



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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Farewell & Best Wishes to Laurie

Laurie Michaelis is leaving Oxford to move to the Quaker Community at Bamford (near Sheffield). He has been a core member of the Oxford Meeting for more than fifteen years, and has contributed to its life in many ways, most particularly in helping us to understand the issues of sustainable living. On 9 October there will be an occasion to say 'farewell' to Laurie. This will be a Bring and Share supper at 7 p.m. at Friends Meeting House followed by a worship-sharing session. All are welcome.

Sandra Figgess



Woodbrooke Correspondent

May I introduce myself as the new Woodbrooke correspondent? My role is to provide information about Woodbrooke, the Quaker study centre in Bourneville, Birmingham, and to encourage Oxford Friends to use it.

I've been going to Woodbrooke for decades. Leonard and I got to know it well as Friends in Residence for a term in 1996, and since then I've held the Eva Koch Fellowship, with resulting publications on Quakers and the Bible. For the past few years I have been an Associate Tutor, recently working on courses about the mystics and life transitions.

When I think about Woodbrooke, it comes to me essentially as a place: a gracious Georgian mansion, acres of peaceful grounds and a lake – all set within a bus ride of New Street Station. However, Woodbrooke is much more than that. It is an accepting, supportive community, with a clear rhythm to its days, from Meeting for Worship in the morning to Epilogue at night.

The sense of place and community can nourish us but so, even more, can the study programme, which is very wide-ranging. Looking at just one month, November, there are courses on Mystics, Quaker Theology, Liberating Jesus and The Presence in the Midst.

The brochure for 2009/10 is on display in the lobby. Do look at it, and talk to me if you would like any more information.

Peggy Heeks

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.

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Deadline for contributions to the November 2009 issue: noon, Tuesday 20 October

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

Oxford Friends' Action on AIDS: Autumn 2009 Update

The Continuing Challenge

As we approach another World AIDS Day (1 December) we are reminded that, despite significant progress in some areas, the challenge of HIV and AIDS remains enormous, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Challenge to Friends

In August 2007 the Friends World Committee for Consultation meeting in Dublin established an Advocacy Group on HIV/AIDS, co-chaired by Fidel Nsengiyumva. This group issued an appeal for Friends worldwide to be more actively involved, with a message of hope, in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Oxford Friends' Action

For several years a number of Oxford Friends have been trying to promote awareness of the challenge of AIDS and support for positive responses, through displays, talks and fund-raising. This concentrates especially on the work of three organisations:

1. The Strategies for Hope Trust (SFH)

(Oxford) which publishes books, films and training manuals, mostly for free distribution in 160 countries in many languages, promoting and enabling positive community responses to the HIV epidemic. Users constantly tell of the transforming effect of SFH materials and appeal for more copies in more languages. The founder and Series Editor is Glen Williams, its Trustees include Karima Brooke and John Whitley and it has received financial support from several members of Oxford Meeting.

2. The Quaker Initiative against AIDS

(Rwanda) – a programme of education, care and support, founded and directed by Fidel Nsengiyumva for Rwanda Yearly Meeting. Oxford Meeting supports this through weekly collections in June each year, through individual donations and through the sale of Christmas cards produced by the young people's group called Bamporeze (meaning Reassurance).

3. The Hope Institute (Kampala, Uganda) – a programme of education and vocational training for orphans and other vulnerable children, founded by Canon Gideon Byamugisha. Oxford Meeting supports this through weekly collections in November each year and also through individual sponsorship.

Opportunities this November

This November Oxford Friends will be able to support the weekly collections for the Hope Institute and also to buy Bamporeze Christmas cards. There will also be two important events: On Saturday, 14 November in the Garden Room Canon Gideon Byamugisha will update us on his work as Christian Aid goodwill ambassador on HIV/AIDS and the progress of the Hope Institute. (For details see separate notice.) On Thursday, 19 November in Oxford Town Hall a reception will be held to mark the twentieth anniversary of SFH, at which Gideon Byamugisha will be keynote speaker (on 'Combating AIDS: does religion help or hinder?'). He will also be presented with the medal for the Niwano Peace Prize, which he was awarded earlier this year in recognition of his international ministry on HIV/AIDS. It is hoped that this event (by invitation for SFH partners and supporters) will also generate wider publicity for local responses to the challenge of AIDS.

Getting involved

Anyone who would like to be involved in Oxford Friends' Action on AIDS, please contact us via jpw1940@yahoo.co.uk (John) or sfh@stratshope.co.uk (Glen).

John Whitley and Glen Williams



Spend Christmas in Africa with 50 kids this year?

In Tabora, in central Tanzania, is HAPO, a Day Centre caring for 52 orphans and vulnerable children. In term time they come to the centre for lunch after school (school finishes at 12.30), in the holidays they attend the Centre all day and have a breakfast of bread and black tea. They live with members of their extended families.

They need someone to ensure that the lunches and breakfasts are supplied each day during December and until mid-January. Could you be the Christmas Manager?

The Centre has been funded by a British Charity, but they gave notice last month that their funding will cease in November. I am anxious that the feeding of the children should continue, as for some it is their only source of food. I have undertaken to raise the necessary money and pay the cook and buy the food and charcoal. The feeding programme should continue seamlessly. Money has already started to come in, though more contributions are always welcome: £9 provides for one child for a month. The Christmas Manager will not need to raise money. He or she will have to ensure that food supplies are in place each day for the cook. Detailed instructions will be given and a few days handover is essential. Some of the children speak some English, enough for communication with the cook. Accommodation is available free.

Tabora is a two-hour flight from Dar Es Salaam, by Precision Air or Air Tanzania. You are needed because my ticket was booked last spring to take me away from Tabora for six weeks to Auckland to visit my son for Christmas. If you can help, please email: TaboraCleanWater AT yahoo.co.uk.

Margaret Paton

Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting



Donna Dickenson,
talking to Tanya Garland

I was born in New England, USA. My family on my mother's side were old New Englanders – back to the Mayflower and possibly amongst the Boston Puritans who persecuted the Quakers. My mother did our family tree, although I can't say it's ever interested me greatly, except for my pride in having one of the Salem martyrs, wrongly known as witches, among my ancestors. I am also proud of our tradition of frugality, tenacity and survival in a cold climate. I took my first degree in Political Science and Law in Wellesley College MA (where Hilary Clinton went) but I've been living in England now for 35 years. After being students at the LSE, my first husband and I decided to leave America – partly due to our disagreement over the Vietnam War and the way America was going at

that time. My reaction to September 11th made me realise I'm still attached to America. I was distressed and disillusioned by all the anti-Americanism that came out at the time, rather than sympathy with the dead, and I still experience anti-Americanism, even amongst Quakers. I don't think people realise I am American when they make these comments.

We settled in Leamington Spa where both of our children were born: my son, Anders, who is a playwright, and my daughter, Pip, who is an activist against the death penalty in New Mexico. (They succeeded this spring in repealing the death penalty, making New Mexico the first Western state to do so.) I began working for the Open University (OU) in 1974, initially as a part-time tutor, then completed my PhD in Philosophy and Medical Ethics and went on to work for them as a lecturer and senior lecturer. I chaired a course on Death and Dying which has trained huge numbers of doctors and nurses (20,000) and was also aimed at home carers and those who were dying themselves. I had some wonderful experiences with people like Roger Twycross, who was then the medical Director of Michael Sobell House here in Oxford, and Cecily Saunders from St. Christopher's in London – making programmes together. This course was read and pilot tested by 300 doctors and nurses from places like St. Christopher's, finding out how they reacted to the materials.

My father died from Hodgkin's Disease at the age of twenty-five when I was four. He was in the US navy during World War Two. Apparently, thirty men on his ship developed Hodgkin's Disease. I've heard it has a viral link to the Epstein-Barr virus so maybe that was a factor for my interest in my future work. I don't think his early death left me with an abnormal fear of death, but it probably did make me feel I had to live for two, to pack a great deal into my life. When I was six, my mother eloped with a bigamist and took me with her to Mexico, but eventually his past caught up with him and he committed suicide, leaving us stranded there. My grandparents were very distressed as we just disappeared. My father's mother had lost her son and then her granddaughter. They set up a Federal all-state hunt for us. I went to school for six months in Mexico City, and then he committed suicide and we came back. My mother became an alcoholic and I spent a lot of time with my grandmother. I lived with her for a year. She was

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the stability of my childhood, which I was lucky to have had.

I left the OU in 1997, having remarried to Christopher Britton (who is a flautist), in Oxford Meeting in 1990, and went to Imperial College London as a senior lecturer. I became head of Medical Ethics there, training doctors and clinicians. I'd begun doing a lot of work on clinical ethics – cases that arose from doctors' practices. One was a case where a man was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease at the end of his life. It is a genetic disease and the question arose as to whether other members of his family should be tested (given it is incurable) and there was conflict in the family about whether there is a right *not* to know. I also had interesting cases at Imperial where we were asked if the first human hand transplant should go ahead, as it was not life saving and could have been life threatening. Having to suppress the body's natural immune reaction, so that the transplant would not be rejected, plus the drugs used, could be life threatening. These are the types of medical problems that can lead to ethical problems for the doctors. I then went on to do work with a surgeon who had done face transplants in France, and I gave testimony to the Royal College of Surgeons in London on ethical issues around face transplants. I left Imperial in 2001 and was given the John Ferguson Chair in Global Ethics at Birmingham University, which I left in 2004. For two years I was Professor of Medical Ethics at Birkbeck College, University of London, and then took early retirement in 2006 to become a full-time writer and activist. I recently wrote a book called *Body Shopping* (2008), which looked at the whole issue of the commercialisation of the human body. This includes the patenting of the human genome (the entire array of genes within the body, which produces all our characteristics) and includes the fact that one in five of those genes is the subject of a patent. This means that biotech firms can block research by their competitors, or charge inflated prices for drugs if they own the patent on the gene that the drug targets. The Herceptin case, concerning the drug for breast cancer, sold at an inflated price, is an example of this.

In 2006 I was the first woman to win the Spinoza Lens Award given to honour contribution to public debate in ethics. It's a Dutch award and the Dutch, being very direct, suggested that I might expand my academic work — much as they approved of that

— to write a more popular book on the same subjects, which triggered the writing of *Body Shopping*.

I joined Sibford Meeting back in 1981 when I was living in a nearby village. I'm a philosopher and interested in religious issues and I'd had an experience of grace, which led me to contact Quakers. I'd not been brought up in any religion. In fact, when I was fifteen, I refused to attend chapel at my school. I'd been reading Henry Thoreau's essay 'Civil Disobedience' and felt that compulsory chapel was incompatible with freedom of personal conscience. I nearly got expelled for it and made a pragmatic decision to comply. I was only fifteen and there was a limit to what I could do, especially as it triggered a lot of anger with my stepfather, which resulted in me going to live with my grandmother.

My favourite quote is from James Nayler, 19.12 in Quaker Faith and Practice: *In 1660, after his release [from prison], he set out on foot for the north, intending to go home to his wife and children. On the way, he was robbed and bound, and found towards evening in a field. He was taken to a Friend's house near King's Ripton, where he died. These were some of his last words:*

'There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it be betrayed, it bears it... It never rejoiceth but through suffering, for with the world's joy it is murdered.'

I've now written twenty books and have just finished a satirical novel about biotechnology – book number twenty-one.

Theological Doubt

Maybe it is God
Who has stopped
Believing
In us.

Chris Gaal