



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

www.oxfordquakers.org

Number 373

APRIL 2010

40 pence

Spiritual Review

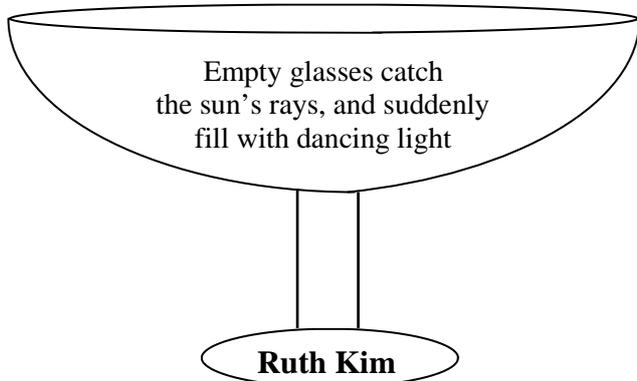
Dear Friends,

Recently elders spent time in worship-sharing around three 'spiritual review' questions which help us to think about the strengths of our local meeting and how to build up our community:

- What are our aspirations for our Meeting?
- What does our Meeting do well in enabling Friends to 'get to know one another in the things which are eternal'?
- What further action do you feel the Meeting should take in order to deepen the spiritual life of the Meeting and its expression in caring?

We found it to be a helpful and encouraging experience.

We encourage Friends to set aside time in their groups and committees to do the same — perhaps



to hold a special meeting held for this purpose. Others might wish to get together with a few Friends to do this at home. If you would appreciate an elder joining you for this, please contact one of us. We hope this might happen in the next few months. (If you haven't been involved in a worship sharing time before, there is an excellent description of this in *QF&P* 12.21.)

There is no need to report on the content of these special meetings - but elders would appreciate hearing from groups who have met. And if the exercise has led to ideas which might be shared we would like to hear about them please.

Alan Allport, Gwithian Doswell, Val Ferguson, Sandra Figgess, Deborah Filgate, Ian Flintoff, Tanya Garland, Ursula Howard, Tina Leonard, Maretta Stark, Glen Williams, Patricia Wright.
(Oxford Local Quaker Meeting Elders)

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

One of the unexpected things I have learnt in my life as a Quaker is that religion is basically about relationships between people. This was an unexpected discovery, because I had been brought up to believe that religion was essentially about our relationship with God.

From *QF&P* 10.20, George Gorman, 1982

Deadline for contributions to the May 2010 issue: noon, Friday 23 April

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

Friends' Links with The Anti-Slavery Society

Friends, together with other nonconformist churches, were active in the anti-slavery movement from the beginning. Britain abolished its slave trade in 1807 and freed all the slaves in its colonies in 1833. The Anti-Slavery Society was set up in 1859 in the hope of influencing other slaving nations and there is still, alas, a need for its work. As far as official government policy is concerned, the society's aims have mostly been met, but slavery continues to this day. It is closely linked with poverty and vulnerable people are still trafficked both within and between countries.

The Society marked its 150-year anniversary with a fundraising campaign and our Local Meeting for Worship for Business (LMWB) received a letter asking us to consider making donations. LMWB considered this request in February and decided that we should reaffirm our practice of only giving financial support to Quaker causes or to those with which Oxford Friends have direct links. However, the anti-slavery cause remains close to Quaker hearts and Friends may like to consider becoming individual members.

Judith Atkinson and Sandra Figgess
Co-clerks, Oxford LMWB



Mobiles, please

The Quaker 'African Great Lakes Initiative' has been training people to assist in a Burundi Election Violence Prevention Programme. As part of this some people will be trained as citizen reporters. They will have mobile phones with photo capability so that they can report on the progress of the elections in real time to a special Centre. They have some funding but donated phones would help greatly. They are appealing through FWCC to Friends in Britain for help.

They need 400 mobile phones capable of using SIM cards and able to take pictures (email and video capabilities would be an added advantage). If any of you have old phones and can get them to Val Ferguson or Jocelyn Burnell, preferably by Easter, Jocelyn will be able to take them to Africa in May. There are five elections to be held between May and September and there is considerable concern about the possibility of local violence.

Val Ferguson



Love and War

In 2007 the bilingual poet Fady Joudah published an Arabic-English edition of three books of poems by the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. In 'A State of Siege' (2002) Darwish plays with love and war, separation and identity in two wonderfully compressed sequences. The first deals with war:

*"Me, or him"
that's how war starts. But
it ends in an awkward stance:
"Me and him".*

The second sequence changes gender and deals with love:

*"I am she until the end"
that's how love begins. But
when it ends
it's an awkward farewell:
"She and I".*

In a poem called 'In Jerusalem' (2003), Darwish finds himself thinking about holy men in Jerusalem, about why they disagree so much and, again, about love and war. The delicacy of his irony is delicious:

*...The prophets over there are sharing
the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven
and returning less discouraged and melancholy, because love
and peace are holy and are coming to town.
I was walking down a slope and thinking to myself: How
do the narrators disagree over what light said about a stone?
Is it from a dimly lit stone that wars flare up?*

The whole book is called *The Butterfly's Burden* (Bloodaxe, 2007). I deeply recommend it.

Stephen Yeo



Lords and Moles

Friends,

You may have noticed a lot of mole activity around and about. Indeed, Colin the mole-catcher has been to see us recently, and told us that they have babies in about two weeks time! This is good news for the other sorts of moles that have become very active lately in our Meeting in pursuit of the decision at Yearly Meeting Gathering to campaign for a change in the law to allow same-sex couples to marry, both legally and before God, in our Meeting Houses. Friends, these moles have been successful in the House of Lords. The Bishop of nearby Winchester spoke against the amendment to the Equality Bill on 25 January which resulted in an eruption from hibernation, with the result that voting in favour of the amendment in the report stage of the Equalities Bill of 95 to 21 when the Lords voted the second time on 2 March. It would be great if we could have closure and a change in the law before the General Election, in time for Yearly Meeting at the end of May, but the time schedule is tight, so we hope our moles can keep multiplying and spreading their influence to allow a free vote on this issue before the dissolution of parliament. Moles do not enjoy being hung!

Jill Green

