

FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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QUNO Summer School

Ever since 1948, the Friends World Committee for Consultation has had a formal presence at the United Nations, in New York and Geneva, to represent Friends' interests and perform advocacy. For most of that time, it has also run a two-week Summer School in its Geneva office, aimed at giving young Friends and non-Friends an introduction to its work. Along with 24 other young people (aged 18 to 27), I attended the Summer School at the beginning of July 2010.

Rather than offer an in-depth study of any particular topic (which, with the diversity of participants and their interests, would not have been particularly useful), we instead had a series of talks – sometimes as many as five or six in a single day – each given by UN and NGO workers who took time out to explain their work, goals, and the sort of issues that they dealt with. On top of this, we got the chance to sit in on the sessions of several UN bodies, such as the Conference on Disarmament and the Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Rights. While you could hear speakers talk about the work of the UN anywhere, to be able actually to watch the legal dynamics, ideological clashes, and even little human dramas (a bored delegate checking World Cup scores during a conference; the elaborate 'pairing off for lunch' rituals after each session) of these institutions makes them much more real, and

helps to humanise the often monolithic and faceless bureaucracy of such agencies.

The wide range of speakers also threw many of the conflicts between groups and agencies into relief. These simmering – and sometimes boiling over – disputes were, I think, some of the most

Continued on page 2, column 1

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Why, I ask myself, did I go to worship with those rather small and not very distinguished groups of people? Surely it was that sitting among these quite ordinary people, to most of whom I remained a stranger and a foreigner for some months, I sensed an experience of belonging — of community. A true Friends' meeting for worship drawing individuals with varieties of temperament, talent and background always manages to engender a climate of belonging, of community which is infectious and creative. This experience of 'belonging' has remained with me over the years and it has grown both in intensity and universality... The 'giving out' of such a sense of community is the natural witness of a Quaker meeting which has in it the seed of life and creative experience.

QF&P 10.32 Ranjit M Chetsingh, 1967

Deadline for contributions to the April 2011 issue: noon, Friday 18 March

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.

Continued from page 1, column 2

interesting parts of the School. It's very tempting – especially when sitting in the calm cool air of Geneva Friends Meeting House, at the end of a long day of traipsing round and listening to a parade of increasingly lofty speakers – to take everything at face value; but the rivalries and differences of opinion force a sleepy person to think, to assess and analyse what was being said. Members of UN agencies disagreed with NGOs about the effectiveness of large-scale help against help at a local level; World Bank members and development groups had very different solutions to the problems of development; and the Human Rights Committee's report on Israel was predictably controversial. Many of these conflicts were obvious, but it was very interesting to see them playing out before our eyes. These, combined with the often quite lively discussions and Q and A sessions after each talk, helped to give a perspective on the NGO/UN world and work that would be hard to find anywhere else.

So, in the end, was it helpful? Ultimately, I'd actually have to say that it wasn't. I think I went into the Summer School with rather simplistic, unnuanced views of the UN, the problems it faces, and how it should go about relieving them. These were easy views to hold, and comforting in their way, but ultimately dispelled by the School, replaced with more difficult, subtle, complex, realities. In short, to call it 'challenging' would be to praise it with faint damnation (as clunky as that phrase is); the Summer School was an enriching, exacting, but ultimately enjoyable experience that I won't forget for a long time yet.

Jack Owen

*The next Summer School will take place from
3 - 15 July 2011.*

Morning held its breath
Silence: the cows stood watching
as a dew drop fell



Ruth Kim

2



Just Change Tea

Some of you may have noticed me sitting in the Garden Room after MfW surrounded by silver packs of *Just Change* Tea. I thought you might like to know a bit more about it.

I spent my childhood in a tea estate in South India. Many years later, I joined Oxfam and travelled widely, reporting on Oxfam's work. I saw amazing examples of courage in the face of adversity, and witnessed the difference charity can make to people's lives.

But it seemed that no amount of charity could make a dent in poverty itself. The poor seemed to be getting poorer and the rich, richer. Then, a couple of years ago, I went to a talk by Stan Thakaekara, a (then) Oxfam Trustee and founder of Just Change. With him was a group of *Adivasis* (indigenous people) from Southern India and members of the Marsh Farm co-operative, part of an inner city regeneration project in Luton.

The *Adivasis* described how they had started growing tea as a way of reclaiming their ancestral land, and selling it through European Fair Trade shops. But they were shocked to discover later how much those shops were charging for their tea. They felt that fair trade should mean that people could *buy* the tea at a fair price too.

So they linked up with Marsh Farm, who buy the tea at a fair price and sell it on – also at a fair price – to others on the estate and to community groups around the country. It's an income generation project for them too.

They describe it as a revolutionary trading system in which ‘everybody makes a living and nobody makes a killing’. What these two very different groups have in common is the struggle to earn a decent living. With Just Change they’ve found a dignified way to help each other do that, and have forged a warm bond in the process.

It costs £1.65p to produce, pack and ship a pack of 80 teabags, (a pack of supermarket tea costs around £2.50). The buyer decides how much to pay based on what they can afford, and anything over the basic cost is ploughed back into the Just Change system to help it – and everyone in it – to grow and thrive.

Instead of low wages, big profits and high prices, Just Change promotes a fair income for the Producer co-op in India and the Distributor co-op in Luton, a fair profit which is shared with the whole network, *and* a fair price for the buyer.

There are now thousands of people trading tea, oil, rice, soap and spices on these Just Change principles in India. I really believe that if everyone traded like this it could make a real dent in poverty. And what better way to fight poverty and trade injustice than by enjoying a lovely cup of tea!

For more information, visit www.justchangeuk.org, email justchangeoxford@gmail.com or catch me after Meeting.

Sabita Banerji

Oxford Friends’ Action on AIDS

Thanks and Invitation

Kind sponsors of Naomi’s Run in aid of the Hope Institute in Uganda will be pleased to hear that she raised over £1,100, boosting our 2011 total to £3,750, providing a year’s training for 25 young people orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS. Many thanks to all who contributed. There will be a chance to meet **Canon Gideon Byamugisha**, the founder, at an informal gathering on the evening of **Friday 11 March**, to update on the Hope Institute and his global HIV/AIDS ministry, and also to plan ahead for OXFAA. If you would like to come, please contact one of us for details.

John Whitley (jpw1940@yahoo.co.uk) and
Glen Williams (g.and.a.williams@ntlworld.com)



Fairtrade Fortnight runs this year from February 28 to March 13, partly overlapping with the Oxford International Women’s Festival, whose theme this year is ‘Women and Health’. Fairtrade (FT) helps workers and producers to live healthier lives; fair wages help them get better homes with weatherproof roofs and cleanable concrete floors, while the Fairtrade Premium allows communities to get clean water supplies and basic health clinics, among other things that we take for granted in the West. Oxford is an official Fairtrade City; this status was earned by producing evidence of:

- Fairtrade shops and cafes in Oxford
- support from the City Council (some staff time, FT drinks in the Town Hall and all Council premises)
- Fairtrade support from local churches, schools and other groups.

Oxford LM is an official FT ‘Church’ – one would expect Friends to be supporting fair trading as an essential element of social justice.

Fairtrade status isn’t static: since the aim is to make fair trading a world-wide norm, not just a niche market (though a growing one), work needs to be done to expand it. In Oxford, the work of collecting evidence, encouraging local retailers, caterers and other organisations to adopt or expand the use of FT products, and publicising FT to the public at large, is co-ordinated by the Oxford Fairtrade Coalition. This is a network of volunteers drawn from retailers, plus some paid Council staff time and free use of Town Hall meeting rooms. Most Friends know of Fairtrade @ St Michael’s, an Aladdin’s Cave in the crypt of St Michael’s at the North Gate – but how many have visited Exclusive Roots, in the small block of shops between St Giles’s churchyard and its Parish Hall; or The Windmill in Headington’s London Road; or caterers like Will Pouget of the Vaults and Gardens Cafe at the University church; or Green’s Cafe near 43? Brookes is Britain’s first Fairtrade University

Continued on page 4, column 1

Continued from page 3, column 2

and some churches and colleges are involved, including the Said Business School which has hosted two major Fairtrade conferences. The Fairtrade Coalition arranges some public events, and publishes a Fairtrade Directory for Oxford and Oxfordshire. Web: oxfairtrade.wordpress.com

This year, the Fairtrade Foundation is focussing on the importance of organic FT cotton, which is not only more profitable for the producers, but given that more chemicals are used on non-organic cotton than on any other crop, it also benefits the planet. We are being encouraged to make lots of organic white flags (or use recycled old sheets), decorated with FT messages; first to decorate our local buildings, and later to be taken to Brussels for a Big Wrap. I have booked the Meeting House for an FT Bunting-making session from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday 3 March in the Meeting House; some bunting is provided free, but it's hoped people will bring their own old sheets, t-shirts etc to cut up and decorate (plus waterproof marker-pens if possible). This is on the International Women's Festival programme; I hope to find a speaker to tell us briefly about Fairtrade and women's' health, and to serve Fairtrade tea and coffee (and perhaps home-made FT biscuits) to the flag-makers. Offers of help will be most welcome; contact me on 01865 249235 or at pwtreasure@yahoo.co.uk. I hope this will be a contribution to outreach as well as a fun event.

Patricia Wright

(Illustration by Sue Mynall)



Extended Meeting for Worship

There will be an extended Meeting for Worship on Saturday, 30 April starting at 10:30 a.m. till about 2:30 p.m. in the Garden Room. We invite friends to join us for a morning of worship, a silent lunch (bring your own), and then time for reflection and sharing of our experiences. The dates (all Saturdays) for the rest of the year are: 30 April, 9 July, 27 August, 15 October, and 10 December. They all take place in the Garden Room.

Tina Leonard and Naomi Morris 4

My experience at Charlottesville Meeting, Virginia

Judith Atkinson's account of Cambridge (Massachusetts) Monthly Meeting (see February issue) reminded me to do the same, and send the loving greetings of Charlottesville Meeting to Oxford Meeting. I was in C/ville, as the locals call it, from October to December 2010. C/ville is the home of the University of Virginia and of Thomas Jefferson's beautiful mountaintop house, Monticello. I was working in the Monticello research library, on 'Jefferson in Paris' (he was US ambassador there 1784-89) and 'Jefferson and religious freedom', a topic which interests me more and more.

C/ville Friends Meeting is about the same size as Oxford. Like us, they have two Sunday meetings, a quieter one at 9 a.m. and a 'talkier' one at 11 a.m. Judith's comments about US meetings fit my experiences in C/ville, and on earlier US visits to New Haven, (Connecticut) and Palo Alto, (California). Not all American Quakers follow our unprogrammed tradition. But down the East Coast from Massachusetts to Virginia, and also up the West Coast from San Francisco to Seattle, there are unprogrammed Yearly Meetings. A 'weighty' Friend in Connecticut once asked me about the Meetings I had attended in the USA. I said they were all like Oxford – quite a lot of ministry. He said, "That is the trouble with Meetings in university towns – they are too talky."

Like Cambridge, C/ville Meeting buzzes with social conscience and practical outreach. Several C/ville Friends went to Jon Stewart's rally in Washington just before the raucous US elections in November. They commended the placard they had seen in the crowd there: 'Talk in your normal voice'. A Quaker 'still small voice of calm' would come in handy in US politics.

A Southern tradition upheld at C/ville Meeting is 'shape-note singing'. This is a form of communal hymn singing that evolved in the new settlements on the American frontier from the late-eighteenth century onwards. The songs are printed in a variant of tonic sol-fa, in which the symbols *la*, *mi*, *fa*, and *soh* are indicated by the shapes of the notes. (They use only four symbols,

not seven as in British tonic sol-fa). In a 'sing' everyone gets together in a hollow square in four parts. The melody is in the tenor but the tenor and treble parts are doubled by men and women. Each song is called by an individual who stands in the middle and conducts twice, once in *so la fa* etc, and once with the words. It can be quite a powerful experience, as I discovered in several 'sings', which culminated in my leading the hymn, *Old Hundredth*, at the James River Convention in Richmond. The James River Convention is one of the many 'sings', throughout the South, where people come from miles around for a day of shape-note singing.

Like Judith, I would like to celebrate the sense of spiritual unity that we find with our Friends in the USA.

Iain McLean

Yearly Meeting Gathering

This will occur from 30 July to 6 August in Canterbury. Booking forms are available in the lobby of FMH or at www.quaker.org.uk/ymg

If you require bursary assistance, please speak to your Overseer as soon as possible, since the deadline to apply is 31 March.

Sally Wilkins

Having seen Dave Dight's poetic reflections arising from a visit to a monastery, it reminded me of a similar little ditty I came up with a few years ago while on a Buddhist meditation retreat near Swarthmore Hall in Cumbria. It goes as follows:

The Essence of Being

*The World has stopped turning,
I'm silent in space
My heart has stopped burning,
No time, no place*

*My eyes have stopped seeing,
I hear not a sound,
The Essence of Being
Once lost, now found*

Ron Hillier



By popular request there will be three Bible Study sessions in April looking at the New Testament. They will take place in FMH from 7 – 9 p.m.

20 April, in the library with Tanya Garland:
A short introduction to the NT followed by a look at Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount .

27 April, in the library with Tina Leonard:
A look at Jesus and his relationships, focusing on what he says about family.

May 4, in the Long Room with Glen Williams:
A look at some of the letters to the early church.

More information from **Tanya** (247150),
Tina (557464) or **Glen** (727612).

Upcoming talks

Friday 25 March: *Study: 'To be broken'*, Leslie and Anne Durham, OX3.

Friday 29 April: *Visit to Palestine*, Sue Smith, OX3.

Friday 13 May: *Quaker Faith & Practice*, Andrew West, OX3.

Talks begin at 7:30 p.m. For locations, tel 763872.

Anne Durham

f/Facts and f/Figures

Allow me to summarise a couple recent reports^{1,2} based on surveys completed and returned by some 70-90% of the approximately 485 Local Meetings, 70 Area Meetings, and so on across the country. First, some data:

- From 2006 to 2010, the median size of a Meeting hovered between 20 and 23 adult Members, while the number of adult Attenders increased from 11 to 14. More and more Attenders “don’t see Membership as the next step in their association with Friends”. Growth was borne more by the larger Meetings than the smaller ones.
- Some 30-40% of Members and Attenders tend to be present at a given MfW. This rate fell from 2006 to 2010, consistent with the long-term trend.
- For a given LMWB, that rate is about 26-29% for Members and about 12% for Attenders. One in seven Meetings doesn’t hold LMWB except “as and when” needed, and only half of all Meetings hold them as frequently as Oxford Meeting does (about ten times per year).
- Trends among visitors and children are difficult to quantify. A third of Meetings have no children associated with them.
- Women tend to outnumber the men by about 1.6 to 1; the difference tends to be smaller in rural Meetings.
- On average there are about three appointments per active Member, and about 97% of these are filled. Good for us!

The authors hope “that eventually a substantial report will be made available to the Society”. Meanwhile, they pose four questions about what our Meetings might do better:

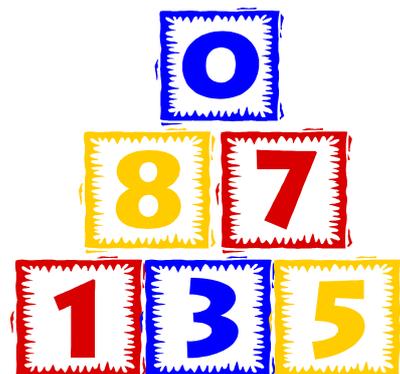
- *The number of ‘visitors’ – seekers or enquirers – at Meeting for Worship is tiny. Are we doing enough for outreach, or is the ‘if people want to, they will find us’ attitude widespread?*
- *The number of children associated with Meeting is falling and the number of Meetings that hold children’s classes is considerably lower than those Meetings reporting children on their lists. Why is*

this? Is it simply that Meeting has to compete with a lazy morning in bed, Facebook and ‘Call of Duty: Black Ops’? Or is it that Meetings do not offer the challenge, interest and fellowship that their young people require?

- *Participation in Meeting for Worship for Business both at Local and Area Meeting is an even lower fraction of possible Members than attendance at Meeting for Worship. Should we be grateful for the numbers who do attend or sorrowful that more, especially Attenders, do not?*
- *The number of appointments made by Meetings is another measure of involvement in the business of the Meeting. They appear to have increased and we appear to be approaching capacity – an appointment for everyone. It used to be said that we needed volunteers because we didn’t have a paid ministry; now a number of meetings suggest in attached notes that they try to create an appointment for everyone as a way of involvement. Is it good to do this or are we becoming so busy with worldly affairs that energy is being taken away from Meeting for Worship and spirituality?*

I’d be glad to share the full text with you.

Mark Ebdon



1. ‘Present and Prevented: Summary Report 2006-2010’, 20 October 2010, Bill Chadkirk and Ben Pink Dandelion.

2. ‘Present and Prevented: A Survey of Membership Activity in Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)’, *Quaker Studies* 12/2 (2008), pp 253-263. ISSN 1363-013X. Full text at <http://media.web.britannica.com/ebsco/pdf/396/29964396.pdf>

Young Friends meetings

Are you aged from 18 to early 30s? Would you like to meet other young adult Quakers to worship and explore your spirituality together? Young Friends from Oxford have been meeting in some form for many years, but over the last year we have been meeting every week on a Thursday.

Before worship, someone reads something they have chosen to share. After half an hour of silent worship, we move into a reflective time where we share our thoughts with one another, inspired by the reading and our worship.

Join us in this month when we will be looking at the poem 'Desiderata' by Max Ehrmann on 3 March; having a session on 'How I became a Quaker' on 10 March; considering the outward expression of simplicity on 17 March; reading an excerpt from George Fox's *Journal* on 24 March; and thinking about young Friends' attitudes to relationships on 31 March.

You are welcome to arrive from 7:30 p.m., and worship starts around 8 p.m. For more details on any of our meetings, or to join our mailing list, email youngfriends@oxfordquakers.org.

Adrian Nelson, Holly Alcock, Katherine North, Matthew Gee, Matt Godwin and Sally Nicholls

Saying Goodbye – The Last Taboo?

'Death is a subject that is evaded, ignored and denied by our youth-worshipping, progress-oriented society ... but the fact is that we will all die, it is only a matter of time.' (*J.L. and L.D. Braga*)

As death is inevitable, why make it taboo? Is it fear that prevents us from admitting that we will not live forever and there will come a time when we are no longer on this earth?

We invite you to come to Friday With Friends on 4 March, when we will have an opportunity to explore why we are in denial, how we would like to spend our last days, how we would like our own funeral to be and how we would like to be remembered. We will even give you a form entitled 'Funerals and Memorial Meetings: Information and Guidance in Advance' to fill in (after consultation with your partner or spouse, closest relatives or F/friends). We suggest that you lodge one copy with your next-of-kin and put one in Kate Joyce's pigeonhole, to be kept by Oxford Meeting Funerals Group.

The session will start at 7:30 p.m. in the Garden Room at FMH. It will be led by Kate Joyce and Maretta Stark from the Funerals Group. For further information about Friday with Friends contact Ellen Bassani (01865 724567, contessabassani@talktalk.net) or Diana Biddlestone (01295 690715 diana.biddlestone@btinternet.com).

Maretta Stark



Oxford Friends in Print

The February 2011 issue of *The Friends Quarterly* contains the following pieces, illustrating the range of interests among Oxford Friends:

- 'Mysticism: the continuing tradition' (by Peggy Heeks)
- 'The politics of Gaia: towards a specifically Quaker or "deep" politics' (by Stephen Yeo)
- 'The FQ interview: Jennifer Barraclough'

www.quakerquip.org/friendsquarterly

CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2011

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Tuesday 1st March	7:30-9:30	'Confucius and the Chinese Idea of Peace', by John Gittings	Thursday 17th March	7:30 for 8 p.m.	Young Friends (see page 7)
Thursday 3rd March	7:30 for 8 p.m.	Young Friends (see page 7)	Saturday 19th March	10:30— 3:30 p.m.	Quilting
Thursday 3rd March	5:30-7:30	Bunting making (see pages 3-4)	Thursday 24th March	7:30 for 8 p.m.	Young Friends (see page 7)
Friday 4th March	7 for 7:30	Friday with Friends (see page 7)	Friday 25th March	7:30 p.m.	Study: 'To be broken' (in east Oxford —see p. 5)
Sunday 6th March	12:30	Local Meeting for Worship for Business	Saturday 26th March		Regional Meeting, in Banbury
Thursday 10th March	7:30 for 8 p.m.	Young Friends (see page 7)	Sunday 27th March	12:30	Bring-and-Share Lunch
Wednesday 16th March	1:45 p.m.	Friends' Fellowship of Healing	Monday 28th March	4:30-6:30	Poetry Group
Thursday 17th March	8 p.m.	Film: 'Silent Prayer'	Thursday 31st March	7:30 for 8 p.m.	Young Friends (see page 7)

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.

Oxford City – Bonn Church
Link visit to Bonn, 28 April - 2 June

Hospitality is offered by German church members, but transport is not included, although possibly there is some funding available. If any Friend is interested, please contact
David Field, dai.field@dsl.pipex.com

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

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