



FORTY-THREE

OXFORD FRIENDS' MEETING
43 ST. GILES OXFORD OX1 3LW

NEWSLETTER

www.oxfordquakers.org

Number 382

JANUARY 2011

40 pence

Global Change

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) has called for the responses of Friends, worldwide, to the massive ongoing changes in our environment, climate, economy and society, which – together – they call 'Global Change'. FWCC emphasises the importance of understanding the close causal inter-dependence between these seemingly very different aspects of change, and hence the importance of responding to them as a whole.

Members of Oxford Quaker Meeting met together to try to find a shared response to this challenging consultation from FWCC. What do we, as Friends, have to say to ourselves and to the world about the colossal changes that are happening in our world? How do we articulate the spiritual basis of our response? What actions are we taking?

Note from a meeting of
Oxford Friends, held 17.12.10

At the start of our meeting, we were reminded of the 1991 World Conference of Friends, convened by FWCC, where the increasing impacts of global change, and the inextricable linkages between justice, peace and the integrity of creation, were already made plain. Epistles from the 1991 World Conference remind us of this:

"We stand at a turning point in human development. The dignity of human life and the

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From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

A public statement by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain agreed in session at London Yearly Meeting 22-25 May 1987:

Quakers in Britain have felt called to issue this statement in order to address a matter of urgent national priority to promote debate and to stimulate action.

We are angered by actions which have knowingly led to the polarisation of our country — into the affluent, who epitomise success according to the values of a materialistic society, and the 'have-leasts', who by the expectations of that same society are oppressed, judged, found wanting and punished.

We value that of God in each person, and affirm the right of everyone to contribute to society and share in life's good things, beyond the basic necessities.

...

We appreciate the stand taken by other churches and we wish to work alongside them.

As a Religious Society and as individuals we commit ourselves to examine again how we use our personal and financial resources. We will press for change to enable wealth and power to be shared more evenly within our nation. We make this statement publicly at a time of national decision [a general election] in the hope that, following the leadings of the Spirit, each one of us in Britain will take appropriate action.

QF&P 23.21

Deadline for contributions to the February 2011 issue: noon, Friday 21 January

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the Forty-Three pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373.

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sustainability of all life forms on the planet are at stake.” (Epistle from the 1991 Kenya Gathering)

“Some Friends now realise the garden of paradise may have been like an untamed rain forest... In Faith in Action groups we learned how that Spirit has led Friends to confront evil in many forms throughout the world, including greed, poverty, oppression, and the destruction of the environment. If we do not take action to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted, we run the risk of losing the garden.” (Epistle from the 1991 Honduras Gathering)

Now, two decades on, these overwhelming global changes are upon us. Our industrial-consumerist society is heading towards catastrophic climate change, environmental degradation, and extinction of life forms on an almost unimaginable scale.

We are moved to the very core of our being. We are anguished by the prospect of an earth unfit for human habitation, and – on the path towards it – untold human suffering. And we, as participants in the industrial-consumerist society, are contributing to this devastation. We have to change – not only ourselves, but also the economic, social and moral system in which we live. Our Testimonies demand no less of us.

The task is immense: to speak Truth to Power, to challenge the military-industrial complex, the global corporations, ‘the market’. These systems are worldwide and seem unassailable. But there *are* alternatives. We must assist the growth of new kinds of interconnectedness: practise new ways of exchanging, trading, travelling, generating power, of being human. We need to be in the business of constructing and demonstrating that there *are* other ways to be human, to be fair and to be joyful.

Equity and fairness were key words among early Friends. They tried to live in a manner which gave new meaning to these words. They spoke bluntly about injustice and evil in systems, believing that there is an inward light available to all people, however obscurely, which if seen can bring them to new Life. Can we learn to live in that same manner, where our lives speak?

Challenging or changing the system can be effective when we work together with others, with strong mutual support. The same is true in changing our own lifestyles. **Now we need to find new and more effective ways of acting together.**

We want to be better connected to the efforts of the wider body of Friends, using all possible means, especially via IT and the internet. And we should look beyond our Quaker networks as well, to partnerships with others who are working for positive change. We need to deepen our listening to, and learning from, each other, at all levels.

In all that we do we need also to turn inward, to our ‘inner plumb line’, to that of God within, to find our direction and strength of purpose.

This note is sent to our newsletter for publication and to Meeting for Worship for Business in February. We hope all our members can reflect upon this and that we can begin to discern what is required of us, individually and collectively, to respond to this call from FWCC.

Val Ferguson

February is Fantastic Food Month!



City of Sanctuary, the movement to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK, have invited us to share the wealth of culture and culinary delights that

Oxford’s refugee population can bring us. As a Meeting we have agreed to host and enjoy a meal prepared by City of Sanctuary’s team of cooks on Friday, 25 February. Then they will sit down to enjoy the food with us, while we also get to know each other better.

The suggested prior donation of £10 per person for this special meal will cover the food costs and raise much-needed funds for destitute asylum seekers.

Please put the date in your diary *now*. Tickets will be on sale after MfW throughout February.

Janet Toye
Human Rights and Asylum Group

Oxford Meeting is reflecting on issues related to the relationship between the Young Friends group and the rest of the Meeting on Sunday **23 January** at 12:30 at FMH. Contributions from everyone in the Meeting will be welcome.

Matthew Gee

Quaker Faith in Action – a letter to Friends from OXFAP

Dear Friends,

We want first of all to express our deep thanks for the generous donations and new ideas from Friends, which have been flowing in since we reported to LBM in October about OXFAP's work last year. Support from P & F committee is our bedrock. And this year we've received so much support from the Meeting as a whole, and from individual Friends. This feels especially important at a time when, as so many Friends recognise, life is getting much harder for those already struggling with day to day living. Destitution is on the rise. Examples of how new energies have been directed to help our cause include: two monthly collections in 2011 instead of one. Brilliant. A lecture by Jocelyn Bell Burnell is to take place on 26 May at the Meeting House which will raise money for OXFAP; collections at special poetry events are planned; and some of the magnificent blankets knitted by Friends have been offered. If this isn't Quaker faith in action, what is?

We know how much more hardship has resulted from the economic crisis. Now the cuts are starting to make things much worse. Friends' work through OXFAP is about helping individual people who have hardly any, or literally no money - and usually a lot of other deep and difficult problems - when an acute problem arises, most often at a moment of transition in their lives. And often when they are struggling against all odds to turn their lives round. Their stories are the best way of illustrating what OXFAP does. Here are a few, all from people who Friends have supported in the last month:

'MU', a woman in her 50s, has been sleeping rough for ten years in a field with her partner of over 30 years. They have consistently refused all welfare and had no income at all. The Oxford

Street Services Team contacted us because they were worried about the couple's mental health. Now MU's partner has been detained under the mental health act. MU is well, but worn down, not least by an overbearing partner, and has lost her voice. She has no idea how to apply for the benefits she needs. She has been found a flat by Oxford City Council, but has no possessions apart from the clothes she stands in. 'Breakthrough' have offered household items. Amazingly, £120 from Friends towards the £180 needed has enabled MU to buy clothing — underwear, trousers and shirt, a jumper and shoes — plus a radio and alarm clock.

KB lives in a rented room in Littlemore. He is on Jobseeker's Allowance and has no other money. Recently there was a water leak in the room above and water came through the ceiling, ruining his bed and mattress. As a result he is sleeping on the floor. He applied for a Crisis Loan from the Job Centre and was told that he would be eligible for only £6, which he declined. Kevin went to OCVA and found a second-hand bed and mattress for £25 plus £5 delivery, which OXFAP has funded.

A resident at Simon House, **HW** was in desperate need of a winter coat and they wondered if we could make a small donation of approximately £50 to help towards this. We did.

Prior to coming to live at the Emmaus Community, **SP** was in and out of custody for drug-related offences. He was a heroin addict, but stopped using drugs and de-toxed from his methadone. When his long-term partner died suddenly and unexpectedly it affected SP terribly, but instead of turning to drugs, he started using alcohol heavily and was asked to leave the community. SP moved to the Night Shelter in Oxford and started to sell the Big Issue, but moved out of the Night Shelter to avoid the negative influence of drug and alcohol use and is now sleeping in a tent. He has a forklift licence and is keen to return to full-time employment and is currently looking for private rented accommodation. But he suffers terribly with his eyesight and an eye test confirmed a retina and focusing problem for which he definitely needs glasses. SP has an HCl certificate which helps with NHS costs such as

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sight tests and glasses but the amount for his prescription is still £79 after deductions.

Requests like these have escalated over recent weeks. But OXFAP can make a big difference with very little sums. And as you see, the organisations we work with are well networked, so help comes from multiple sources. But through OXFAP Quakers fill a gap - our help is quick, focused, direct and we only ask for confirmation that the money has reached its destination.

Some of you will know already that support for homeless people in Oxford is deteriorating and the services that exist are threatened. The Gap (a resource centre in Frideswide Square) has been closed and its intended replacement may not happen. After many years of uncertainty, the Gatehouse in St Michael's Street has been given notice that it must move out and find new accommodation within a year. Local authorities are under pressure to sell off their assets as well as shrink services. It is the poorest and most vulnerable people who will be further deprived of essential help to keep their heads above water.

If you would like to find out more about poverty in the UK and Oxford, and particularly about the public spending cuts, please come to Friday with Friends on 21 January (see page 2 of the December issue of Forty-Three).

Once again, thanks for your generosity and support. It matters a lot. In 2011, together, we can all help make a difference.

**Ursula Howard, Matt Godwin, Jo Dobry,
Sue Smith and Elisabeth Salisbury**
email: Ursula.howard@pop3.poptel.org.uk



Woodbrooke News

I'm just back from Woodbrooke, our Quaker Study Centre, and the message is upbeat. Woodbrooke finished 2010 with a financial surplus, rather than the expected deficit. It ran 142 courses on-site and provided hospitality for a host of outside conferences.

So 2010 was a successful year, and already there are plans for new initiatives for 2011. One is the Friendly Introductions series with thirteen courses, pitched at different levels of Quaker experience and providing a grounding in all aspects of the Quaker Way. Also new is a Spiritual Practice Pathway, designed to deepen experience of spiritual practice and prayer. Sandra Berry is now in post as director, and retirements have brought opportunities for new appointments. A fresh era for Woodbrooke has begun, yet one where you will still find comfortable accommodation, beautiful grounds, good food and a supportive ethos. There are lessons for our local meetings in strong sense of loving-kindness enfolding all who visit. A new programme will be coming out soon, but, meanwhile, I have details of courses January to March, and am happy to talk with you about the opportunities available. Why not enlarge your experience with a visit in 2011?

Peggy Heeks
Woodbrooke Correspondent



Cluster Groups for Outreach

Quaker Life are forming Cluster Groups for Outreach and are looking for Friends who are:

- Committed to outreach
- Enthusiastic
- Available to visit meetings at weekends
- Willing to travel reasonable distances
- Willing to attend the necessary training events
- Have the ability to use email (highly desirable)

If you want to know more, contact alistairf@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1016.

Sandra Figgess

FOCAGIFO Hope Institute: Naomi's New Year Challenge

The Friends of Canon Gideon Hope Institute in Kampala, Uganda provides support and training for children orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS (OVCs). To train one OVC costs £50 per term or £150 per year; Oxford Friends sponsored twenty OVCs in 2010. We hope at least to match this for 2011, since many applicants are turned away for lack of funds.

By Christmas 2010 we had raised £2400 (from November's Sunday collections & private donations), which provides sponsorship for sixteen OVCs (£600 short of target). On Sunday 9 January, Naomi Morris is doing the Goring, Woodcote & District Lions Club 10k Run to help us reach this target. You can still support Naomi's effort retrospectively. She has sponsor forms which include a gift-aid option for UK tax-payers. Or donate online: www.justgiving.com/Naomi-Morris. Or cheques payable to Strategies for Hope Trust can be sent to me at 111 Divinity Rd, OX4 1LW. Donations should be sent a.s.a.p., as Hope Institute's academic year starts in February.

Our support is greatly appreciated. At Christmas Gideon sent a poem ending "...only Friends keep us going" and added: "Thanks, Oxford Friends, for being Real Friends."



John Whitley

Quaker Paintings

I should like to pass on two watercolours by my father so that the Meeting may benefit. I think he would have liked that. One watercolour is of dark moorland, I think in Wales, with a road winding upwards. Someone who loves the Welsh uplands would be attracted by this. The other is a misty study of a Welsh border castle, perhaps Clun castle. The reason I wish to dispose of the pictures is that I have inherited others of my father which I care about more. I should like the pictures to go for not less than £150 each, perhaps more. He was regarded as sufficiently skilled that he exhibited (though I think not these pictures) at both the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours and the Royal

Watercolour Society. He was an active Quaker and regarded painting as a means of worship.

Anybody interested in purchasing these pictures and giving the money to Oxford Quakers is invited to email me at mariekefclarke@pop3.poptel.org.uk or telephone 557807.

Marieke Clarke

Meetings and Notices

Book of Members and Attenders

The new edition of the Area Meeting *Book of Members and Attenders* is to be available soon. All Members are listed. Also included are those Attenders who gave us permission to print their names and addresses by completing the data protection form. We apologise if anyone was omitted by mistake.



Any Attenders who would like to complete the data-protection form and leave it in **Donna Dickenson's** pigeonhole will have their names added to our database of Members and Attenders.

Meeting for Worship and dinner 6 p.m., Sunday 16 January

Dear Friends,

A half-hour Meeting for Worship will be held soon in the chapel of Somerville College, on Woodstock Road. Four of us plan to first speak briefly about worship, and will take questions. After the worship, dinner will be provided at no charge by the college in its dining hall (this hall contains a portrait of former principal Margery Fry, a Quaker known for prison reform and war relief).

Your attendance would be very welcome. Please arrive at the college comfortably before 6 p.m., in order to allow time to find the chapel.

In Friendship,
Val Ferguson, Stephen Yeo,
Lis Burch, and Mark Ebdon

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2011

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Fri 7th	7 for 7.30	Friday with Friends: Experimental Quakerism	Thu 27th	7 for 7.30	Quakers in Focus
Thu 13th	7 for 7.30	Quakers in Focus, <i>in north Oxford.</i>	Sat 29th	6 - 9	Meeting House Party
Sat 15th	10.30	Area Meeting			
Sun 16th	6.00	MfW and dinner, <i>at Somerville College</i>	<p><i>Forty-Three</i> is available online, at www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter</p> <p>If you are considering writing an article or notice but would prefer it not to go online, please don't hesitate to contribute it. Just indicate that the piece is not for inclusion in the internet version — no reason will be asked for. Articles and notices are very welcome to appear in the print edition only, and the same applies to calendar items.</p>		
Wed 19th	1.45	Friends Fellowship of Healing			
Thu 20th	7 for 7.30	Quakers in Focus, <i>in north Oxford.</i>			
Fri 21st	7 for 7.30	Friday with Friends: OXFAP			
Sun 23rd	12.30	LM discussion (see p. 2)			

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The Warden, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW.

You may also like to contact the warden about the environmentally friendly option to subscribe by email
(write to oxford@quaker.org.uk)



MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Sundays at 9:30 and 11 a.m. at 43 St Giles
(followed by coffee and tea)

Wednesdays at 12:15 p.m. at 43 St Giles
(followed by coffee and tea)

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 a.m. at 43 St Giles
(followed by breakfast at 8 a.m.)

Sundays at 10 a.m. at The Priory,
85 Old High St, Headington

OPENING TIMES

43 ST GILES

Wednesday - Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Closed in August

Dear Friends,

Oxford Meeting is preparing to issue a statement in response to the government's programme of public sector cuts. This is a first draft. The plan is to bring a more finalised statement to consider at the LMWB on 6 February. If Friends would like to make amendments to this draft, please send them by 14 January to me (preferably by email but otherwise by post). The email address is katherine.wedell@ntlworld.com. I will then get an amended draft out to Friends who wish to contribute to this process, hopefully by early in the week of 17 January. Friends will then have until the end of January to make further amendments before the draft statement goes to LMWB.



Kathy Wedell

Draft Quaker Statement on the Cuts

Oxford Meeting, December 2010

Intro giving Quaker values and Quaker view of deficit and cuts

As Quakers we hold to testimonies of social justice and equality. We value that of God in each person and affirm the right of everyone to contribute to society.

We are angered by actions which divide our society into the haves and the have-nots, which create injustice and inequality. All have the right to an adequate standard of living and to social protection from poverty.

We are concerned about an economic system based on gambling and marketisation which led to this mess. Banks creating money out of nothing by issuing debt are a root cause of excessive growth and increasing inequality. Housing values have risen with no effort on the part of owners and, with higher rents, those not owning homes have lost out completely.

We know that society has not become happier as the divide has widened.

View on cutting the deficit *per se*....

The policy of the present government to cut the national deficit in four years and to do it by cutting public spending creates injustice and inequality. It fails to recognise people's basic rights. It will create poverty. There are economic alternatives which are more just.

Section on why cutting the deficit via spending cuts is unjust

Cutting public spending puts more people out of work. That reduces the tax intake. It also increases the costs falling on the welfare services.

It is almost inevitable that cutting the deficit via spending cuts will hit the more vulnerable harder than doing so by higher tax; empirical research confirms that the present proposed spending cuts will hit the poorest proportionately harder.

Examples....Housing benefit, child benefit, cuts to disability living allowance, cuts to adult social care, Localism Bill...

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We are concerned that those in need of social protection are being stigmatised as 'scroungers'. It appears that the government are trying to limit a politically unpopular 'hit' to middle income service users by displacing more of the burden onto low income benefit users, using the anti-scrounger argument. The Welfare Reform Bill about to go through Parliament will, through its stronger conditionality measures and its punitive attitudes to those perceived as a drain on the state, will deny basic rights and social protection to the more deprived and vulnerable and make poverty worse.

Section on unfairness of current taxation

We are concerned about the proposed increase in VAT, a regressive tax that will affect most badly those on low incomes and those already disadvantaged for example by disability.

We are concerned about the lack of taxation of rich individuals and rich corporations. Has 'freedom' come to mean 'freedom to get rich in whatever way you can, and to avoid paying back to society the share of you increase which is due to it'? There is no stigma attached to poor methods of doing business, which includes avoidance of taxes (such as Kraft relocating Cadbury's headquarters to Zurich).

Section on more just and egalitarian alternatives - what we want done

We do not need to cut so much and so fast. The argument that the national debt is out of control and public sector spending cuts will solve the problem is faulty. Britain's national debt is about 75% of our national income. For much of our history it has been higher. The IMF is concerned about the depth and speed of the cuts being introduced at present.

Reducing public expenditure to address the economic crisis is a mistake. The government should be putting money into the economy. We need to create jobs, not cut them. That way economic growth will contribute to reducing the deficit. We urge the government to consider the Million Climate Jobs campaign's call for funding a National Climate Service to offer retraining and work that will cut emissions to anyone who loses their job to address twin economic and environmental crises.

The debt-based economy must be reformed at its source to prevent economic crises from arising again and again with increasing severity. The Positive Money campaign offers ways to achieve a stable money system.

It is calculated that if the top 10% were to pay a one-off additional 20% tax this would resolve the UK's deficit problems.

We need a real, serious tax on the banks.

We need to scrap the Trident nuclear programme and not replace it. We need to remove subsidies to the arms trade.

Quaker view on campaigning action - ie active, vocal and non-violent

We support those who campaign non violently for social justice and equality. We recognise the energy and anger of those who campaign. We see that that energy and anger must be used positively and peacefully to engage debate and to effect change. We will take non-violent action for justice and equality.