

# Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 547

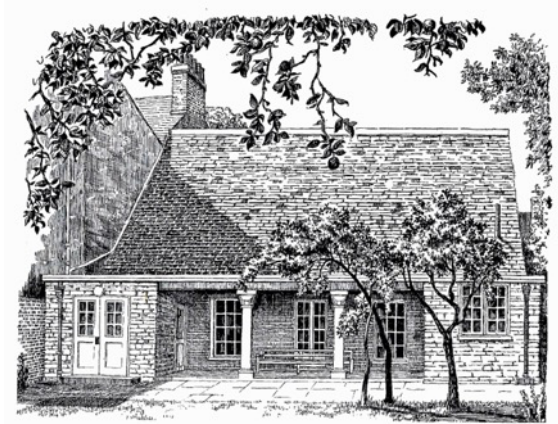
November 2024

## Oxford Friends Meeting

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## 'Tea Cake and Play' - The Heart's Truth

Julia Dover

Thames Valley Children, Families and Young People Development

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*Images by J. Dover*

As Oxford Friends welcome the newly appointed Sally Lawson to support 'Tea Cake and Play', some reflections on the significance of the playgroup for the community- both within and beyond 43:

Since humble beginnings in the Garden Room, the group has triumphed. These days,

volunteers welcome many new and returning carers and their charges from across the city to the meeting house, often numbering more than thirty: a trustee has referred to the playgroup as 'the most successful outreach initiative in the history of the Area Meeting'. The playgroup has evolved into a wholly unique ecosystem whose

connective tissue is heart-based presence and joy across generations.

The offering is simple fare: a beautiful space in the meeting house and garden, an array of toys, games, and books, artfully laid out by volunteers on floor mats with discovery in mind; explicit welcome and invitation to belong gently held by the volunteers- through genuine and intentional conversation, listening and care of the grown-ups; playful engagement with toddlers, and treats for all.



Photo by Julia Dover

As a parent of young children it takes courage to enter a room full of strangers, especially when the isolation many new parents feel bears down. At Tea Cake and Play, volunteer Friends are proactive in greeting carers and youngsters and introducing them to others to invite connection. Feedback suggests this 'Friendly' playgroup is unmatched elsewhere in Oxford in the way participants are invited to join and belong as they are.

Some examples: a Muslim mother shares that ours is the only playgroup where people know her name and talk to her. A grandparent au fait with local provision says the Quaker playgroup is the most open and welcome to all. A refugee mother new to Oxford thanks us in tears for the solace she feels on Tuesdays- as she seeks stability for herself and her child.

Over the last year and a half, attending youngsters who have grown from infant to

toddler, toddler to preschool clearly see Tuesdays as THEIR space to play, explore and be. One child, for example, frames her whole week around Tuesdays- Monday nights are her favourite as Tuesday morning is a dream away; Tuesday nights are a drag because there's so long to wait. A toddler with Quaker parents associates the bricks and mortar of the meeting house with freedom and delight. For them the building glows, just as they glow in it: may this association be lifelong.

The playgroup has revealed a hidden epidemic of acute disconnection that many new parents feel. Volunteers are moved by the harrowing loneliness that mothers especially can experience- that is exacerbated (sparked?) by a society-level age-old desecration of nurture. Tea Cake and Play carers are welcome to bring all of themselves to Tea Cake and Play, including any fraught feelings.

The sessions are an opportunity to share, relax and receive genuine kindness as their children play happily- a restorative balm when they are stressed. The effect of the playgroup on isolated mums is marked. Parents who arrive on a Tuesday overwhelmed/shattered, leave relaxed and open two hours later, relieved they can return. It is a privilege to witness carers blossom in confidence over weeks and months.

In fine Quaker tradition Tea Cake and Play is radical. A playgroup, radical?! On systemic and personal levels, humans everywhere face the consequences of distorted structures created out of fear, passed down and perpetuated over centuries. Just as we best see a flicker of light in the dark cave, what if, amid the chaos of the times, an opportunity surfaces to attune to the qualities I have evoked here that flow on Tuesday mornings- compassion, heart-felt witness, joy, exploration, play, tenderness- as core to regeneration?

In upheaval, what if a space opens to return to love as first principle of creation?

One could describe love's embodiment as "...a witness to the living truth within the human heart, as it is acted out in everyday life. It is not a form of words, but a mode of life based on the realization that there is that of God in everybody, that all human beings are equal, that all life is interconnected" (Quaker Faith and Practice 23.12). During immense uncertainty and change within and beyond the Society of Friends, Tea Cake and Play invites us to engage through the living truth within the heart.



*Photo by Julia Dover*

The key to this thriving cross-generational heart-based community I have described, is the merry band of (mostly) Quaker volunteers. The volunteers hold the space simply, in love-Quaker faith in action close to home. While it's brilliant that a superb part-time paid person is now in place to provide ballast to the playgroup Friends, expanding the pool of helpers is essential for the stability of the initiative.

I ask Friends to offer your occasional time and presence, even if only to join the pool of helpers for when the rota is sparse. There are many ways to support if playing Lego on the floor isn't your thing. I invite you to check it out- live adventurously! - by contacting Sally Lawson ( [playgroupsupport@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:playgroupsupport@oxfordquakers.org) ), Chris White or Virginia Allsop as a first step.

## **Friends' World Plenary - hear news from beyond Oxford, OSAM and BYM!**

**Anne Watson**

**A Special "Tuesday with Friends"** will take place on November 26th to hear from Tas about the World Plenary and to give time to absorbing the beautiful epistle that emerged. Our Friend Tas Cooper is Information Manager for the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) at the World Office in Friends House. In this role, he recently did much of the background work for the recent Plenary in Johannesburg and attended it, also in this role, while also writing its Daily Bulletin.

The epistle was read during Oxford MfW and Business Meeting on World Quaker Day but it has been felt that Tas' work, and the epistle, deserve more attention.

The event will be in the Long Room from 7.30, gathering from 7 p.m. Zoom will be available:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=VkkyYzZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09>

**Meeting ID: 873 8330 4611**

**The Passcode is: oxford** (all lower case)



*Photo within Christ Church College by M. Hughey*

## **November Appeal**

### **Friends of Canon Gideon Foundation**

### **Hope Institute, Uganda**

The Hope Institute in Kampala, Uganda, trains young people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds in vocational and life skills. The Foundation traces its origins to 1992, when Rev Gideon Byamugisha, a young priest in the Church of Uganda, was diagnosed HIV-positive. He could have tried to keep his HIV-positive status a secret and risk infecting people. Instead, he embarked upon a remarkable ministry, the Friends of Canon Gideon Foundation (FOCAGIFO), with the Hope Institute as its training arm for vulnerable youths.



*Photo provided by Glen Williams*

Since its formation in 1992, the Hope Institute has trained over 3,000 young people in skilled jobs such as electricians, chefs, hair stylists, motor mechanics and clothing designers. Most of the students are girls. Students also acquire the knowledge and life-skills they need to avoid becoming infected with HIV.

Now, 32 years after the foundation of the Hope Institute, its future is threatened by a lack of funding for four main purposes:

- the physical structure of the Institute's teaching facilities and student accommodation, which are in a poor state and in dire need of replacement

- insufficient income from student fees to pay staff salaries on time, leading to several of the Institute's most highly skilled and dedicated staff to quit

- inadequate maintenance of equipment such as motor vehicles, which are often standing unused until funds can be found to repair them

- the lack of classroom facilities, especially of computers.

With sufficient support, the Hope Institute could greatly improve the quality of its services and fulfil its potential for enabling young people to realize their hopes and dreams of serving their communities.



*Photo provided by Glen Williams*

### **Young fashion and design instructor,**

### **Roy Mwenkanya**

*I am 23 years old. We are five children at home, and I am the third-born. My parents are both alive. I completed my National Certificate in Fashion and Design at the*

*FOCAGIFO Hope Institute last year, and they have retained me as an Instructor. I aim to be the best fashion instructor ever!*

*I love teaching because I can share what I know with others. It's also helping me to learn new skills and to gain a sense of purpose in my career and my life.*

*I have faced some challenges with students who have tried to undermine me because of my youth. But I never let that get me down. I always encourage my students to keep going, even when the going gets tough. Learning is a life-long journey of enrichment. You are the founder of your future!*

*I thank FOCAGIFO for the chance to be creative, to have an impact on the community, and to fulfil my dream of being the best fashion instructor ever!*

Now, however, the Institute is urgently in need of funds to upgrade and expand its educational and living facilities. (Most of the students are boarders.)



Photo provided by Glen Williams

### **Young electrical instructor, Edison Katuramu**

*I am 21 years old, and unmarried. There are six children in our family, and I am the fifth. My parents are both deceased. This is my first year in the field of work.*

*I thank FOCAGIFO for helping me to become a good electrical instructor. It's a great opportunity for me. It has also enabled me to contribute to my sister's tuition fees.*

*Teaching was difficult for me at first, but now I'm getting better at it. I always encourage my students to be hard-working and disciplined, and to love the courses they have decided to pursue.*

#### **How to donate:**

Donations to the Hope Institute can be made in two ways, via a bank account managed by Glen and Alison Williams:

- Online banking transfer to: Account name: G and A Williams Partners. Account No: 50323628. Sort Code: 60 – 70 – 03. (Natwest Bank)
- Cheque payable to G and A Williams Partners, c/- Glen and Alison Williams, 93 Divinity Road, Oxford OX4 1LN.

Please give generously to help the FOCAGIFO Hope Institute to thrive and fully realize its enormous potential to empower young people with the knowledge, skills and self-belief they need to support and strengthen their communities.



Photo by M. Hughey

## Annual General Meeting of the Oxford Council of Faiths

Ian Finlay

([i\\_finlay@hotmail.com](mailto:i_finlay@hotmail.com))

Dear All

You are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Oxford Council of Faiths to be held at 6.45pm for 7.15 pm on Thursday 21 November at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 430A Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4XG. (Next to what used to be Go Outdoors). There is a car park and easy access from buses from Oxford City Centre. The 35 Oxford to Abingdon bus is best as it stops almost opposite the building. Light refreshments will be served from 6.45.

I have served for two 3-year terms as Honorary Secretary so am obliged to stand down this year so the Council is looking for a new secretary. The role is not onerous. It involves communicating with members on the mailing list when meetings are called or to forward details of events of interest. There are regular but infrequent meetings of officers to attend online. Notes of meetings are to be taken and circulated.

Bede Gerard is also standing down from his role as the Co-chair of the Faith Walk Committee.

Please let me know if you are interested in undertaking either of these roles.

Kindest regards

Ian Finlay ([i\\_finlay@hotmail.com](mailto:i_finlay@hotmail.com))

## Old Friends

Ursula Kneisel

In the September edition of '43' Sue Smith asks "Who were the Friends whose names are inscribed on the MH Garden Benches, and why do they have benches? I can partially answer the first part of this question.

1. Mary Pendleton who was a servant at St. Anne's College, was known to our family in the 1950s. Her daughter Effie who lived with her, tragically died in a climbing accident in the Alps. Mary left some money to Oxford Meeting, which was later amalgamated into the 'Stoll Pendleton Warner Fund', now known as the 'Stoll Fund'.



Photo by Caroline Worth

2. Dorothy Ellis was the wife of Frank Ellis. According to the internet she died in 1990, and he lived until the age of 100, (died in 2006). Frank had toured Radiotherapy Units in Europe in the 1930s, following which he established the first Cancer Units in England, - in London, Sheffield, and in the early 1950s

at the Churchill Hospital. He completed his final American Lecture Tour in his mid-nineties.

They lived in Charlbury, and he spent his last years in Wyndham House, Summertown. Frank was involved with various Peace Groups including the Oxford Project for Peace Studies, the Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons, Amnesty International, and Oxfam. Both Frank and Dorothy regularly attended Oxford Meeting. (There is more information about Frank's life as a Dr. on the internet).

## Quaker Writers Series 2024

### Constance Everett-Pike on Birds in Ancient Greek and 21st-century North American Literature

Jimin Kang

On Thursday, September 26, Constance Everett-Pite delivered a presentation of her DPhil work-in-progress as part of Oxford's English faculty.

Starting with an examination of the literary and spiritual meaning of birds in Ancient Greek literature, she then introduced us to four modern poets—H.D., Elizabeth Bishop, Amy Clampitt, and Anne Carson—whose engagement with both the Greek language and birds evoke metaphorical significance in their work.



Wikipedia image of Amy Clampitt found by T Alden

As the 'wildest of domestic animals' and the 'most domestic of wild animals', birds have signified a range of experiences and ideas, Constance explained: from their association with Eros to the

themes of homing, migration, climate, imperialist expansion, and a desire for other places and people, they can be and often are as 'metaphorically loaded' as texts.

Constance began her talk with an image of a murmuration, depicting how a murmuration consists of individual birds all moving separately but together in a harmonizing whole. Later, in the discussion portion of the session, we talked not only about how the structure of a murmuration might mimic a Quaker meeting, but also how Constance's project—in bringing together a varied range of influences and poets tied together by birds and poetry—might resemble a murmuration in itself.

Constance put a special focus on the American poet, Amy Clampitt (1920-1994), who was a Quaker, and offered a close reading of Clampitt's poem, 'A Hermit Thrush'. We discussed what bearing Clampitt's faith might have had on the openness towards silence and the activist inclinations in her work, though we also recognized that these traits have a universal quality to them and cannot always be attributed to Quakerism (or any faith tradition, for that matter).

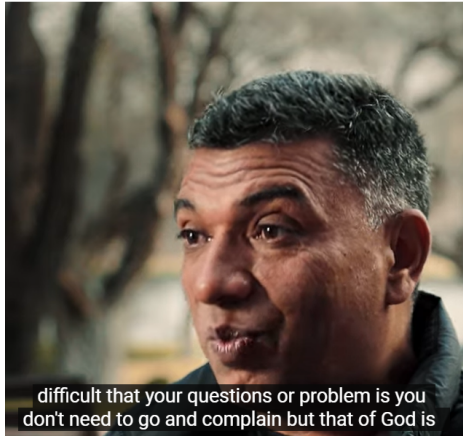
Our discussion was wide-ranging, touching upon philosophy, bird species, and how to write up such a wide-ranging project. To listen to a recording, you can access it here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kcMIEay7wv-w4AuytUhbP8N3ynvIPk2/view?usp=sharing>.

To stay informed about future Quaker Writers Series events, get in touch with Jimin at

[jiminkang2021@gmail.com](mailto:jiminkang2021@gmail.com).

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



### [The Quaker Simplicity of Talking to God](#)

Friends speaking of their understanding and experiences of prayer.

5 Minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDVeUrS6ccE>

## From Quaker Faith & Practice 12.08

### Appointment of elders and overseers

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

*I had a salutary lesson in sober thinking when I was first asked to become an elder. The invitation appalled me; I felt I was not old enough, had not been in the Society long enough; I suspected strongly that my monthly meeting had asked me on the inadequate grounds of vocal ministry; I read up the appropriate passages in Church government and felt still more appalled. Nevertheless I had been in the Society just long enough to know that the group often has a wisdom which can seldom be justified on logical grounds but which is, nevertheless, superior to the wisdom of the individual. I therefore went to consult a much respected elder of my acquaintance. She and her house were late Victorian; she sat on her ugly sofa with the poker up her spine, her feet set neatly together and her hands folded in her lap; and she let me talk myself out. When I had quite finished she inclined herself slightly towards me and said: 'My dear, we have to take what we can get.' I have since been convinced that this is a text which ought to be framed and hung up over the bed of every elder in the Society: it ought to be hung over the bed of every Friend who is tempted to refer to the elders as 'they'.*

1982



## October 2024

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](mailto: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](mailto: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 from Wikimedia Commons

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

and on the Oxford Quakers website,

<https://oxfordquaker.com/>

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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/>

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