

Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 542

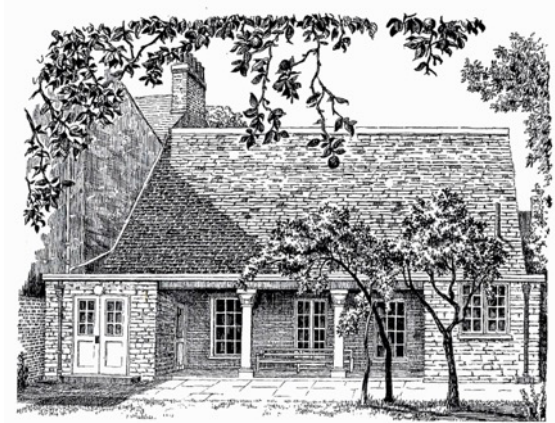
June 2024

Oxford Friends Meeting

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A Stammerer's Tale to Storytelling

Tom Wells

For anyone, no matter their religious background, denomination, or spiritual beliefs, disability challenges and confronts our ideas about the world.

Why do we have them? Why do only certain people have disabilities and not others? Why do we get awkward face-to-face with 'abnormal' characteristics or traits (if we should use that term)? While we have moved beyond Victorian physiognomy - applying moral behaviour to physical appearance - it seems particular disabilities (like stammering) have unfortunately kept what are sometimes seen as negative associations (e.g., people who stammer are shy, awkward, neurodivergent, have learning difficulties, etc.).

As somebody who stammers, it is time we move beyond those categories. Interfaith journals (such as the Journal of Disability and Religion or Feminist Theology) and other writers have started to move beyond the traditional associations between the Biblical fall and personal character, instead suggesting there must be a clear distinction between somebody's appearance and disabilities compared to their actions. And

for those who don't associate with Christian, Jewish or Islamic doctrines (or other world religions), there is a growing trend to accept and reflect on human differences. But for me, people only change their views when perspectives and ideas get challenged.

As a result, I felt led to apply to a student competition, allowing students to compete to share a talk at the TEDxOxford conference (January 2024). Before, I had watched Paul Gaskin's TEDx talk, [A Stuttering Revolution: Don't fix your stutter, restore your life](#). His talk was great, but for me, it still operated within traditional frameworks; it was time to break free from those conventions to celebrate a stammer as a different form of verbal communication.

Preparation and Presentation of the Talk
I am only 20 at the time of writing. I had public speaking experience as a member of the Oxford Speakers Club and completed GCSE and A-level drama qualifications and extracurricular events. I had yet to gain experience on this scale. It was a great help to read Carmine Carullo's Talk Like TED: The 9 Public Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds. From it, I learnt the importance of sharing a passionate



Tom giving his TEDx talk

connection with the audience. However, writing the speech was difficult. I had to think long and hard about how I wanted to communicate my ideas about a new framework, and learning the speech afterwards could be a complicated process (I am grateful for the tips from peers and colleagues).

The talk itself was a fantastic experience. I discussed traditional views around stammering, my personal experiences at secondary school, and my social life outside the classroom. I used C. P. Carvafy's poem 'Ithaka' (1911) to argue that people must live beyond social categories and taboos, and that standard narrative frameworks and aesthetic ideas don't work for everyone.

I'm a slight anomaly in the stammering community in that I like talking in public more than talking to small groups. It

almost felt like an out-of-body experience (or what the early Quaker friends might have described as the presence of God): I didn't have to worry about other people butting in or feeling awkward, and I got to celebrate something that made me unique. After the talk, I received compliments from people who used it to change their views on the condition.

As a Quaker Christian, disability provides a beautiful and profound view of the world. And while nobody wants a disability or deliberately seeks it out, it reveals and challenges our conception of beauty and human connections.

(To watch Tom's TEDx talk from January, go to this link: [A Stammerer's Tale to Storytelling | Tom Wells | TEDxOxford](#))

To Jenny Buffery



Dear soul, go gentle into that good night,
Old age has earned a quiet close of day;
Praise, praise for living in the Light.

A life-long Friend who knew the Light,
Your words were brief and to the point;
Dear soul, go gentle into that good night.

Good Friend, the last breath came in sight
Past deeds displayed your Love at play;
Praise, praise for living in the Light.

John Mason
April 2024

A tribute to our Friend will follow in next month's 43.

June's Charity Appeal Asylum Welcome



Asylum Welcome is first and foremost a charity comprised of members of the community, committed to serving the community of Oxfordshire. Comprised of dedicated volunteers and experienced staff, we are united by an incredible sense of purpose: to transform lives, reunite families, and rebuild lives.



June 17th-23rd is Refugee Week, a week that celebrates the resilience and contributions of refugees and asylum seekers, and this year the theme is "Our Home". As a charity, we are constantly reminded of the various meanings that 'home' can have for different people. It is a word fraught with deep

emotion, encompassing our families, houses, friends and communities. One thing that our clients share, however, is that they have had to leave theirs.

Our mission is to support the people that have been forced to leave the people, possessions and places most precious to them. Every day, across Oxfordshire, we are helping people to piece together their lives and rebuild their homes in the county.

Most of our clients have fled incredibly dangerous and traumatic circumstances, be it war, violence or persecution, and are increasingly faced with immense challenges when they arrive in the UK. In recent weeks, there has been widespread anxiety and fear over the passing of the Safety of Rwanda Act. One of our clients has already been detained, awaiting deportation, and we are deeply concerned that more will follow. Some of our clients have gone into hiding for fear of detention, only returning to their rooms late at night, making it even harder for us to assist them. For the majority, already living in a state of limbo waiting for their asylum claims to be processed, this has intensified their trauma further.

At Asylum Welcome, we are resolute in our determination to ensure that we support and defend our clients to the best of our ability, ensuring that they receive the legal advice and counsel that they are entitled to as a human right.

Beyond legal advice, we offer practical support to newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers, including outreach to asylum hotels dispersed across the county. We provide food, warm clothes, modest financial support for those with no recourse

to public funds, and where possible, emergency accommodation.



Photo by Asylum Welcome

Our ambition, however, goes far beyond serving as safety net against destitution. We want to help people and families that have had their lives uprooted to make their homes here in Oxfordshire, and this is reflected in the range of our services. From our Youth Service, Schools Advocacy project and Education and Employment Service, we are determined to ensure that people can flourish, reach their potential and lead fulfilling lives.

“I want to take this moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your incredible kindness. Your support and thoughtful counsel to me and acts of generosity truly made a profound impact and a great difference in my life and family. I am grateful to have met you during my trying moments.” - Asylum Welcome client

Last year alone, we assisted around 4000 clients across the county. With the help of our team of 220+ dedicated volunteers. The stories that we witness every single day show that with adequate support, people that have suffered some of the most

profound losses and trauma, can make Oxfordshire their home.

In these immensely challenging times, we need your support today to continue our work to support people in desperate need. There has never been a better time to give - for Refugee Week, we are launching our first ever matched-funding campaign. For every pound that you donate, three local organisations have generously offered to give us two pounds, effectively tripling the impact of your donation.



Stand with us this refugee Week
Triple your impact

The key thing that unites us all at Asylum Welcome, whether you are a client, staff member, volunteer or supporter, is that Oxfordshire is home, or, with time, will become home.

Your help today can help make this become a reality for somebody living in the county today. Please give what you can: [tinyurl.com/refugeeweek2024](https://www.asylumwelcome.org.uk/refugeeweek2024)

Thank you.

Co-operative Bank
Account Name: Asylum Welcome
Sort Code: 08-92-50
Account Number: 65026773

**Joint statement on Rafah incursion
(8 May 2024)**

Quakers in Britain has joined 30 other charities calling on the UK government to take meaningful action to stop any further attacks on Rafah by the Israeli military.

We are asked to write to our MPs, urging them to take urgent action to stop any further attacks on Rafah by the Israeli military, which will severely worsen the already catastrophic humanitarian situation.

See *Quake!* 9 May 2024 and Quakers in Britain website or use this link:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/joint-statement-on-rafah-incursion>



Photo by SL Granum

Boundaries, doorkeepers, and holding Meeting for Worship

Meeting for worship is a collective spiritual practice that involves deep and careful listening and attention.

Advices and Queries speak of seeking a gathered stillness, entering with reverence into communion with God, taking heed to the promptings of love and truth in our hearts and receiving the vocal ministry of others in a tender and creative spirit, reaching for the meaning deep within it.

In his book *The Liturgies of Quakerism*, Ben Pink Dandelion writes of some of the ways in which British Friends have become more worldly and individualised in our practice. We welcome a diversity of spiritual experience and religious belief, we avoid judgements about each other's lifestyles and life journeys.

For many, meeting for worship may be a precious time of silence in which to "think," although we may also treasure Isaac Pennington's words: "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..." (Qfp 26.70).

The Covid pandemic prompted more individualisation of our practice. For many months we met only online from our own homes. When we restarted in person meetings, we kept the doors and windows open for ventilation.

It was difficult to find Friends to serve as welcomers. We still don't have doorkeepers so we prop the doors open to enable

Friends to come into the room with minimal noise and disturbance. Being open to the world outside the meeting room can enrich our worship, but it can also diffuse the sense of gathered stillness.

In some meetings for worship, Friends continue to arrive for the first 10-15 minutes, and people sometimes enter the room while ministry is being given, making it hard to hear and distracting both speaker and listeners.

Elders think it would be useful to revive the role of doorkeeper. A doorkeeper would:

- be outside the meeting room to greet Friends as they arrive (this used to include the offer of a handshake)
- close the door at the beginning of meeting for worship and remain outside to welcome latecomers and ask them to wait, to enter together 10 minutes into the meeting
- sit by the door for the remainder of worship, opening it for any further latecomers but asking them to wait if ministry is being given
- welcome the children at the end of 11.00 meeting, ask them to wait in the lobby until they and the accompanying adults have all arrived, and let them in together.

It might be best to try this on an experimental basis initially with a few volunteers, and if it seems to work we would hope to find a Friend willing to coordinate a rota. Would you be willing to serve? If so, please do get in touch with me.

Laurie Michaelis

laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

The Wisdom of Trees

Trees hold their ground, don't get pushed
around

weather storms
never do anything in a hurry

love birds, are good with animals
shelter refugees
march against tyrants, outlive dictators
drop litter but always recycle
have already reached zero carbon

never grumble except in high winds
enjoy an occasional flutter
usually grow up well balanced
don't fuss about their appearance
look good naked

inspire artists, poets, composers
enchant children
thrive in community, survive in isolation
embrace change, respect tradition

don't lie, cheat, steal or make false
promises
are transparent – you can see through them
never obfuscate or obscure
always head towards the light

guard the secrets of the afterlife

C.E.W. Feb 23



'A Walk in the Woods' Jill Green



Photo by SL Granum

YAF gathering at Jordans

'Where two or three are gathered': Young Adult Quaker Gathering at Jordans

This gathering will centre on 'the presence in the midst': the promise around which early Friends gathered, that "where two or three gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). More than a century ago, James Doyle Penrose painted



J. Doyle Penrose, "The Presence in the Midst," 1916

The Spirit is moving among young adult Friends, in Oxford and across the country. In new and exciting ways, we are being gathered, guided, and knit together by the Divine hand. In response to the Spirit's movement, a group of Oxford young adult Friends are organising a Young Adult Quaker Gathering this summer at Jordans Friends meeting house and centre. This will take place 21 – 25 August, bringing together an international group of Friends to explore how we are transformed and drawn into community by the Spirit.

a now well-known image of the presence in the midst at Jordans meeting house. In his painting, seventeenth-century Friends meet for worship, waiting on the presence of Christ, who is positioned just above the Friends, leading the worship. This reflects the experience of early Friends, whose lives were changed by Jesus's presence in the gathered community as its head, teacher, guide, and shepherd.

Here is Penrose's testimony, given late in life, about his experience painting this image:

“One beautiful summer day I went over to Jordans, and, quite alone, sat down in the seat from which the picture was painted... I seemed as I contemplated all those who had worshipped there in the past, to be surrounded by them in imagination as if they were gathered there.

I pondered on what it was that gave them all their power; for they had power in those bygone times, and then I realized that it was the presence of Christ amongst them – ‘The Presence in the Midst’. And I felt there was a subject that I ought to paint; and I did feel that it was a very great undertaking.

The sunlight streaming through the window threw the shadow of the casement mullion and transom on the wall, and, although I was not conscious of it at the time, it must have been an unconscious inspiration, for years afterwards, it was pointed out to me that this shadow was a cross – an empty cross.

The work on the cross was a finished work of redemption, and now He, who once hung there, was the risen, living Christ whose presence may be relied upon where two or three are gathered together in His name.”

We are moved by Penrose’s reflection on ‘what it was that gave [early Friends] all their power’, and by his realization that this could be nothing other than Christ’s living presence among them. We are sure that our

gathering won’t look like his painting! However, we want to explore what that Source of Light and Hope captured in the painting might mean for us today.

Is this just an old-fashioned image or does it have a connection to our lives? What would this experience of the living Christ among us be like today? What empowered earlier Friends to witness and suffer with such audacity, and how might we encounter that same source of strength?

Over five days together in August, we will have time for renewal, worship, fun, and exploration, as we come together with young adult Friends from across the Quaker world. We need your help to make this happen: we are hoping to make use of the Youth Hostel near Jordans, but need support to cover the fees as well as food for the gathering.

We are also keen to support Friends travelling long distances to join us if we can. If you are led to help us, please consider supporting us [at this link](#). And please consider spreading the word: registration information for the gathering can be found [at this link](#). We are so grateful for your help – whether in donating, spreading the word, or upholding us in prayer – as we gather to see how the Spirit is moving among us today.

**Matt Rosen, Eleanor Beswick, Julia Dallaway,
and Katy Jenkinson**

Quaker Writers Series 2024: Anne Watson on Quakerism and Her Professional Life

On Friday, April 26, Anne Watson brought a roomful of Friends on a journey encompassing her time as a Maths educator, thinker, and Quaker.

Beginning with reflections on how one comes to experience Maths not as a formulaic and predetermined activity but as an opportunity to notice deeper beauty and truth, she spoke about approaches to Maths education distinct from the ‘European heritage model,’ which emphasizes Maths as a handy tool for counting in a world that champions capital accumulation.

What if we experienced Maths more like certain Indigenous communities, who learn about numbers in the context not of ‘counting, claiming, and trading,’ but of ‘symmetry, balance, and sharing’? What if we imagined teaching Maths out of an ethics of care?

Anne’s talk was punctuated by moments of ‘spotting the Quaker’: situations in which Quakers have emerged throughout Anne’s personal journey as a Maths educator.

One of her early Maths teachers was a Quaker, who, at Anne’s first meeting for worship, ministered on the concept of infinity.

Anne spoke about drawing inspiration from academics like Ursula Franklin, whose Quaker faith is apparent in her various reflections on technology and peace (which you might want to read as part of Anne’s



Ursula Franklin 1921-2016. Photo Creative Commons Licensed.

Ursula Franklin reading group—to learn more, get in touch with Anne at: annewatson1089@gmail.com).

There was even one publisher’s assistant who had asked Anne for the reference of a specific citation, who—what are the odds?—revealed his Quaker heritage when Anne mentioned the citation was from Quaker Faith and Practice.

To listen to Anne’s talk, you can access the recording here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13ybIhgUweWjT1Ygw5piy6K1uoaCmJWZm/view?usp=sharing>.

To stay informed about future Quaker Writers Series events, get in touch with Jimin at jiminkang2021@gmail.com.

Getting Oxfordshire Online

Have you ever wanted to know how to creatively dispose of your old laptop, mobile phone or tablet?

[Getting Oxfordshire Online](#) is a service for everyone in Oxfordshire who wants to get online. They can accept laptops up to 12 years old, and mobile phones from iPhone 5s or Android 8 and recycle them so they can be passed to local people in need. Devices are securely wiped and refurbished; minor faults can be fixed and missing chargers replaced.



"© Raimond Spekking / CC BY-SA 4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)"

Just last week the Kurdish asylum seekers I know sent me a text saying “help”. Both their phones had broken. These phones are their lifeline to keep in touch with relatives in the UK etc. It was terribly lucky that I

had recently been to the Over 50s Group in the Town Hall where we are often given local information. (We Over 50s are seen as the place to give out information about all kinds of things including requests to take part in some research at both universities. Anyone interested in Over 50s do ask me.)



Apple iPhone 5S. Public Domain

So now it's your opportunity to find those devices you no longer want and go to oxforditbank.com/preparing-your-device to learn what to do next.

For me, it's a relief to find out what to do with these objects full of precious metals and rare earths and see them go for use by others.

Sarah Lasenby Ox 725991

Quaker Videos in this Month's 43

[The Quakers: A Brief History \(Religious Society of Friends\)](#)

A brief overview of early Quaker history focussing on the theological and historical foundations of the Pennsylvania Colony in the 17th century (18 minutes)



Tom Richey

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI_iE9Je4TI

[Quaker Spiritual Disciplines](#)

The practice of Quakerism doesn't just take place on Sunday morning. Many of us have spiritual disciplines that we carry throughout the week. Patricia McBee explores the Quaker disciplines that address this need. (5 Minutes)



Patricia McBee

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhX_mv0WM0s

From Quaker Faith & Practice 28.02 Sharing the Quaker Experience

'When you come to your meetings ... what do you do? Do you then gather together bodily only, and kindle a fire, compassing yourselves with the sparks of your own kindling, and so please yourself ... ?

Or rather do you sit down in the true silence, resting from your own will and workings, and waiting upon the Lord, with your minds fixed in that Light wherewith Christ has enlightened you ... and prepares you, and your spirits and souls, to make you fit for his service?'

William Penn, 1677

June 2024

Many meetings and events are held via Zoom. Link for all Oxford Meetings for Worship:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=VkkyYzZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09>

Please contact the Office for more details:

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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 11:45-12:30 (in person & Zoom)

Friday:

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



Photo by SL Granum

Forty-Three is available online at

<https://oxfordquaker.com/newsletter/>

and on the Oxford Quakers website,

<https://oxfordquaker.com/>

The views expressed in **Forty-Three** do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.

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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/>

Please send newsletter contributions well in advance of 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.

For more information: tel. +44 (0)1865 557373 or visit <https://oxfordquaker.com>.