



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

www.oxfordquakers.org

Number 374

MAY 2010

40 pence

Reaching Poverty in Oxford

The following is an excerpt from the OXFAP (Oxford Friends Action on Poverty) cheque book:

- To Oxford Night Shelter: £100 for Moses who was sleeping rough
- To Emmaus Oxford: £350 for Thomas to help with accommodation while his asylum status was reviewed
- To Connection Floating Support: £100 for Dora to help with housing
- Also £100 for Owen, getting established in independent accommodation

It is perhaps no surprise that four of the most recent 'emergency' donations made by OXFAP have all dealt with housing. It is frustrating that, as the requests for help from organisations increases, Oxford Meeting's three-year funding project came to an end in December 2009.

Since 1989, OXFAP has been Oxford Meeting's response to the poverty on our doorstep, with Oxford city comprising some of the most extreme levels of wealth and poverty in the country, particularly child poverty. It always works through organisations, care workers and so on, trusting them to come to Quakers with requests for 'one off' donations which will really make a difference.

In addition OXFAP has been able to give regular donations at Christmas time to a variety of local

groups including hostels, prisoners' families, family support organisations and a women's refuge.

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From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

When the Religious Society of Friends gathers for its annual assembly, it does so because it seeks to come to know the mind of God on the various affairs to be brought forward... [T]here is laid upon us the necessity of patience with one another in all our gatherings, and especially in Yearly Meeting, and the willingness to accept the imperfect arising from our human limitations. When therefore we find our Yearly Meeting falling short of the standard which it should reach, whether in worship or in deliberation, it behoves each of us to listen more intently for the voice of the Spirit, and to seek the more earnestly that every contribution, be it by spoken word or in silence, is that which is in accord with the divine leading. In our worship at Yearly Meeting, it is laid upon us with special weight to listen. It is not our ministry that is required in worship, nor our inspiration in deliberations, but we seek to hear the true word of God speaking through our frail humanity and leading us to the place where he would have us be.

From *QF&P 6.09, Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee, 1960*

Deadline for contributions to the June 2010 issue: noon, Friday 21 May

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.

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The bulk of the funds however have gone to Asylum Welcome and Elmore Community Services, an independent charity which caters for people with complex needs in Oxford city. At the end of the three-year project both charities wrote to thank Oxford Quakers giving examples of how they had spent our money. Asylum Welcome said:

“OXFAP money has been vital to our support of destitute clients.” They valued in particular that we placed no restrictions on the use to which money could be put. They had been able to give cash to clients to buy their own food; to purchase a Princess bed for a three-year old girl; a pair of glasses for another client; most importantly nappies and formula for milk. “It is extremely difficult to source funds for things like food and nappies,” they told us.

One example was a young mother who at eighteen found herself without refugee status because of mistakes in her case. She was destitute for two years. She now has full refugee status but found she had been overpaid child support. This now has to be paid back, so she continues to receive help with nappies, formula and most recently a second-hand pram.

One of the examples given us by Elmore Community Services was Pete’s story. To qualify for help, Elmore clients have to have problems in three of the following four areas: mental health, drugs, homelessness and offending behaviour. The aim is to provide long-term, joined-up support for people who fall through the net of the various specific support services.

Pete was 29 when he was referred to the Elmore team. He was sleeping rough, addicted to crack and unwilling to address his mental health needs. Within the first year he was found a place in a supported housing project, with help for his addiction and mental health. At a point when he appeared more stable his Elmore worker suggested he join in with client involvement work. He did so, but sporadically, taking breaks when his drug use was high. Gradually, however, his chaotic lifestyle reduced and his confidence grew. Today Pete is a strong member of the Elmore group, giving help to others now – for instance, giving talks to schools.

Another example was Ben, 35, in and out of prison for breaching a court order for begging, diagnosed with schizophrenia and long-term drug and alcohol

problems. Ben was very mistrustful and it took months to build a relationship. Initially the welfare fund was used to buy him food from fast food restaurants. It was winter and cold and Ben learned to chat over a burger. As Ben learned to engage with the team, it became clear that he needed to leave the area if he were to have a chance of turning his life around. The welfare fund was used to buy train tickets to visit hostels and, when he found a place, to buy him new trainers and some small items for his new home.

Like Asylum Welcome, Elmore valued the flexibility of the OXFAP money, enabling them to buy the one-off extras for clients which made all the difference.

Straitened Circumstances

Although the OXFAP funding project (£15,000 over the three years 2006 to 2009) has come to an end, Oxford’s premises and finance committee has been able to give us a £1,000 to budget for this year. In addition, of course, we get the money that we raise ourselves and direct donations from individual Friends.

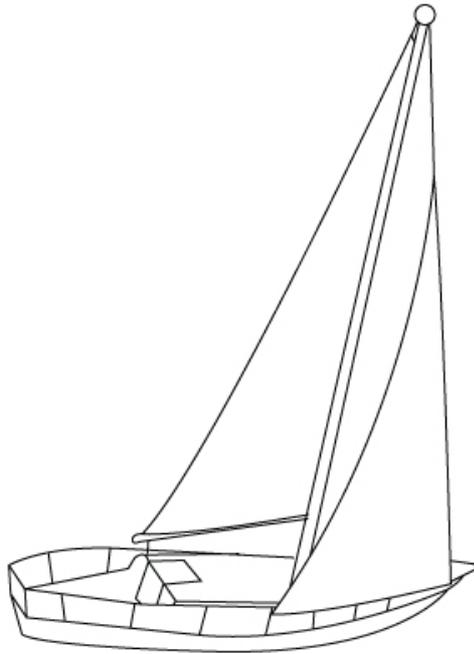
How you can help

- **OXFAP** is one of the charities for May 2010 – please give as generously as you can;
- Remember that you can also give directly to **OXFAP** when you are making your annual donation to the meeting – so if you haven’t filled in your schedule yet, it’s not too late!

Although the sums we give are often very small, they can make an enormous difference. And if you would like to know more about the work we do or know of someone who needs help, please free to contact any of the OXFAP committee: Jo Dobry, Rebecca Howard, Ursula Howard (convener), Elizabeth Salisbury and Sue Smith.

Jo Dobry





BECOMING FRIENDS

Living & Learning with Quakers

Becoming Friends is a learning project for those who are new to Friends. It is a course that explores Quakerism using a structured framework that can be undertaken either online or on paper. It has been developed by Woodbrooke & Quaker Life for use in all meetings.

The course aims to encompass distinctive aspects of Quaker faith and practice and to encourage the seeker to discover the Quaker community in a guided way.

Those who are currently exploring the course will meet in the Short Room on the second Sunday of every month between the 9:30 and 11 o'clock Meetings. All are welcome to join in, especially others who might like to join those exploring the course.

It is possible that the course will become a source of conversation and reflection for everyone, hence our intention to organise a 'talking-wall' in the Library or Short Room where questions can be asked, answered and thoughts can be shared regarding both practical and spiritual aspects of Quaker life.

A paper copy of the *Becoming Friends* course will be available in the Library for general perusal.

Holly Cole

Look before you sit

Friends may have noticed that the seats of some of the chairs in the Garden Room have become somewhat worse for wear over the last year or two. However, if you look again now, things have changed: these chairs have been re-covered in new fabric. This is the handiwork of two Friends, Sarah Lasenby and Rebecca Howard, who began working late last year, on a journey that took them on a trip to a snow-bound High Wycombe and the cellar of F.M.H., and involved exploratory deconstruction, shaping the fabric to fit the chairs, sewing, putting the chairs back together again, an enormous quantity of staples, and surprisingly little swearing. Completing the first chair and finding that the methods used had worked was a moment of joy. We hope that Friends will enjoy the result of all the hard work!

Rebecca Howard



Friday with Friends

These are held in the Garden Room at FMH, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. For further information please contact Ellen Bassani (01865 724567) or diana.biddlestone@btinternet.com.

7 May "The Power of Music" Glen Williams and Kate Binnie.

A workshop to explore what music means to us including songs of peace, love and protest by Yves Montand (translations will be available).

4 June "The Fallen Angel" Emlyn Warren.

The story of Herbert Hoover, the son of a Quaker and 31st president of the United States of America.

2 July "Walking the labyrinth" Sally Welch.

There are no Fridays with Friends planned for August. Meetings will resume in September.

Diana Biddlestone