-Three



Adwoa Burnley
Catherine James

[Adwoa Burnley - Yearly Meeting Epistle 2023](#)

'Adwoa Burnley, Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, reads the letter from Quakers in Britain to "all Friends everywhere", with support from Catherine James.'

Quakers in Britain

<https://youtu.be/rO8xPQ7edwU>

6 Minutes



Deborah Shaw
Friendship Friends Meeting
Greensboro North Carolina

[The Courage to Be a Quaker](#)

'Being a Quaker isn't just about going to Meeting on Sunday morning. It's about opening yourself to being transformed and then living in way that not everyone will understand. How do we find the courage?'

QuakerSpeak

<https://youtu.be/1kwTcWQz0CU>

4 Minutes

June 2023

Many meetings and events are held via Zoom. Link for all Oxford 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

From Quaker Faith & Practice 26.50

In every homeless child, every refugee, every criminal or outcast, every worker or preacher, those in authority and those without it, there is a child of God, one who is precious and loved.

Janet Scott, 1980

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)



Photo by J Henderson

Forty-Three is available online at
<https://brooksidepress.org/quaker/>

and on the Oxford Quakers website,
www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter

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 **Forty-Three**
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