

FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

Number 388

JULY 2011

40 pence

Quaker Prison Ministry at HMP Grendon

Grendon is a unique British prison because it operates as a therapeutic community in which men, generally serving long terms of imprisonment for serious crimes, choose to spend a few years of their sentence engaging in group therapy and being challenged to look deeply at problematic behaviour patterns and entrenched beliefs that have contributed to their offences. They have to risk being exposed and vulnerable as they share powerful emotions and are robustly challenged by both therapists and other inmates – it is not a soft option.

I became interested in Grendon even before I was a Quaker, because the head of my daughters' primary school encouraged parents to learn about the prison on our doorstep, where he led poetry workshops. I was very impressed and intrigued by the place when I visited it during one of the prison's regular open days.

When I began attending Quaker meetings in 2001, I learned about the group which meets weekly in Grendon and so started to attend here too with the 'Freddie Lakers' as we've been dubbed in rhyming slang. I was appointed Quaker chaplain in November 2006.

Each Wednesday afternoon I visit the prison wings and later in the evening I bring in a group of Quaker volunteers to worship with inmates in the prison chapel. Many times I have heard both volunteers and inmates say how much they look forward to the meeting and how moving and uplifting it is, even though we sometimes hear some desperately sad stories in ministry and in private conversations.

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From Quaker Faith and Practice

We are all, yes, I believe, all a mixture of good and bad, and we are not always good at recognising in this magpie mixture what is bad and what is good. Our need is to accept ourselves as a whole, and offer that whole to God, leaving it to God 'unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid' to evaluate the good and bad in us. The glorious miracle is that, if we can do this, God can still use us, with all our faults and weaknesses, if we are willing to be used.

The knowledge that I am usable, and sometimes used, is to me a source of love and gratitude and strength far deeper even than joy and happiness.

QF&P 21.08 Anna Bidder, 1978

Deadline for contributions to the August 2011 issue: noon, Friday 22 July

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 6 can be emailed to helen.mccabe@politics.ox.ac.uk. Paper copy can be left in the 'Forty-Three' pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

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What I most often hear the men say they value is the quiet, a chance to get away from the noise on the wings and the 'inner noise' after a particularly heavy therapy session. Sometimes our half-hour period of worship is entirely silent and sometimes inmates or volunteers may speak. Afterwards there is a chance for conversation and I make sure there is a supply of Quaker books and magazines for those who want to enquire further or who need something to read if they find the prospect of silence too unfamiliar or unsettling.

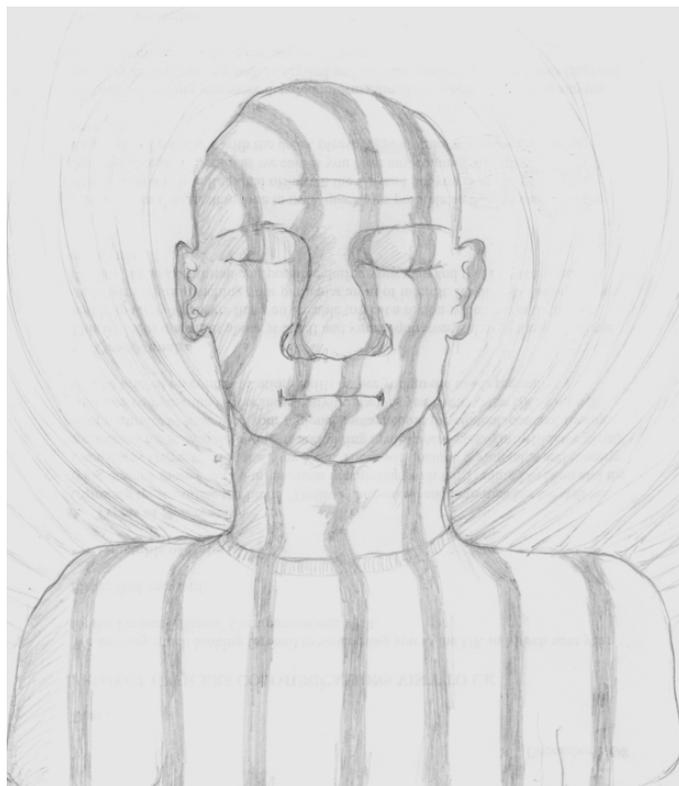
I remember one inmate who would not join our circle at first, but chose to sit in a corner watching us, saying he did not like to close his eyes or have his back to anyone. He gradually joined the circle and surprised us a few times by venturing to offer spoken ministry.

A chaplain's duty is to staff as well and I have appreciated the occasions when an officer has chosen to sit with us. Recently we have enjoyed having a Sikh and Muslim officer join us for worship and ask us about Quakers and our place within the Christian tradition.

I have had to think hard about my own beliefs and values which have been subjected to tests as diverse as the question 'Do you believe in Noah's Ark, miss?' to a philosophical conversation with a Hindu prisoner about causation and responsibility which left my mind reeling.

As I'm a part-time volunteer and not a paid employee of the Prison Service I perhaps have the advantage of not being seen as 'part of the system' by the men, but it can also be hard sometimes to feel part of the chaplaincy team, particularly if I go for a few weeks without seeing any of the other chaplains. Without the support of Quaker volunteers I would find the job a lonely one, but I have been very grateful for the support offered by Quaker friends and the social occasions we arrange a couple of times a year.

Prison is a difficult environment at the best of times and particular challenges at the moment are staff shortages, which mean that arrangements for the Meeting for Worship have to be changed at



Sabita Banerji

short notice, and more restrictive security measures, which are making it harder to bring new volunteers into the prison.

It would be very easy to descend into a spiral of negativity over such things but I believe it is crucial not to succumb to it personally nor to feed into it when talking with prisoners. I take an interest in reform to the criminal justice system through my membership of various organisations, but I see my chaplaincy work as different from this. For me, it's essential to be rooted in my own daily practices of stillness, prayer and meditation, and open to the leadings of the Spirit manifested through the support of Quaker friends and in many other ways in order to be able to communicate that spiritual joy enjoined on us by George Fox in the wonderful advice to 'walk cheerfully'.

Yvonne Dixon

The group meets every Wednesday from 5:30 pm to 7 pm. Contact Yvonne for more information: 01869 242311, alldixons@yahoo.co.uk

Woodbrooke Brochures

We have new brochures, running to the end of 2011, for Woodbrooke Study Centre. You'll find them in a rack in the entrance lobby. Do feel that you can take one to browse through, as you look for a course which is right for you now. Over the next months there are courses on a wide range of subjects: among them Literature, Spiritual development, World religions, Art; and, of course, Quaker issues.

Woodbrooke is a place for solace, comfort and new paths. It's affordable, and there are bursary schemes run by Oxford Meeting and Woodbrooke. For people in their first year of membership there's a special discount of 50%. Do come and talk with me about opportunities.

Peggy Heeks

Woodbrooke Correspondent, 01865 727391



Letter from Havana Monthly Meeting

Dear brothers and sisters and Friends in the Light,

Taking advantage of Palm Sunday to reply to you is part of the Kairos time, God's time for a new moment and a long road ahead. Today we are writing to you to confirm and thank you for our joint desire to walk together and to create bridges to unite our light. If the celebration of Palm Sunday reminds us of anything, it is of the importance of that sisterhood and brotherhood which at crucial moments spreads cloaks which shelter the road, words which spread Good News, and embraces which generate energy. May our entry today spread our friendship, our wish to walk together, our desire to make our Meetings grow. May the Light always reveal to us, not so much the road, as the next step to take. We ask today for a blessing for our Meetings and for a shared road to follow.

*In love,
Havana Monthly Meeting*



Letter from Oxford Meeting

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends in the Light,

We were very happy to receive your letter, which has been shared with Friends at Oxford Local Meeting for Worship for Business. We are moved by your reminder that we are all on a shared journey, concentrating on each step as we take it and benefitting from the bridges which we are building together.

Some of us have had the joy of meeting some of you personally in Oxford or Havana, but most have not. Nonetheless, it is a great privilege for us to be prayerfully united with you, as Friends, in a bridge of love.

British Friends do not customarily use the churches' liturgical calendar, but we are happy to note that your message was written on Palm Sunday, reminding us that we need to walk joyfully in and towards the light. We are replying from our local Meeting for Worship for Business held on the first Sunday after Easter.

*We send loving greetings from all
Oxford Friends.*



Young Friends – age 18 to early 30s

Thursdays, 8 pm at meeting house. We have half an hour's worship and an hour's reflection or discussion.

7th July: Desert Island Discs. We will each share music which means something to us.

14th July: 'Fruits of Solitude'. Reflection on some of William Penn's spiritual writing

21st July: Finger painting. Worship whilst painting

28th July: Open-ended worship. We will wait and see how the spirit moves us in worship...

For more details, please email:
youngfriends@oxfordquakers.org

Matthew Gee

From the editors

Been on a course? Something to share with the Meeting? Moved by ministry? If you are passionate about a cause or would like to express what Quakerism means to you — in prose, in poetry, or in pictures — this is the place for you.

With the long summer evenings, and now that the holidays are upon us, pick up a pen or brush — go on, don't be shy.

Send your creativity to:
newsletter@oxfordquakers.org

Our repository needs replenishing!

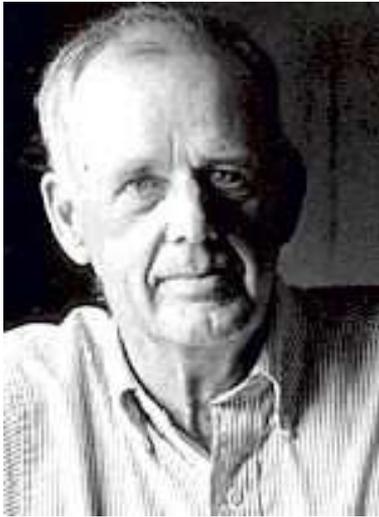
BPM (Becky, Penny, and Mark)

Friends in France

Travelling in France? Page 14 of the latest issue of the *Lettre des Amis*, in our library, contains contact details for Friends in thirteen *régions*. (For other countries, visit www.fwccworld.org)



"What's the french for Friends?..."



The Silence

Though the air is full of singing
my head is loud
with the labour of words.

Though the season is rich
with fruit, my tongue
hungers for the sweet of speech.

Though the beech is golden
I cannot stand beside it
mute, but must say

"It is golden," while the leaves
stir and fall with a sound
that is not a name.

It is in the silence
that my hope is, and my aim.
A song whose lines

I cannot make or sing
sounds men's silence
like a root. Let me say

and not mourn: the world
lives in the death of speech
and sings there.

Wendell Berry

Provided by **Adrian Nelson**

Meetings and Notices

Oxford Friends in Print

'Stepping out of the shadow'
by **Rupert Booth**, QAADRANT
No. 64 Summer 2011, pp. 4-5

QAAD (Quaker Action on
Alcohol and Drugs) speaks
for Friends on issues such
as dealing with drugs
misuse, gambling, and
alcoholism.

www.qaad.org

Bring-and-share lunch

Come and join us with your contribution
for a delicious lunch in the Garden Room
at 12:30 on 31 July. These lunches take
place regularly, on the last Sunday of the
month.

Friday with Friends

To be held in the Garden Room at FMH.
The session will start at 7:30 and will
finish by 9:30 pm. An introductory article can
be found in the June issue of *Forty-Three*.

Friday 1 July

'Preparing for Remembrance Day'

Led by Sue Smith &
Penny Ormerod

All are welcome.

CALENDAR FOR JULY 2011

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Friday 1 July	7 for 7:30 pm	Friday with Friends (see p. 5)	Thursday 14 July	8 pm	Young Friends
Sunday 3 July	12:30	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 20 July	1:45 pm	Friends' Fellowship of Healing
Monday 4 July	10:30 - 3:30 pm	Quilting	Thursday 21 July	8 pm	Young Friends
Thursday 7 July	8 pm	Young Friends (see p. 4)	Thursday 28 July	8 pm	Young Friends
Saturday 9 July	10:30 - 2:30 pm	Extended Meeting for Worship	Sunday 31 July	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share Lunch (see p. 5)

A reminder that Yearly Meeting Gathering is from 31 July to 6 August in Canterbury.

For more information: www.quaker.org.uk/ymg

Forty-Three is available online, at www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter

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.

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

Wednesdays at 12:15 pm at 43 St Giles
(followed by coffee and tea)

Tuesdays and **Thursdays** at 7:30 am at 43 St Giles
(followed by breakfast at 8 am)

Sundays at 10 am at The Priory,
85 Old High St, Headington

OPENING TIMES

43 ST GILES

Wednesday - Friday, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm

Closed in August

*Editorial Team: MARK EBDEN, PENNY ORMEROD, and BECKY RIDDELL (Joint Editing & Production);
TINA LEONARD, DEBORAH FILGATE (Proofreaders); HELEN McCABE (Distributor and Subscriptions)*