Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 560
December 2025

Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles', Oxford OX1 3LW
+44 (0)1865 557373
office@oxfordquakers.org

A (Quakerly) dispatch from California

Jimin Kang

I arrived in California on September 12th, to begin a PhD in Comparative Literature at Stanford. It's been a busy month full of adjustments to the climate, to the campus environment, and to my new Quaker community, which I've found among Palo Alto Friends. Most Sunday mornings I spend about an hour walking to the local meeting house, passing a weekly farmer's market on the way. Sometimes I buy myself a little treat: I picked up a jar of pumpkin spice almond butter one week, a turmeric coffee on another (classic California, you might think).

Having attended the local meeting for about a month now, I've been struck by the many ways in which it reminds me of our community in Oxford. There's a sense of camaraderie and real friendship among Friends, who, after meeting for worship ends, go around sharing riddles about how old they're turning if they're celebrating their birthday that week. Time and time again, I am also struck by Quakers' knack at baking and making jams—I'm currently making my way through a jar of homemade plum jam that was on sale in support of the Friends Committee on Legislation of California, which works to advocate for California state laws that are 'just, compassionate, and respectful of the inherent worth of every person' (you can read more about their work here: https://fclca.org/our-organization).

Stanford is based in Silicon Valley, which many of you might recognize as the world's 'tech hub'. Though the intermittent quality of Stanford's Wi-Fi often makes one skeptical of this fact, Palo Alto does feel, in many ways, like a place that always looks forward. Here, the future is the much-coveted thing, whereas in Oxford—at least from my experience—the past often seemed to hold that distinction.

I've been reflecting on what that means for me and how I approach my life here. I do feel that my daily life has taken on a somewhat breathless quality, in which I am constantly flitting from class to class, reading lots (sometimes upwards of two novels a week!), trying to maintain my creative writing practice, and keeping up with my health. Sometimes I fear that I might fall into the trap of instrumentalizing my time, such that it becomes a tool with which I 'achieve' things rather than a general and unavoidable fact of life.

Whenever I feel this way I invariably think back to my time in Oxford, where though I did often feel a need to be 'doing stuff'—it's just the person I am!—I was able to attend to that which is eternal: meals shared with friends, long walks in nature, regular Quaker meetings. I find myself grateful for the intergenerational community I was able to find within the meeting house. As a twenty-

something-year-old charting her path through life, it was deeply grounding to share life perspectives with people who had lived so much more, and especially those who took unprecedented turns. I'm still looking for that sense of intergenerational learning here at Stanford, where for the most part I live among people my age or younger.

Having said that, my move back across the pond has given me daily opportunities to live adventurously. In a new environment, I'm forced to try new things every day. I've recently gotten into early morning trail running with the alpine club, which has been tough but rewarding. I've met lots of interesting people: climate scientists and doctors and literary scholars who do deep dives into song lyrics. I've started taking formal Korean classes so that I can start seriously engaging with Korean literature, which—despite the fact that I'm Korean and have always spoken the language at home—I've never done before. And it all feels quite exciting. It's still early days, and I'm still not quite sure about my place among friends and Friends here at Stanford. But it's a hopeful time, ever more hopeful still when I remember my community in Oxford—to which I was initially a stranger just four years ago!—and all the things I learned and gained over the course of several years there, which were immeasurable, and for which I remain deeply grateful.

Stanford University: arguably sunnier than Oxford.
Photo credit: Jimin Kang

Listening Space

Linet Arthur and Carol Saker

We are writing to give our impressions of the Listening Space held on 21 September. Alistair Fuller and Ruth Audus facilitated the meeting and encouraged us to reflect on our hopes and wishes for the future of Oxford Quaker meeting.

We recognised that each of us has our own needs – for love, care and inclusion. We are looking for a vision for all and hope that there will be shared ownership of community tasks. This includes basic tasks like opening and closing the windows, setting up Zoom, welcoming people to meeting, as well as offering support to the community through pastoral care, for example.

We meet at different times of the week (9.30 and 11.00 on Sundays, Young Adult Friends on Monday evenings, breakfast meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Wednesday lunchtime meeting) and the various meetings were compared to a convoy of boats, a cluster of diverse groups. We felt the need for connection between the different groups and individuals. We expect all our meetings to be open and safe places.

We aspire to be a community where it is easy to get to know people, including both adults and children. Quakers are relational: we would like people who come to Oxford meeting to feel that they can love and be loved, and that we can 'hold' our differences and disabilities.

Image: Rebecca Price, Let's Explore the Quaker Way (BYM, London: 2017)

We come together for worship, and alongside knowing each other's joys and sorrows, we seek to know one another in the things that are eternal.

Our take-away messages were:

- whenever possible, talk to people you don't know well, not just your existing friends: Alistair asked us to talk to someone from a different generation over lunch and this proved to be a great pleasure
- chat to the children about their interests and concerns (but do this safely, in the presence of other adults)
- find a way to reach the people who feel disengaged from our community.

Avebury

Roger Ede

I love to visit Avebury.
Always, it makes me reflective on the nature of time.
If we had no capacity of memory, we could have no concept of Time.
We would live in an eternal 'now'.
After my most recent hours in Avebury, visiting on a cold and sunny autumn day, I wrote these few lines - more aware than ever previously of the inexorable beat of time's drum in my own life.

***

In Spaces: A Short Reflective Piece
My fingers trace the face and moving hands of Time,
Counting down my minutes in metre and in rhyme.
It races at a pace I can no longer run—
The pity of my life: the things I should have done.
In spaces, I find places to travel in my head,
Seeking out the silence of words I might have said.

Photo credit: Roger Ede

Times and seasons: A Quaker reflection on Christmas

Gill Sewell

Gill Sewell reflects on the Quaker tradition of not marking 'times and seasons' and finding the holy in the every day.

Early Quakers did not observe Christmas nor mark other 'times and seasons'. They believed that no day was more holy than any other, and believed that each day, and all of life, was sacred (*Quaker faith & practice* 27.39 and 27.42). Today, as with so many things in the Quaker community, there is a full spectrum of practices and responses.

There are those who do the full Christian event to mark the birth of Jesus with candles, carols, presents and Christmas pudding, and others who will observe simply and quietly. There are also those who will choose not to mark this Christmas season in any way, but who nonetheless give daily witness to their faith.

Whilst I experience this sense of the 'sacred always' I do, like many Quakers, find times and seasons helpful markers from which to reflect and rejoice. I delight in the new spring buds, the crisp autumn leaves, the wisps of breath on a cold winter morning. I celebrate Easter as a time of new beginnings and advent as a time of deepening darkness with the promise of new light to follow.

The ordinary moments of each day

New Year is like the turning of a page and the chance to consciously approach a new chapter in my life, with renewed intentions. I find the sacred manifests itself in laughter in the office, good music on my headphones, shared meals at home, and Sunday evenings with six of us on the sofas watching Blue Planet II. In these ordinary moments of the day I can be reminded of the divine. Watching specks of dust dance in the sunlight – in the small things of the universe – I am reminded of my belonging in the cosmos and my part in being love and light. With Christmas approaching I mark the Sundays of advent – knowing that (in the northern hemisphere) the shortest day approaches.

Earlier humans have marked this passage of the sun/moon as sacred with such festivals as Yule – later supplanted by the Christian Christmas festival. I engage with this reminder of birth in the darkest days, heralding the arrival of life, and life more abundant, in the months to come. Advent reminds me too that in the darkness there are moments for hibernation and reflection, so that when the daylight comes I have a readiness to turn to face the sun.

Celebrating in community

We humans want to celebrate in community, perhaps remember those who've died, perhaps to celebrate new and burgeoning relationships – and also our sense of belonging. Recognising too, that for some there may be little to celebrate – in poverty, isolation or war-torn zones. Globally the world has perhaps held too much darkness this year with several political leaders unable to beam shards of goodness and light.

As nights draw in, it is a reminder to me that I need to hold my spark of light faithfully and boldly, witnessing in the darker corners of my community. Holding and living by the Quaker testimonies of peace, simplicity and care of the environment remains a challenge in my preparations for a Christmas celebration. I make donations (including at the food bank), try to make good ethical choices with my purchases, and identify ways in which to share.

Quakers mark Christmas in different ways but I will spend Christmas Eve looking up at the stars and hoping fervently that the seven billion people on this planet will indeed show good will to one another.

Reprinted from
https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/times-and-seasons-a-quaker-reflection-on-christmas
(originally published December 23rd 2017)

December appeal: OxFAP

Big Small Things: What might seem small to you and me can be big to someone else.

That's what our OxFAP partners keep telling us – where else do they find the money to provide clients with essentials they can't afford themselves? Things like

- A washing machine for a single father with two young children. He has numerous health problems leading to limited mobility. His old machine was leaking which caused mould in the room, and was not repairable (Citizens Advice)
- A sofa bed for a client moving on from temporary accommodation (Aspire)
- Jeans, tee shirt, shorts for a homeless man whose clothes were stolen while rough sleeping (Homeless Oxfordshire)
- Subsistence support for a domestic violence survivor whose husband cut all financial support after leaving. Not yet receiving public funds. Has two young children to support (Asylum Welcome)
- A fan for an elderly client in the heatwave (Elmore)

Our giving goes directly to five local organisations who work with vulnerable people. A member of the OxFAP committee is responsible for liaising with each one and we get accounts and a report from each organisation quarterly. They really value our support – in fact, they tell us how much they love the Quakers!

For people on the margins Christmas can be a particularly challenging time. Please give generously.

How to donate:
By card reader – tap your card on the device in the lobby of 43 and money goes straight to OxFAP
BACS payments to:
Account name: Oxford Quaker Meeting R/C 1137897
Sort code: 08-90-38
Account number: 50000898 (Cooperative Bank)
Reference: 'OXFAP Dec. Appeal'
Cheques: payable to "Oxford Quaker Meeting R/C1137897"

Tabora League for Children Seasonal Update

As 2025 moves towards its final month the children are ready for their holidays; they have finished their exams and they are looking forward to the festive season.

The staffing situation in Tabora is good with Paschal at the helm. The volunteering situation in the UK is not so good, with some volunteers overloaded. We are addressing this matter and hope to find some more UK trustees coming forward in the new year. Do let us know if you would be willing to help out. It is now possible to attend all our meetings on Teams so distances are no longer a problem.

Thank you so much for all the regular income and the one-off donations that you continue to send, and our sincere apologies if we have not acknowledged your gift. We and the children are very grateful that your generosity allows us to continue this work.

With very best wishes to you all from the group in the UK which met in Oxford last weekend at the Trustees Meeting, and from those of the UK group that were unable to attend.

On behalf of the Trustees of Tabora League for Children UK:

Trustees: Siobhan Collins, Miranda Holmes. James Howson, Marg Paton, Robina Richter and Beth Tomkinson.

Patrons: Sandy Bharat, Meg Brohan, Josh Lewis and Marion Windsor
Web: tlctanzania.org
Contact: tlctanzania@gmail.com

TABORA LEAGUE FOR CHILDREN (TLC)

Working with orphans and vulnerable children and their families at 3 TLC Day Centres, Isevya, Ngambo and Chem Chem in Tabora

Contact us at tlctanzania@gmail.co

TLC Seasonal Appeal

Our TLC children will be gathering soon to celebrate Christmas with their friends at our centres.

- the youngest get a small gift.

They will also be preparing for the new school year, and will need new uniform, shoes, books, writing materials etc. (£40 for primary £70 for Secondary)

Families share the joy – they receive sacks of beans and rice (£12 per family)

Give them joy with any of these:

Netballs/footballs for each centre (£20 each)

Skipping ropes (£2)

Art materials: Paper(£5 Felt tips £2 per child)

Bring them comfort, joy and hope for 2026

Not forgetting the practicalities – like mosquito nets to keep them safe (£4 each) and replacement water filters where needed (£10)

Merry Christmas to you all

Facebook **Web: tlctanzania.org** **Contact: tlctanzania@gmail.com**

Donate

Oxford Meeting Notices

Invitation: Interfaith panel discussion hosted by the Elijah Interfaith Institute and the Oxford Council of Faiths
On 4 December from 4 pm to 6 pm, the Elijah Interfaith Institute and the Oxford Council of Faiths are hosting an interfaith panel discussion at Harris Manchester College.

There will be a dynamic and engaging group of international speakers, leaders in their faith tradition, including Lord Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury. All delegates are invited to a brief reception with the panellists.

The event is free to attend, you can find more information and register at this link.
Priscilla (admin@hope4creation.org)

Pastoral Care and Eldership in Oxford Meeting
Everyone is invited to a meeting on Sunday 7th December, 9.15-10.00am, before the 10.30 All-Age Meeting for Worship, to continue considering the way forward with pastoral care and eldership in our Meeting. This will be a space for hearing about needs and concerns, and for considering together how we can address them.

A second meeting will be held on Zoom only, 8-9pm on Friday 19th December.
We expect these meetings to take place once or twice a month and we'll experiment with timing to see what works best. We hope that the Friday evening session will make it possible for some Friends with daytime work and parents of young children to attend.
Any questions to laurie@livingwitness.org.uk

Please help us keep warm! Please close doors, including the door to the kitchen and the loos in the Meeting House - it makes a great difference. The heating in most rooms at 43, is controlled via a website but it only works if the radiators are plugged in. Please do not unplug them!

Please keep off the grass. The main lawn is still in the process of recovery – please keep off it. The back garden remains fine for playing on.

Empty jam jars are needed for an all-age craft activity. Please leave any jars you are able to donate in the box on the kitchen counter. They'll be much appreciated!

The Meeting House veranda ceiling is being re-plastered over the next couple of weeks. Please be extra careful when moving around this area. Because of this work, there will be more vehicles than usual in the car park.

We are continuing to collect every Sunday for Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OxFAP) via our contactless card machine and a cash donation box, both of which are next to the refreshments in the Garden Room.

All-Age Meeting for Worship – Sunday 7th December, 10:30am
Our next all-age meeting for worship is on Sunday 7th December at 10:30am. As part of this meeting, Friends from the 9:30 and 11:00 meetings, and the Beansprouts and Sunflowers children's meetings, will gather as one community to share in worship, story, song, and stillness.

As is often the case for our December all-age worship, the theme will draw on the nativity story, and provides an opportunity to reflect on how the message of peace on earth and goodwill to all continues to sing within us and through us, in a world that still needs hope and light. Children from the Sunflowers children's meeting will present a short play, based on the carol It Came Upon the Midnight Clear. We will sing two songs together: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear and How Can I Keep from Singing. We will have time for worship sharing with an invitation to think about how we respond to the call to peace, love, and truth in our lives today.

We hope that Friends of all ages can join us as we connect across the generations and come together as our whole worshipping community and remind

ourselves of the many ways we put our faith into action.

Quakers wanted!
On the weekend of 14-15 February 2026, there will be a One World weekend. On Saturday, 14 Feb, I have suggested that there will be a panel discussion on the theme of your faith tradition's attitude to the created environment. I am looking for volunteers from the faith traditions in Oxford who are willing to give a 3-4 minute talk on the subject, and when all five members of the panel have spoken, then engage with the audience on the subject. I would like some, if not all, speakers to be under 59 at least. Please reply as soon as possible, providing your name and the faith community to which you belong, so I can select a balanced panel.

God bless,
Bede

Canon Dr Charlotte Bannister-Parker, Chair of OxCoF,
Associate Vicar of St John's, Notting Hill, London,
www.stjohnsnottinghill.com
Mobile: 07745 347 395
& the Founder of The Hope4Creation Foundation
https://www.hope4creation.org/

Formatting editor for "43"
Since taking on the formatting editor role for 43 in the summer I have had some ill health which is making it more difficult for me to fulfil the role reliably while maintaining my health. I have informed nominations that I would like to step down from the role and I would ask Friends do consider if they feel led to try the role.

You just need basic Word editing skills and a can-do attitude! Please get in touch if you're interested in learning more about the role:
essjay.spencer@gmail.com
SJ Spencer

OX2 Coffee Mornings
OX2 Friends have sometimes expressed regret that we no longer hold monthly coffee mornings. The difficulty seems to be that holding them in our own homes is less practical than it used to be. However, OX1 holds monthly morning events in the Meeting House Garden Room. The Office tells me that we would be welcome to do the same, particularly if it could be a Monday or Friday. The bus services would suit most of us. If anyone in OX2 would like to join in I'd be happy to get it going in the first instance (not necessarily too soon).
Richard Seebohm

Christmas tree in Darlington Friends Meeting House.
Image: Robyn Drummond

Diary

All-Age Meeting for Worship
Sunday 7th December 2025, 10:30am, Meeting House.
https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/all-age-mfw/

Looking further ahead

Britain Yearly Meeting
1st - 4th May 2026, Friends House, London, and via Zoom

Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting (OSAM)
Saturday 10th January 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm Oxford Friends Meeting House.
https://osamquakers.org.uk/about-osam/

The Meeting for Church Affairs starts at 10:30am; there will be an **all-age spiritual nurture session** after, based around dance and singing.

Regular Events

Beansprouts Children's Meeting (under 4s)
Sundays – 10:30am (first Sunday), 11:00am (others), Long Room.
https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/beansprouts/

Sunflowers Children's Meeting (school-age)
Theme for November: Peace
Sundays – 10:30am (first Sunday), 11:00am (others), Short Room.
https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/sunflowers/

Young Adult Friends Meeting (18-35)
Mondays – 7:00pm, Meeting House. Followed by dinner at 8:00pm in the Garden Room.
https://oxfordquakers.org/youngadultfriends/

Tea Cake and Play
Friendly stay-and-play for babies, toddlers and their grown-ups.
Tuesdays, 10:00am–12:00pm, Meeting House.
https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/baby-and-toddler-group/

Volunteer Service Opportunities

Children's Meeting Helpers
Support Beansprouts or Sunflowers at 11:00 meetings.
Speak to a CYPC member. DBS and references required.

Tea Cake and Play Volunteers
Help run Tuesday stay-and-play sessions.
Contact Sally Lawson:
playgroupsupport@oxfordquakers.org

Welcomers for Sunday 11:00 Meetings
Provide a warm welcome to all who worship with us.
Contact Paul Fine: paul.fine@lshtm.ac.uk / 07854 618146

"Tea cake and play hosts a Quaker meeting"
Photo credit: Trio Watson

Quaker Videos of the Month

Do Quakers celebrate Christmas? // Vlogmas 2019 Day 3

Jessica Kellgren-Fozard's popular blog explores the meaning of Christmas to Quakers, the historical context of Quaker attitudes to Christmas, and talks about what it means to her as a Young Friend (14.50).

A Quaker Take on Christmas

Do Quakers celebrate Christmas? In this episode of 'Quaker Take', Quakers in Britain's podcast, we hear about different Quaker takes on the festive season, discuss why Quakers don't traditionally celebrate Christmas (and how they sometimes do now), and explore ways to approach difficult conversations with family and friends. (50.47)

From Quaker Faith & Practice 21.25

Living a full life

Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of itself occasionally.

Gerald Priestland, 1977

December 2025

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

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

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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Editorial Team
Tasha Alden
Sally Bayley
Nicole Gilroy
SJ Spencer

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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.