

Forty-Three Newsletter

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Oxford Friends Meeting

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The meaning of belief: is it time to give up being 'theists' and 'nontheists'?

Craig Barnett

Most religious traditions have a shared view on whether there is a God. Liberal Quakers are unusual in not expecting or requiring any particular statement of religious belief. This causes some Quakers to question how people who believe radically different things can worship or discern together in Quaker meetings.

This question has often been posed in confrontational ways. Quakers have been encouraged to self-identify as 'nontheists' or 'theists' and to assert their group's rights to inclusion and influence. Framing differences of belief as an issue of identity has done real damage to our communities. It has created distrust about what 'those others' are thinking or doing. It has led to widespread self-censorship, as people silence themselves to avoid giving offence or being criticised for their choice of words. It has suppressed our willingness to share experiences, as we assume that people with different identities can never understand each other. Silent worship is even sometimes justified as a way for Quakers to tolerate different beliefs, by not having to hear about them.

All of this reflects a false and simplistic understanding of what religious belief actually means in people's lives.



Photo provided by Craig Barnett

Religious beliefs are not just statements of fact about the existence of a supernatural being. I could hold an opinion that something called 'God' exists, without this affecting my motivations or actions in any way. This wouldn't be a religious belief, because religious belief is not just having an opinion that something is true, but orienting my life in a certain way. Belief in facts is always a

matter of probability. Religious belief is the certainty of trust.

The meaning of belief in God is shown by what a person does with it. Believing can mean trusting in the promises of God, resting in God's love and following God's guidance. It often means judging one's own life and behaviour according to God's commandments, and speaking out when God's purposes are ignored or violated. This is what it means to believe that God is real; that we do these things and that others could do them too (because God cannot just be 'true for me').



Photo by DAVID ILIFF. License: CC BY-SA 3.0

In other words, religious belief is an inextricable part of religious practice and a way of life. It is a perspective for interpreting and navigating the whole world of our experience. What this actually means to someone is shown by how they practise it, which can be very different, even for people who use the same words.

There are plenty of people who claim to believe in God who are petty, superficial and hard-hearted (and some who are much worse). A person who uses the idea of God to persecute others has a different belief from someone who practises compassion and justice, even if the religious words they use are the same. Religious words

never have and never can logically determine a person's behaviour or character.

Similarly, someone who describes themselves as a nontheist hasn't yet told me anything about what their belief means, because the meaning of belief is not in our heads, it is in how we act, live and engage with others.

This doesn't mean that belief is irrelevant. Our beliefs are inseparable from our thinking and feeling, our judgements and aspirations. But I can't tell from the words that someone else uses what their belief means to them, only by seeing what they do with it in practice.

In a Quaker community, it is the way that people worship together, offer and receive spoken ministry, speak in business meeting, show self-restraint or care for others, take risks and give or withhold their time and commitment, that shows the meaning of their beliefs, whatever words they use to describe them.

Claims such as this often meet the objection - 'but how can we discern the will of God together if some people don't believe in God?' and 'What do Quakers who don't believe in God do in a Meeting for Worship?'

If people in a Quaker meeting are listening attentively, showing detachment and self-restraint in promoting their own opinions, and searching for creative new possibilities, they are practising Quaker discernment. The same thing is happening whether they call it 'seeking the will of God', 'listening to the Inward Guide', 'being open to what emerges', 'finding the wisdom of the group', or however they make sense of it.

There are Quakers who never use the idea of God at all, or who reject it for various reasons, who experience worship as a source of healing and insight, a space of connection with others and their deepest self, or a wordless openness. Insisting on the use of particular words to describe worship doesn't add anything to our practise of it.

There are certainly some ways of believing that are disruptive of community and that undermine Quaker practice. Behaviour that is intolerant, censorious and self-righteous is evident in very similar ways in some people who profess both religious and anti-religious beliefs.

The use of different religious language doesn't undermine Quaker community, but criticism and censorship (including self-censorship) does. We need to be willing to be open with each other, which requires the confidence that the words we use will be acceptable.

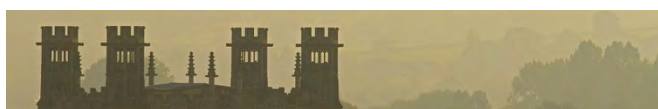


Photo by DAVID ILIFF. License: CC BY-SA 3.0

We also need to allow ourselves to change, to be open to the possibility of new ways of interpreting the world, instead of being attached to identity categories that put us in permanent competition with others.

The labels 'theist' and 'nontheist' have not served us well, but we don't need to carry on using them. Perhaps it's time to retire these fixed identities and allow ourselves the freedom and flexibility of all sorts of religious belief and language, according to our changing life experiences and unique temperaments.

We could be interested in each others' different perspectives rather than anxious and quick to take offence. And we should be encouraging each other to share our experiences in the words that are most authentic and meaningful for us.

We should never suggest that someone will give offence by using the word God, or that they are less valid if they don't use it. And we should stop censoring ourselves by reaching for bland expressions or staying timidly silent when our Quaker communities need honest sharing and spiritual intimacy.

Our worship will be deeper when we minister confidently in words that carry authenticity and

conviction. Our communities will be more genuine when we are confident enough to talk about our beliefs. And our spirituality will be broader and more generous, when we are able to listen to others and hear 'where the words come from'.

Reproduced with kind permission from Craig's substack, [Quaker Renewal](#). Craig sends his best wishes to Oxford Friends!

Oxford's Ethiopian Community Gathers in the Meeting House

Hilary Hoyt and Jimin Kang

'When you've seen the challenges that we have, you don't think so much about the daily stuff,' said Martin (name pseudonymised for privacy). 'You're just grateful to be alive.'

Martin and about a dozen other asylum seekers from Ethiopia joined with local supporters in the Oxford Quaker Meeting House on December 22 last year for a holiday meal and tea ceremony, reminiscent of family meals served after days of Christmas fasting in orthodox Ethiopian homes.

'We are gathering for a meal to show that we welcome you here,' said Ethiopian academic and publisher Abebe Zegeye, called 'Dr. Abebe' among the Ethiopian asylum seekers. Abebe organized the event with help from Genet and Azeb from Gloucester, Tsega, Merid, Ashly and John from Banbury, Mimi from London, and Lula from Oxford, who prepared traditional food for the crowd of nearly 50. Speaking to the guests, Dr. Abebe said, 'You have been through the unimaginable. You have traveled great distances and you are far from your home. We want you to know that we are glad you are here.'

Martin said later that he is very glad to 'be here' too. As a young man in Ethiopia, Martin witnessed friends killed by invading forces. 'They don't kill you first,' he recalled. 'Just throw you into the fire.' For two months he was imprisoned. 'That was a very dark time,' he said, showing burn

marks on his arms from hot oil poured on him in prison. During a march from one prison to another, he saw an opening and ran. 'If you were a young man, it was leave the country or be killed,' he said. 'For a long time my family did not know where I was, if I was dead or alive.'



Photo provided by Hilary Hoyt and Jimin Kang

Martin eventually found asylum in the UK, where he was housed in a budget hotel with several others who had fled Ethiopia with only their lives. Along the way, he traveled to and was rejected by a string of other countries: Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, and France.

His older brother fled to Saudi Arabia and was detained in a facility there. 'Better to be in held by the Saudis, because you know you will let you stay alive,' Martin reflected. 'Maybe in a few years, they will let him go.'

Some of the young men who attended the celebration no longer have homes or families to go home to. 'It's just me,' said a man who goes by

John (pseudonym), when I asked about his family. 'No one else is left.'

For 8 months John has lived in a budget hotel at the edge of Oxford. While he waits for the UK work permit that will allow him to get a job, he goes to the library nearly every day to practice English and teach himself how to code. He also enjoys cheering for his favorite team, Manchester United.

John shared his plate at dinner with a friend, with both men eating from the same family-style array. As the meal concluded, John looked around the long table. 'These are my brothers, now,' he said.

The evening was full of rich conversation between various attendees, the topic ranging from life in Ethiopia to the different ways in which Doro Wat (a traditional Ethiopian chicken dish) can be cooked. When the injera ran out, tortilla wraps were served; the coffee served after dinner had been prepared for days. The evening was a warm and convivial one for all involved. (Editor's note: Abebe Zegeye wanted to add special thanks to Chris White for being welcoming to all and especially to young refugees.)

Elmore Community Services

OxFAP Team

The OxFAP team wanted to share this story with readers of *43* because we were particularly moved by it, and thought it was a shining example of how your money is being used by one of our partners, Elmore Community Services.

This piece from our colleagues at Elmore shows how your donation contributed to the wellbeing of one of their clients:

This was an important contribution that really helped in a tricky situation.

Our client is new to us and has very complex physical and mental health problems. Part of the problem is that she has a dog in her flat. Her

landlords have ordered her to rehome the dog, saying that she does not have permission to have the dog, that there are problems with its behaviour, and she is not caring for it properly. The client is very sad to have to give up her dog but has agreed to do it – but it turns out it's very difficult to get a dog rehomed. Part of the process is having a health check with the vet and reporting on the dog's behaviour at the vets.

The dog had health problems that were not being addressed. It was having problems with its ears that were causing it distress, and sometimes causing it to lose balance and fall over.

The client is physically disabled and not able to get the dog to the vets by herself. He is a strong dog, and she isn't strong enough to control him in a stressful situation like going to the vets. She also didn't have the money to pay for a vet's appointment, or any subsequent treatment. To add further stress to the situation, if the dog wasn't taken to the vets there was a risk that she could be prosecuted for animal neglect, as she was failing to care for his physical health by not getting him veterinary treatment.

We tried phoning vets to see if they would come to the home to see the dog but none of them would agree to this. Furthermore, they wanted payment in full up front when the dog was seen.

We contacted the RSPCA (several times), and despite us explaining our concerns that the dog was being neglected and that our client was unable to care for him properly, they said they didn't have the resources to come out and see the dog, help pay the vets bill, or help in any way.

Dog rehoming centres either rejected our requests to rehome the dog or wanted more information about his health and behaviour from a vet.

All this was very distressing for the client, and she was receiving letters from the council (her landlords) threatening legal action if the dog was not rehomed.

Fortunately, the Oxford dog warden was extremely helpful. He agreed to collect the dog from our client's home and take it to the vets in his van (we were unable to do this ourselves as we weren't sure about the dog's behaviour and whether we would be able to manage the dog). But our client couldn't pay the vet's bill, and the vet wanted assurance in advance that the bill would be paid straight away.

Thanks to OXFAP, we were able to secure funding to pay the vet's bill and give the vet reassurance that it would be paid on the day.

The client is very chaotic and it was all very tricky to arrange, but eventually we managed to co-ordinate the dog warden's availability with a vet's appointment, and the dog warden collected the dog to take it to the vet.

The Blue Cross have said that they think they will have a space for him in February, and because we have been able to clearly demonstrate that we are making every effort to rehome the dog, and that he is being properly cared for while he waits for rehoming, the council have paused their legal action for now in the hope that it can be avoided.

This was a complex problem and without funding from OXFAP we would not have been able to solve the problem, our client would have been prosecuted, and the dog might well have been put down. As things stand, the situation is still ongoing but we are hopeful that there will be a positive outcome for both the client and the dog.

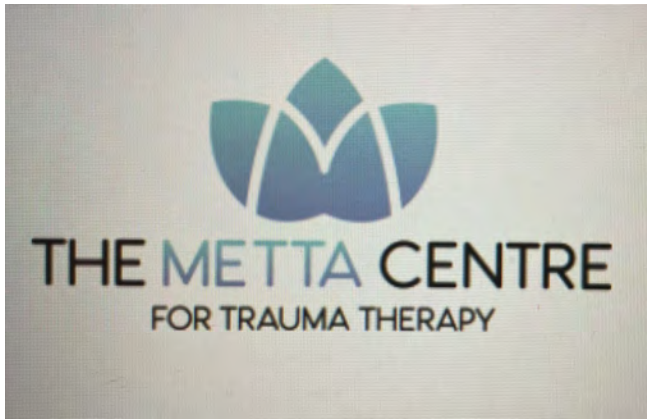
OXFAP / Elmore Community Services



Photo credit: Sam at <https://pawsandsniff.uk/>

December Appeal The Metta Centre

The Metta Centre, formerly MEET, was founded in 2014 by three members of Oxford Meeting who offered two innovative forms of trauma focused therapy (EMDR and Energy Psychotherapy) at very low cost to people who could not access support otherwise.



People who come to The Metta Centre often have a history of repeated or enduring trauma that is rooted in childhood. These 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' include neglect and/or emotional, physical and sexual abuse.



Creative Commons image: <https://www.librinews.it/varie/terapia-emdr-libri-manuali/>

Metta also works with victims of domestic abuse, refugees and survivors of war violence, as well as with those who have suffered a single incident trauma like an assault or accident. In the last

financial year, including their Self-Care Groups, they have helped 44 individuals and provided 400 hours of low-cost or free trauma therapy, but continue to be significantly oversubscribed.

- *“I am kinder to myself and more understanding of myself. I felt cared about as a human being for the first time.”*
- *“I feel a lot more resilient; I have a lot more ability to self-soothe and cope in healthier ways, I felt quite empowered.”*
- *“I have a real sense of power and autonomy over my own life and that feels very freeing. MEET in Oxford is amazing, it has been nothing short of life changing.”*
- *“The service is excellent, brilliant – I would recommend it to anyone with trauma. MEET has the expertise to help people deal with their trauma.”*

– Clients at end of therapy.

How to donate:

Account name: The Metta Centre for Trauma Therapy.

Sort code: 08 92 99

Account number: 65870194

Or go the website and click on the donate button:

<https://themettacentrefortraumatherapy.org/>

Meeting for Sufferings December 2024

Jennifer Barraclough

Meeting for Sufferings Representative

20.12.25

Report on Meeting for Sufferings held on 7 December 2024

This was a meeting which I'd already had to plan to attend by Zoom, and only for the morning session, because of other commitments. However, it was also the weekend of Storm Darragh, which affected the presence in person of a number of Friends and made us even more grateful for the Zoom facility.

About 36 Friends came in person, with 50 or so on line, to consider a largely administrative agenda, which nonetheless gave us some extremely meaningful matters to deal with. I'd like to highlight some of these.

Prison and Court Register

This is a historic part of our life together as a community, and there continue to be Friends who accept that peaceful witness may lead to criminal convictions. We recorded formally the names of two of these, but possibly more worryingly, considered the minutes from three AMs, flagging up deep concern about the consequences for peaceful protest arising from the enhanced police powers. As BYM, we have been making formal representations for some time about the dangers of this enhancement; it is no satisfaction that the dangers are now becoming very real. This matter will return to MfS and may be something this Area Meeting wishes to spend time on.

Spirit-led Employment Practices

Having had responsibility for employment in Quaker organisations, I feel a keen sense that there will always be a need for us to consider what good practice looks like, and how we reconcile secular and church expectations. Lancashire and Central North AM has now produced a guide

which meets the law and goes beyond it, and is in the form of Advices and Queries. It comes 'as a tool and a present for other Friends – please use it' and can be acquired from Lancashire and Central North AM.

Review of the Book of Discipline

Members of the committee attended to share the steps being taken to finish drafting by the end of 2025, so that the committee can edit the text and produce a complete first draft of the new book before the end of 2026. Friends will be encouraged to read and discuss the first draft, in preparation for it coming to a Yearly Meeting session in 2027. After careful consideration, the committee has decided not to seek feedback on sample draft text, in the interim period. The committee aims to bring the complete and final text to a session of Yearly Meeting in 2030, for adoption.

The committee encouraged members of Meeting of Sufferings and Friends in their meetings to engage with the work of BDRC, including the exercise 'Reflecting on *Advices and Queries*', which our meetings might like to try.

BYM trustees' report

Key issues raised by the Clerk and Treasurer included the decision not to take further at this stage the proposal that the Central Committees for QPSW and Quaker Life should be merged into a single committee. There has been approval for a new fixed term post at senior management level to support the 'immense work' which will be needed to move to a continuing Yearly Meeting (and the laying down of Sufferings in its present form) by 2026. Trustees have accepted a deficit budget for 2025, with the warning that this will be the last year this can be afforded.

Appointment of non-members to certain AM roles

This is a matter on which OSAM may need to spend time, so I give the Sufferings minute of recommendation:

We recommend to Yearly Meeting that amendments to our discipline should be made to permit Friends not in formal membership to be appointed to area and local meeting roles. This would include serving as a trustee, including service as treasurer, although we ask that legal advice be taken to clarify the implications of these latter two so that suitable template constitutional documents can be provided to area meetings ahead of any trustee appointments.

We recognise that this is the latest step in an ongoing process of discernment and that there is further work to be done on the spiritual meaning of membership. We feel that it is important that the text of our discipline should foreground the spirit-led discernment of our practices. This might imply that option (b), the amplified text in paper MFS 2024 12 14, might form a suitable basis for any amendments.

The bad weather meant that the meeting had to be brought to a prompt close, and the final items were reports from Quaker World Relations Committee and Quaker Council for European Affairs, for which part of the minutes read, respectively:

We have been asked, how can we encourage Friends and meetings to respond to the spiritual call from the World Plenary Meeting 2024, and engage further with its three themes: Ubuntu, Care for Creation, and Healing Historical Injustices? (QWRC)

and

Post Brexit, QCEA is still relevant to Friends in Britain. BYM appoints a representative and alternate to the QCEA General Assembly, and along with individual Friends continues to support and take a strong interest in its current work on migration and peace, climate justice and peace, and dialogues for transformation.

We note that from 20 to 22 June 2025 QCEA and QPSW will hold a joint conference in Brussels, on the topic, 'Faith in Action in an age of Permacrisis'. (QCEA)

Third Thursdays: Conversations about Contemporary Quakerism

New Dates for 2025!

Aileen, Moya, and Sarah

Friends from the East Midlands, the Thames Valley, and Northamptonshire, Luton and Leighton, and Hertford and Hitchin AMs are warmly invited to Third Thursdays: Conversations About Contemporary Quakerism.

Third Thursdays provide an exciting opportunity for Friends across the central sweep of the UK to come together on Zoom to discuss topical issues relating to contemporary Quakerism. Each month the conversation centres around a different theme.

The sessions are facilitated by Aileen Braidwood, Moya, and Sarah Shaw, who are the Local Development Workers for this area.

Sessions take place on Zoom **on the third Thursday of the month from 12pm-1pm**. These discussions are lighthearted and informal, so please feel free to bring along your lunch. All are welcome.

The dates for the first half of 2025 are:

Thursday 16 January
Thursday 20 February
Thursday 20 March
Thursday 17 April
Thursday 15 May
Thursday 19 Jun

If you'd like to come along, please register via the following link: [Third Thursdays: Conversations about Contemporary Quakerism](#).

For further information, please contact: Aileen Braidwood (aileenb@quaker.org.uk), Moya (moya@quaker.org.uk) or Sarah Shaw (sarahs@quaker.org.uk).

We look forward to seeing you there!

News of Friends

Penny Thomas: Penny Thomas, who attended Oxford Meeting for many years, died peacefully in the early hours of January 6th. She had been called in to her Myeloma clinic on Boxing Day for treatment, having had this disease for 20 years, but after expecting to return home she caught pneumonia and declined. Her son Kunzang, says “she knew that her time was up and said she was OK with that. After saying her farewells to family..., I stayed with her overnight and the end was peaceful and painless.”

Although Penny had been unable to attend MfW in 43 for several years she maintained connections with Quakers and often worshipped quietly at home. Her husband Colin, who was also a part of Oxford Quakers, died in 1999. Her three children are Jake, Nicky and Kunzang. Kunzang has fond memories of joining Penny and Colin at the Sunday meeting.

The funeral will be a small family event.

Emails could go to (kunzang.namgyal@gmail.com). Postal messages to: Kunzang Namgyal at 12 Halls Close, Oxford. OX2 9HR. His longer term address is: 151 North Road, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear. NE28 8RH.

Tim Toomey: News has reached us of the recent death of Tim Toomey, who was an attender at our meeting for many years before Covid. Tim was undergoing further cancer treatment which was going well but died of a heart attack. Friends might remember his skills with furniture and joinery, his interest in Japanese ceramics, and his affiliation with Marazion Meeting. No further details have reached us; his wife Iku lives at the address in Florence Park.

David Gee memorial: In line with some guidance David left us, we will be holding two ceremonies.

The first will be a small family cremation ceremony at 11.30am on 10 February in Stratford

Upon Avon, where David grew up. This is to allow his elderly parents to attend, as they would otherwise find it difficult to travel. If you would like to light a candle at this time and hold David and his family in heart and mind, that would be most welcome.

We will then hold the main memorial **in Oxford at Somerville College Chapel**, a place that David held close to his heart. This will be on the afternoon of **Sunday March 16th** (exact time TBC).

We are intending this to be the main celebration of David’s life: we will have music, poetry, joy, laughter, and hopefully even a choir! This will be a chance for all of David’s friends far and wide to come together and say goodbye, share memories, and celebrate the light that he brought to the world. It will be followed by a local gathering.

We will email again with full details in a couple of weeks, once these are all confirmed, but for now please do hold the date if you would like to join us. As soon as you are able, if you could please RSVP here that would help us to anticipate numbers!

We ask everyone to please not send flowers, but if you would like to donate in lieu, we suggest the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), for which David worked happily for many years.

Finally, we are currently dealing with David’s belongings. If there is an item that you gave David or had a close attachment to, and you would like me to bring this to the memorial for you to keep, please let me know by the end of this month. (David anticipated this request, so please don't be shy.)

If you have any questions, please do let me know. And thank you as well for all the warmth, memories and support that people on this list have been sharing over the past few weeks - while we haven't been able to reply to all straight away, it's been deeply touching to read all these messages.

Warmly, Katie Stewart

Notices

Accommodation sought

Owing to a change in personal circumstances, Adam Hartley is looking for temporary accommodation in or around Oxford for six months or so. He's a non smoker IT professional and part time therapist, aged 61 who works on-line from home and regularly attends the Sunday Meeting for Worship. As well as general accommodation he is willing to consider all sorts of arrangements such as pet sitting, house sitting or offering company to an elderly person. He is looking to start as soon as possible and can be contacted at adamchartley@gmail.com

A Friend from Costa Rica (Monteverde Monthly Meeting), Hazel Guindon, is visiting Britain throughout May; she will be a guest at Yearly Meeting at the invitation of Quaker World Relations Committee. She is hoping to attend YFGM in Bristol (2-5 May), and is looking for accommodation en route between Bristol and London afterwards. She will also be visiting Charney Manor on 14th May. QWRC have therefore suggested Oxford would be a suitable location. I can put her up on my sofa or floor with a sleeping bag, but that is not ideal. I can vouch for her being delightful company!

Does anyone have a spare bed they would be willing to lend a Friend for at least the night of 13th May and potentially 5th-13th? I will do my best to confirm her itinerary ASAP but am trying to put out feelers. In friendship, Tas Cooper

Accommodation offered

*Homeshare accommodation with semi-retired epidemiologist and teacher
St Clements/Headington*

We are looking for the right person to share the lovely East Oxford home (looking onto South Park) of a semi-retired epidemiologist and teacher (working in London for half the week) who leads a full and busy life but who would prefer to not be

living alone. Do you know an engaging person who enjoys stimulating conversation and intellectual exchange whilst also appreciating a quiet, peaceful lifestyle.

See the ad on [spareroom.com](http://www.spareroom.com) here:
<https://www.spareroom.co.uk/flatshare/oxfordshire/oxford/17635860>

...and on our webpage, where you can also find out more about Homeshare Oxfordshire and homesharing here:

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/our-services/homeshare-oxfordshire/>

Elizabeth Jenkerson Memorial Interfaith Lecturer Sought

Dear Quaker friends,

I am the lecture organiser for the South East England Faith Forum, which is as you know one of the few survivors of the plethora of interfaith bodies installed by the Blair government some two decades hence.

Our most prestigious lecture is the Elizabeth Jenkerson Memorial Interfaith Lecture, held every two months online. We do not pay our lecturers, yet nor do we charge for the lectures, which are intended to improve mutual respect. The next date is 7-8 pm online, on Thursday 13th March 2025. Would you please have anyone who would be both able and willing to talk about the early history of the Friends, focusing inter alia upon the role played by Friends in the struggle to abolish the slave trade?

I remain, etc., Stephen Vickers (Dr)
stephen@appleinter.net
South-East England Faith Forum

Volunteers needed!

Welcomers are needed for 11o'clock meetings for worship on Sundays. If you are willing to volunteer, please contact Paul Fine (paul.fine@lshtm.ac.uk or 07854 618146).

Friendship and Philosophy in Tumultuous Times

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/friends-hip-and-philosophy-in-tumultuous-times/>

This Woodbrooke Zoom course looks at lives of four philosophers who met during WWII: Iris Murdoch, Elizabeth Anscombe, Mary Midgley and Phillipa Foot. We will explore how their conversations and friendships helped them to think deeply about some of life's most puzzling questions, even in the midst of global conflict during and after the war.

Oxford Friends might be particularly interested because of the location and some might remember some of these women. The course will be led by a Quaker philosopher who Oxford Friends may remember from her student days, Sasha Lawson-Frost of Richmond and Leyburn LM. Anne Watson will be eldering. The idea of creating a course for Quakers was inspired by the book Metaphysical Animals by Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman.

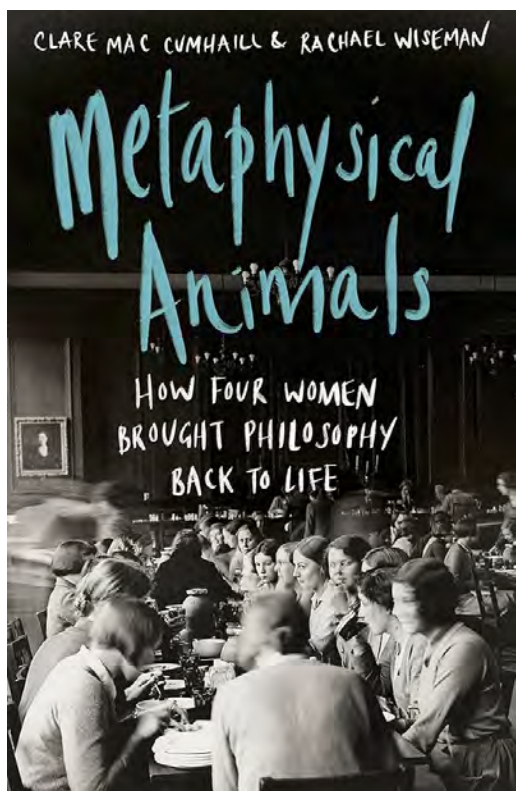


Image copyright Chatto and Windus

Saturday 15th March, 2pm at the Weston Library, Broad Street.

Led by Jess Worth (daughter of Caroline and Charles Worth), Green Badge Oxford Tour Guide.

To book a place at £13.20 students/unwaged or £18.70 general go to

<https://wegottickets.com/event/642696>

or on www.ladygargoyletours.uk

On this tour we will dive down the rabbit hole to learn about many of Oxford's literary inhabitants and some of their most enduring creations. We will also hear excerpts from their writings that give us a deeper understanding of the city of dreaming spires itself.

From early links with Chaucer, Shakespeare and Donne, through flawed and fascinating figures like Shelley, Wilde and Auden, we will encounter brilliant literary women, beer-drinking Inklings and outstanding crime fiction writers, as well as being introduced to some of the most exciting authors connected to the city today.

Gmail

Friends with Gmail accounts are asked to access 43 via the website while we iron out an issue with the proxy email service we have started using which is making Gmail reject emails from both the newsletters and the weekly notices. If anyone understands the issue better than we do and knows how to fix it, please contact Tasha (43 editor) on natasha.alden@gmail.com!

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

Quaker Videos in this Month's Forty-Three



Ollie

'Quakers and Twitter' on the QuakeltUp channel explores ten Quaker organisation's decision to leave twitter/X last December.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euuF4h2tgs0>

11 Minutes

From Quaker Faith & Practice 26.07

Hilda Clark (1881–1955), a doctor, wrote in 1908 of her experience when her sister-in-law died in childbirth:

I am thinking of those lovely fine days when Cara sat with me for hours sewing her little things. I feel as if my whole life might be better and more use to others from those two days, but what an awful price it is to pay. Do you know, I actually felt that it was 'better' somehow than those awful hours with those two poor creatures in the maternity hospital, when one's heart felt like ice within one, because one realised the tragedy with one's brain, and not with one's heart. And if I ever have to hold such a cold hand and feel such a death stricken pulse, I think a little of the love I have for Cara will go out to the victim, whoever it may be ... No, justice is of the Spirit, not of the outside world – but our understanding is so wrapped up in outward things that we can only grow spiritually by applying spiritual things to material ones – therefore we must be just though Nature is not.

One thing I understand now is that one's intellect alone won't pull one through, and that the greatest service it can perform is to open a window for that thing we call the divine spirit. If one trusts to it alone it's like trusting to an artificial system of ventilation – correct in theory but musty in practice. How I wish it were as easy to throw everything open to the spirit of God as it is to fresh air.

Diary:

Local Meeting for Worship for Business:

2nd February

Forest Foxes (adventure in the woods, around a fire, for friendship and fun for young people age 10-12): 8 February 2025.

Contact juliad@quaker.org.uk for details

Bring and Share Lunch (food and fellowship with Friends from across our community): 23rd February, 12:15

All-age meeting for worship. Theme: Living Faithful Lives (worship for our whole community, with a semi-programmed element and some singing): Sunday 2nd March, 10:30-11:30, Meeting House.

<https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/all-age-mfw/>

Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting: 9th March 10:30am-3:00pm. (Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs in the morning; spiritual nurture session in the afternoon). Charlbury Friends' Meeting House, Market St, OX7 3PH <https://osamquakers.org.uk/about-osam/>

Bible Studies group: Tuesday 18 February from 7-9pm at 43 St Giles and on the Meeting for Worship Zoom link. Contact Matt Rosen (friendmattrosen@outlook.com) for further information.

Regular Events:

Friends' Fellowship of Healing: the next FFH meeting will be at 1.30pm on Wednesday 5th February, in the Garden Room.

Beansprouts Children's Meeting (for children under 4): Every Sunday, 10:30 on first Sunday of the month, 11:00 on other Sundays, Long Room. <https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/beansprouts/>

Sunflowers Children's Meeting (worship for school-age children). Theme for February is **hope**. Every Sunday, 10:30 on first Sunday of the month, 11:00 on other Sundays, Long Room <https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/sunflowers/>

Tea Cake and Play (weekly morning chat and fun session for babies, toddlers and their grown-ups): Every Tuesday 10:00-12:00, Meeting House. playgroupsupport@oxfordquakers.org <https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/baby-and-toddler-group/>

Looking further ahead:

Britain Yearly Meeting with a theme of 'Peace: Inside and Out' (including children's programmes and Junior Yearly Meeting): 23-26 May 2025, Friends House (London), and online. <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym>

Junior Gathering (for young people aged 11 to 14) and **Senior Conference** (for young people aged 15-18) are Quaker residential gatherings for young people from across the South of England. 23rd-30th August 2025 <https://fsse.org.uk>

Berks and Oxon Regional Meeting
Speaker: Ben Pink Dandelion, Honorary Professor of Quaker Studies and Director of the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies, University of Birmingham. 18th October 2025, Swindon Friends' Meeting House

Volunteering:

Children and Young People's Committee (CYPC) are always in need of adult volunteers to support the children's meetings and other events in various roles. Please speak to a member of CYPC to find out more. We will need to organise an Enhanced DBS check and take up references before you can volunteer to work with children.



Creative Commons image:
<https://westberksvillagers.com/events/snowdrop-sale/>

December 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:

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

OXFORD MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Meetings for worship are in person. Zoom connections are available only when indicated.

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 followed by breakfast 07:30-08:00

Wednesday:

Meeting for Worship followed by lunch 11:45-12:30

Thursday:

Meeting for Worship followed by breakfast 07:30-08:00



Photo Wikimedia Commons

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/>

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**
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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.

For more information: tel. +44 (0)1865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org.